Anti-Corruption Advocacy - in Contemporary Russia?  
Domestic CSOs between International Allies and the State*

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Abstract

‘Anti-corruption’ remains a pressing issue in international politics and meanwhile a transnational advocacy network (TAN) against corruption has emerged. Much anti-corruption attention is paid to the post-Communist world, and Russia in particular, as well as to fostering civil society involvement. But how precisely are civil society organisations (CSOs), which are part of the TANs but situated within an authoritarian domestic context, involved in anti-corruption advocacy? How does their local context matter to the internal workings of an anti-corruption TAN? Addressing these question requires engagement with, and fresh contribution to, the existing theoretical work on TANs, which has never been applied to the issue area of anti-corruption advocacy or to a non-democratic post-Soviet context. This paper presents corresponding theoretical and conceptual considerations. It discusses how existing approaches to studying TANs may be complemented with insights from the literatures on anti-corruption and on contemporary Russia. On this basis, it outlines how a more appropriate approach may be developed and operationalised for the empirical analysis of CSO involvement in transnational anti-corruption advocacy in Russia today.

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Anti-corruption debates and activities have experienced a boom over the last decade. The anti-corruption idea has entered international debates with a move towards framing corruption as a major global problem requiring collective counteraction in the form of international mobilisation, agreement, and regulation. Regarding the political discourse, most analysts agree on the significant increase of attention paid to ‘corruption’ during the 1990s. Anti-corruption remains a pressing issue for international actors to this day. It is currently the second hottest topic on the World Bank agenda (after Avian Flu), the U.N. Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) has come into force in December 2005, and the problem of endemic corruption in EECCA countries remains high among concerns expressed by the European Commission.

Two fundamental transformations have given additional impetus to the emergence of a transnational advocacy network (TAN) against corruption since the end of the Cold War: the comparatively high levels of corruption in the post-Soviet countries and the emergence of civil society organisations (CSOs) throughout Eastern Europe. Accordingly, much of the attention of anti-corruption advocacy is being paid to the post-Communist world, and Russia in particular, as well as to fostering civil society involvement. Both academic and policy fronts are underlining the corrosive effects of corruption, both within EECCA transformation countries and coming from them into the international sphere. On a national scale, corruption is seen to affect negatively economic growth, by deterring foreign and domestic investment and increasing the problem of capital flight. Further, it may hamper democratisation and good governance, feed into other forms of (organised) crime or have destabilising effects on politics, national and international security. In practice, numerous anti-corruption measures have been taken. Today, after 15 years of transformation, however, Eastern European countries still or even increasingly prove problematic with regard to post-Communist criminalisation, corruption or relapse to non-democratic governance. Even initial hopes, and corresponding assessments, that EU accession would lead to significant improvements regarding anti-corruption, have not materialised. Democratisation in the post-Communist region has proceeded more or less successfully, and at the advent of the 2004 eastern enlargement, TI stated that it shared the Commission’s assessment that “corruption is still a serious problem in many acceding and candidate countries” (TI 2003: 6, emphasis in original). The European Commission itself acknowledged that:

Across the board there has been little real progress towards democratisation and respect for human rights, and indeed there has been a tendency toward increased authoritarianism, with administrative and judicial systems which can be arbitrary and corrupt. Civil society remains weak [...] Environmental problems are generally given low political priority in the EECCA countries [...] In addition, endemic corruption at all levels has severely affected all EECCA countries; a large proportion of economic activity remains unrecorded and untaxed (European Commission 2004).

Recent findings show that the anti-corruption effect of the accession process has been more in the adoption of anti-corruption legislation and building of institutional arrangements, rather than in practical implementation (Michael 2005a; TI 2003). In any case, anti-corruption efforts in post-Communist states have been more extensive than in West European countries. Most importantly,
these efforts have often been in response to emerging international pressure, while in Western Europe such efforts “tend to be initiated ‘at home’” (Grødeland, et al. 2005). However, despite continuing concerns about corruption and crime prevention, a particular “obsession with Russian crime” (Rawlinson 2003) by Western media, and noticeable counter-effects of anti-corruption measures, related questions have hardly been addressed in a systematic way by studies on either TANs, anti-corruption, or contemporary Russia.

Regarding Russia, several billion U.S. dollars/Euros of democratisation assistance have been invested to date, much of it devoted to civil society formation, good governance and anti-corruption initiatives. However, the situation only seems to worsen with corruption rising “at a record-setting pace” (RosBiznesKonsalting 2005) whereas “Russian civil society is still poorly organised, the emergence of NGOs is slow, and they do not yet play a significant role” (EESC 2005: 2). Two trends have raised doubts about the advocacy potentialities of Russian NGOs: the enormous dependency on foreign assistance; and strengthening governmental control in a domestic authoritarian governance context. Such concerns are intensified by the most recent events, including the latest ‘NGO law’, which alters registration procedures for both domestic and foreign NGOs and a range of other conditions for NGOs and donors thus seriously impairing the operational potential of transnational-domestic links. The Washington-based CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), for example, warned in an open letter to the Russian State Duma:

*Under the guise of fighting corruption and terrorism, the amendments would in fact deal a potential death blow to Russian civil society, reversing important advances made […] Indeed, the pending proposals reflect an attitude toward independent political activity that is reminiscent of Russia’s Soviet past.* (CSCE 2005)

Given a rising anti-corruption fatigue, or even frustration, in the case of Russia, and particularly regarding civic activities, it is time to re-examine the role of domestic CSOs as part of ongoing transnational efforts to curb corruption. This concern is at the centre of the author’s PhD thesis, which asks how precisely CSOs, which are part of TANs but situated within an authoritarian post-Soviet context, are involved in anti-corruption advocacy. An attempt to analyse (1) transnational networking and the transfer of international principles (2) in the case of anti-corruption advocacy (3) to the non-democratic domestic context of Russia also raises new theoretical and conceptual challenges. The study thus searches for a theoretical framework appropriate for analysing the changing behaviour and agendas of such domestic advocacy groups. Theoretically, the thesis does not aim at broad generalisations. Rather, using the case study of Russia, it seeks to explore and record the links between one particular domestic system and the transnational sphere of advocacy against corruption, with a particular focus on local non-state actors. In practice, the latter are the focus of attention from both the international and the domestic sphere. In fact, their emergence is rooted partly within both spheres. In studying these CSOs, the thesis explores the social links that enable the communication of anti-corruption principles between international and domestic spheres and the realisation of anti-corruption measures within the latter. In general, it attempts to provide more tenable answers to the problem of involving local CSOs in anti-corruption concerns, which are highly relevant to both international and governmental actors.
This paper presents the theoretical and conceptual considerations of this study, which builds on, and seeks to contribute to, the IR literature on transnational advocacy networks (TANs). Theoretical work on TANs has never been applied to anti-corruption advocacy or to a non-democratic post-Soviet context. Therefore, in order to operationalise it for the given case study, it is complemented with insights from the literatures on anti-corruption and on contemporary Russia. The approach adopted is one of generating rather than testing theory, by bringing together three considerably young areas of scholarship. The remainder of this paper discusses this venture. It briefly introduces the theoretical foundation of TAN studies and its crucial deficits with regard to anti-corruption advocacy in Russia (section 1). It then critically examines the anti-corruption literature in its dealing with the concept of corruption, civil society involvement in anti-corruption, anti-corruption in post-Communist Eastern Europe / Russia (section 2) and the literature on contemporary Russia regarding CSOs and anti-corruption (section 3). With these insights, the paper resumes the discussion on TAN studies and outlines how to develop an appropriate approach for this research project (section 4).

1 Studying TANs Against Corruption (in Russia)

The main starting point in elaborating a theoretical basis for this study is the literature on TANs, recently developed by group of scholars in IR (constructivist approach) and comparative politics (social movements approach). This entails models proposed for analysing mechanisms by which international norms affect domestic change through the activities of transnational advocacy or principled-issue networks (e.g. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse, et al. 1999). TANs are defined as “networks including those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services.” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 2) Relevant actors usually are domestic NGOs, transnationally operating NGOs, intergovernmental institutions, and national governments. These scholars suggest that transnational activism around human rights “foreshadows transnational campaigns in a multiplicity of areas” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: ix). Theoretically, in particular with the so-called spiral model (cf. Risse and Sikkink 1999), they believe that the causal mechanisms of TAN socialisation modelled with a view to the sphere of human rights help to explain other domestic socio-political change processes, such as democratisation (Risse and Ropp 1999: 273) and that they are truly universal, i.e. applicable across countries, socio-economic systems, cultures, types of political regulation, including former Communist states (Risse and Ropp 1999: 238). In practice, an international anti-corruption network has been emerging within the last decade, which in many respects resembles the preceding human rights and environmental TANs. Anti-corruption activists are indeed confident of emulating the successes of human rights and environmental networks. However, anti-corruption advocacy proves more complex with a view to civil society involvement, to the issue area, and to the domestic-transnational nexus. Evidence from contemporary Russia contradicts many assumptions found in currently prominent models; and by striking a neo-authoritarian path, it does not correspond to conventional democratisation schemes. In particular, evidence does not support the statist, effect-oriented and normative perspective on
On the one hand, it would therefore seem reasonable to apply theoretical models in the TAN / norm transfer literature, developed on the grounds of evidence from the human rights realm, to the study of transnational anti-corruption networks and post-Soviet country contexts. On the other hand, a range of analytical particularities that would prohibit such a transfer are presented by the case in hand. This does not mean that the latter is totally irrelevant from this theoretical point of view. It does mean, however, that the ability of existing models to explain domestic change and network socialisation in the context of post-Soviet countries with high levels of corruption and newly authoritarian regimes is limited. If one wants to correct fallacies in the causal mechanisms of norm diffusion as operationalised in the spiral model proposed by Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999), it is proposed to step back to its theoretical origin. The model has been built on an earlier conceptualisation of transnational advocacy: the boomerang effect, proposed by Keck and Sikkink (1998), which also considers the tripartite actor constellation involving international actors, domestic governments and domestic CSOs, yet conceptualising their relations in a more simplistic manner. It is acknowledged that a complex approach is needed to study the changing behaviour of domestic CSOs within their transforming operational context and as part of TANs. That TAN research started with unrealistically simple models is justified by the logic of socio-political science. More simplistic models, although they are necessarily ‘false’ (Esser 1993: 133), produce empirical anomalies that effectively force analysts towards systematically improving model complexity. Scholars seek to find simple explanations for complex socio-political matters, which are still correct. Yet this objective will not be reached if explanatory models are from the very beginning designed as complex and tangled as the matters themselves. One has to start with models that are as simple as possible. Or, as Moore puts it: “I have come to the conclusion that it is advisable to plunge into the data with only the simplest and most flexible hypotheses, together with some ideas about the ways in which one might examine them.” (Moore 1951: 4)

