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# Nature of Regional Nongovernmental Organizations During the Post-Soviet Transformation in Georgia

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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2018

Abstract

Nature of Regional Nongovernmental Organizations During the Post-Soviet

Transformation in Georgia

by

Shota Shubladze

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2018

## Abstract

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-Soviet transformation process influenced the establishment of democratic institutions in the country of Georgia. Scholars and analysts from international organizations have revealed a gap in the development of the central and regional civil society organizations in Georgia. Using Morgan's organizational metaphors framework as a guide, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the nature, culture, and structure of regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Georgia. Research questions focused on the influence of the post-Soviet transformation on the development of Georgia's regional NGO sector and its perceived capacity as a democratic institution. Data were gathered through interviews with 9 stakeholders from 3 regional NGOs, observations of the organizations' daily operations, and review of publicly available documents and organizational records. The data were analyzed thematically, using structural and pattern coding. The analysis revealed that regional NGOs in Georgia are strong leader-driven, family style organizations and limited in their financial and organizational capacities. The insufficient intersectoral collaboration with local government and businesses has kept regional NGOs fully dependent on small grants provided by international donor organizations and large NGOs from the capital city, Tbilisi. That dependence has restricted local NGOs' ability to initiate programs based on the identified needs and demands of the local communities. The results of this study increase the knowledge of civil society organizations outside Tbilisi and offer recommendations for enhancing the organizational capacity of regional NGOs, leading to rapid democratization processes and positive social change in Georgia.

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## Dedication

This task is lovingly and wholeheartedly dedicated to the memory of my beloved father, Bagrat (Badri) Shubladze. The most humble and wisest person I ever met, he was my biggest mentor and remains my all-time hero and source of inspiration. Thank you, Dad.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The country of Georgia is located in the Caucasus region of Eastern Europe and shares borders with Russia, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Based on a 2014 general population census by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the population of the country is 3,720,400 (Geostat, 2016b). Tbilisi, the capital, is its largest city, with a population of 1,113,000 (Geostat, 2016b). Georgia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 2015 was U.S. \$3,743 (Geostat, 2016b).

During 1988 and 1989, the anti-Soviet Union (USSR) and anticommunist protests in the Soviet Republic of Georgia escalated. The Soviet army's killing of Georgian patriots protesting incessantly and peacefully on April 9, 1989, in Tbilisi, led to the nation's people's decision to take on the Soviet regime. Eventually, in 1991, the former dissident and newly elected president of still Soviet Georgia, Zviad Gamsaxurdia, declared an Act of Restoration of Georgian State Independence (Jones, 2015). The declaration of independence created tremendous excitement for an immediate transformation into a wealthy, democratic Western society. Unfortunately, these hopes evaporated quickly, and Georgians faced a troubled reality. The economic collapse, high crime, civil war, armed conflicts with separatist regions of Abkhazia and Samachablo (former South Ossetia), and the political crisis left in dark ruins what was once one of the richest republics of the USSR (Cornell, Swanstom, Tabyshaliev, & Tskitishvili, 2005).

The rapid transformation and lack of experience in democratic governance during the early period of Georgia's independence created a chain reaction of misconceptions

regarding democratic institutions that continue to negatively affect Georgian society. Additionally, the aggressive and massive intervention of international humanitarian agencies and organizations in the local social environment generated a high dependence on foreign financial aid. Yet despite ongoing challenges, Georgia has experienced political stability, economic improvements, international recognition as a sovereign state, and support of Western allies such as the United States and the European Union. Starting in 1991, four ruling political parties and presidents have governed post-Soviet independent Georgia:

- President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who led the political block Round Table – Free Georgia (1990–1991).
- President Eduard Shevardnadze, who led the Citizens Union (1992– 003).
- President Mikheil Saakashvili, who led the National Movement (2004– 2012).
- President Giorgi Margvelashvili, who led the Georgian Dream (2013 to present). Because of changes in the constitution, Margvelashvili’s power was significantly reduced and transferred to the prime minister.

Different political regimes and presidents of the independent Georgia created opportunities and challenges for the third sector development in the country; however, the sector is still unable to reshape the functional democratic institution. Several factors have affected the nature and functionality of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Georgia, a sector that DiPuppo (2010) argued has “been artificially created by donor money” (p. 224). The transition to democratic institutions from a totalitarian environment has proved difficult. Local NGOs adopted the agendas of their international funders,

which weakened their allegiance to domestic constituents (Lee, Johnson, & Prakash, 2012, p. 15).

In recent years, the number of registered NGOs in the country has increased dramatically. Based on 2014 data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (as cited in Geostat, 2016a), 20,737 noncommercial legal entities were registered in the country, yet few were functional; the vast majority of them existed only on paper (Ritvo 2013; Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2010). Modebadze (as cited in Ritvo, 2013) opined, “While most NGOs are located in Tbilisi and other large cities, the needs of the rural population for basic necessities are often overlooked” (p. 14). Indeed, many small villages and communities have never experienced NGOs’ impact.

International organizations have published reports outlining the lack of social activism and citizens’ participation in the Georgian society (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011, p. 234). Lutsevych (2013) stated, “Very few citizens volunteer their time or make donations to NGOs” (p. 4). A country of more than 4 million people and 20,000 registered NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) should have one of the most active, participative, and open societies in the world. Paradoxically, the level of citizen participation has changed little over the last 20 years (Lutsevych, 2013). NGOs are weak in shaping public opinion, and only 18% of the population trusts local NGOs, and most do not understand NGOs as public institutions (Lutsevych, 2013).

As I noted earlier, the vast majority of Georgian NGOs have been headquartered in Tbilisi. Among those, most were staffed by Western-educated and experienced personnel who could speak English, design project proposals, and receive additional

training. International organizations thus trusted and were more comfortable with NGOs from the capital rather than with newly developed NGOs from the other regions of the country. Instead of stimulating NGO and civil society development in medium-sized cities and small towns and villages, the majority of international organizations continued to focus on the same NGOs in Tbilisi, creating a significant gap between regional organizations and elite NGOs from capital (U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID], 2013, p. 25). According to Vasadze and Datuashvili (2011), “There is a dramatic difference between activity in the capital, Tbilisi, and other, more rural, regions” (p. 233). The majority of the regional NGOs in the country have shown major limitations in their performance and understanding of even basic NGO functions, in contrast with the high-performing, Westernized, local Georgian NGOs from the capital.

A huge gap remains in the understanding of the structure, nature, and culture of the regional NGOs in Georgia. Because of a lack of funding for small regional organization, only large civil society organizations (CSOs), primarily based in Tbilisi, have sufficient qualified staff. Many of the small CSOs are one-person organizations; however, there are no data available to understand the structure, management system, daily operations, protocols, and regulation of small CSOs located outside of the capital (USAID, 2011, 2013, 2014).

Therefore, it is impossible to evaluate the post-Soviet transformation and the development of the NGO sector in Georgia as a whole without understanding the organizational phenomenon of the regional NGOs in the country. The elite NGOs from capital of the country and the small NGOs or CSOs are two different organizational



phenomena that require separate screening and analyses. Understanding the nature, culture, and structure of the regional third sector is vital to measure and understand democratic processes in the country. In this study, I will argue that those small CSOs in the regions of the country, and their capacity to serve as democratic institutions, are a true litmus test for measuring Georgian democracy.

### **Background of the Study**

Previous studies have identified several challenges in the development of NGOs and civil society in Georgia. Vasadze and Datuashvili (2011) studied processes of community development in Georgia based on work with their organization, the Center of Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSR DG). After organizing small informal groups in the communities and encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making processes, Vasadze and Datuashvili indicated that the most challenging problem was overcoming the Soviet mentality of indifference and passiveness with respect to citizens' civil responsibilities. They found that younger generations appeared to have more potential to engage in community life. Despite the CSR DG's nearly three years of hard work in the rural communities, the long-term financial stability of most of the region's community youth centers was not achieved (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011). The authors identified the lack of local philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, and state funding for civic organizations as main challenging areas that need improvement.

The CSR DG (2012) has also researched citizen participation in local self-governance in Eastern Europe and identified serious problems and challenges in citizen participation in an open society and civil sector development, particularly in Georgia.

While examining civil participation in postcommunist countries, Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013) argued that the main reason for the civil engagement deficit is the communist past, and that only the new generation who did not experience communism directly will be able to improve the process of democratization (p. 64).

Ritvo (2013) also studied the public attitude and trust toward NGOs in Georgia. In an online questionnaire, Ritvo found that 55% of the respondents said NGOs are “not effective or somewhat effective” in meeting people’s needs, and 56% had negative views when asked whether “NGOs help people in Georgia in basic needs (food, housing, health services, clothing)” (p. 13) Lee et al. (2012) also discussed the problem and challenges in trust that NGOs face in post-communist countries. The authors identified the critical role of independent media in gaining trust for the NGOs in the community by serving as a watchdog.

How NGO leaders themselves understand the role of the third sector in the development of civil society and democracy must be considered. Lutsevych (2013) conducted an online survey of NGO leaders in Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova in order to “identify their strength and their role in democracy” (p. 4). Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated their main strength is their experience and expertise, both technical and in a relationship with Western foundations and embassies. In the same study, 52% of the NGO leaders indicated that the success of their NGOs correlates strongly with their ability to access decision-makers in government. After conducting 86 semistructured interviews with NGO senior officials and representatives in Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as with European Union officials, Aliyev (2015b) determined that “over 80% of

those interviewed in Georgia confirmed that their organizations regularly rely on informal networking in dealing with government officials” (p. 322). Paradoxically, according to Lutsevych, more than 70% of Georgian NGO leaders reported an inability to impact public policy in the country, while only “27% of organizations describe their organization as a citizens’ association” (p. 5). Lutsevych also that 95% of local NGOs in Georgia never received any support from local businesses.

USAID (2012), in its country development cooperation strategy for 2013–2017, provided specific goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and indicators for further economic and social development in Georgia. In this comprehensive document, the agency outlined the need for empowering and promoting more informed and engaged citizenry by developing an open society and distributing of NGO capacity building, including outside of the capital, Tbilisi.

### **Problem Statement**

Several authors have indicated that NGOs in Georgia have a low impact in shaping public opinion or policies (Lutsevych, 2013; Mokverashvili, 2013; Rommens, 2014). Local NGOs are mainly promoted and funded by international organizations (Lee et al., 2012). At the same time, not every NGO or CBO can write a competitive proposal to apply to the large international organizations because of the difficult requirements and application process (Aliyev, 2015).

One of the biggest problems in NGO development in Georgia is the dramatic difference between activities in regional NGOs and the elite ones in central Tbilisi (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011, p. 233). Successful local NGOs are located mainly in the

capital, Tbilisi, and “populated by a young urban elite” (Mac Ginty, 2013, p. 452). The high dependence on international grants makes local NGOs more focused on the donors’ agenda, which may not always match the local population’s priorities (Ritvo, 2013; Vasadze & Datuashvili 2010). As a result, a large segment of the rural population has been left out of reach of NGO programs. Moreover, “NGOs are the least understood of all public institutions in Georgia” (Lutsevych, 2013, p. 7). Accordingly, the high level of trust toward NGOs in Tbilisi is contrasted with the low level of trust toward the third sector in rural areas (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014, p. 254).

My review of the literature revealed no published investigation of nature, culture, and structure of NGOs in the regions of Georgia. Reports from USAID (2013, 2014, 2015) over the last 3 years regarding CSOs’ sustainability index in Georgia have shown a lack of data regarding small CSOs’ organizational capacities, quality of service, protocols, regulations, management system, guidelines, and day-to-day operations.

In the Country Development Cooperation Strategy document for fiscal years 2013–2017, USAID (2012) described three major challenges that restrict the development of democratic institution in Georgia: “a lack of public trust and confidence in some state institutions; insufficient government engagement and public dialogue; and, a wide gap in the development of democratic institutions between the center and the regions” (p. 10). Mistrust and misunderstanding with the third sector reduces the chances of creating an open and inclusive civil society in Georgia. Most vulnerable are regions of the country where democratic institutions are less developed compared to the capital. Anheier, (2004) stated, “Civil society is the arena in which people associate voluntarily to

advance common interest” (no page). Wakening such an important component may create mistrust in the democratic institutions and forms of governance, which is risky for the post-communist “hybrid democracy” country such as Georgia.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The results of this study filled the gap in the literature comparing regional NGOs and CBOs separately from the elite NGOs in the capital city. Learning and identifying the organizational capacity and structure of the regional NGOs and CBOs is crucial for further development of democratic institutions in the regions of Georgia. Moreover, finding evidence of the influence of the past Soviet mentality on the day-to-day decision-making processes in operations, structural development, and strategic planning of the local NGOs may increase the potential for improvements and the capacity building of these organizations. Finally, in this study, I identified the nature of the organizational culture, structure, and ways of operations of the regional NGOs in Georgia in contrast to the strong NGOs in the capital.

### **Research Questions**

I developed the following research questions (RQs) to guide this study:

RQ1: How does the post-Soviet sociopolitical transformation of Georgia affect the organizational culture of the NGOs in the regions of the country?

RQ2: What is the organizational capacity of the regional NGOs for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia?

RQ3: What are the prospects for the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The main goal of this research was to explore the organizational culture of the NGOs in the context of the social-cultural environment in the Georgian society.

Morgan's (1986) organizational metaphors allude to the nature of the NGO system in the regions of Georgia and served as a conceptual framework for this dissertation. In this study, I concentrated on the concept of three organizational metaphors: organizations as organisms, organizations as cultures, and organizations as political systems.

The organismic metaphor describes an organization as a biological organism that is dependent and adaptable to the external environment. The open system theory is the main theoretical frame of this metaphor, as well as the population ecology views, wherein organizations compete for resources in order to survive. In this context, it was also pertinent to link contingency theory and resource dependence theory to the study. The abovementioned theoretical frames suggest that organizations exist in an open system, in active connection and communication with the external and internal environments.