The boomerang effect, in turn, constitutes only one part of a much wider analytical undertaking by its authors in their corresponding book on TANs. It is proposed to resume engagement with this overall approach and start re-modelling and re-finining from there. It is hoped that starting with this perspective, the analysis may step two steps back in order to be able to then move forwards, or “make other oblique moves” (Douglas 1986) for the benefit of theory development. Still, it is not such a huge step back when considering that this approach to TANs is considerably young:

When we started this book, the realm of transnational social movements and networks was still an almost uncharted area of scholarship, both theoretically and empirically, and thus required a style of research aimed at the discovery of new theory and patterns. (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 5)

In order to be more conscientious in such a move, and before undertaking the effort of bringing this strand of literature together with the literatures on anti-corruption and contemporary Russia in a constructive way, the thesis discusses in more detail the two models and three essential shortcomings of TAN perspectives in general:

1) TAN studies are essentially statist and focused on outcomes, i.e. the changing behaviour (socialisation) of norm-deviant states in response to network pressure. The output-
oriented view assumes a directional process of transferring international principles to particular countries, where they are internalised. This implies a heavy emphasis on assessing the final stage of advocacy processes (policy outcomes and internalisation of principles) – much to the neglect of the internal workings of TANs. In this manner, the precise involvement of domestic non-state actors is ill-conceptualised. In the issue area of anti-corruption, the state is not the only accused actor and behaves not merely responsive; the involvement of CSOs is more complex and they are not necessarily pro-active and oppositional. Russian anti-corruption CSOs in particular hardly fit into the picture of agenda-setting and networking pressure groups.

2) TAN studies adopt short-sighted normative assumptions insofar as the accused state and state decision-makers are normatively portrayed as “bad” and empirically viewed as “passive and reactive” (Checkel 1999: 5; Hawkins 1999). There is a respective bias against CSOs when assuming that “[g]overnments want to remain in power, while domestic NGOs seek the most effective means to rally opposition.” (Risse and Sikkink 1999) Domestic groups are portrayed as ‘good’ and pro-democratic actors “who want to tell the truth” (Risse 2000: 203). However, this is a misplaced conception common to most of the work on civil society (Kopecký 2003) and particularly questionable in the Russian context (cf. Martirossian 2004).

3) TAN studies are built on insights mainly from the human rights (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse and Sikkink 1999) or environmental fields (Keck and Sikkink 1998) and have not been applied to anti-corruption advocacy. Yet the matter to be advocated makes a difference. Corruption is conceptually different from governmental repression, the main focus of human rights advocacy, since it encompasses a set of offences, from criminal to unethical, which can be committed by individuals and groups on all levels and in all sectors of a society. Neither the normative principles nor the target-actors are clearly defined or definable, so that mechanisms of advocacy and mobilisation would involve more complex interactions between actors across societal sectors.

In consideration of these shortcomings, and given the intention to nevertheless use a (modified) TAN perspective for this study, it is necessary to specify how the gaps shall be filled. The study relies on consulting the literatures on anti-corruption and on contemporary Russia for some more conceptual insights and proposes how the deficits highlighted may be overcome. In the following, the essence of this critical discussion of the two main literatures is reproduced in a condensed way, in order to show how they can be involved in the effort to elaborate the given theoretical approach towards TANs when studying a new issue area (anti-corruption advocacy) and a new domestic context (post-Soviet authoritarian governance in contemporary Russia) while paying more attention to the involvement of domestic CSOs.

2 Literature on Anti-Corruption

There is no seminal theory on anti-corruption mobilisation that can be discussed. Instead, the following section reviews the massive body of anti-corruption literature with a focus on three
(interrelated) aspects most relevant to this study: 1) the conceptualisation of corruption and anti-corruption, 2) civil society involvement and the role of states, and 3) anti-corruption in Eastern Europe and Russia.

2.1 The subject matter: anti-“corruption”

Following the argument that it makes an analytical difference if a TAN forms around the – neither stable nor clear - issue of anti-corruption, one may consult the literature on anti-corruption about the given conceptualisation of the central subject matter: corruption.

Recently, authors have explicitly avoided detailed discussion on the definition of corruption, since there would be no chances of arriving at a consensus (e.g. Jain 2001: 72; Sajó 1998) and the current “debate about the debate” (Miller, et al. 2001) would distract much time and attention from more profitable discussions among scholars (e.g. Tanzi 1998: 564). The World Bank in its anti-corruption efforts has implemented a straightforward definition of corruption as ‘the abuse of public office for private gain’ (World Bank 1997). This has caused much discontent too. For some scholars “[t]his means everything and nothing at the same time, and it allows the Bank great scope for work” (Marquette 2004: 425), for others “the Bank’s definition is problematic and far too restrictive” (Shore and Haller 2005: 8). Moreover, corruption is linked to economic, moral bias, and recently security questions in various ways. The UN, in turn, has recently acknowledged that “[t]he problems are compounded by the very broad nature of the phenomenon and a lack of consensus about legal or criminological definitions that could form the basis of international and comparative research (United Nations 2004, foreword).

Instead of enlightening the search for an appropriate theoretical framework, a consultation of the anti-corruption literature on the definition of the concept seems to touch a sore spot. At least, this points to another deficit to be overcome. A fresh look at the definition problem is needed in two respects: First, the definition debate remains imprecise in differentiating between the multiple forms of both Western liberal-democratic and post-Communist societies. Regarding studies of corruption and related phenomena in Eastern Europe, it is frequently claimed that the definition of corruption may reflect what Sajó called the “moral opprobrium of outsiders”: “Just as corruption in southern Italy has traditionally been a matter of northern perception, so corruption in Eastern Europe is, in part, a function of Western perceptions.” (Sajó 1998) Accordingly, for some scholars, “that is a debate best avoided” (Miller, et al. 2001: 3), others propose that analysts should use a culturally neutral definition and at the same time clarify which normative framework they adopt (Karklins 2005: 91). From an anthropological perspective, “this debate is far from closed” (Shore and Haller 2005: 8) and a focus on the broader cultural contexts is needed. Furthermore, growing recognition of the complexity of anti-corruption efforts, coupled with the complexity and diversity of ongoing transformations in post-Communist countries, has revived a desire for understanding corruption in its many forms within various domestic contexts. Academics have begun to combine research on anti-corruption measures with investigation of various types of corrupt relations (e.g. Karklins 2005; Miller, et al. 2001). Second, the definition debate would need to expand its vision beyond ‘corruption’ in order to clarify differences and overlaps between various forms of petty and grand corruption, organised crime, economic crime, and shadow economies. These remain unclear
in both policy and academic discourse in general. The blurring seems to have been aggravated by growing concerns about corruption and crime prevention in Eastern Europe and Russia in the media, thus necessitating a need for re-contextualisation. As for academia, “[i]n the language of political science corruption and organized crime are structurally connected […] organized crime is viewed both as a source and product of rising corruption” (Krastev 2004: 9). How corruption and related phenomena are defined not only determines “what gets modelled and measured” (Jain 2001: 73) and “the kinds of research questions we ask, or fail to ask” (Shore and Haller 2005: 8), but also has real policy consequences. The latter, in turn, further deserve to be examined by both anti-corruption and TAN scholarship.

By focusing on anti-corruption advocacy, this study can examine concrete actions and interpretations by participants in different albeit interconnected contexts: the international and the Russian domestic and local milieus. A TAN perspective allows to study the framing of corruption by those who seek to advocate against it and how they adapt their strategies depending on how their interpretation may resonate in other contexts. This includes a consideration of reframing and “venue shopping” (Keck and Sikkink 1998). With corresponding insights gained from the empirical study, some more conclusions are drawn on the differences as compared to advocacy on other issues, such as human rights.

2.2 Civil society involvement and the role of states

In order to develop an appropriate approach towards anti-corruption advocacy, the anti-corruption literature remains to be consulted about the involvement of CSOs and their relations to governments and TANs. But this proves to be another conceptual vagueness in the anti-corruption discourse.

As shown by studies of human rights, the environment, and other issue areas, commitments to collaborating with civil society in global governance have been increased by international organisations and governments during the past few decades. This has been particularly so in the anti-corruption field with a view to the presupposed failure of governments and businesses as well as in the context of democratisation assistance to Eastern Europe. Civil society is thus commonly understood as a key agent in fostering both democratisation as well as anti-corruption in post-Communist countries. This becomes reinforced by the tendency that anti-corruption efforts are seen as a precondition for fostering democratisation. However, involvement of local CSOs in anti-corruption has not yet become a research issue.

An analysis of international anti-corruption documents and programmes reveals that there is agreement on the overall role ascribed to civil society. It is supposed to build partnerships, provide links between public actors and the business community and between international actors and domestic contexts through information, mediation, and education. At the same time civil society shall put pressure on the government and expose corruption. Moreover, civil society organisations shall maintain their credibility by ensuring their own compliance with principles of integrity, transparency and good governance. This should raise a range of practical and conceptual questions, including the crucial question who precisely is expected to represent this ‘civil society’ in anti-
corruption initiatives (Schmidt 2005a). The term is frequently used synonymously with NGOs, sometimes listed along with the media. Other groups that may count as civil society according to conventional concepts, such as political parties, trade unions and business associations, civic educational initiatives and transnational activism, are not clearly categorised in this discourse. Moreover, the term is mostly used without differentiating between international and domestic (local) organisations. Accordingly, the particular forms and functions of the latter in post-Communist countries are improperly addressed.