The contingency approach was developed on the basis of Fielder's (1970) contingency theory of leadership effectiveness, which has evolved into a contingency theory of organizational structure that outlines where structure fits the contingencies (Burton, Eriksen, Hakonsson, & Snow, 2006, p. 19). The ecology of the environment directly influences organizational actions, including the interdependence of the organization for sharing and exchanging resources for survival. However, there is no distinct way of management or organizational development; it directly depends on and varies based on the environment, the nature, and the task of the organization.

Another metaphor that applied to the research topic was organizations as cultures. Morgan (1998) argued, “The organization itself is a cultural phenomenon that varies according to a society’s stage of development” (p. 112). In applying this perspective to *imaging* organizations, I drew on Hofstede’s (2005) cultural dimensions, as well as Lewis’s (2000) concepts of linear-active and multiactive concepts of organizational culture. Additionally, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s (1998) concept of organizational structures and their relationship to the national culture were incorporated in this approach. For example, their concepts of *family culture* and *Eiffel tower culture* may be used to accurately describe the reality with the NGOs in the regions of Georgia.

Several aspects of Morgan’s (1998) metaphor of organizations as political systems were applicable to this study. In political organizations, conflicts of interest and competitions, both internally and externally, are subject to interpersonal and interorganizational intrigue and power plays. Because one organizational system may be autocratic, and another democratic, Morgan assumed that organizations are initially political systems (p. 148). This concept is well suited to social power theories, including power elitist, pluralist, and Marxist perspectives.

### **Nature of the Study**

I undertook this qualitative study using a multiple case study research design. Creswell (2013) noted that “a case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p. 100). Qualitative research was the most effective way to understand the organizational phenomenon of regional NGOs in

Georgia. These organizations are the product of post-Soviet transformation, and their nature might be different from the predominant Western perceptions of NGOs; accordingly, their study required in-depth descriptions and analyses of multiple cases.

I used purposeful sampling to identify three regional NGOs in three different small towns and villages of Georgia. The organizations were officially registered and functional NGOs and CBOs from medium- and small-sized towns and villages of the regions of Georgia. I interviewed three individuals from each organization—one person from each organizations' executive leadership team (CEO, COO, or operations manager) and two individuals from the organizations' program staff (program manager, coordinator, community mobilize, or social worker).

To triangulate the study, I incorporated multiple data collection methods: interviewing, observation, and a review of documents and audio-visual materials. I used data management software to label and code the collected data. Further, I also used the software to develop a *naturalistic generalization* for data analyses.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Community-based organization (CBO)*: “A public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that: (A) is representative of a community or significant segments of a community; and (B) provides educational or related services to individuals in the community” (California Department of Health Care Services, n.d., p. 5).

*Civil society*: “The wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of



their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations” (World Bank, 2013, para. 5).

*Civil society organizations (CSOs)*: “Wide of array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations” (World Bank, n.d., para. 5).

*Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)*: Any nonprofit, voluntary citizens group that is organized on a local, national or international level (NGO Global Network, n.d.).

*Regions of Georgia*: Georgia is an independent country that includes two autonomous republics (Abkhazia and Acharia) and nine regions (Guria, Imereti, Khakheti, Mtkheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and Shida Kartli) governed by regional and municipal governments (Government of Georgia, n.d.).

*SARFIT*: Structural adaptation to regain fit. “A theoretical model of fit and misfit between contingency variables and organization structure” (Burton et al., 2006, p. 21).

*Soviet mentality or post-Soviet mentality*: In the former Soviet republics, the population “prefers to be a passive player and avoids taking civil responsibility” (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011, p. 234).

*Third sector*: “The part of an economy or society comprising non-governmental and non-profit-making organizations or associations, including charities, voluntary and community groups, cooperatives, etc.” (Third sector, n.d., para. 1). The third sector is the alternative to the state and market. These valued driven organizations are established by

people on a voluntary basis (Corry, 2010).

### **Assumptions**

I undertook the fieldwork for this study with the assumption that NGOs and CBOs in the regions of Georgia want to be effective democratic institutions, gain public trust, and actively participate in addressing challenges in the communities as well as in shaping public opinion. In addition, I assumed local and regional NGOs are interested in identifying gaps in their organizational development and addressing challenges, especially those inherited from the past Soviet era. I assumed that local NGO leaders and staff would be willing and able to collaborate during the fieldwork and that central and local governments of Georgia would welcome such academic research as a way to increase capacity for further development of democratic institutions in the country.

The ontology of the study was relativist, which is constructed on multiple realities based on how individuals see and understand the world (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Relativism moves the vector of the studies' interpretive framework toward social constructivism, where the reality is described as a socially-constructed phenomenon. Accordingly, the study featured emic epistemology, which assumes that the researcher is closely engaged with the participants to collect evidence based on individuals' views (Creswell, 2007). My function as the researcher in this qualitative study was mainly exploratory. The axiological assumption of the researcher's role was inductive; that is, I led the processes and served as a primary instrument for collecting the data (Creswell, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

My specific focus in this study was the organizational culture and structure of the NGOs and CBOs in the regions of Georgian. This research was the first attempt to outline organizational capacity and the level of influence of the third sector specifically in the regions of the country.

The findings may encourage social scientists to investigate the organizational phenomenon of the regional NGOs in Georgia and other countries, especially post-Soviet nations. Studying third sector and democratic institutions may require separate investigations in well-developed and less-developed parts of other countries. As a delimitation, I explored the culture and structure of regional NGOs by examining three small NGOs in the regions of the country, by observing and interviewing only NGO leadership and program staff and other citizens' viewpoints in this study. Previous researchers have suggested NGOs are among the least understood organizational form for the general public in Georgia, particularly in the rural and semirural communities in Georgia in the post-Soviet era.

### **Limitations**

In this study, I focused on the third sector specifically in the regions of Georgia. The findings of the study may not apply to the NGOs located in the capital of the country or to those that are well staffed and funded by international organizations. Accordingly, the findings cannot be generalized to NGO development processes in the entire country.

Each state of the post-Soviet bloc has its specific social-cultural background that directly influences the level and aspects of the development of democratic institutions,

including NGOs, after the collapse of the USSR. Although there may be some similarities between Georgia and other nations, the results of this research cannot be generalized to other post-Soviet countries.

### **Significance of the Study**

I designed this study to build a solid foundation for international organizations and the government of Georgia to promote social activism, citizen participation in democratic processes, and capacity building for regional NGOs and CBOs in the country. Through this research, I expected that local NGOs and CBOs would better understand gaps in the third sector development in the regions of the country and open new avenues and clarify areas of opportunities for future organizational and structural development of the sector. My findings were intended to trigger similar studies in other post-Soviet countries.

### **Summary**

The introduction of democratic institutions in post-Soviet Georgia has been a slow and challenging process. As a democratic institution, NGOs were introduced to Georgian society soon after the collapse of the USSR. Like a plant grafting process in which tissues of one plant are inserted into another for inoculation, the NGOs as democratic institutions were implanted in the early post-Soviet Georgia. Accordingly, the host social-cultural environment with the dominating Soviet mentality played a significant role in the NGO development processes in the country. Thus, the main theoretical framework of this research was open system theory, including Morgan's

(2006) organism metaphors, where environment plays a significant role in determining scope and nature of the processes in the organization.

Past research and reports from credible international organizations revealed a wide gap between third sector development processes in the capital city and outlying regions of the country in Georgia (USAID, 2012; Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011). NGOs and CBOs in the regions in Georgia have less organizational capacity and attention from international and local donors and government than do those in the capital city; moreover, many organizations are not able to apply to large international donors due to the complicated application process (Aliyev, 2015). As a result, the third sector in the regions of Georgia has limited trust from the public and limited capacity to influence social-economic life (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014). In this qualitative case study, I conducted in-depth research of three NGOs and SBOs in three regional towns and villages and my findings reduced the size of the gap in the literature on organizational culture and structure of regional NGOs in Georgia. I also explored the impact of the post-Soviet transformation processes on the third-sector development in the regions of the country.

I designed this study as a guide for international organizations and local government with which to learn and understand organizational structure, culture, and the challenges of regional NGOs in Georgia. Furthermore, this study benefits local third sectors and their leaders in advancing the organizational capacity of the regional NGOs in Georgia.

In Chapter 2, I will provide a literature review covering three major directions: related theories of the study, post-Soviet transformation and NGO development in

Georgia, and the classical role and structure of the NGOs in a democratic society. In Chapter 3, I will present the method and tools used to collect, manage, and analyze data. Chapter 4 will include the findings, and in Chapter 5, I will provide an interpretation of the findings, implications for positive social change, and my recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

My goal with this dissertation was to explore the organizational culture and structure of the NGOs in the regions of Georgia in relation to the existing social-cultural environment in Georgian society. Accordingly, I designed this research to outline major aspects and outcomes of post-Soviet sociocultural transformation and its influence on the development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia.

In this literature review, I will examine three major topics: post-Soviet society and social-political transformation in Georgia, the classic concept and organizational structure of NGOs, and relevant theories of organizational development and culture. In the review, I will analyze related books, peer-reviewed articles, and annual and thematic reports of international organizations such as USAID and the World Bank. I will also provide a theoretical review to examine existing organizational theories and concepts and outline similarities differences and the relationship between the theories. To apply a theoretical framework to this complex process, I will discuss open system theory, which encompasses a number of theories and organizational metaphors such as ecology theory, contingency theory, organization as an organism metaphor, organizations as a political system, metaphor, and other related theories.

Post-Soviet transformation was a complex process that touched many aspects of the social, economic, and political life of Georgian society. Accordingly, one section of the literature review will be focused specifically on this process and the third sector development, role, and function in post-Soviet Georgia.

I acquired scholarly resources from Walden University's library by using Google Scholar and online databases, including SAGE Premier, SAGE Research Methods, EBSCO, and JSTOR.

### **Relevant Theories of Organizational Development and Culture**

In this section, I will provide a spectrum of theories and metaphors of organizational culture, especially organizational cultures that are defined to be most common and appropriate for the public and NGOs. I will review the extant literature on a number of organizational theories, such as the open system theory, population ecology, and contingency theory of organization structure, among others.

Organizational metaphors are useful tools to understand an organization by stimulating the imagination and helping to see the image of the organization and understand its function (Foropon & McLachlin, 2013). Organizational metaphors “enable scientists to articulate and communicate their findings by providing familiar interpretive frameworks in which to make conceptual sense of new phenomena” (Nicholson, 2014, p. 162). Metaphors help people understand and conceptualize unfamiliar or better learn already known phenomena. Boxenbaum and Rouleau (2011) argued that “Metaphors are core components of cognitive processing and consist of the superimposition of a source domain onto a target domain” (p. 275).

Organizational metaphors and metaphoric views have been shaped over time. Jacobs, Oliver, and Heracleous (2013) differentiated metaphors in term of their type, origination, and modality, and mentioned primary versus complex metaphors. “Complex metaphors involve the fitting together and conceptual blending of primary metaphors into



larger wholes” (p. 489). In addition, Jacobs et al. outlined the aspects of the multimodal metaphors that are represented in different modes. Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) described the same conceptual metaphor theory and argued that “metaphor should manifest itself not just in language but also via other modes of communication, such as pictures, music, sounds and gestures” (p. 283). However, the multimodal metaphors are still new and need additional study to test and outline their capacity in the organizational theory building.

As such, I focused on metaphors based on Morgan’s (2006) notion of the images of organization, which describe the nature of the NGO system in the regions of Georgia and served as a conceptual framework for this dissertation. Three key factors may influence NGO development in the regions of Georgia: the existing social economic environment, strong dominant national culture, and post-Soviet mentality and approaches inherited from the past political regime. Accordingly, in this study, I concentrated on three organizational metaphors: organizations as organisms, organizations as culture, and organizations as political systems. As Morgan (as quoted in Oswick & Grant, 2015) described it, metaphors are relevant “if you want to understand organization and where it’s come from and how organization theory has developed” (p. 1).

### **Organization as an Organism**

The lenses of the organism metaphor compare an organization to a biological organism that is reliant and adaptable to the surrounding environment. The main theoretical frame of this metaphor is the open system theory, as well as the population ecology view, in which organizations compete for resources and survival. In this context,

it was also appropriate to link contingency theory and resource dependence theory to the study. The abovementioned theoretical frames suggest that organizations exist in an open system, in active connection, and in communication with the external and internal environments. (Morgan, 2006)

The core idea in the metaphor is that an organization's ecosystem functions similarly to a biological ecosystem (Mars, Bronstein, & Lusch, 2012). The idea of openness, according to Morgan (2006), "emphasizes the key relationship between the environment and the internal functioning of the system. Environment and system are to be understood as being in a state of interaction and mutual dependence" (p. 40). Cummings and Worley (2009) described an open system as an interaction of the organization and environment in the frame of inputs transformation and outputs. The authors stated, "The model suggests that organizations operate within an external environment, takes specific inputs from the environment, and transforms those inputs using social and technical processes" (p. 89). Inputs are people in the organization, materials, information, and other necessary resources; transformation is the process that transforms inputs into outputs by utilizing both social and technical components; and outputs are final products that are ready to leave the system (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Thus, an organization is a microenvironment for its subsystems, groups, and individuals, all of which share characteristics as being parts of the open system (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

The importance of the environment of the organization is a main element of Morgan's (2006) concept of the organism metaphor. To address this notion, Morgan

discussed several theories to outline the interaction between the environment and organization, including contingency theory, system evolution theory, and equifinality.

The contingency approach was developed on the basis of Fielder's (1970) contingency theory of leadership effectiveness. It has evolved, however, into a contingency theory of organizational structure that outlines where structure fits the contingencies (Burton et al., 2006, p. 19). The ecology of the environment directly influences organizational actions, including the interdependence of the organization for sharing and exchanging resources for survival. However, there is no distinguished universal way of management or organizational development; it depends on and varies based on the environment, the nature, and the task of the organization.

Burns and Stalker (1994) argued that management systems largely depend on the nature of the environment. "The utility of the notions of 'mechanistic' and 'organic' management systems resides largely in their being related as dependent variables to the rate of 'environmental' change" (Burns & Stalker, 1994, p. 103). However, Burns and Stalker indicated that the organism metaphor is effective in turbulent changing environment where organization has to adapt to the changes. When comparing organism versus machine metaphors and their organizational systems, Nicholson (2013) described the autonomy as a core functional difference of organism organizations. "Organisms are intrinsically purposive because they have an autonomous self: the phenomena of self-formation, self-preservation, self-reproduction, and self-restitution are all characteristic of the internal organizational dynamics of living systems (p. 671). Nicholson (2014) also introduced the machine concept of the organism metaphor, arguing that a machine, as a

human-made instrument, is the best way to conceptualize the organism with regularly structured systems.

According to Morgan (2006), the contingency theory outlines the complex process of adapting organizations to the environment. The appropriate management of the organization pays a vital role in reaching a balance between internal needs and the existing environment. “Different approaches to management may be necessary to perform different tasks within the same organization. Different types or species of organization are needed in different types of environment” (Morgan, 2006, p. 42).

One of the main attributes of the contingency theory is environmental change and the adequate response of organizations to the changes. The question is who defines it and what are the manager’s perspectives about the environmental changes. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) discussed the aspects of complexity and the rate of change in the environment and challenged the notion of *environmental uncertainty* in the early environmental contingency theories. Hatch and Cunliffe introduced the notion of information perspective on uncertainty and argued that the environmental conditions cannot be experienced in the same way by everyone. Hatch and Cunliffe stated, “Today, organization theorists recognize that uncertainty lies not in the environment, but in the individuals who consider the environment when making organizational decisions” (p. 78).

Based on the contingency theory, Burton et al. (2006) discussed the process of fit and misfit between contingency variables and organization structure and introduced the theoretical model of structural adaptation to regain fit (SARFIT). Burton et al. argued that

such a fit creates surplus resources and leads to expansion, which increases contingency variables, leading to misfit in the existing structure. These interrelated processes of fit and misfit between environment and structure increases organizational development and provokes growth when a deficit accrues on one or the other side (Burton et al., 2006).

“An organization in fit tends to expand into misfit, which provokes structural adaptation into fit which than leads to further expansion into misfit. This cycle repeats itself over time” (Burton et al., 2006, p. 21).

As a part of the open system approach, the population ecology views are also focused on the relationship between organization and environment; however, in this case the subject of study is the unit of the organizations. Accordingly, the theory argues that “adaptation for a population involves selection among types of members” (Hannan & Freeman, 1977, p. 929). The theory screens the groups of similar organizations as one population and analyzes the populations’ interaction with both internal and external environment.

In the framework of the population ecology theory, Hannan and Freeman (1977) analyzed several other subtheories, including niche theory and competition theory. According to the niche theory, each population should find the best area or space suitable for its superior performance. “Niche of population is defined as that area in constraint space in which the population outcompetes all other local populations” (Hannan & Freedman, 1977, p. 947). Niche theory outlines two types of organizations: one that occupies a broad niche in the environment and another that occupies a narrow one (Hannan & Freedman, 1977).

In the population ecology theory, the abovementioned behavior distinguishes generalists' and specialists' populations. A generalist population accepts risks and is more flexible to the environmental changes as the population exploits a large segment of the environment. In contrast, a specialist population has greater needs in security and a stable environment. In a rapidly changing environment, the population of specialized organizations will be more effective as generalist organizations will be spending most of their time on adjusting to the different environments (Hannan & Freedman, 1977).

After determining the niche of the population, it is worth examining how much and in what circumstances different populations can share the same niche. In this case Hannan and Freedman (1977) introduced competition theory. In this theory both the capacity of the environment and the structural ability of the organization play vital roles where the capacity of the environment has to support a population size. "As long as the resources which sustain organizations are finite and population have unlimited capacity to expand, competition must ensure" (Hannan & Freedman, 1977, p. 940). In the environment with the limited or finite resources, the competition between organizations can occur within a niche. "Competition coefficient, denote the magnitude of the effect of increases in one population on the growth of the other" (Hannan & Freedman, 1977, p. 941). According to Hannan and Freedman, two populations cannot take one niche continually. "The greater the similarity of two resource-limited competitors, the less feasible is it that a single environment can support both of them in equilibrium" (p. 943).

One of the key aspects that emphasizes competition between members of population is the density depended theory. "Density dependence theory assumes that the

intensity of the competition depends on the number of organizations in a population” (Clegg & Hardy, 1999, p. 84). As the population grows, the competition between interdependent members of the population increases; the lower the population, the less the competition, or it will be avoided (Clegg & Hardy, 1999).

The age and size of an organization also are important factors based on organizational ecology. Young organizations are more vulnerable to failure compared to mature organizations. Similarly, according to Hannan and Freedman (1984), large organizations have a better chance for survival than their small competitors. “Since large size increases inertial tendencies in organizations, and since selection pressures favor structurally inert organizations for their reliability, large organizations are proposed to be less vulnerable to the risk of failure (Hannan & Freeman, as cited in Clegg & Hardy, 1999, p. 73).

### **Organization as a Culture**

Apropos to this discussion is the metaphor organizations as cultures. Morgan (2006) argued, “The organization itself is a cultural phenomenon that varies according to a society’s stage of development” (p. 112). Different societies have different culture that affect organizations as a cultural phenomenon and develop cross-national variation in organizations. Culture and organization are strongly tied with each other. Culture reflects the level of society’s development, knowledge, beliefs, ideology, and customs (Morgan 2006, p. 116). Therefore, the collectivity and collective efforts of individuals, which creates the organization a human-made product, is affected with the culture.

Different national and social-cultural characteristics create specific organizational and leadership cultures. Morgan (2006) provided examples of and analyzed Japanese organizational culture and compared it to the culture of the western organization. When viewing the Japanese concept of work, Morgan stated, “The organization is viewed as a collectivity to which employees belong rather than just a workplace comprising separate individuals” (p. 118). This approach has roots in Japanese national character, which has been shaped by traditions and customs over history. The history of collective and communitarian approach to the work in an emerging field as well as respect for and dependence on each other shaped the core aspects of the organizational culture in Japan. As opposed to Japan, the social change, class conflicts, and revolutions in the west created more individualistic approach and sometimes “perpetuate antagonistic division in the workplace” (Morgan, 2006, p. 122). Another cultural phenomenon was born in the United States, where competitive individualism drives organizations.

Morgan’s (2006) culture metaphor opens avenues to the organization as a cultural ecosystem that includes subcultures. “Organizations are mini-societies that have their own distinctive patterns of culture and subculture” (Morgan, 2006, p. 125). The subcultures mostly may occur in big organizations or corporations when some group of workers may not agree or support the main organizational culture. It can happen when new management and new team arrives in the organization with prevailing strong corporate culture. The organizational subculture can also occur based on gender differences. “This has led to the creation of organizations that often have strong female subcultures standing in tension and, at times, opposition with male power structures”



(Morgan, 2006, p. 131). The different attitude and level of dedication toward an organization's goals can be an additional factor for development of the subcultures. Some personal relationships or specific interests may develop coalitions in the organization. "These coalitions sometimes develop in forms of counterculture, in opposition to the organizational values espoused by those formally in control" (Morgan, 2006, p. 131). However, it is very important to understand what is the shared meaning of the organization, where do they come from and how they are created. Morgan (2006) provides examples of "cultural revolution" in IBM and Hewlett-Packard when these corporations replaced old bureaucratic views of life with "customer and quality driven" business logic (p. 138)

Culture metaphor shows that organizations greatly depend on shared meanings, visions, and beliefs of its members. "Organizations are in essence socially constructed realities that are as much in the minds of their members as they are in concrete structures, rules and relations" (Morgan, 2006, p. 137). Morgan's (2007) culture metaphor suggests it is critical to learn cultural aspects of the environment in order to fully understand the organization. Hofstede's (2005) cultural dimensions can be used effectively to measure and analyze specific cultural aspects that are characteristic for different cultures. Hofstede (2005) created cultural domains, including Power Distance, which measures the level of inequality in the society (p. 41); Individualism versus Collectivism, which measures interests of a group versus interests of an individual (p.74); Masculinity versus Femininity, which measures strong, competitive, dominant and assertive culture versus supportive, caring and collaborative culture (p.117); and Uncertainty Avoidance, which

measures the level of tolerance of ambiguity in the society and is “defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (p.167 ); and Long-Term and Short-Term Orientation, which measures the level of “the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards” versus “the fostering of virtues related to the past and present” (p. 201).

Each of the above-mentioned dimensions is characteristic of the national cultures and may affect organization culture. For example, “In large power distant situation, superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially unequal; the hierarchical system is based on this existential inequality. Organization centralizes power as much as possible in a few hands” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 55). The individualist culture in a workplace promotes and values individuals’ personal interest over the interests of the group. “Employed persons in an individualist culture are expected to act according to their own interest, and work should be organized in such a way that this self-interest and employer’s interest coincide” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 99). The opposite tendencies are observed in collectivist culture where the fitting in a collective prevails the individual internists. “In a collectivist culture an employer never hires just an individual, but rather a person who belongs to an in-group” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 99). The masculine culture organizations value competitive environment in the workspace when feminine culture organizations are focused on collaboration and compromises. “Organizations in masculine culture societies stress results and try to reward in on the bases of equity. Organizations in feminine societies are more likely to reward people on the basis of equality” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 143). The societies with a strong

uncertainty avoidance culture have high dependence in rules, and therefore, the organizations in such a culture are highly structured. “The need for rules in a society with a strong uncertainty avoidance is emotional” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 182). In opposite the countries with low uncertainty avoidance culture reject formal rules. “People think that rules should only be established in case of absolute necessity, such as to determine whether traffic should keep left or right” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 182).

The long-term oriented culture in a business and work is goal oriented and supports entrepreneurship. “In a long-term oriented environment, family and work are not separated. Family enterprises are normal” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 218). In short-term oriented cultures the need for the personal stability rejects risks and changes. “At the short term oriented pole, personal steadiness and stability, if overstressed, discourage the initiative, risk seeking, and changeability required of entrepreneurs in quickly changing markets” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 218).

However, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) argued that national and organizational cultures are not the same phenomenon. “Difference between national and organization culture is based on their different mix of values and practices” (p. 284). No researchers have studied Georgian organizational and leadership culture through Hofstede and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions; however, it is still possible to find studies with some implication of Hofstede and Hofstede’s cultural diminutions. Project GLOBE research has utilized the same notion of cultural dimensions to measure “effects of culture on leadership, organizational effectiveness, economic competitiveness” (House, 2004, p. 10) of societies in 61 countries, including Georgia.

House (2004) expanded and modified Hofstede and Hofstede's cultural dimensions and set the nine cultural dimensions discussed previously as independent variables. Gupta, Hanges, and Dorfman (2002) analyzed the several factors such as common language, geography, religion, and grouped 61 GLOBE nations into 10 distinct clusters. Georgia was allocated in the Eastern Europe cluster, along with Hungary, Russia, Kazakhstan, Albania, Poland, Greece, and Slovenia. Project GLOBE measures and demonstrates the relationship between values, practices, and leadership styles in the society. As a part of the integrated theory of the study, the authors indicate that the aspects of specific culture are "predictive of organizational practices and leader attributes" (House, 2004, p. 17). The researchers found that the value chart of the Eastern Europe cluster showed a high score in Performance orientation and Future orientation, and In-group collectivism. However, on the practices side, the In-group Collectivism and Power Distance led the chart.

The eight countries in the Eastern European cluster differ greatly both culturally and economically; therefore, it is difficult to ascertain which results apply well to Georgia. However, the high scores of Eastern European cluster in power distance and in-Group collectivism clearly indicates on the shared Soviet past of these countries except the Greece.

Kaynak, Kara, Chow, and Riza Apil (2013) studied similarities and differences with time orientation between Georgian and Macau cultures. Georgian consumers were more past- and present-oriented compared to Macau consumers. "These mean values mainly show that Georgian sample were less open to change, less positive about the

future, and prefer a more stable environment than Macau sample” (Kaynak et al., 2013, p. 638).

Woldu and Budhwar (2011) interviewed 150 respondents from the capital city and small cities of Georgia to provide gender-based analyses to cultural value orientation in six former soviet countries. “The aim of the study was to determine if any cross-national differences exist between the male and female samples within each country; and second, to assess cross-country cultural differences among the females in the Central Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and former Soviet Republics (FSRs)” (Woldu & Budhwar, 2011, p. 1367). The authors found no significant cultural differences between males and female respondents in Georgia. “Female respondents from all research countries except Georgia scored higher means when compared with their respective male counterparts on subjugative relations to nature, AB/feeling, and thinking or risk avoidance” (p. 1381). Females in Georgia compared with their male counterpart scored significantly lower means in collectivism and hierarchical human relations. Woldu and Budwar broke stereotypic perceptions about existence of homogenous culture in the entire communist countries. Despite of political and ideological pressure, communism was not able to create “a cohesive cultural homogeneity. . . With regard to gender-specific observations, which are the main focus of the study, the study found that there are more cultural variations among females than among males” (p. 1381). Based on these findings it appears that females in post-Soviet countries were less impacted by the communist system and ideology.