From the perspective of anti-corruption studies, the assumption prevails that in countries where political commitment is lacking, “the demands and protests emanating from civil society can induce reluctant political leaders to conduct anti-corruption purges” (Williams 2000: xvi). However, more recent evidence on the problems of CSOs in Eastern Europe and the NIS suggests that one should ask whether these are able to deal with corruption (Sandor 2003). By the end of the 1990s, disillusionment and uncertainty had superseded much of the initial enthusiasm for anti-corruption initiatives. Amongst others, civil society involvement has become a matter of controversy. From the view of the international anti-corruption movement, the main achievement at that time was to have broken a taboo and placed a crucial issue on the international agenda – with the essential help of civil society, as exemplified by the engagement of TI (e.g. Eigen 2003; e.g. Elshorst 2003; Vogl 2003). There is ample evidence that this has been the case at international level. Regarding civil society involvement at a domestic level, however, two inconsistencies emerged.

First, while civil society involvement remained “the common thread in all advice about institutional solutions for containing corruption” (Karklins 2005: 125), even proponents of this idea became more cautious about the actual potential of CSOs in a field that is rather new to them and may overstrain their experience and resources (e.g. OECD 2003: 22). At the same time, concerns about mismanagement and corruption inside civil society appeared on the agenda. Given the enormous transfer of funds to Eastern European NGOs, the latter were among the main suspects. Terms such as Mangos (Mafia-NGOs) or Quangos (Quasi-NGOs) came to be used for corrupt organisations, yet it was also argued that unethical behaviour can occur in authentic NGOs (Sandor 2003). Conceptually, due to equating civil society and NGOs, the latter would appear as “perfect creations” in the fight against corruption in the CEE, while recognising the shortfalls of both government and business, from a normative view. Instrumental reasoning in turn, while showing the shortfalls of NGOs, would doom them as a “Trojan horse” and suggest “that civil society is completely helpless in reducing corruption in the post-Communist countries” (2003). Wider conceptual discussions on civil society have meanwhile embraced the argument that civil society may contain uncivil elements and that research needs to reconsider the normative bias against civil society as inherently ‘good’ (e.g. Kopecký 2003). Anti-corruption studies also point to the danger ‘uncivil society’ being created by leaders through anti-corruption campaigns (see 3.2).

Second, these arguments are complicated with increasing criticism against the neo-liberal scenario, which had substantially shaped the anti-corruption debate. Such a critique also affects the neo-liberal anti-state rhetoric. In practice, lessons from the first decade of post-Communist reforms showed that the best anti-corruption results can be obtained when the state is fully involved (Sandor 2003). This should not cause much surprise, as the argument has been made before in the
anti-corruption literature (Klitgaard 1991; Tanzi 1998). But sceptics of the idea of a strong state gained new support too, as it became evident that the anti-corruption agenda may be instrumentalised by state leaders against their political opponents in countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, or Russia (e.g. Coulloudon 2002; e.g. Krastev 2004: xiv; Savintseva and Stykow 2005: 200). This is not a novel observation either. As early studies of corruption have shown, anti-corruption measures have often been used as instruments of selective repression and alternatives to reform under conditions of non-democratic regimes (Huntington 1968: 66). To make matters more complex, recent evidence indicates that formal political anti-corruption institutions, such as administrative control and the judicial structures, have been of minor effect in CEE, whereas “among the systems that work, the watchdog role of the press and NGOs stand out” (Karklins 2005: 126).

Scholars have discussed the role of the state and the controversial expectations towards civil society in studies on anti-/corruption in developing countries (Doig 2003; Theobald 2003). But these debates have rarely been linked to corresponding analysis of Eastern European countries. Here, analysts have only begun to examine more critically the actual anti-corruption potential of domestic citizens, for example with a view to the variance of reform priorities of the public in different CEE countries (Miller, et al. 2001). Regarding Russia, the view that the citizenry can discourage corruption becomes increasingly supplemented by more pessimistic perspectives. Yet both euphoric and pessimistic perspectives seem too narrow-sighted and effect-oriented. The stark contrast between high ambitions and a simultaneous vagueness regarding the role of civil society needs to be mitigated. As a first step in this direction, most recent studies are more precise about the historical contexts and micro-processes that encompass citizens. These may thus foster understanding of the lack of popular trust in state reforms against corruption and organised crime, due to the misuse of the concept of ‘organised crime’ by the government (Orlova 2005) or the negative meaning attached to whistleblowing given historical handlings of information and informants (Martirossian 2004). Research has also started to address the ‘trapped’ position of Russian NGOs between Western (donor) expectations and domestic commitments to a system of increasingly non-democratic governance and entrenched corruption (Schmidt and Bondarenko 2005).

Moreover, a set of arguments have emerged around Western aid to CEE and Russia in particular. As such assistance also went to anti-corruption projects, more than marginal questions are added to the research on civil society involvement in anti-corruption in post-Communist countries. It is obvious that scepticism of civil society involvement in an anti-corruption context is often reduced to a view on assistance. Yet this overlooks the fact that international aid is also, if not primarily, an issue in relations between states and international organisations. Some argue that through the neglect of monitoring, the problem of economic crime has only been encouraged: “The West has been unwittingly complicit and has unknowingly fed the criminal activities in Russia” (Martirossian 2004: 89). The concern that Western funding may increase corruption is not new, it has already been raised in studies on anti-corruption in the development field. Klitgaard, for example resumes Morgenthau’s description of foreign aid being “little more than a transnational bribe” (Klitgaard 1991: 134). Yet to what extent are the processes of development and transformation comparable, and which analytical means are available to analyse one or the other? It
is no coincidence that development has substantially influenced earlier anti-/corruption research (cf. Klitgaard 1991). Accordingly, the end of the Cold War caused a re-examination of development aid priorities, not only towards Third World countries but also towards the former Communist CEE and CIS countries, in whose successful transition the major international players found new strategic interest. Displacing ideology as a major guiding principle (Hotchkiss 1998: 109; Williams 2000: xii), anti-corruption became a criterion for aid allocation. This augmented the causal argument that corruption impacts on effective governance, by further establishing that governance performance also affects the granting of anti-corruption assistance in the first place.

The involvement of CSOs in anti-corruption efforts remains one of the issues ill-addressed by political science research. The various aspects of involving local CSOs in transitional networks, of international anti-corruption efforts, and of civil society development in CEE/Russia - while closely entangled in anti-corruption discourse and practice – are still studied by separate communities. This research contributes to the effort of bringing these together by providing an empirical study on local-transnational CSO initiatives against corruption in Russia, which may allow more substantiated conceptual conclusions that are so far missing in the studies on both anti-corruption and TANs. To do so, the anti-corruption literature needs to be further reviewed with regard to existing research on Eastern Europe and Russia.

2.3 Anti-corruption in Eastern Europe / Russia

The post-Communist world, displaying comparatively high levels of corruption, became interesting in anti-corruption debates from two – not necessarily opposing - perspectives: First, the end of the Cold War was optimistically associated with the final collapse of Communism and “eroded support for kleptocratic regimes” (OECD 2003: 10). Accordingly, academic studies have mostly been guided by linking prospects of democratisation to prospects of anti-corruption in Eastern Europe. Second, in the course of post-Communist transformation, concerns were raised about new forms of corruption caused by extensive and rapid privatisation programmes and the “complete breakdown of old rules and controls” (Hotchkiss 1998). Both perspectives, presenting corruption as a major obstacle to political and economic reform, have substantiated new demands for counteraction. This stands in contrast to an apparent lack of academic research on anti-corruption in Eastern Europe. The editors of a recently published four-volume compilation, which sought to “offer a representative, up-to-date and authoritative guide to the literature on corruption” (Williams 2000: xvii), admit the difficulty in deciding whether to place Russia in the volume on the developed world or in that on the developing world (Ibid.: xvii). Another recent volume on corruption places its only chapter (out of 48) on post-Communist CEE in the section on ‘authoritarian regimes’ while the sections on ‘entrenched and transitional corruption’ and ‘international efforts to control corruption’ do not refer to the post-Communist world. The latter remains clearly underrepresented in the seminal contributions. Yet this does not mean that there is no analysis at all of the issue.