The communist system did not live long enough to be able to touch core cultural

assumptions of the nations. However, the Soviet mentality and norms still influence generations of the post-Soviet countries. Historical roots of the nation do affect how a national culture is created, which itself influences organizational and leadership cultures.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1998) concepts of organizational structures and their relationship to the national culture is a worthy topic of discussion. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner described layers of the culture and outline how each layers are linked and based on each other. For example, the authors described the outer layer as a set of "explicit producers, which is observable reality of the language, food, buildings, art, and many others" (p. 21). However, there are deeper levels of the culture that determine norm and values. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner provided examples of Japanese tradition of bowing when there is a mutual sense that bowing is the norm. A cultural value guides toward what is good and bad. In this case the same behavior is a part of individual's desire (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turners, 1998).

Individuals have the desire to act certain way touches on the core of the culture. The core of the culture is a set of "basic assumptions" developed and echoed from the deep historical memories, and survival skills of the nation. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) argued that national culture influences organizational culture. "When people set up organization they will typically borrow from models or ideals that are familiar to them. Organizational culture is shaped not only by technologies and markets, but by the cultural preferences of leaders and employees" (p. 161).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) outlined three main aspects of the organizations structure vital for determining organizations culture. Those aspects are the

relationship between employees and organization, hierarchy of the organization, and employees' view and understanding of organizations goals. Based on the above-motioed aspects, the authors provided four main dimensions for screening organizations' culture "equality—hierarchy and orientation to the person—orientation to the task" (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 162).

Accordingly, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) introduced four types of organizational culture:

1. The family style organization culture is based on the strong personal and hierarchical relationships. It mimics family structure when a caring father has an exclusive power and authority and the most experience. "Family style corporate cultures tend to be high context, a term which refers to the sheer amount of information and cultural content taken for granted by members" (p. 165).
2. The Eiffel tower organizational culture strongly correlates with Morgan's (2007) machine metaphor and describes a highly structured formal bureaucracy where structure is more important than its function.
3. Unlike the Eiffel Tower organization culture, which is oriented to means, the guided missile culture organizations are oriented to ends. "The guided missile culture is oriented to tasks, typically undertaken by teams or project groups. It differs from the role culture in that the jobs members do are not fixed in advance" (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 177).
4. The incubator culture promotes organizations' role as the arenas for

individuals' professional fulfillment and creativity. Such organizations have minimal structure and hierarchy. The incubator culture engages members of the organization in active participation in the decision-making processes to create innovation products. The incubator culture organizations are not business incubator organizations; however, as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) indicated, "The purpose is to free individuals from routine to more creative activities and to minimize time spent on self-maintenance" (p. 180).

These four organizational cultures have different characteristics in terms of employees, attitude toward authority, ways of thinking, ways of motivating, as well as criticism and conflict resolution. Individuals shape and create an organization's culture based on their norms, values, and core assumptions. However, that culture may also influence and dictate individuals' behavior in the organization. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turners (1998) stated, "Calling your boss 'Buddy' and slapping him or her in the back will get you thrown from the Eiffel Tower, while suggesting in an incubator that everyone fill out time-sheets will be greeted with cat-calls" (p. 184).

Lewis's (2007) concepts of linear-active, multi-active, and reactive cultures are relevant theories to the current research. Lewis introduced linear-active culture mostly typical for Swedes, Swiss, Germans, and the Dutch. "Linear active people do one thing at a time, concentrate hard on that thing and do it within a scheduled time period" (Lewis, 2007, p. 30). In opposite of linear-active culture, the multiactive culture is flexible, impatient, and does several things together. "When people from linear-active culture



work together with people from a multi-active culture, irritation results on both sides” (Lewis, 2007, p. 31). An irritation can occur when Western linear-active international NGOs try to set their organizational culture and standards in the multi-active culture post-Soviet countries.

Finally, the third cultural group that Lewis (2007) introduced is the reactive culture, also known as a listening culture. Member of this culture are good listeners, introverted, and patient. They “rarely initiate actions or disruption, preferring to listen to and establish the other’s position first, then react to it and formulate their own” (Lewis, 2007, p. 32). Among other countries, the author assigned Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore to this culture.

In conclusion, national culture plays significant role in shaping organizational culture. Accordingly, there may not be the universal way to approach organizational development in different countries and regions of the world. This concept directly applies to the main topic of the dissertation, as understanding the cultural phenomena of the organization in the post-Soviet Georgia may open new avenues both for Georgian and international leaders for responding to challenges in the organizational development.

### **Organization as a Political System**

Several aspects of Morgan’s (1998) metaphor of organizations as political systems may be applicable to the current study. In political organizations, conflicts of interest and competitions, both internally and externally, are subject of interpersonal and interorganizational intrigues and power plays. Since one organizational system may be autocratic, and another democratic, Morgan assumed that organizations are initially

political systems (p. 148). This concept is well suited to social power theories, including power elitist, pluralist, and Marxist perspectives.

After reviewing organization as an organism and as a culture, it is worthy to examine the dynamics of individuals' interpersonal collaboration within the hierarchy of the organization. Each person has an agenda, interests, and attitudes that he or she brings to the organization—some of which may be unacceptable to others, which can create conflict. In this situation, it is essential to use the power of negotiation, and compromising that brings up the processes of political nature. In this context Morgan (2006) introduced the organizational metaphor organization as political system. The author argues that “the political metaphor encourages us to see how all organizational activity is interes-based and to evaluate all aspects of organizational functioning with this in mind” (p. 202).

Morgan (2006) described a different type of organizations: democratic organization, autocratic organization, bureaucratic organization, and technocratic organization. The author uses these political terms to describe power distribution in different kinds of organizations. It can be absolute power of one individual, power of written law, the power of knowledge, power of elected representatives, or power of equal right among all. “It is rare to find organizations that use just one of these different kinds of rule. More often, mixed types are found in practice” (Morgan, 2006, p. 153).

Organizations are an arena for political activity on a daily basis. Individuals may get involved in the political processes even without recognizing it. “More fundamentally, however, politics occurs on an ongoing basis, often in a way that is invisible to all but

those directly involved” (p. 156). The political processes in the organization mainly focus on finding a compromise between individuals’ interests, avoid conflict, and distribute power among players in the most acceptable way. “Organizational politics arise when people think differently and want to act differently. This diversity creates a tension that must be resolved through political means” (Morgan, 2006, p. 156).

Different interests motivate individuals’ interaction in the organization: It could be a performed work task interest, career interests, and extramural interests that apply to personality, attitude, beliefs, and values (Morgan, 2006). “However, the political content increases a manifold when we begin to recognize the existence of other players, each with interest-based agendas to pursue” (Morgan, 2006, p. 159).

When describing power and authority as in the organization, Morgan (2006) indicated bureaucracy is a most formal authority. However, the author noted that authority should be legitimized from the bottom. “The pyramid of power represented in an organization chart thus builds on a base where considerable power belongs to those at the bottom of the pyramid as well as to those at the top” (Morgan, 2006, p. 168).

In this context, Morgan (2006) introduced notions of pluralist, unitary, and radical organizations. These three radically different forms of organization employ different models of conflict resolution, interests, and power distribution in the organization.

1. The unitary approach emphasizes the organization as a unity of individuals where interests of organizations and individuals are same, and employees and managers are codependent by serving common purpose.

2. Radical views of the organization are related to the Marxian approach where class conflict plays main role in protecting exploited class from the exploiters. “This radical view, influenced by a Marxian perspective, suggests that the interests of disadvantaged groups can be furthered in a substantial way only through radical changes in the structure of society that displace those currently in power” (Morgan, 2006, p. 194).
3. Pluralist approach permits and tolerates differ opinions in the organization where conflicts are recognized as an inherent part of the process human interaction. However, the bargain, negotiation, and compromise are primary tools for managing conflicts in the diverse groups within the organizations. “The pluralist vision is of a society where different groups bargain and compete for a share in the balance of power and use their influence to realize Aristotle’s ideal of politics: a negotiated order that creates unity out of diversity” (Morgan, 2006, p. 194).

Thus, political processes in the organization are unavoidable and, in some cases, necessary to reach balance in power allocation and distribution. Avoiding and managing conflicts, accommodating diversity, collaborating for achieving an organization’s goals, and compromising for better solutions are the processes of political nature. The political metaphor shows that organizations goals may not always be rational for every member of the group; it outlines the existence of separate agendas behind each member and analyzes interests, conflicts, and power distribution in the organization. As Morgan stated,

“Finally, the metaphor also encourages us to recognize the sociopolitical implications of different kinds of organization and the roles that organizations play in society” (p. 205).

Analyzing aspects of political processes in the organization and examining the Georgian regional NGO’s organizational forms and structures through the lenses of the political megaphone provided a unique way to examine the processes of organizational development in post-Soviet environment.

### **General Concept and Organizational Structure of Nongovernmental Organizations**

In this section I review and define classic concepts of the NGOs as an organization in democratic society, NGO culture, the history of NGO development, innovative and modern NGO structures, and NGO role in building open and democratic society. There are many definitions of the NGOs; however, the main characteristics of this organizational entity are same. An NGO is a “voluntary not-for-profit organization that is bound legally to be nonpolitical but can engage in non-institutional politics, that generates normative claims about a common good, and that acts on these claims as a public expert in variously scaled civic spaces” (Lang, 2013, p. 13). At the most basic level, “NGOs are not related to government, are not for profit, are voluntary, and pursue activities for the common good instead of just their members” (Lang, 2013, p. 12)

The term NGO was first used in 1945 when the United Nations (UN) initially identified the specific role of nongovernmental associated groups. NGOs may have different organizational form and structure. “In term of their structure, NGOs may be large or small, formal or informal, bureaucratic or flexible. In terms of funding, many are externally funded, while others depend on locally mobilized resources” (Lewis & Kanji,

2009, Introduction, para. 5). NGOs also vary with their functions. “Some might have philanthropic condition, when other ones might be recorded for duty exception founded on acknowledgment of communal motives. Others might be fronts for governmental, devout either different attention groupings” (Franklin, 2014, Non-Governmental Organizations section, para. 1).

There are typically two main kinds of NGOs: international NGOs (INGOs) or big international NGOs (BINGOs), and local NGOs or local community-based organizations or CBOs.

The idea of an international organization is the outcome of an attempt to bring order into international relations by establishing lasting bonds across frontiers between governments or social groups wishing to defend their common interest, within the context of permanent bodies, distinct from national institutions, having their own individual characteristics, capable of expressing their own will and whose role it is to perform certain functions of international importance. (Gerbet, as quoted in Archer, 2001, p. 32)

International organizations played a significant role in the establishment of the third sector in post-Soviet countries. “Since the end of the cold war, postcommunist states in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia have played host to a virtual army of international NGOs from the United States, Britain, Germany and elsewhere in Europe” (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002, p. 1). The impact that this dramatic intervention created in the post-communist countries is debatable. Many authors and scholars have criticized international NGOs by outlining the existing mistrust and mismatch with these

organizations and the local social-cultural environment in the host countries. Mendelsohn and Glenn (2002) indicated that “Western NGOs unfamiliar with the domestic settings and relying on foreign experts and advisors to formulate strategies were hampered in their ability to help make new institutions function” (p. 233). Pearce (2000) outlined the same problem and argued that NGOs should reconnect with their “original social change objectives.” In addition, Pearce (2000) raised the question of shifting from vertical to the horizontal relationship between Northern donor and Southern recipient NGOs by indicating adverse competitive nature of the vertical approach. “Southern NGOs, particularly the larger ones and those willing to scale up further, may now have gained some relative independence from the Northern, but not from the official donors who have financed this expansion” (Pearce, 2000, p. 27). However, the relationship between local and international NGOs has continued to evolve. “Northern NGOs that have continued to act as conduits for official aid have had to face dilemmas in trying to preserve their own agenda” (p. 28). Most importantly, the central question that Pearce raised that also well applies to this research is not only about a nature of the relationship between the international donor (Northern) and local recipient (Southern) organization, but how much the NGO development in general addresses the real needs of the society. “Have Southern NGOs proved themselves more effective than states in the development process? And, if not, what kind of state, as well as what kind of NGOs, should we be thinking about?” (Pearce, 2000, p. 29).

Considering the circumstances that NGO development may experience in the post-Soviet countries, the traditional structure and role of the NGOs in the democratic

society should be defined and analyzed. NGOs are products of civil activism and engagement, although the nature of the civil engagement demands exploration. Lang (2013) argued that “even the most cursory glance at history and politics reveals that there is no automatic link between civil engagement and democratic public voice” (p. 34). Lang mentioned Nazi Germany, where powerful civil groups supported the development of autocracy and “one-man one-voice propaganda.” Accordingly, it is important to learn the arena for public participation in the society. Lang revisited the concepts of the public sphere and argued that that NGO should be “not just civic but public actors” emphasizing on social inclusiveness and open debates. “Without the concept of the public sphere, civil society talks will remain hopelessly one-sided and analytically useless” (Cohen, as cited at Lang, 2013, p. 49). Accordingly, in the process of defining the NGO role in the democratic society, it is critical to understand and distinguish the ways, how the NGOs link to the public will. “Without the concept of the public sphere, the analysis of NGOs misses a central dimension of how these organizations channel and condition public voice and advocacy” (Lang, 2013, p. 49).

Indeed, one of the core factors for the strong NGO development is how the organization communicates with the public. Lang (2013) described three main channels of the communication: reflective internal communication, institutional communication, and public communication. Reflective internal communication applies to the interaction and information exchange among members of the organization; it could be the board, the executive leadership, the program staff, and the associated members of the organization. Institutional communication involves institutions such as a partner or other NGOs,



governmental agencies, international organizations or originations that are offering expertise or consultation. Finally, the public communication is the essential component that facilitates citizen's participation in the processes. "Finally, it (NGO) might use means of communication to engage in public communication practices to gain support from a wider array of citizens and to engage with those who are not part of their subpublic" (Lang, 2013, p. 57). Furthermore, Lang outlined the importance of using all three modes of communication simultaneously and concluded, "If NGOs use exclusively reflexive and institutional communication repertoires, their legitimacy is in jeopardy" (p. 58).

At the core of democratic society are political, economic, social, and cultural elements. In such a complex environment NGOs must lead and, in many cases, even "remodel the social intervention" (Vernis, Lglesias, Sanz, & Saz-Carranza, 2006, p. 2). Vernis et al. (2006) outlined the importance of intersectorial coordination between three main sectors: business corporations, public administrations, and nonprofit organizations. "Like a three-legged stool, these three sectors have to work together to drive towards balance" (p. 2). The role of NGOs in this intersectorial collaboration is vital. Evers and Svetlik (as cited in Vernis et al., 2006) gave nonprofit organizations central positions in their welfare triangle where each angle represents family, state, and market. Citizen participation and social inclusiveness are critical factors for developing a strong NGO sector. To apply this notion, Vernis at al. introduced the capacity building concept. The authors cited the UN's definition of capacity building: "creating a society and supporting it to perform certain tasks and to achieve human development goals (set forth in the

Millennium Statement)” (p. 11.). Capacity building concept requires an active engagement of people in the processes. It focuses on simultaneous communicational coordination among citizens and organizations. “Capacity building involves many dimensions; hence, interventions will focus on several levels: individuals, organizations, sectors, and institutions. Certainly, for a real impact, capacity building strategies must approach all levels simultaneously” (p. 11).

Several negative environmental factors restrict NGOs from the effective collaboration. Those factors are competitive environment, overlapping actions, focus on daily operation and lack of strategies thinking, lack of resources, resistance to change, and highly personalized organizations (Vernis, 2006, p. 2.). However, modern NGOs use cross-sector and multidisciplinary approaches as the complexity of the problems to solve exceed one organization’s capacity. The use of new technology and increasing demand for better accountability also stimulates the collaboration. Another positive factor for NGO development as a strong social actor is the increasing interest from the state and acknowledgment of the NGOs as partners in welfare and service provision.

The increase in publication of civic-social sector studies shows not only public administration’s rising interest in the nonprofit sector but also the departure from the charity culture of the past a new perception of nonprofits as legitimate, socially responsible agents. (Vernis et al., 2006, p. 71)

Anheiner (2004) also outlined the importance of public administration and NGO collaboration. In many western countries, public administration suggests that NGOs are effective in providing social and other services. “As a result, cooperative relations

between governments and nonprofits in welfare provision have become a prominent future in countries such as US, Germany, France or the UK” (Anheier, 2004, p. 114). Modern NGOs and nonprofits play a significant role in democratic society, especially in the frame of new public management, where modern NGOs are considered as an equal player along with the business sector and public administration in managing the social welfare. One of the characteristics of the NGO in the frame of new public management is “a move from third-party government (Salmon, 1995) where nonprofits served as either extension agents or partners of governments in service delivery, to a mixed economy of social and welfare that includes businesses and public agencies next to nonprofit providers” (Knapp, Hardly, & Forder, as cited in Anheier, 2004, Civil Society section, para. 4).

Zettl (2013) also indicated that NGOs gain an increasingly influential role in the modern society. Because of their narrow specializations and expertise in the areas, local geographic focus, and attention to the chosen social group, NGOs can be more efficient than government. However, the government still remains as the primary decision maker. “Although NGOs become increasingly influential in world politics, it is, nevertheless, the state’s decisions, which opportunities are given, which limits are set to NGOs and to which extent NGOs are integrated into political decisions” (Zettl, 2013, p. 3).

### **NGO Development and Community in Post-Soviet Georgia**

In this section I review the literature on the phenomenon of Soviet mentality, NGO development, and community in post-Soviet Georgia; social activism in the region;

empowerment of civil society and community development; citizen participation; and the public attitude toward NGOs in Georgia.

Vasadze and Datuashvili (2010) noted that the “formation of a formal ‘third sector’ [began] in 1992–1995, after the various US and international programs began to work in the country” (p. 138). Since that time a large number of NGOs have been registered in Georgia, although many exist only on paper. One of the main problems that Vasadze and Datuashvili outlined in the article is the lack of active NGOs and CBOs in the country. Only 150-200 NGOs are regularly involved in the processes on a nationwide basis (p. 231). Another challenge for Georgian NGO development is that “local philanthropy is insufficiently developed” as there is a lack of legislations including the legal mechanisms for the government to provide grants to NGOs (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011, p. 232).

The high dependence on international funding is one of the major downsides and increases doubts whether the NGOs are rooted in the local communities. The large social-economic imbalance between the capital, Tbilisi, and the regions is another main reason for the insufficient development of the NGO sector in the regions of the country. “There are dramatic differences between activity in the capital, Tbilisi, and other, more rural, regions” (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011, p. 233).

According to the NGO Sustainability Index (USAID, 2011) Georgia scores middle category (scores between 3 and 5 points) in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Similarly, the CSO Sustainability Indexes in 2012, 2013, and 2014 in Georgia were 4.2, 4.1, and 4.1. In the all three reports, USAID indicated that local SCOs have limited

financial capacity and are 95% depended on their international donors. Large organizations are concentrated Tbilisi and have more formal organizational structure. Small organizations predominantly remain as one-person organizations. One of the biggest problems for small CSOs is their access to quality labor, as they cannot compete with large international NGOs and governmental agencies. Boards of small organizations are nonfunctional, and structures are undeveloped. The culture of volunteerism is undeveloped as well. Although these organizations have official boards and structure on paper, USAID has reported “no data is available on the extent to which these management structures and guidelines are applied in day-to-day operations” (USAID, 2015, p. 87).

While reviewing the role of community development in Georgia, Vasadze and Datuashvili (2011) indicated the “imbalance of development between urban and rural areas in the country” (p. 233). Vasadze and Datuashvili reviewed the CSRDG’s 3-year experience of developing community youth centers (CYC) in the regions of Georgia. Vasadze and Datuashvili (2011) outlined several challenging factors for NGO development in Georgia, including the lack of financial stability, low development of local philanthropy, an inactive role of community, lack of community foundations, and insufficient mechanisms for accessing state funding for civil organizations (p. 237).

Democratic governance is a complex phenomenon that requires citizen activism and participation in the actual governing processes. Georgia as a former Soviet country is still on its way to developing a mentality that would allow society to enjoy freedom and democracy. Nodia (2012) provided several interesting aspects outlining the role of think-

tanks and democratic research organizations in policy development and policy implementation processes in Georgia. Nodia described processes related to the public policy development and policy makers' attitude toward NGOs and the use of intellectual resources during the period of the last three ruling parties and governments (Shevardnadze's government, national movements, and the Georgian Dream) that ruled country for most of the period after declaring the independence in 1992.

According to Nodia (2012), Georgia belongs to the list of "hybrid democracy" countries where autocratic elements are still well nursed by ruling governments. In 2003 new revolutionary government of President Saakashvili drained the NGO intellectual recourses by moving NGO leaders into his new government. The experience created fresh thinking and brought new organizational culture to the governmental structures of Georgia; at the same time, it decreased potential and effectiveness of the NGO sector in the country. "If they saw talent in the NGO sector, their first choice was to draw it into government positions rather than engage in cumbersome relations with independent organizations" (Nodia, 2012, p. 34).

In an examination of post-Rose Revolution reforms, Mac Ginty (2013) described the weak and disorganized civil society in Georgia. Like many other authors, Mac Ginty described factors preventing an open civil society in Georgia. First has been the lack of tradition and experience of local Georgian NGO to organize their work toward solutions to problems. "While good at identifying problems, such organizations had little tradition of initiative or many of the logistical and organizational skills required for a thriving third sector" (p. 452). Another reason for the failure of civil society during post-Rose

Revolution period in Georgia was the impatience of government, centralized state power, and highly controlled media. These factors are common for the post-Soviet countries, so-called post-Soviet hangover (Mac Ginty, 2013). Moreover, Mac Ginty, similar to Lutsevych (2013), emphasized the disconnection between the elite-led NGOs and society. “Other observers note that civil society was not demand driven. Instead, it tended to be populated by a young urban elite” (p. 452).

When summarizing the reasons for the failure of the civil society during the period of the West favored President Saakashvili, Mac Ginty (2013) suggested that simply implanting Western models and values in unprepared Georgian environment may not bring success. “The Georgian case illustrates that good governance interventions are not the simple transfers of ideas and practices from Western exemplar states and organizations” (p. 456)

The same issues touched Ritvo and Jankharashvili (2012), who indicated that the collaboration between Saakashvili’s government and NGO sector was difficult. Ritvo and Jankharashvili stated, “Surprisingly, Georgia experienced a weakening of the civil society sector as many civic leaders moved into governmental positions. Some hoped that these former NGO activists would be more supportive of NGOs, but the situation did not improve” (p. 273). Despite having experience with NGOs, Saakashvili’s government neglected recommendations from the NGO sector by keeping the sector less influential and involved in the public policy development processes. Nodia (2012) also touched on the problem and negative aspects related to the passiveness of Georgian society as well as the dependence of majority the local NGO in international donors and their agenda.

Nodia (2012) argued that the reason for the failure of the democratization process in Georgia is a lack of “social capital,” which includes civil organizations as intermediate institutions for promoting the democracy (p. 40).

When screening and analyzing the NGO development in Georgia, Grodsky (2012) outlined two main periods. The first was during the presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze, who came to power by force after the coup against the first president of independent Georgia, Zviad Gamsaxurdia, (Grodsky, 2012, p. 1691) and President Saakashvili, who rose to power after the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003.

The democratization processes that President Shevardnadze brought in Georgia created a greenhouse environment for the NGO development. Grodsky (2012) stated, “Western democracy promoters found Shevardnadze’s Georgia a welcome home to the political and economic resources they poured into the civic associations they hoped would empower Georgia’s citizenry” (p. 1691). However, Grodsky noted that political and economic challenges, high corruption, and unemployment in the country left him unpopular.

Government cooperation with NGOs became much challenging during President Saakashvili’s presidency. “Inclusion of various Georgian NGO members into the post-Shevardnadze state has at times weakened the country’s NGO community by creating rifts between one-time partners who now find they have suddenly disparate agendas” (Grodsky, 2012 p. 1685). Several factors prevented the effective cooperation. Officials from the United States and international donors saw Saakashvili as the main promoter of the democracy in the country and began to redirect finances from the NGO sector to the



new government (p. 1693). The new political elite comprising the one-time NGO leaders were not cooperative, as they believed that no one knew NGOs better than they did; as such, cooperation should be only on their terms. Accordingly, local NGOs became mostly dependent on international organizations to speak for them (Grodsky, 2012, p. 1703).

Post-Soviet Georgia has not finished its transformation into a democratic state. The massive inclusion of the NGO leaders into Saakashvili's new government created a negative effect on the democratization process. According to the Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" survey, Georgia's low scores were not sufficient to move Georgia from a "partly free" to "free" country (Grodsky, 2012, p. 1704). According to Ritwo and Janezashvili (2012), civil society in Georgia is weak. A survey of the East West Management Institute's –Pac program conducted in 2011 revealed several major problems preventing NGO development:

1. The public's fundamental lack of understanding and knowledge of what an NGO is and does.
2. A mismatch between the issues that deeply concern citizens and the issues that NGOs often address.
3. The assistance of family and friends as a form of informal insurance that substitutes for NGO programs and services.
4. The current economic environment creates a lack of resources for participation.

5. A lack of institutionalization of programs—NGOs often do something once and are then gone. (Ritvo & Janezashvili, 2012, p. 273)

Ritvo (2013) discussed his concerns about NGOs in Georgia and outlined the tendencies that this sector faces after 20 years of development in the country. The author provided several factors as the major impediments to civil engagement and NGOs in Georgia: a lack of understanding in the society about the NGO work, and NGOs heavy dependency on international donors and inability to meet local needs. Most importantly, Ritvo argued, most NGOs are located in the capital and other large cities of the country that leave regional and rural population out of reach (p. 14).

### **Citizen's Participation and Attitudes Toward NGOs in Georgia**

Citizen participation in post-Soviet countries still experience strong influences from the past communist legacies. Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2013) noted that the communist approach to civil activism promoted mandatory participation accompanied with strong regulations and severe civil society restrictions. Pop-Eleches and Tucker stated that their research provided “not just a systematic analysis of the extent to which there has in fact been a civic participation deficit in the post-communist world but also to assess the extent to which this deficit is a function of the communist past” (p. 46.). They argued that the lack of citizen participation in post-Soviet countries is a result of the past communist experience, albeit with different generations showing a different level of social activism. The Stalinist generation are less participative compared to the generations who lived longer in the post-Soviet period. “To the extent that the civic

participation deficit is driven by the experience of having lived through communism, we have no reason to expect it to persist beyond current generations” (p. 64).

The mistrust and lack of motivation for participation in social processes is one of the major problems of the Georgian post-Soviet society. “One of the most difficult problems to overcome in the post-Soviet area is the mentality of the population: society, in general, prefers to be a passive player and avoids taking civil responsibility” (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011, p. 234). Vasadze and Datuashvili (2010) discussed community development and its challenges in Georgia, sharing the experience of one of the strong Georgian NGOs, the CSRDG. The authors indicated that one of the major problems in community development work is mistrust and passiveness of citizens as a result of Soviet era. The CSRDG implemented its programs in two of the nine regions of Georgia. The goal of the programs was to support development and activities of the local small civil organizations. The programs resulted in a difference between generations’ response in the level of involvement in the community life. The young generation appeared to be more responsive and active other than older generation who lived during the days of the USSR (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2010).