The representation of Russia in academic writings on anti-corruption is of particular importance, not only because of persisting Soviet legacies that matter for both corruption and its prevention. Russia also remains underrepresented in the series of anti-corruption-related country
reports, which stands in contrast to the fact that Western advisers have been particularly active in Russia (Philp 2005: 93), and to the otherwise wide coverage of corruption and crime in Russia. In comparative studies on anti-/corruption in other CEE countries, Russia is often noted in the margins (e.g. Karklins 2005; Miller, et al. 2001). When discussed as a single case, then it is primarily with a view to extraordinary corruption and crime and/or to the period of democratisation during the 1990s. In particular the rise of organised or mafia-style economic crime became a salient theme (e.g. Ledeneva and Kurkchiyan 2000; Rutland and Kogan 2001; Varese 1994; 1997; 2001; Volkov 2002). While Russian scholars have joined the Anglophone academic community rather late, they have essentially enriched corruption research – albeit less in the way as narrative insider-expert revelations about corruption had enlightened Sovietology (e.g. Simis 1982), but by combining in-depth empirical research with conventional Western concepts. Importantly, they demonstrate how transformation has often created new opportunities for using old practices, rather than destroying these (Ledeneva 1998; Volkov 2002) – a highly emphasised aspect in most recent writings (Karklins 2005; Martirossian 2004). A body of Russian-language literature has emerged generally separate from the Western academic debate while harbouring some efforts to bring Western approaches together with domestic and local findings (e.g. Kliamkin and Timofeev 2000a; e.g. Kliamkin and Timofeev 2000b; Olimpieva and Pachenkov 2003; Shanin 1999). Several volumes give detailed insight into the variegated faces of corruption across time, space and different societal spheres in Russia – and reflect on anti-corruption measures, including civil society initiatives (Bogdanov 2001; Bondarenko 2001; Kliamkin and Timofeev 2000a; Strategia 2003). In relation to anti-corruption, however, the contributions are either empirical accounts of what has been done in various (single) cases or recommendations for what needs to be done. In this respect, chapters published in Western volumes are not much different, being mainly accounts of empirical facts presented by those involved in anti-corruption efforts in Russia (e.g. Savintseva and Stykov 2005; Schtschekotschichin 2000; Volchikova and Zvetcova 2005). Writings on the fight against corruption in Russia largely remain detached from conceptual or theoretical debates. Many arguments, which seek to link longstanding Western assumptions with evidence from different stages of the perestroika and post-Soviet transformation, remain suggestions as long as relevant data on changing and persisting aspects are scarce or cursorily interpreted. This study can bridge the gap between empirical research and theoretical debate by bringing rich empirical insights from the literature on anti-corruption, enhanced by original data, into the field of TAN studies.

Existing contributions on anti-corruption in CEE and Russia helpfully complement this study as they have raised important methodological and normative concerns. Area and transformation experts have contributed to this by expressing discontent with the general lack of methodological thoroughness of the 1990s literature:

*Western ‘experts’ rely on anecdotes and so-called ‘surveys.’ These ‘surveys’ are often based on hotel-lobby chats with disgruntled businessmen, which are frequently conducted by journalists and ‘experts’ who generally do not speak the local language. (In this case, the chat is called an ‘interview.’) The reports remind us of the descriptions of South American Indians written by Jesuit missionaries. As there was no communication and understanding, the Indians were seen and depicted as savages. (Sajó 1998)*

Some analysts have condemned the use of authors’ personal impressions and anecdotes as the least systematic, while acknowledging that it “can be highly entertaining and it can convey a strong
sense of insight, especially if the author has lived for many years under the regime in question” (Miller, et al. 2001: 23). It seems problematic that, together with studies based on media and official statistical data, anecdotal evidence is often biased due to a focus on dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction, and on illegal rather than legal methods of obtaining satisfaction (Ibid.: 24). In addition, cross-country corruption perception indexes that have become prevalent since the mid-1990s, have received much criticism concerning their methodological base and usefulness in explaining differences across countries or taking account of variation within countries. In the case of Russia, the levels of perceived corruption across the 81 regions within the country would vary enormously. TI Russia has therefore developed a separate index of Russian regions. Supplemented by a range of regional and cross-regional surveys (INDEM 2001; 2005), a rich pool of data exists. Yet it is hardly incorporated into systematic interpretation or theoretical debate. Public opinion surveys have also emerged as a methodological strength of comparative research on corruption across CEE (e.g. Miller, et al. 2001; e.g. Miller, et al. 1997; Rose 2003). This counts as an important step in systematically gathering and interpreting data on the theme, not least because survey-based studies are contributing valuable insights into anti-corruption by addressing concepts such as social embeddedness, informal institutions and Communist legacies while seeking to understand street-level corruption within post-Communist cultural contexts. Comparative studies have presented attempts to recognise the problems “without over-dramatising their significance” (Miller, et al. 2001: 3) or “to focus less on problems and more on solutions” (Karklins 2005: 126) and have initiated assessment of historical and cultural determinants, which may aid the search for generalisable as well as culturally country specific features with due attention to the many variations within the region.

When disillusionment and uncertainty have seized the rather euphoric anti-corruption field, post-Communist countries have played a crucial role. The insight that anti-corruption efforts actually had limited effect here has evoked a number of questions and doubts. Moreover, supposed solutions to the problem of corruption have in many cases triggered new sets of problems. Scholars have expended some efforts on bringing together established theoretical approaches and rich empirical detail at the international level. The development of a global anti-corruption regime during the 1990s was traced from a perspective on norm emergence and diffusion, supporting the argument that it has been comparable to that of environmental and human rights norms in many respects, but “unusual for its breath and rapid emergence” (McCoy and Heckel 2001: 66). Accordingly, the process has since involved closer examination of the main actors, their agendas and perspectives, in the different phases of the emerging anti-corruption norm and in the wider context of globalisation (Moroff 2005). Meanwhile, scholars concerned with anti-corruption in the post-Communist countries needed to raise awareness that expectations have been too high from the very beginning, as it was assumed that the region “ostensibly can make institutions from scratch” (Michael 2004: 20) and as the lack of political will to fight corruption was often neglected:

... free trade and integration into the global economy condemn postcommunist governments (both the executive and Parliament) to work permanently on anticorruption measures. This is a Herculean task assigned to Sisyphus. Every time antifavoritism measures get tougher, the “system” (that is, the beneficiaries of the system) is mobilized. The more promising the measure, the less likely it will be implemented. (Sajó 1998)
By the onset of the 2000s, there was a good deal of disillusionment resulting from seemingly slow progress, contested results, or fundamental problems to assess the success of anti-corruption measures, not least due to the very difficulties of measuring the prevalence of corruption in those countries (as in any other countries). Monitoring agencies were just about to bring out evidence about persisting corruption in many post-Communist countries (e.g. OSI 2002), which could substantiate earlier arguments that “anticorruption and antipatronage […] rules and measures that were adopted in Eastern Europe were half-hearted at best.” (Sajó 1998) In CEE, this stood in contrast to the initial hopes, and corresponding assessments, that the prospects of EU accession would lead to significant improvements. Russia has prompted particularly resigned views on its intractable corruption and crime problems. Given the lack of success or even counter-productivity of anti-corruption reforms, one has to agree that “[a]nti-corruption strategies are beset by problems of transferability, sustainability, cost-effectiveness, sequencing and intent.” (Williams 2000: xvii). Researchers have addressed possible reasons for the insufficient progress beyond legislative and institutional measures, such as lack of political interest to fight corruption (e.g. Pleines 2001; Sajó 1998) or earlier futile anti-corruption attempts (Glinkina 1998: 16; Volkov 2002: 182). Yet differentiation is also made between elite and mass political culture and a lack of popular incentive to engage or trust in anti-corruption measures, which is attributed to disillusioning experiences of ongoing reforms as well as a residual mentality oriented towards informal connections (Karklins 2005: 61 et sqq.; Ledeneva 1998; Orlova 2005). While the literature does relate to the empirical question of (the lack of) anti-corruption success in the region, comparative studies that reflect on the numerous anti-corruption efforts actually undertaken in various post-Communist countries have emerged only more recently (e.g. Michael 2005a; Steves and Rousso 2004).

The fateful situation in post-Communist countries has also given new impetus to anti-corruption debates which, to some extent, has sharpened the focus on the role of civil society and the wider public. Experts have stressed that the progresses made by CEE countries in strengthening their capacities to investigate and prosecute corruption (and in adjusting their legislation and law enforcement to meet European standards in general) need to be complemented by ‘human capital’ in fighting corruption (Karklins 2005: 115; Michael 2005a). Moreover, civil society organisations, the media and the university sector have emerged as the most promising agents to provide anti-corruption training in most CEE countries (Michael 2005b: 12) and research keeps emphasising the key role of NGOs in the development of anti-corruption policy and a range of awareness-raising, debate, monitoring, mobilisation and research initiatives (Karklins 2005: 140).

Yet the anti-corruption debate across West-East dimensions has also grown more complex regarding international politics. The high attention paid to corruption in post-Communist Eastern Europe has provoked a reaction by the accused countries, which is no longer merely defensive but determined also to pointing out corruption in the Western world. Empirically, this is not a totally new observation. In fact, it seems a repetition of what happened some decades ago along North-South dimensions: “But just as the perception that corruption was a major problem in developing countries emerged, confidence in its decline in developed countries began to evaporate.” (Williams 2000: xi). TAN perspectives incorporate the aspect of (temporary) backlashes. The repercussion of accusations of corruption is not new, and neither is the disclosure of political scandals that reveal how present and deep-seated corruption is also in developed countries. What seems new, however,
is that higher attention is given to this controversy within a globally more favourable anti-corruption climate providing plenty of resonance points. On a regional European level, scrutiny of candidate countries has raised questions about corruption within the EU itself (Reed 2003). This meets with a wider debate on shared European norms, values and collective preferences, which has intensified in the wake of the EU’s eastern enlargement. Russia is a slightly different case, as its government responds with increasing discontent to both U.S. and EU criticism of its non-democratic course, resolutely insisting on the right to sovereignty in defining domestic problems. This challenges common assumptions about the socialisation of states, which are proposed by TAN models and which have actually guided many optimistic and output-oriented anti-corruption ventures. Instead, concepts of cultural relativism, with a plea for acknowledging differences, or geopolitical challenges, with a stance towards reinforcing differences, are increasingly important.

In conclusion, the issues of conceptualising corruption, of civil society involvement and of post-Communist contexts have gained particular relevance to the anti-corruption discourse. But they are largely addressed separately. Meanwhile, in-depth discussion has occurred in other practice-oriented and academic spheres. In practice, both corruption and civil society development sparked the interest of donors in these issues in the most actively assisted countries in CEE. Academic attention to civil society involvement and post-Communist contexts has been primarily through democratisation/transformation studies, research on Eastern Europe, including former Sovietology, mainly in the context of studying marketisation and state-(big)business relations or studying the role and formation of civil society as part of democratisation. As for corruption, the focus has been more on explaining the rise of corruption during transformation rather than on anti-corruption. Klitgaard (1991) urged anti-corruption research from a development perspective almost 20 years ago that both the frequency and utility of case studies need to be increased. This argument is now due with a view to post-Communist countries. More precisely, anti-corruption research needs to be linked analytically to the past and to ongoing transformations in their multiple dimensions and with due attention to national and local contexts and differences. This research contributes an in-depth study on civic anti-corruption efforts in different Russian regions under an increasingly authoritarian regime. To guide the empirical analysis, another body of literature needs to be consulted for more clarity about how to best operationalise the TAN approach for this case: the literature on Russia, in particular on civil society and anti-corruption during the Putin era.

3 Literature on Contemporary Russia

TAN studies have so far not incorporated post-Soviet operational conditions in their conceptualisation of domestic non-state actors, not to mention non-democratising contexts such as Russia. With a primary perspective on human rights, TAN studies perceive authoritarian states automatically as repressive and thus “norm-violating” states, which are ultimately subject to effective network socialisation (Risse and Ropp 1999: 239). CSOs, as mentioned, are conceptualised as political entrepreneurs pro-actively pushing this process of transnational-domestic pressure.
3.1 CSOs in Russia

This section does not aim at rehashing longstanding debates on the role of civil society in transformation/democratisation processes or globalising politics.\textsuperscript{20} Nor does it summarise the comprehensive debates on initial civil society formation in Russia during the \textit{perestroika} or even Soviet periods.\textsuperscript{21} Rather, it discusses empirical and conceptual contributions on the particularities of civil society in present-day Russia along two dimensions that are most relevant to this study: state – civil society relations and relations between Russian CSOs and international allies.\textsuperscript{22}

Regarding state - civil society relations, both TAN studies and anti-corruption debates understand civil society mainly as an oppositional agent that puts pressure on the state. Similarly, the discourse on Russian civil society is characterised by a dominant focus on civil society vis-à-vis the state and centred around concepts of influence and independence. Mainly from a Western perspective on democratisation and civil society formation, Russian civil society was hoped to play an oppositional and influential role. The particularities of the Putin-era have only recently entered the scholarly debate with acknowledgement of an authoritarian trend. A novel combination of ‘systemic’ and ‘systematic’ (Siegert 2005: 2) obstacles to civil society formation makes arguments more complex. In addition to persisting structural or institutional impediments to the development of civil society, a change in the governmental approach to civil society brings new restrictive policies, laws, and institutions. Scholars point to trends of threatening or co-opting CSOs and rendering the institutional environment even less friendly (Evans 2006; McFaul and Treyger 2004: 159 et sqq.). Yet thorough insights and conceptual elaboration on precise relations between Russian CSOs and the current authoritarian government remain scarce.

It seems that earlier conceptualisations of state-civil society relations within a context of authoritarian rule are more appropriate than the 1990s democratisation literature. This would allow to shift the focus from concepts of independence and influence more towards the locus of civil society as acting both outside and inside the state while the latter dominates the political and public sphere. Examples like the Civil Forum, the Public Chamber, or the state-supported youth movement seem to illustrate tendencies as those documented in Latin American case studies, where the central administration constitutes a force that “destroys self-organised and autonomously defined political spaces and substitutes for them a state-controlled public arena \textit{in which} any discussion of issues must be made in codes and terms established by the rulers” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 48, emphasis added). Such approaches had generated valuable insight regarding civil society and individual activists acting \textit{from within} the Soviet state (e.g. Lewin 1991), which would also have some relevance to the current situation in Russia. Yet short-sighted analogies should be prevented when comparing the Soviet and the present regime in this regard, not least because the intermediate \textit{perestroika} period must not be neglected (Evans 2006).

Civil society may also be understood as a “third sector”, operating independently of, but also mediating between, the two other societal sectors - the state and the market. While this is helpful in principle, it has proven problematic in studying Russian civil society in several respects. The debate around a three-sectoral society has been dominated by a focus on \textit{state-civil society relations}, while a separate research focus lies on \textit{state-business relations}, in particular big businesses. The latter dimension has been the common framework for analysing anti-/corruption
matters. As Howard (2003: 17) rightly argues, a preoccupation with post-Soviet elite-level developments and corruption has taken the question of civil society back seat. Further, a perspective on the remaining nexus of a tripartite constellation is largely missing: business-civil society relations. Not only would this dimension be of high relevance to anti-corruption initiatives, it also comes in with questions of funding and independence of CSOs. Given the dominant role of the state in leading comprehensive reforms, on the one hand, and the entanglement of state and businesses, as well as state and civil society, on the other, it is surprising that there is little inquiry about the particular mechanisms of inter-sectoral relations (cf. also Petrov 2005). Moreover, new questions are arising around philanthropy supported by Russian foundations as additional mediators within state-business-civil society relations (see Hinterhuber and Rindt 2004). Finally, a view on civil society as a third sector within the domestic sphere that excludes international influences on these interrelations is inadequate in the contemporary global governance context. While currently observed patterns might be difficult to fit into a conventional concept of ‘civil society’, as an intermediating sphere between the public and private realm within the domestic arena, they may be well addressed from a perspective on transnational advocacy networks which bring together domestic and international dimensions of activism.

Although Russian civil society has been analysed with regard to the increasing integration of local/domestic CSOs into transnational networks, this discourse is rather young and characterised by a heavy focus on NGOs as the main representatives of civil society. While this comes close to TAN studies, it has mainly been inspired by another body of literature, which brings together transnational networking and civil society development in countries undergoing transformations: studies on democratisation assistance. A central argument is that Russian NGOs in their current form constitute entirely new societal entities that have emerged through Western promotion of democratisation and civil society principles and financial assistance programs, rather than resulting from bottom-up civil society formation with sustained legitimisation on the part of the population (e.g. Crotty 2003; Hemment 2004; e.g. Henderson 2003). The debate tends to reduce the international dimension to the aspect of foreign funding in relation to domestic activism (e.g. Carothers 1999; Henderson 2003; Mendelson and Glenn 2002). The challenges to advocacy on international issues have been analysed only most recently with a closer look at the controversial involvement of local NGOs into anti-corruption TANs (Schmidt and Bondarenko 2005) or at the mechanisms of issue framing and normative contexts of activists (Sundstrom 2005). Sundstrom (2005: 422) suggests that foreign assistance may lead to successful mobilisation if it seeks to promote a universal norm, but may not do so if promoting non-universal norms that originate in the specific context of the foreign donors. The perspective on norms calls attention to the argument that failure of foreign assistance might not only be due to political barriers, since groups that “receive high levels of foreign assistance but pursue specific goals that are alien to the society, in which the NGOs are situated should be largely unsuccessful” (Sundstrom 2005: 423).24

Central to a the focus on foreign assistance to domestic CSOs is also the concept of trust, more precisely the problem of distrust, as Western-funded domestic groups are often suspicious to authorities, businesses as well as to the population. Thus, they are easily blamed for inefficiency and mismanagement, considered as money laundering devices, dubious enterprises seeking to evade taxes, elite-driven clubs, or alien institutions trying to impose foreign norms while
abandoning traditional approaches and values (Henderson 2003; Powell 2002). While respective scrutinising remarks are repeatedly made by the Russian government regarding NGO funding, these developments are too recent to have entered scholarly debates.25

The literature on transnational influences on Russian civil society is mainly of Western origin and, recently, very critical. “Managing civil society” (Crotty 2003) is not any longer an issue related solely to state-civil society relations. Some analysts point to dysfunctions arising from transnational aid and networking grounded on foreign funding (Henderson 2002; 2003; Sperling 2006). One of the main arguments is that the support from donors and transnationally active organisations, since it is often the only available source for funding, has significantly shaped the topical agendas and organisational capacities and actions of domestic NGOs. As a result, “[t]he version of civil society that has been brought into being by western design - the third sector - is far from what Russian activists desired and what donor agencies promised” (Hemment 2004). Henderson (2003) argues that the financial ties between foreign donors and Russian NGOs may entail unintended consequences that disturb desired mechanisms of persuasion and pressure. Suggesting that an involvement of domestic NGOs into rather asymmetrical or hegemonic relations may be expected, Henderson sees a mirroring of unintended consequences of foreign aid in actual relations, which she terms “supply-driven civic development,” “principled clientalism,” and “guardian civil societies” (Henderson 2003: 155-166). While many of the arguments yet remain to be substantiated by more empirical case studies, this literature is useful in preventing a prematurely positive bias towards the transnational-domestic dimension of TANs.

Concerning issue-related advocacy, it is important to note that financial assistance to Russia involves CSOs in two ways: by directly supporting the development of a third sector and by channelling aid for issue-related programmes through NGOs.26 This distinction is important to keep in mind when studying civil society involvement in transnational anti-corruption advocacy as it widens the view from assessing progress in issue-related initiatives towards understanding communication processes and changing agendas and behaviour. Besides misdirection and a lack of contextualisation of foreign assistance (Powell 2002: 142), also its behavioural impacts within local environmental movements have been attested, mostly in a negative sense: “Despite its claims to allow a grassroots to flourish, the third sector is a professionalized realm of NGOs, inaccessible to most local groups and compromised by its links to a neoliberal vision of development” (Hemment 2004), (see also Crotty 2003; Henry 2002). This position has been somewhat mitigated. First, in spite of the overall critical stance of this strand of literature, it remains to be noted that some authors also underline “unexpected signifying possibilities” (Hemment 2004) of a third sector introduced by Western efforts at the local level, as indicated by various social services undertaken by local NGOs that would otherwise not have been possible (e.g. Caldwell 2004; Shomina, et al. 2002).27 Second, more attention has been paid to different funding strategies by comparing those pursued by the U.S. and the EU, with the former paying more attention to the professionalisation of the NGO sector itself, to grantmaking and philanthropy, and a normative standpoint that seeks to foster civil society control over state power. EU assistance, in contrast, is more concerned with interaction with (and professionalisation of) authorities, fostering input from recipients, civic education, and expert exchange from normatively understanding civil society as complementary to the state (Belokurova 2005; Wedel 1998).28 Third, some Russian regions have embraced the
concept of community foundations over the last years, which redirect assets raised from local budgets, private donors or companies towards local projects (Hinterhuber and Rindt 2004).