After examining the CSRDG’s work in the rural communities of Georgia, Vasadze and Datuashvili (2010), indicated there is a need for more independence of the local NGOs from the international and governmental funding. Such a financial dependence may shift local NGOs attention from the community’s viewpoints and needs by implementing the donors’ agenda. To increase the engagement of the young

generation in the community development work, the older generation with the post-Soviet “culture of dependency on state” must be replaced (Vasadze & Datuashvili 2010)

The causes of the lack of citizen participation in the post-communist era are complex. Lutsevych (2013) analyzed NGO development and the role of NGOs in democratization processes in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Lutsevych described the elite nature of local NGOs, who are favorites of Western international organization and are highly depending on their funding. “Many Western-funded organizations are disconnected from the wider society” (Lutsevych, 2013, p. 4). Such a high dependence increases the contrast between local NGOs and people as the NGOs tend to focus on the donors’ agenda. “In all three countries, citizens are largely isolated from public deliberations about important issues because local NGOs have little ability to help them formulate opinions and influence state policies that affect them” (Lutsevych, 2013, p. 4). In short online survey, 70% of Georgian NGO leaders declared that professionalism and high expert level of their team is the main strength of their organization. “Only 27 percent described their organization as an association of citizens” (Lutsevych, 2013, p. 5). The growing number of registered NGOs in the region does not correlate to the level of citizen participation. The low level of citizen’s activism has not changed over the last 20 years (Lutsevych, 2013, p. 4).

Tracking the effectiveness of civil society organization and level of social activism in Georgia, Ritvo (2013) described the research project that “gauges levels of public support for NGOs in different sectors of Georgian society” (p. 13). Ritvo outlined the importance of the civil society activists and institutions in emerging democracies. He

provided several conceptual definitions of the NGOs that outlines and mainstreams the citizens' involvement in decision-making processes and organizations active presence in public life. The goal of the online survey was to identify current attitude toward NGOs by different missions and provide a breakdown of the attitude by age and gender. The results indicated the majority of the respondents (62%) agreed that NGOs are important for future development of Georgia. However, while most of the respondents thought that NGOs are important in helping people in exercising their rights of voting, free press, and individual right, 52.2% of respondents suggested that NGOs' role in cultural development is limited. The majority responded that NGOs do not provide basic needs to the people of Georgia (56%). Overall, 44% of the respondents believed that NGOs are only slightly effective or not effective at all in meeting people's need in Georgia (p. 16).

The survey showed the concerning tendency of nihilism and distrust toward NGOs in Georgian society. Ritvo (2013) discussed Georgians' pessimism about the use of aid money reflecting ineffective, misapplied resources, and corruption. Ritvo quoted one respondent: "NGOs are like pigs, doing nothing but eating" (p. 16). This survey outlined the challenges in the NGO development in Georgia. The results suggested that NGOs must raise awareness about their work, increase citizen participation, and promote volunteerism (Ritvo, 2013, p. 18).

The active collaboration with local business and their increased role and input in the processes will also be essential for developing a strong third sector in the country. The problem of post-Soviet mentality and lack of citizens' participation is one of the changes for the entire region. The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS;

2013) produced a volume of perspectives from different authors from several countries in the Black Sea area. Marthenescu of Romania described a complex transition process from Soviet to democratic governance. Marthenescu mentioned that the development processes accompanied by the transition were not the same for every country in the region.

However, Marthenescu outlined common problems for the NGO development in the region. The problem of citizen participation is one of the first in the list of changes the author described. Marthenescu, (2013) stated, “Low participation also translates in a rather elitist, competitive and distant or disengaged approach in leading NGOs, which ultimately affects impacts of public policies and the effectiveness of western aid” (Marthenescu, 2013, p. 32).

Mockverashvili (2013), of Georgia, described the Soviet mentality as the main problem for all of the post-Soviet states. She argued that society has a low level of trust and suspicion of politics, disbelief towards civil society, low level of solidarity, and indifference with NGO activities. Mockverashvili described local NGOs as ineffective and often dysfunctional organizational entities (p. 41). Georgian NGOs have few members, and even they are indifferent to the NGOs’ goals and activities. Mokverashvili indicated that based on 2007 Caucasus Barometer’s survey, only 1% of the Georgian population attended any civil sector meetings. Local NGOs in Georgia have little influence in the decision-making processes, which makes the government more authoritarian (Mockverashvili, 2013).

Citizen activism may have implications with regard to the culture of gender in Georgia. Japaridze (2012) discussed Georgia’s patriarchal-dominant culture in which

women are not required to be active in the country's social-political life. Japaridze criticized women's subordinate position in Georgian society but suggested that the majority of women are satisfied with their role in the society and do not want changes. Japaridze provided examples of why women's involvement in politics is important and stated that one of the reasons for the women's passiveness in Georgia is a lack of information about gender equality. Another reason is a lack of women's consolidation. The author concluded that the performance of NGOs that contribute to gender equality are weak (p. 21). While gender policy promotes the development of democracy, the main attention on economic and financial problems restrict women to engage in decision-making processes in social and political arenas (Japaridze, 2012).

Lee et al. (2012) provided a comprehensive discussion of the problems and challenges in trust that the society and NGOs face in postcommunist countries. Lee et al. argued that "post-communist Eurasia has little historical evidence with NGOs' contribution to their social, economic and political life" (p. 9). In addition, despite Western NGOs emerged from the bottom up, the NGOs in postcommunist countries are mostly promoted and funded by international organizations. This creates major confusion with citizens in understanding and trusting core principals of NGOs as civil organizations (Lee et al., 2012). As citizens' trust is a crucial element for development and sustainability of the NGO sector in postcommunist countries, it is important to inform and educate society with true principles of NGO work, its structure, and its values. Lee et al. noted the critical role of independent media in gaining trust for the NGOs in the

community, and suggested the media should provide information about activities of the NGOs, both positive and negative, and serve as a watchdog for the processes

Indeed, citizen participation is one of the core factors for developing democracy and one of the virtue of self-governance and secures citizens' rights to engage in the decision-making process. The CSRDG (2012) provided research about citizen's participation in local self-governance in Eastern Europe. The studies were conducted in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. The CSRDG analyzed and compared legislative systems of researched states and provided outcomes of the survey, which reflected opinions of NGOs and municipalities about citizen participation in targeted regions. The CSRDG found a number of unfavorable factors for NGO development in Georgia, including the "lack of citizens activeness, lack of political readiness, insufficient information, insufficiently developed civil-sector, and deficiencies of the legislation system" (p. 15).

To narrow the focus on the Caucasus region, Paturyan and Gevorgyan (2014) examined the process of post-communist transformation that has been evolving differently in South Caucasian countries of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The authors determined that among the three countries, "Georgia has achieved the highest levels of democratization, though its development has been uneven and turbulent at times" (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014, p. 242). However, the level of citizens' participation and level of volunteering was lowest in Georgia (p. 246). Paturyan and Gevorgyan analyzed data from the 2008-2012 Caucasus Barometer, produced by the Caucasus Research Resource Center, to measure and compare the level of trust toward



NGOs among the three countries of the region. Azerbaijan scored the highest with 24 and 35% of the population who trust NGOs, Georgia scored between 20 and 33% and Armenia scored lowest with 20%. It is also noticeable that a large group of the population in every studied country found the question difficult to answer. For the comparison, the authors provide scores indicating the level of trust toward CSOs in Europe where Malta scored highest with 88%; Netherlands at 77%, France at 74%, the UK at 74%, and Belgium at 72%. (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014, Table 1). Until 2012, trust of NGOs was the highest in rural settlements rather than in Capital cities in Armenia and Azerbaijan. This, however, did not apply to where “the pattern was reversed, with the highest levels of trust towards NGOs recorded in Tbilisi, while respondents in rural areas expressed the lowest levels of trust” (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014, p. 254). “Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union,” Paturyan and Gevorgyan wrote, “the civil societies of the three South Caucasus countries display comparatively low levels of trust towards civil society organizations” (p. 257).

### **Democracy, Humanitarian Aid, and International Community in Georgia**

Dunn (2012) discussed the problems and demonstrated the example of general misconduct or conceptual misunderstanding in the NGO system in Georgia. Dunn criticized the existing humanitarian aid system from the viewpoint of the internally displaced people (IDP) in Georgia after the 2008 war between Georgian and Russia that resulted with ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population from the regions of South Ossetia.

In order to manage the large humanitarian aids, the UN provided the cluster system approach, in which the UN would settle special Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Dunn, 2012, p. 6). This system required close collaboration with governmental agencies and local and international NGOs. As it was planned governmental ministries had to provide plan and directions for supporting the IDPs, adequately, international and local NGOs would design and implement their programs. However, as Dunn (2012) described, not everything went as planned. The author stated, “The bureaucratic mode of humanitarian actions was not simply characterized by epistemologies of planning and order but was fundamentally reliant on other forms of knowing, including guessing and improvisation” (p. 10). Moreover, many times in this chaos beneficiaries even were not able to identify what organization was helping them. Also, because of the lack of a clear need assessment, NGOs were using imagination to distinguish the needs for IDPs; however the additional problem was that “each NGO imagined the need differently” (Dunn, 2012, p. 12). NGOs were providing projects that was good enough with its technical parameter, but not very effective. As a result, “IDPs became not the customers or beneficiaries of humanitarian aid but a part of the means of production for NGOs as they sought to meet requirements of their clients, the donors” (Dunn, 2012, p. 14).

One of the primary strategic goals for Georgia is to become integrated into the Western community as a member state of the European Union (EU). The country must first take several steps to develop itself as a real democratic state to satisfy membership requirements. Rommens (2014) described the empowerment processes that the EU

provided to Georgian NGOs through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). In 2008, the EU introduced the Eastern Partnership program (EaP). “One of the goals of this policy was to increase steadily ties with non-governmental (NGO) organizations from the EU’s Eastern neighbors” (Rommens, 2014, p. 55).

Rommens (2014) argued that the weak civil society in Georgia is characteristic of other post-communist countries. At the beginning of the implementation of the ENP, there were only two partners, EU and the government of Georgia; however, from 2012-2013 CSOs were incorporated into the process. EU claimed the vital role of CSOs in democratic governance and promoted democracy in Georgia through functional cooperation in the framework of the ENP.

Despite the EU’s actions and policies for the empowerment of the local Georgian NGOs, there is still a great need to create the institutional framework for cooperation. The framework should help NGOs to provide a firm impact and not serve only as watchdogs for the political processes in the country. “NGOs operate in in a vacuum and do not manage to make an impact on the policies concerned or on the broader political context” (Rommens, 2014, p. 67).

The last round of growth of the EU in 2007 created a new agenda in the EU neighborhood politics. The South Caucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia became an immediate “neighborhood” of the EU. The EU switched its interest from short-term humanitarian aid to the long-term partnership for the empowerment of civil society and democratization processes in the region (Aliyev, 2015a). Aliyev (2015a) outlined the EU’s support of the civil society in the region. The author detected the EU’s

interest in collaborating and supporting NGOs and CSOs, which are independent and free from political and government influence. “The local national-level coordinators of the EU aid are using their connections among civil actors to distinguish independent NGOs from either representatives of ‘uncivil society’ or government organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs)” (Aliyev, 2015b, p. 318). In 2009, the EU launched the Civil Society Forum for the five Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. The Forum had to support regional networking within civil society. The Civil Society Forum is the initiative in aimed at facilitating regional networking within civil society; it is also the only EU program promoting bottom-up democratization (Aliyev, 2015, p. 9).

Despite the EU’s efforts to promote bottom-up democratization, the majority of the EU funding was distributed through high control of government, which jeopardized the independence of the NGOs. In addition, a large portion of the funds has been circulated to Western consultancy firms from Western Europe and the United States. As a result, few funds were available for local NGOs and CSOs, many of which were unable to apply for the EU grants due to difficult and technically complicated application procedures (Aliyev, 2015a). “In the words of an NGO official in the South Caucasus ‘that is why it is [running an NGO] often being seen as a business: as a NGO if you have one or two people in your organization, who know how to attract the EU funding, then you have quite a stable source of income’” (Aliyev, 2015a, p. 9).

Aliyev (2015a) concluded that, in general, the EU’s programs for empowerment for civil society in the region of South Caucasus do generate positive results. But the EU

must take additional steps to provide better impact, including switching from “government-focused assistance” to the empowerment of NGOs, simplifying the application processes, engaging more local NGO and CSOs in the programs, and focusing on rural-based organizations (Aliyev, 2015a).

The USAID (2012), in its country development cooperation strategy for 2013-2017, provided specific goals, objectives, expected outcomes, and indicators for further economic and social development of Georgia. In this comprehensive document, the agency emphasized the need for empowering and promoting more informed and engaged citizenry by development of an open society and distributing of NGO capacity building, including outside of the capital Tbilisi. In a 2013-2014 World Bank (2014) survey, 81% of respondents were from capital city Tbilisi. The report indicated that one of the weaknesses of the World Bank was “not collaborating enough with non-state actors” (p. 19). Moreover, the document revealed an inadequate level of citizen participation, which has slowed democratic reform in Georgia (p. 39).

### **Conclusion**

A review of the literature suggested that the large-scale interventions of the international NGOs in the post-Soviet countries have not always been successful. The unfamiliarity of the international organizations with the local social-cultural environment negatively affects local NGO development. “Because of the overwhelming reliance on Western practitioners, Western NGOs could not gauge how they should have adapted their strategies to the inherited historical legacies and the rapidly changing political environment of a country in transition” (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002, p. 235). Moreover,

scholars suggested that the perspectives of local communities and local NGOs in many cases do not match with the Western international NGOs viewpoints. As a result, the financial dependence on international donors excludes and isolates local NGOs from their communities. “The diffusion of ideas and practices beyond the people and organizations with which international NGOs work is an important unexamined dynamic in assistance” (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002, p. 23).