Some of these arguments are not entirely new. Earlier TAN studies have pointed to the challenges of far-flung networking, including aspects of location, access to resources, ambiguity and opportunism (e.g. Keck & Sikkink 1998b). From a Russian perspective, the interrelations between transnationalisation and compromising independence of Russian civil society organisations have even been problematised earlier. For example, in the midst of initially emerging assistance structures, Yanitskii (1994; 1998), had criticised the Westernisation of the Russian environmental movement during the early post-Soviet period as a turn from self-replication of resources towards receiving financial assistance from the West. Although he understands this strategy as a “logic of self-protection”, he critically points to the multiple risks involved. Many parallels with today’s Western critics become obvious where he sees the social behaviour, mentality and politics of the ecological movement changing with trends towards a) more organisational and communication services than mass protest campaigns and public discussions, b) increasing corporatist and vertical structures with a growing bureaucratic elite, decreasing ability to promptly react on new problems, c) strengthening of the reformist and service character of single movement units seeking to deliver ‘constructive’ projects, therewith also growing atomisation, isolation and disunity, d) commercialisation and monopolisation of organisations who are bigger and closer to the financial sources, thus enhance their chances to receive further grants, their reputation, and bureaucratisation. Yet, in contrast to the more recent Western normative arguments that such organisations may be criticised as “creatures of foreign agitation and unsuited to Russian conditions” (Sundstrom and Henry 2006), Yanitskii (1994: 17) envisions the possible result that organisations concentrate even more on local problems, while ‘thinking globally’ would become an unaffordable luxury. Regarding the relation to the state, besides opting for either protest or cooperation, he suggests a third way for Russian organisations: distancing themselves from the state and searching for their own experts and professionals. Yet given the current conditions, this adds to the need to distance themselves from international allies in a new ‘logic of self-protection’. At the same time, it is vital for Russian organisations to maintain links to both Western partners and domestic / local authorities – in particular when anti-corruption initiatives are concerned.

3.2 Anti-corruption in Russia

In the wider context of the 1990s discourses, the anti-/corruption literature on Russia comprised arguments related to marketisation and democratisation, including optimism about the rapid privatisation of assets in accordance with American advisers (e.g. Dugan and Lechtman 1998: 385). This, however, turned into a much reprehended argument as it became obvious that privatisation took place without any public oversight or legal foundation, providing a basis “for skyrocketing growth in the country’s level of corruption and for the criminalization of the economy in general” (Glinkina 1998: 595), including a privatisation of protection (Varese 1997; 2001) and the consolidation of violence-managing protection enterprises (Volkov 2002). Moreover, as mentioned before, important methodological/conceptual lessons remained to be learned after a decade of efforts to assess informal and shadow economic dimensions, since these came with a
Soviet heritage of “secondary economies so numerous that they could not be divided into black and white but formed a range of ‘rainbow’ economies” (Rose 2002/03). The transformation, it was argued, would involve a cultural shift for both the citizens of societies undergoing transformation and Western advisers “trained to think only in terms of a market economy using a single measuring rod – official accounts.” (Rose 2002/03: 62)\(^1\) Insight into the complexity, diversity and more realistic time horizons of ongoing transformations in Russia – as within the post-Communist region at large - have added to growing apprehension of the multifaceted nature of anti-corruption reforms. Thus, by the late 1990s, academic conclusions were shaped by as much uncertainty as economic and political reality. The problem of a weak/inefficient state and need to stabilise socio-economic conditions was thus frequently underlined. During the early 2000s, under Putin’s presidency, economic and political stabilisation could be attested, whereas concerns increased that this came at the cost of democratisation. For anti-corruption research, this means that both economic and democracy related theses became supplemented by the strong-state hypothesis. From a TAN perspective, the latter is particularly challenging.

Little has been written on civil society involvement in anti-corruption advocacy in Russia. As mentioned before, there are reflections on what has been done in single cases and/or what would need to be done (e.g. Bogdanov 2001; e.g. Bondarenko 2001; Kliamkin and Timofeev 2000a; Strategia 2003; TI 2002). These contributions provide helpful insights into anti-corruption initiatives as well as expectations and demands as discussed among donors and domestic activists during the late 1990s/ early 2000s. More recent findings on actual civil society involvement in anti-corruption efforts, however, remain to be awaited. For example, there is evidence on increasing difficulties of journalists, activists and researchers within the neo-authoritarian context to address politically sensitive issues such as human rights, corruption, environmental or military affairs. Yet this has rarely been addressed by comparative or further theoretical work.\(^2\) Martirossian (2004) steps beyond the case study while explaining the lack of whistleblowing, an much encouraged anti-corruption strategy in the West, by its distinctively negative meaning in the Russian context. This is helpful in highlighting the approach to information and informancy by the state, but it does so with an exclusive focus on the relations between individual citizens and the state. This view would go in line with the argument that the risks of acting outside the state-controlled public arena may be accepted by “only the most highly motivated individuals” (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 48). But Martirossian completely neglects empirical examples of collective civic action and transnational links, as presented by TI-Russia and other civic groups against corruption.

The concept of uncivil society is increasingly relevant to anti-corruption undertakings in Russia. Criminal groups may fall into this ambiguous category of collective action in a common interest, but in anti-liberal and anti-democratic ways. Some authors explicitly exclude these from their definition of (Russian) civil society, underlining the for-profit nature of criminal organisations and the fact that they place themselves beyond the reach of the law (Howard 2003: 41; Sundstrom and Henry 2006). Others understand them as “‘uncivil’ part of” this civil society, arguing that they may even operate within the law and pointing more towards the network structure and transnational dimensions (Shelley 2001: 248; 2006). Most authors agree on the fact that criminal groups affect civil society development, be it by co-opting and threatening civic groups and journalists or by providing security and funding to fulfil basic needs in society (Shelley 2006), in any case thus
“changing the playing field for NGOs” (Sundstrom and Henry 2006) and impeding channels of healthy contact between civil society and the state (Shelley 2001). Conceptually, this debate further complicates arguments about the identity and functions of civil society (elements), in particular in the anti-corruption field. Moreover, some phenomena, which would generally count as part of the civic or public sphere in Western democracies, fall into a conceptual twilight zone thanks to the particular characteristics attributed to them. For example, Russian media and business sectors, accommodating features of untrustworthy political entrepreneurship and scandalous corrupt relations, are predestined to be categorised as uncivil (cf. Oates and White 2003; Rutland 2005).

Another peculiarity of the Russian civic sphere is the persisting importance of various forms of informal inter-personal connections and networks, which are not easily compatible with conventional civil society theory. As the latter seeks to conceptualise “collective action”, i.e. groups acting in a public sphere beyond private/personal life, oriented towards common goals, and not guided by individual objectives, cannot easily accommodate the phenomenon of using person-to-person contacts, even if these would be to the benefit of civil society building. These tend to be mentioned along with the dangers of co-optation, lacking independence, or alienation from mass-based action. It is only now being proposed by students of civil society that the informal networks in the Russian context would “deserve study in their own right” (Sundstrom and Henry 2006). TAN perspectives, in turn, proceeding from a network concept, would acknowledge informal personal relations and informal forms of communication. However, as mentioned before, these are often understood as per se beneficial to network formation and mobilisation. Neither perspective is sufficiently linked to analysing how civic networking accommodates the interplay between new realities and enduring features. While analysing TANs, the fundamental question persists whether the continuing reliance on informal networks would be an obstacle or catalyst to advocacy networking. This aspect becomes complicated in the case of anti-corruption by the fact that corruption is often an aspect of such informal relations.

Yet another trend is seen in constructing uncivil society on the grounds of a security-oriented debate, and in particular the global antiterrorism agenda. Anti-corruption and anti-crime agendas, for example, were incorporated into the declared reform priorities since Putin assumed presidency in 2000. However, it has been observed that “the struggle against corruption is becoming a powerful tool in the hands of the president who may turn it selectively against unhelpful officials or political opponents” (see also Krastev 2004; Savintseva and Stykow 2005: 200). The context of intensified debate on new terrorist threats and the colour revolutions thus provides fertile ground for the Russian government to identify CSOs as groups that undermine national security or stability. This phenomenon is not dealt with in the recent literature, but would need to be considered when studying the involvement of Russian CSOs on transnational advocacy.

4 Towards Developing a New Approach

Using the case study of anti-corruption advocacy in Russia, this research project seeks to develop a perspective towards TANs, which is better suited to the study of an open-ended process of promoting more contested principles, such as anti-corruption, in a domestic governance context that is generally resistant to internalising these principles and returns to repression of non-
governmental ‘political entrepreneurs.’ In order to develop a clearer understanding of the involvement of such entrepreneurs, this study starts from a basic approach towards TANs as a *phenomenon* rather than an actor vis-à-vis domestic states. The TAN perspective is complemented with relevant insights from studies on anti-corruption and on contemporary Russia. Having outlined crucial deficiencies in the theoretical arguments and empirical applications of the TAN literature, and discussed the literatures on anti-corruption and Russia with a view to their potential contributions, another look shall now be taken at the TAN literature in order to specify which of its theoretical aspects are (less) useful for studying the case in hand.

When starting with the 5-phase spiral model, evidence on anti-corruption mobilisation in Russia would appear in a highly ambivalent light. In some respects, the case would correspond to the model, or more precisely, the latter seems able to explain the lack of progress in this case (cf. Risse and Sikkink 1999: 19-35): Prior existence of an international anti-corruption regime is given; domestic societal opposition is too weak to present a significant challenge to the government (phase 1); Russia is on the international agenda as a ‘target state’ with a high level of corruption, information is being produced and disseminated, the government objects to the criticism and charges that this constitutes an illegitimate intervention in the internal affairs of the country (phase 2). Russia, however, is less vulnerable as it does not depend on Western aid, so that the spiral could be interrupted here (as considered by the model). It is, though, vulnerable regarding its concern for international standing as well as foreign investment, so that the advocacy process may continue as the government “seeks cosmetic changes to pacify international criticism” (Ibid.: 25), and thus facilitates social mobilisation at home. Indeed, domestic coalition-building around the principle of anti-corruption “from below” as well as international pressure “from above” are continuing. However, as the government also responds with repression of activists in general, the upward spiral may still be broken (phase 3). One could go as far as saying that the validity claims of the anti-corruption cause are no longer controversial, even if the actual behaviour continues violating the rules (phase 4). Rule-consistent behaviour, in this case abstention from corruption, remains to be seen (phase 5). Yet at large, Russia seems to be stuck in phase 3, or regarding repression on domestic civic activism, seems to have manoeuvred itself back to phase 1 and thus trimmed the essential preconditions for transnational action: some minimal links between the domestic opposition and the transnational networks (Risse and Sikkink 1999: 22). As illustrated in this case, the spiral model poses the problem that its internal logic does not allow for simultaneity of phases, since it merely conceptualises progress from one phase to the next or stagnation. Further, the given case would clearly contradict the model in that not the issue of human rights is at stake, but anti-corruption. Proponents of the spiral model may still argue that it is applicable to other issue areas (Risse and Ropp 1999: 273). Yet the review of the literatures on anti-corruption and on Russia shows the many conceptual obstacles concerning the anti-corruption issue, in particular in a post-Soviet authoritarian context. It is thus argued that the spiral model, although it has some important points to make, cannot be applied here.

As a next step in search for a more appropriate approach, one may go back to the previous TAN framework on which the spiral model has been built, that is, the boomerang effect: a pattern of influence that may occur when channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the domestic groups bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring
pressure on their states from outside (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 12; Risse and Sikkink 1999: 18). The
spiral model is conceived as consisting of “several boomerang throws”, in order to present “a more
dynamic conceptualisation of the effects which these domestic-transnational-international linkages
have on domestic political change.” (Risse and Sikkink 1999: 18). Given the empirical case and the
decision to reject the spiral model, it would now make sense to start with the more simplistic
boomerang pattern, which would guide the study towards the tripartite interrelations between
domestic groups, the government and international actors in a less prefabricated way. The given
case corresponds to the premise that the state blocks responsiveness to domestic organisations;
there is also evidence that transnational and domestic non-state actors are working together on anti-
corruption efforts and seek to address the state from above and below simultaneously. However, it
cannot be said that the domestic organisations initially activated this network with their demands –
as is assumed in the model. Rather, anti-corruption advocacy in Russia, as in most other Eastern
European countries, seems externally initiated from the outset. Further, it should be considered that
Keck and Sikkink propose that the boomerang pattern may occur, and that it does so mostly in
cases where claims about rights are addressed by advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998:
12). They also note that “[b]oomerang strategies are most common in campaigns where the target
is a state’s domestic policies or behaviour; where a campaign seeks broad procedural change
involving dispersed actors, strategies are more diffuse.” (Ibid.: 12). Campaigns against corruption
clearly fall into the latter category. While anti-corruption measures are being demanded of the state,
it is not the only target of accusation. Anti-corruption campaigns are aiming at changing the
behaviour of many actors, including local authorities, political parties, the police, inspection
agencies, medical and educational institutions, businesses, new forms of professional mediating
agencies and so on. Moreover, underlying reasons such as the Soviet past and the transformation
process of the 1990s are being blamed for having caused prevalent corruption. An analysis of the
given case should thus not start from the boomerang assumption in the strict sense of a model.

It is important to note that the boomerang pattern is only one element of a more comprehensive
approach developed by the authors. Another step back is required that enables an overview of
Keck and Sikkink’s overall approach to TANs. This is an interesting move at is opens up the
analytical perspective in several respects. A range of aspects and objectives are addressed, which
would remain excluded from the stripped-down, and at the same time complexly elaborated causal
explanations provided by the spiral model. First, the overall approach is not confined to human
rights but explores several advocacy issues (human rights, environment, women’s rights, and
historical precursors, such as anti-slavery and suffrage). Second, its focus is less confined to the
‘power of international norms’, instead it conceptualises TANs as networks where “advocates
plead the causes of others or defend a cause or position […] They are organised to promote
causes, principled ideas, and norms.” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 8). Third, while it is less concerned
with “Western powers” (Risse and Sikkink 1999), it looks primarily at relations between less
powerful actors in Southern/Third World countries and Northern groups. In doing so, it takes into
account the benefits for both sides, but also mentions (albeit marginally) that considerable tensions
may be produced by such relationships (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 13). Fourth, it would not assume
that governments alone are to be pressured, but also corporations and international financial
institutions. This wider idea of TANs thus provides a suitable starting point.
Still, it should not be adopted uncritically. Altogether, Keck and Sikkink had set of their discovery of theory by asking four questions: 1) What is a TAN? 2) Why and how do they emerge? 3) How do advocacy networks work? 4) Under what conditions can they be effective? Subsequent work on the spiral model has confined itself to the dimensions of question 4 by envisaging effectiveness and developing hypotheses about the conditions under which this may be expected (Risse and Sikkink 1999: 18). Keck and Sikkink themselves had actually limited their focus onto questions 2 and 4 by tracing network emergence and primarily evaluating network success and failure according to influence and effectiveness in achieving network goals. The authors also define TANs (thus solving question 1). However, the crucial question that remains to be addressed is question 3: How do advocacy networks work? This concern is at the centre of this study, which seeks to proceed with a theoretical framework appropriate for analysing the changing behaviour and agendas of domestic advocacy groups involved in a TAN but acting within their particular domestic context. As any engaging with question 3 will inevitably raise new concerns regarding question 1, this study certainly has wider implications for the definition of TANs. This aspect is further explored, and question 1 thus resumed, on the basis of empirical findings.

The main question of this study is: How precisely are CSOs, which are part of TANs but situated within a post-Soviet authoritarian context, involved in anti-corruption advocacy? In order to address this, the study of the Russian case cannot be purely inductive as findings are not systematically elaborated by incorporating comparative cases. Neither does this study seek to test empirical facts against a perfected system of causal hypotheses, given that civic advocacy against corruption in contemporary Russia is a highly complex, sensitive, and ambivalent phenomenon, which has not been systematically studied before. Therefore, the study starts from a rather immature and wider TAN perspective, as initially envisaged by Keck and Sikkink. Some conceptual advances made by the spiral model may still inform this research, in particular attention to the conditions under which variation and lack of advocacy progress may occur, to a mix of material pressures and communicative processes linking international and domestic dimensions, and to the role of ‘Western powers’ across West-East dimensions in international relations.

Some aspects that both Risse et al. and Keck/Sikkink have pointed out remain relevant but would need some follow up given that first empirical insights and the review of relevant literatures have evoked some new questions regarding the issue of anti-corruption as well as the context of post-Soviet transformation towards authoritarianism: First, it shall be kept in mind that backlashes may be expected when blaming any particular state internationally as states may resent external intervention in their affairs and point to other states where action seems equally appropriate or to the fact that the external advocates do not understand the domestic institutions and should therefore stay out (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 42). While a state seeks to deny the charges made against it, it may still make tactical concessions internationally (Risse, et al. 1999). TAN approaches presume that these tensions are eventually overcome thanks to pressure from above and below. So far, the Russian case challenges this assumption. Second, both perspectives on TANs ascribe utmost importance to information politics. For anti-corruption advocacy in particular, information is indeed a central issue given its emphasis on independent and free media, access to information and freedom of speech, and transparent decision-making. What this means in a domestic context of
information secrecy, state controlled media and allegations of activists as spies, and how this affects the working of a TAN internally, remains to be examined in the case of Russian CSOs.

Finally, some fundamental assumptions taken on by both approaches remain to be thoroughly scrutinised, first of all the bias against domestic NGOs or activists understood as categorically oppositional (Risse, et al. 1999) or as ‘political entrepreneurs’ who are not risk-averse, self-conscious and self-reflexive in their normative awareness (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 35). Connected to this is the argument that the inner workings of a TAN need to be better understood before studying its effects on changing state behaviour. When widening the empirical scope towards post-Soviet ‘target states’, it needs to be asked whether TANs may still be defined as ‘relevant actors working internationally on an issue with shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchange of information and services’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 9, 46; Risse and Sikkink 1999: 18).

The wider conceptual framework arrived at still needs to be operationalised to guide the empirical analysis. While studying anti-corruption advocacy, the research follows Keck and Sikkink’s (1998: 6) methodological focus on campaigns:

For our purposes, campaigns are sets of strategically linked activities in which members of a diffuse principled network (what social movement theorists would call a “mobilization potential”) develop explicit, visible ties and mutually recognized roles in pursuit of a common goal (and generally against a common target). In a campaign, core network actors mobilize others and initiate the task of structural integration and cultural negotiation among the groups in the network. Just as in domestic campaigns, they connect groups to each other, seek resources, propose and prepare activities, and conduct public relations. They must also consciously seek to develop a ‘common frame of meaning’ – a task complicated by cultural diversity within transnational networks.