One of the core aspects of the classic Western NGOs suggests that maintaining coordination and communication at the individual, organizational, and sectorial levels are critical for modern NGOs. In a democratic society, such organizations should continually and simultaneously engage in internal, institutional, and public communication by holding strong collaborative ties with public administration and local businesses. These notions of social inclusiveness and public engagement are supported in the public sphere (Lang, 2013) and capacity building concepts (Vernis et al., 2006) concepts. On the other hand, the new social-economic environment increases businesses’ interest in social development that has to be addressed with the proactive role of NGOs. “Nonprofits [have formed] more proactive relationships with businesses instead of responding individual situations” (Vernis et al., 2006, p. 25)

The increasing collaboration with public administration makes modern NGOs one of the primary players, along with local businesses and local governments, in delivering the social welfare to the public. A growing demand in public-private partnerships and collaboration between state and NGOs makes welfare pluralism theory essential to consider in which “public agencies and private organizations cooperate and complement

each other” (Vernis et al., 2006, p.53). As a result, modern NGOs are no longer charity organizations. They have reestablished themselves as influential actors in building, serving, and managing a democratic society.

According to the existing literature, the NGO role in Georgian society is dramatically different from modern NGOs in Western democratic societies. Moreover, the general public has a lack of understanding of the NGO concept and NGO role in the society, particularly between the issues that society raises and the issues that NGOs address. Besides, the lack of institutionalization makes NGO programs as short-term interventions with insufficient effectiveness (Lutsevych, 2013; Ritvo & Janezashvili, 2012; USAID, 2016).

The low level of solidarity, disbelief towards civil society, and indifference with the NGO activities—that is, the mentality of post-Soviet society—are central problems for post-Soviet Georgian society (Mokverashvili, 2013). Accordingly, citizen participation is dramatically low, and Georgia scores lowest among the three South Caucasus republic (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014, p. 246). The level public trust also is not favorable for Georgian NGOs. More than half of Georgian respondents indicated that NGOs are not effective in meeting people’s needs (Ritvo, 2013) “According to NDI’s August 2015 public opinion survey, only 29 percent of Georgians agree that CSOs in Georgia work on issues that matter to them” (USAID, 2016, p. 107).

Several influential Georgian NGOs in the capital and large cities of the country have highly qualified staff who are effective and transforming their organizations. The number of such elite NGOs is small, and they are located mainly in the. “Only a few

domestic organizations are able to compete successfully against international CSOs” (USAID, 2016, p. 104). The unequal development of the democratic institution and the NGO sector in the capital and the regions of country have created a sizeable gap in effectiveness, structural development, and financial sustainability of regional and central elite NGOs. Regional NGOs struggle because of the lack of attention and support from international donor organizations. Accordingly, the public trust toward NGOs in the regions and rural areas of Georgia is low (Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014; USAID, 2012). There were 21,660 nonprofit organizations registered in Georgia in 2015 (USAID, 2016), of which many were nonfunctional and existed only on paper.

Therefore, it was vital to focus on the regional NGO sector and identify the organizations’ culture, structure, and capacity to impact democratic processes. USAID (2011, 2013, 2014) has repeatedly called for additional data in understanding the structure and daily operations of small civil society organizations in Georgia.

### **Summary**

This chapter was a comprehensive literature review in three main directions. I reviewed existing literature regarding the theoretical framework of the study, discussed the NGO concept and its role in the democratic society, and viewed the post-Soviet transformation and NGO development in Georgia. Morgan’s (2006) organizational metaphors—organization as an organism, organization as a culture, and organization as a political system—are a main theoretical guide for studying the culture and, structure of the regional NGOs in Georgia, and their impact on the democratic processes. The open system and contingency theories complement the organization as an organism metaphor,



while Hofstede's six dimensions and Project GLOBE's nine cultural dimensions fit the organization as a culture metaphor.

In the literature review I compared the classic NGOs model and the modern transformed NGOs to those in Georgia, especially in the regions of the country. The recent literature shows that modern third sector is inclusive for the general public. It plays a significant role in delivering a wide range of services in close collaboration with government and business sector. Often governmental agencies outsource their services to the local NGOs, as the NGOs are considered not only as charity organizations but community partners in delivering positive social change.

The development of NGOs in Georgian is typical for post-Soviet states. The Soviet mentality still discourages citizens participation and the democratic processes. NGOs struggle because the general public is unaware of their function. Moreover, the NGO sector was planted in Georgia by foreign international organizations after the collapse of the USSR. Unfortunately, a majority of Georgian NGOs still highly depend on foreign financial aid channeled through large international organizations. Accordingly, the local NGOs are more focused on the international organizations' agenda rather than on the issues raised by the public, which has resulted in societies' mistrusts and indifference toward the local NGOs in the country.

One of the main problems in Georgia is the unequal development of the NGO sector between the center and the regions of the country. Elite NGOs from the capital are well funded and staffed when small regional NGO are struggling with human resources,

financial stability, and organizational development. Often, these small organizations are driven by one person.

This study was designed to understand the influence of post-Soviet transformation processes on the culture and structure of the small regional NGOs and determine their capacity for influencing democratic process in the society. I argue that small regional NGOs have a key role for small communities in the regions of the country to learn and understand self-governance, engage in the decision-making process, and participate in the democratic processes as true engines of the modern democracy.

In the next chapter, I provide a detailed description of the research methods, tools, and method for planning and conducting this multiple case study in Georgia. I address my role as researcher, sampling strategies, data collection, data management, and data analyses methods. Finally, I review the ethical implication of the research, along with the reliability and validity of the study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, I explored the current literature on the concept, role, and scope of activities of NGOs in democratic societies, including in post-Soviet Georgia. I reviewed and analyzed the theoretical framework of the study--the open system theory and Morgan's (2006) three organizational metaphors: organization as an organism, organization as a culture, and organization as a political system.

In this chapter, I will outline the research methodology I used to explore the influence of post-Soviet transformation on the development of the third sector in the regions of Georgia by studying their organizational structure, culture, and influence on democratic processes. The chapter will include the research paradigm, methodology, and methods by providing a step-by-step guide map for the sampling strategies, data collection tools, data management kits, and data analyzing approaches.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The existing literature showed a gap in NGO development between the capital of the country and the regions of Georgia. Researchers had not examined the organizational capacity of the local, regional NGOs or investigated the nature of the challenges in influencing positive social change as a democratic institution.

The research questions, which determine the entire direction and strategy of an inquiry, are among the most important aspect of a qualitative study. Stake (1995) argued that "the most difficult task of the researcher is to design good questions, research questions, that will direct the looking and the thinking enough and not too much" (p. 15).

The research questions that I designed for the study focused on the organizational culture, structure, and nature of the regional NGOs in Georgia and exploring how the post-Soviet sociopolitical transformation has affected NGO development and their capacity to influence democratic processes in the society. The research questions were:

RQ1: How does the post-Soviet sociopolitical transformation of Georgia affect the organizational culture of the NGOs in the regions of the country?

RQ2: What is the organizational capacity of the regional NGOs for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia?

RQ3: What are the prospects for the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia?

I designed this study to understand the nature of regional NGOs based on exploring individuals' opinions, experiences, and understanding of the phenomenon. The ontology of the study was relativist (i.e., constructed on multiple realities based on how individuals see and understand things). "Relativists argue that reality exists in the mind, with each individual creating his or her own version" (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1170).

The epistemology of the study was emic (Hammer, 2004; Killam, 2013), wherein the researcher is closely engaged with the participants of the study by conducting research in the field and the "subjective evidence is assembled based on individual views" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Accordingly, the methodology I used in the study was qualitative. "Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The

interpretive framework I employed in the study was social constructivism. Patton (2002) stated, “Social constructivism is built on the thesis of ontological relativity, which holds that all tenable statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical or sense data about the world” (p. 96).

I used the multiple case study design in this study, which is relevant for studying events, programs, groups of individuals, and organizations. In a case study, multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and existing documentation, are used to investigate “complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). I chose three cases (research sites) for analysis. This approach increases the reliability of the study as it replicates the procedures in different representative cases for generalization (Creswell, 2013; Yin 2009).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher is central to a qualitative case study. According to Creswell (2007), a researcher positions him or herself in the study by bringing values to it. These axiological assumptions of the researcher’s role are “characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 22). In general, the role of the researcher in the qualitative case study is more exploratory than confirmatory because the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and engages in depth analyses of the chosen theme (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

I conducted this study in the regions of the republic of Georgia. This was a familiar environment for me, so cultural and social barriers did not affect the data collection process. Knowing and understanding local culture and being representative of the local social environment rather than being an outsider gave me a unique communication advantage while conducting interviews and observations. I was born and raised in the western Georgian region of Imereti. My career in Georgia started in the executive branch of the local government and then continued in the officially elected legislative assembly of the region. I established one of the first successful NGOs in my town, Samtredia. I then moved to Tbilisi to lead countrywide projects in a large international organization. My career and experiences in Georgia gave me an understanding of the critical gap in development between central-elite and regional NGOs. I had no personal or professional influence on the research participants because I now reside in the United States and left my NGO career in Georgia in 2008.

My knowledge and past experience with the local NGOs in the regions of Georgia may raise questions of potential biases. Therefore, in every stage of the fieldwork, I carefully assessed the risks of influences of my opinions and eliminated any risks of bias. I asked neutral, open-ended questions during the interview process and collected data from several sources at multiple sites. I remained in the center of the field study and neutral with my opinions and beliefs during the data collection and data-analysis process; thus, my presence had no apparent influence on the participants. No ethical issues restricted the research endeavor.

## **Methodology**

Like most qualitative, naturalistic studies, I conducted this study in a natural environment without manipulating the phenomenon of interest (see Patton, 2002). A qualitative study is interpretive and focused on human experience, their understanding, and interpretation of the world (Merriam, 2009). I examined organizational culture, structure, and the capacity of NGOs in the regions of Georgia. Organization is the product of human perception and interaction. It may have different forms or traditions in different parts of the world; however, in general, it is a social unit of people where members are deliberately organized to achieve common goals (McNamara, 2013). Accordingly, I gathered data from people directly through the interviews and observation and indirectly via reviewing documents and other sources. This study had a clearly identified scope in regards to the units of analyses—the NGOs, and specific category within this scope—the regional NGOs.

In this study, I focused on three regional NGOs in Georgia in depth. Using a multiple case study, I provided a cross-case analysis that strengthened the validity and reliability of the study. “By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29). Yin (2009) argued that the logic behind the multiple case studies is similar to the experimental study when a researcher replicates the same experiment to confirm the results. “Each case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results or predicts contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons” (p. 54)

## **The Research Population and Sampling Strategy**

I designed this study to investigate specific categories of regional NGOs in Georgia. These organizations were developed in different environments than NGOs in the capital or large cities of Georgia. Unlike for-profit or governmental institutions, NGOs are independent, goal-oriented democratic institutions governed by their boards without generating profit for their members. The unit of analysis was one organizational entity, and I used the multiple case study design by investigating three independent units. Participants of this study included board members, executive leadership, and staff members.

The sample size of the organizational entities was three. According to Merriam (2009), there are two levels of sampling in the qualitative case study, and first, the researcher must identify the case and then identify samples within the case. I interviewed three participants from each of three NGOs in the region of Georgia, for a total of nine participants, to increase confidence in the findings (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). The small NGOs in the regions of Georgia generally are run by one to three individuals and monitored by small boards of directors.

### **Participant Selection**

I interviewed executive leaders of the studied organizations as well as two other members, including staff members and board members. However, the focus of the study was the organization as the central unit of analysis. The sampling strategy was based on purposeful sampling, a common method for the qualitative case study, where the author selects information-rich cases for deep investigation (see Patton, 2002). The main goal of



this sampling strategy is to identify the cases that are typical for the chosen social cultural environment. “The purpose of a qualitative profile of one or more typical cases is to describe and illustrate what is typical to those unfamiliar with the setting—not to make generalized statements about the experiences of all the participants” (Patton, 2002, p. 236).

The purpose of this study was to identify common organizational structures, cultures, capacities, and issues that typical NGOs have in the regions of Georgia. To do so, I analyzed demographic data of the targeted small cities and villages, and I communicated with local municipalities to collect information about registered, active NGOs in their jurisdiction. I also collected information about regional NGOs from the large NGOs in the capital city that had ongoing partnerships and that collaborated with small NGOs in the regions of the country.

Because of rapid migration from small towns and villages to large cities in Georgia, the urban population in 2016 reached 2,128,500 and the rural population remained lower at 1,591,900. (GeoStat.Ge, 2016b). The majority of the urban population is allocated in Tbilisi, the capital of the country, with a population of 1,113,000 (GeoStat.Ge, 2016b). The smallest population in the list of the five large cities of Georgia is 73,000 (GeoStat.Ge, 2016b). Accordingly, I focused on small cities with the population of 40,000 or less, the size of the majority of the medium-sized and small cities in the regions of Georgia (GeoNames, 2016).

Another criterion for purposeful sampling was the functionality and official legal status of the researched organizations. Each organization I selected as a case was

officially registered in the National Agency of Public Register of Georgia as an NGO. The organization had to be functional with at least one ongoing program or activity in the community. The organization also had to have an official address, phone, and bank account. Finally, the organization had to have a basic structure and officially assigned board.

After identifying the three organizations through demographic analyses and collaborations with key informants, I contacted the executive leaders of each organization and explained the purpose and goal of the study. Upon receiving written permission (letter or e-mail) from the executive leader of the organization for conducting the research, I scheduled the dates of my site visit. I spent a minimum of 3 days in each organization—1 day for observation, 1 day to review relevant documents, and 1 day for conducting interviews.

## **Instrumentation**

### **Qualitative Interviews**

Yin (2009) suggested that in a qualitative case study, researchers must ask good questions, be good listeners, be adaptive and unbiased, and have a thorough understanding of the topic. Creswell (2013) suggested asking open-ended questions, identifying interviewees by using purposeful sampling, and using adequate recording procedures.