As mentioned, in the case of anti-corruption advocacy in Russia, it is somewhat unclear, who would be the core network actors that mobilise and initiate. Therefore, the empirical analysis needs to identify more precisely the agendas and actions of all actors in the tripartite TAN constellation: international actors, state, domestic groups. The main analytical focus nevertheless lies on the latter. At each level of analysis, it needs to be asked what corruption, or anti-corruption, means to the involved network agents, in order to reach a better understanding of the common cause, but also of its meaning to the different actors, their agendas and strategies. It also needs to be asked how the domestic CSOs are included in the agendas and strategies of other TAN actors. The study thus examines the international level as well as the domestic context regarding the role of the state in anti-corruption campaigns and in dealing with CSOs. In-depth empirical analysis then addresses in more detail the case studies of anti-corruption groups in three different Russian cities: Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Irkutsk. In order to explore their agendas and actions, as well as their relationships with other TAN actors, the following empirical categories are looked at: values, discourses, and exchange of information and services. This follows the original definition of TANs in its basic categories at first. In order to avoid a too narrow view from the outset, and given the possible need to scrutinise/refine the given TAN definition, relationships to actors need to be considered whose position within or outside the tripartite constellation is yet unclear: other local/domestic actors, such as authorities or activists devoted to other issues, as well as those who are accused of corruption. The findings are then evaluated according to their issue-related and context-related importance (see Table 1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local non-state anti-corruption groups and individuals</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agendas</strong></td>
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<td>Values Discourses</td>
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**How are their agendas and actions related to:**
- Embeddedness within local milieu
- Relationships with the state
- Relationships with foreign partners
- Relationships with peers and other local actors
- Relations to ‘target’ actors (accused of corruption)

**How are their agendas and actions related to:**
- The anti-corruption cause
- Circumstances (long-term, situational)
- Relations to other TAN elements


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to a joint project of the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPAcee) and the Council of Europe, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing: 79-89.


money, although it was slightly softened after the original proposal caused international criticism. Its official publication (Interfax 2005). In particular, it tightens control over NGOs working with foreign education, medical services and military conscription (cf. INDEM 2001; 2005). A leading Russian survey conducted in 2005 and 2001 finds alarming increases in the overall volume of bribes paid annually by businesses (pay around $316 billion, 13 times higher) but also in the sectors of higher education, medical services and military conscription (cf. INDEM 2001; 2005). The so-called 'NGO bill' has been part of a wider legislative measure: the draft Federal Law ‘On the Introduction of Changes in Several Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation’ (cf. http://www.grani.ru/Society/p/98512.html), which has included amendments to the Civil Code, the Law on Closed Administrative-Territorial Entities, the Law on Public Organizations, and the Law on Non-Profit Organizations. The latter was approved on the 27th of December 2005 and is due to take effect 90 days after its official publication (Interfax 2005). In particular, it tightens control over NGOs working with foreign money, although it was slightly softened after the original proposal caused international criticism.

This study pays attention to differentiating between different local case studies within the Russian domestic context. Correspondingly, the term domestic is used when referring to aspects concerning Russia in general, whereas the term local is used when referring to findings from one particular locality within Russia, or in theoretical discussions when underlining the importance of the specific local context where civil society actors are situated with their daily activities and routines. When referring to other literatures, the terminology used by the authors is adopted.

Notes:

1 For data on increasing press coverage on corruption, see Glynn et al. (1997), Krastev (2004), McCoy (2001).
4 The term non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is commonly used to subsume organisational units operating in the sphere between the state and the market (i.e. being non-governmental and non-commercial), such as interest groups, advocacy groups and citizens’ associations. In this paper, the more general term civil society organisations (CSOs) is used, in order to consider the various kinds of Russian organisations, bodies and individuals falling into this category. The term Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is used when referring to this type of organisation only or when discussing literature that explicitly uses the term NGOs.
5 See also most indices and country reports, attesting severe increase in corruption in several sectors and respects over the last 2-4 years referred to in Schmidt (2005b).
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8 This shall not be replicated here. For an introduction to the spiral model, see Risse and Sikkink (1999), for an outline of the boomerang pattern, see Keck and Sikkink (1998).

9 Karklins (2005: 92) claims to use a culturally neutral definition of corruption as “the misuse of public power for private gain”, related to the “norms and rules of fundamentally democratic political systems as protestors envisioned them when regime transition started”.

10 For example, a CIVICUS pilot study in 2000-01 led to the conclusion that “in Eastern Europe […], while the influence of foreign donors may have introduced good accountability mechanisms, a donor-driven civil society with weak local roots may have provided incentives for mismanagement and corruption.” (Heinrich 2003: 273) The study categorises this as a ‘mixed’ type of civil society (Eastern Europe, Mexico), as distinguished from ‘mature’ (Canada, South Africa) and ‘grass-root driven’ civil society (Uruguay, Pakistan).

11 Karklin’s analysis is based on “Monitoring the EU Accession Progress” (OSI 2002) and TI data on ten countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, the three Baltic States, Bulgaria, Romania. Ukraine, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czech Republic.

12 Anti-corruption became a central component of the new and more comprehensive focus on “good governance” by development experts (Kaufmann, et al. 2003; Kaufmann, et al. 1999), on the EU see Frisch (1999), TI (2003: 7). With increasing attention to corruption, the World Bank, IMF, UNDP, EBRD and EU in 1996/97 revised their guidelines for relations with third countries and made loans conditional on anti-corruption efforts.

13 The chapter presents essentially the study of Miller et al. (cf. Miller, et al. 2001), which analyses Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine.

14 For a comprehensive review of research on anti-corruption in Eastern Europe and Russia, see Schmidt (2006).

15 For a comprehensive review of research on anti-corruption in Eastern Europe and Russia, see Schmidt (2006).

16 E.g. the envisaged review by OECD and Russian anti-corruption experts of the legal and institutional framework to combat corruption in Russia remains pending, because the Russian Federation presented an outdated and incomplete self-assessment report for the review and was not presented by an official delegation at the ACN (Anti-Corruption Network for Transition Economies) Advisory Group meeting (ACN/OECD 2005: 2). Russia is also absent among the country chapters in the TI 2006 Global Corruption Report (TI 2006) and the ‘country datasheet’ for Russia on the OSI webportal of the ‘Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative’ remains without any data (http://lgi.osi.hu/country_datasheet.php, accessed 30.03.2006).
It cannot be ignored that the theme of high-level corruption and gangster capitalism was also taken up by the genre of accounts of insiders in the Russian business (e.g. McCauley 2001) or investigative journalist scenes (e.g. Holm 2003; Lallemant 1996; Roth 2001; 2003). It seems worrisome that these are announced, even by professional experts, as revealing the enormous threats posed by the Mafia to the Western world or, in the context of EU Eastern enlargement, as “a stock-taking of the real circumstances of all the countries in direct proximity, which pose a bigger threat to our democratic political systems as the terrorism of the past decades.” (Herman Lutz, President of the European Police Unions, on Roth 2003: book jacket)


Probably the first comprehensive university-level anti-corruption textbook was produced by a Russian CSO (Satarov 2004)

For reflections on the concept of civil society and transformation / democratisation, see Howard (2003), Hyden (2004, Chapter 3), Keane (1998).

Although the Western literature on Russian civil society is vast, summarising reviews are rare; possible starting points are offered by Brown (2001), McFaul (2004). For good reviews on the civil society debate in Russian social/political sciences during the 1990s, see Belokurova (Belokurova 2001; Khlopin 2002; Mikhailova and Ryzenkov 2001; Pro et Contra 1997)

A more comprehensive review of the literature on Russian civil society since 2000 is given in Schmidt (2005c)

Interestingly, in contrast to the concept of state-capture, as predominant in the Western corruption literature, analysts not only speak of business-capture in Russia, but even of NGO-capture.

It bears, however, a close focus on rights at the centre of activism, which would aim at influencing state behaviour: Comparing the soldiers’ rights movement and the women’s movement in Russia, Sundstrom finds that CSO initiatives, which face more hostile political structures may even experience greater public support and progress in changing state conduct than those which face more open political structures. Depending on what kind of norms they support, they may also face resistance within society itself.

E.g. President Putin’s State of the Nation Address to the Federal Assembly 2004 in 2004 (see www.kremlin.ru), or announcements recently made by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (RIAN 2005). The argument has been frequently resumed, most recently in the context of the “spy-scandal”. At the latest FSB meeting in Moscow, president Putin called on the security services to protect Russia from "attempts by foreign states to use these organizations to interfere in Russia's internal affairs." (Bigg 2006).

Regarding environmental NGOs, Powell comes to the conclusion that, if assistance to Russian environmental groups “is understood to compromise two separate but related goals – the development of post-communist third-sector groups and the progressive resolution of environmental issues – it is manifestly clear that greater progress has been achieved on the first front than on the second.” (Powell 2002: 141).

Yet these studies refer to the numerous small organisations that have emerged in the spheres of social and health services, education, culture and religion. While many of these rely on important international links, they seem to be disconnected from the domestic political sphere and restricted to a confined local terrain.

For similar findings on CEE (without Russia), see also Freise (2005).


In addition, interesting being the statement that 13% of all privatization vouchers printed in Russia ended up in the ownership of an American consulting firm (Glinkina 1998: 20).

Rose (2002/03) refers to a tripartite vertical dimension (micro-economic activity of individuals, meso- or intermediate-level activity of firms, macro-economy reported in national income accounts) and a tripartite horizontal dimension (official economy, unofficial/shadow economy, household economy).

At least, some of the more prominent cases of whistleblowing have been examined in more detail, see for example Pas’ko on Sutjagin (2005), Siegert on Pas’ko (2002), Martirosian on Zhiro (2004).

In Russia, the most prominent, and with a perspective on civic anti-corruption mobilisation the most contradictory example is the tradition of blat, which includes Soviet-time traditions of protectionism, the using of profitable connections, or illegal dealings. Some scholars consider this particular form of social interaction as a form of “street level corruption” (Miller, et al. 1997) or “grassroots corruption” (INDEM 1998) and others as an informal exchange of favours that essentially opens access to scarce goods under conditions of economic shortages (e.g. Ledeneva 1998). Kharkhordin (2000: 2) has discussed the similar ambivalence in understanding friendship networks in contemporary Russia.

As illustrated in campaigns on human and indigenous rights or environmental issues (see Keck and Sikkink 1998: 12).

This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in a later contribution by Sikkink (2005) where she distinguishes four patterns of international – domestic activism according to closed / open opportunity structures. The
boomerang pattern and spiral model present one of the four modes: open international / closed domestic opportunity structure.