Patton (2002) listed three types of interviews: informal conversations, general guided ones, and standardized open-ended interview. The general guided methods provide broad directions in the process to keep respondents' attention close to the

research topic. In contrast, the standard open-ended interview method provides clear guidance and precisely spells out each question prepared to ask the respondent. Patton suggested combining the types “with a standardized format by specifying certain key questions exactly as they must be asked while leaving other items as topics to be explored at the interviewer’s discretion” (Patton, 2002, p. 347). Merriam (2009) discussed semistructured interviews, similar to Patton’s general guided or mixed strategies of the interview. “In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Based on guidance from Patton, Creswell, Yin, and Merriam, I constructed semistructured interviews with three representatives of each organization. The interviews took place after business hours in the offices of the studied organizations, with their permission and based on their availability. I interviewed one executive leader, one board member, and one staff member of each organization.

### **Observations**

Along with the qualitative interviews, the observation is an essential instrument for collecting data in the qualitative case study (Creswell, 2013). First, I considered my role of as a complete participant, observer as participant, or complete observer, depending on my access to the researched groups (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). To investigate the structure, culture and organizational capacity of the regional NGOs in Georgia, I visited the organizations to conduct interviews and review documents and took part in informal dialogues with the organizations’ leadership team, staff members, and, in some cases, with the beneficiaries of the organizations. This strategy of “participant as an

observer” gave me a better opportunity to understand and learn the depth of the organizational culture and nature of the regional NGOs as organizational entities. Having access to the individuals in the organizational settings and events without participating in them during the observation was the most appropriate strategy of observation for my study. “The participant role is more salient than the researcher role. This may help the researcher gain insider views and subjective data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 293).

Another important aspect of the observation process is to be certain about what to observe. According to Merriam (1998), it is important to observe the physical setting, the participants, activities, conversations, subtle factors, and my own behavior (pp. 97, 98). As part of the observation process, I spent one day in each organization and follow the organization’s agenda and schedule for the given day. I informed the organization’s leadership and members of the organization about my role as an observer and the role of the observation process in the research. I did not engage in the processes as a participant or take any functional role in the event or other activities except in the role of outsider observer. However, I also engaged in informal communication with the organization members in when I need clarification of the facts or additional information about observed activities (program, event, meeting, operations). I designed the observation protocol that guided me through the entire process of observation and supported me to classify and manage collected data.

### **Document Review**

I reviewed relevant documents related to the case. According to Merriam (1998), “Public records, personal documents, and physical materials are three major types of

documents available to the researcher for analyses” (p. 113). Patton (2002) also recognized the importance of document review in the qualitative research. Those documents could be public record, photographs, client files, letters, and many others. “At the very beginning of an evaluation or organizational fieldwork, access to potentially important documents and records should be negotiated” (p. 293)

To better understand the structure of the culture and organizational capacity of the regional NGOs, I reviewed public records organization, including registration, bylaws, and article of incorporation. I also examined last two or three board meeting minutes and grant proposal and program implementation reports (annual or quarterly), media publication about the organization, and photo video materials.

Because of the legal status of the NGOs in Georgia, all the types of above-listed documents were public information and should have been released by an organization upon request. Before starting the data collection process, I provided a special letter to the researched organization’s leaders wherein I explained the goal of the proposed study, the nature of the research, and data collection methods and instruments. I informed the organization’s executive leader and when possible board members about the procedures of the document review their role as a source of qualitative data for the study. Only upon receiving written permission from the organization’s leadership did I schedule fieldwork in the organization.

### **Data Management and Analysis**

Researchers must ensure proper management of qualitative data. As the qualitative researcher collects, evaluates, and analyzes the human experience, it may

require more complex data management strategies rather than just numbers, as in a quantitative study. The rapid development of new technology and software programs gives better flexibility for storing and managing any forms of qualitative data.

During the interview process, with the permission of participants, I used a high-quality audio recorder. I took notes on an iPad during the observation process and directly backed up and stored the data on the iCloud. To take pictures and videos during the observation process I used a high megapixel semiprofessional camera, and a portable mini-scanner to scan documents, newspaper articles, brochures, and other printing and photo material and digitally store it to my computer and to my iCloud storage.

Using the computer-assisted qualitative data analyses software is almost unavoidable for modern researchers. After reviewing software tutorials, I chose to use MXQDA, which is more user-friendly to the Macintosh IOS system. MAXQDA “helps researchers systematically evaluate and interpret qualitative texts” (Creswell, 2009, p. 188). I organized data according to the research questions, research source, and research case. “The process of data collection, data analyses, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process; they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” (Creswell, 2013, p. 182). In Chapter 4 I provide a general explanation of each individual case, and then, based on initially created themes, I categorized data and identified patterned regularities and contextualized it with the theoretical framework. It was critical to analyze and categorize the content of collected data carefully. I used both letter and color-coding to classify data with three criteria: Place of the data collection, method of data collection, and implication the three main research questions. Finally, I

provided cross-case analyses and provide a general explanation of the identified phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

Establishing trustworthiness of the study is an important issue for a qualitative researcher. Qualitative research mainly collects data that are subjective as they represent human experience, views, and perceptions. “To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). There are four main criteria for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study: “(a) credibility (in preference to internal validity); (b) transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability); (c) dependability (in preference to reliability); [and] (d) confirmability (in preference to objectivity)” (Shenton, 2004, p. 64).

The assumptions for validity and reliability of the study must be rooted in every stage of the research. Researchers must establish enough evidence to show that the study is rigorously conducted. Merriam (1998) argued, “They [researchers] need to present insight and conclusions that ring true to readers, educators, and other researchers” (p. 1999). Creswell (2013) also emphasized the importance of validation in the qualitative study and describes it as an “attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants” (p. 249).

### **Credibility**

Building credibility of the study starts from the adoption of a right research method (Shenton, 2004). I chose a multiple-case study as a preferred qualitative research method to study regional NGOs in Georgia. Studying three NGOs in three different

regional municipalities gave me an opportunity to corroborate findings and find similarities to identify the nature and organizational culture of the regional nongovernmental sector in Georgia.

For ensuring the credibility of the study, I used several strategies. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation, persistent observations, and member check, are among the strategies that increase internal validity of the study. Shenton (2004) added strategies to outline background qualification of the researcher, tactics to help ensure honesty in informants, and iterative questioning.

**Triangulation.** Using multiple methods and multiple sources for data collection provides an opportunity for employing triangulation to the qualitative case study. This method is well tested and frequently used among qualitative researchers for increasing the credibility of the study. I applied the triangulation method to this study by using different sources and multiple methods of data collection. “Typically, this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). I validated data by comparing facts and records collected in the three regional NGOs from three different locations. Also, I corroborated the data gathered through multiple methods of data collection, which included one-on-one interviews, observations, and documents reviews. Collecting the data in this fashion gave me a sense of seeing and hearing things repeatedly.

**Member check.** I used a member checking strategy by bringing the collected interview transcripts back to the participants for their confirmation if the results were plausible. I stored the research data in two copies: one on my personal computer, and



another copy in my personal iCloud storage. Both storages are secured with passwords. Each Microsoft document with the data has a unique password lock.

**Ensuring the honesty of the informants.** Shenton (2004) indicated that random sampling of individuals who serve as informants may increase internal validity. However, the author warned about the risks of such a strategy. “A significant disadvantage of the random method, however, stems from the fact that, since the researcher has no control over the choice of informants, it is possible that quiet, uncooperative or inarticulate individuals may be selected” (p. 65). In my study, I used purposeful sampling in both levels by choosing organizations for the study, and individual within the organizations for the one-on-one interviews.

Each participant at both individual and organizational level had an opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. Moreover, participants received information about their rights of withholding from the study at any time without explanation.

To ensure the credibility of the interviews, I audio-recorded each interview by using a digital recorder, but only with the permission of the respondents. I asked open-ended questions first in English and then translated them into Georgian. As a native Georgian speaker and fluent speaker in English, I translated the interview transcripts into English.

**Persistent observation.** While discussing the internal validity of the qualitative research, Merriam (2009) also discussed being adequately engaged in the data collection process (p. 219). During the data collection, I worked closely with the participants but did not influence the process observed in natural settings. I used persistent observation by

focusing on the elements that are most relevant to the research topic. The main goal of the observations was to see organizational culture, business relationships, process and structure of planning and implementing the programs in the regional NGOs in Georgia. While conducting the persistent observation, one must “continue the data collection process to permit identification and assessment of salient factors, and investigation in sufficient detail to separate relevant (typical) from irrelevant (atypical)” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985. p. 2). I kept a reflective journal for my personal notes and documentation of my thinking throughout the process.

**Background and qualification of the investigator.** Another strategy to ensure the internal validity of the study is to assess a researcher’s credibility and personal biases. Merriam (2009) labeled this process as a “reflectivity” and Creswell (2009) as self-reflection. It is when “investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). As a person who had experience in establishing and leading local NGOs in the region of Georgia, along with the experience of leading governmental programs and programs with international organizations both in Georgia and in the United States, I had my established views and assumptions regarding NGO development in the regions of Georgia. “Such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 221).

### **Transferability**

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to another situation (Merriam, 2009, p. 207). Different strategies are

available to ensure transferability of the qualitative case study. The primary goal of this study was to learn from multiple cases and use them as examples within a broader group. To achieve such a generalization, I took several concrete steps. First, by implementing the thick description method, I described “procedures, context, and participants in sufficient detail to permit judgment by others of the similarity to potential application sites; specify minimum elements necessary to recreate findings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 2)

I provided broad contextual information about each case and detailed information about the studied environment and the characteristics of the three regional NGOs. I included sufficient information about the financial, programmatic, structural, and operational capacities of the organizations. This enhanced the generalizability and transferability of findings as it “allows readers to have a proper understanding of it [phenomenon], thereby enabling them to compare the instance of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situation” (Shenton, 2004, p. 70).

Additionally, I offered sufficient information and detailed justification of the research methods, sample size, sampling strategy, data collection tools, and data coding and analysis. According to Merriam (2009), “In multi-case or cross-case analysis, the use of predetermined questions and specific procedures for coding and analyses enhances the generalizability of findings in the traditional sense” (p. 208).

I also provided detailed information about for candidate selection process to establish transferability of the study. I set specific selection criteria that were most

applicable to the typical regional NGOs in Georgia. A candidate nongovernmental organization needed to have had an official registration and an active bank account. Also, each organization had at least one ongoing program, with a minimum staff of four people, a functional board, and a minimum annual budget of 25,000 *lari* (approximately \$10,000 in Georgian currency) but not exceeding the 250,000 *lari* (approximately \$100,000 in Georgian currency). Most of the small grants that regional NGOs receive from international donors are in the range of \$10,000 to \$100,000.

To obtain realistic information about the culture, structure, and capacity of the regional NGOs in Georgia, I interviewed three representatives from each organization who were involved in daily activities and operations of the organizations. The organization's leader (director), program director, program coordinator, program staff member, and active board members are typically those who have most credible information about the culture, structure and capacity of the organization. Thus, such a precise and criteria-based sampling process was expected to significantly increase the transferability of the study.

### **Dependability**

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). Strategies that may establish credibility and dependability are often similar. According to Merriam (2009), the triangulation method strengthens reliability, as well as the internal validity (p. 207) According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), keeping a reflective journal may increase credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of the study.

To establish the reliability of the study, researchers must justify each step in the research process. The literature shows that the NGO development process in the post-Soviet republics is relatively similar as the post-Soviet transformation process affected an entire region of the former USSR. Accordingly, the solid dependability of the study established through comprehensive description of the phenomenon, extensive contextual and methodological information, triangulation, and a reflective journal increased the chances for replication of the findings of this research in different post-Soviet countries.

### **Conformability**

The concept of conformability is the qualitative investigators' comparable concern for objectivity (Shenton, 2004). Patton (2002) recognized challenges in establishing real objectivity, as the human involvement in the data collection and data analysis process make certain biases unavoidable. However, the precise justification of each step in the process addressed such concerns.

I provided a detailed justification of the methodology, methods, and tools that I used to conduct this study. I continued to research the literature that supported and confirmed my research problem and design choices. Finally, the triangulation of multiple sources utilized for the research increased the objectivity of the study.

### **Ethical Concerns**

A qualitative case study may face many critical ethic issues (Creswell, 2013); therefore, a researcher must carefully plan the research and specifically the data collection process to eliminate any ethical concerns. The research strategy and data collection tools addressed research questions in an ethical manner according to the

approved guidelines of the Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval no. 02-17-17-0337948).

One of the main focuses of the qualitative researcher should be to ensure transparency and explain the research goals and objectives to the research participants and the confidentiality of the research respondents. To eliminate ethical issues in my study I took several steps and actions. Before scheduling the data collection process in each organization, I informed the organization's leadership about the content and purpose of the research, explained data collection methods and instruments, and indicated the timeframe of the data collection process in the organization. I scheduled the visit in the organization only after receiving a confirmation letter from the organization's leadership. I reviewed the above-mentioned information and procedures with the staff of the organization on the first day of my visit. I designed a special flier with the research description and disseminate it among the members of the organization. I also developed informant content for the research participants and disclosed the research topics, research questions, and the purpose of the study; indicated confidentiality toward participants; and explained research instruments and the voluntary nature of the participation in the research. I planned the interviews and observation in a way to not invade respondents' privacy or bring changes in the observed activities (Merriam, 1998).

This was an international study. The official and spoken language in Georgia is Georgian. As a native Georgian speaker and fluent in English, I developed and distributed all the above-mentioned documents in both languages to the organizations' leadership staff members and interviewees. "The IRB only approves protocols in which

informed consent can occur in a language/dialect in which the participants are fluent” (Walden University, 2016, n.a.)

The multilingual informant consent was distributed to the interview respondents’ minimum one day before of the actual interview. Nevertheless, I read the informant consent to the respondent in English and in Georgian as part of the interview process. The interviews were conducted in Georgian. “Collecting qualitative data in a language in which the researcher is NOT fluent can be ethically challenging but is not impossible” (Walden University, 2016, n.a.). My ability to be native in Georgian and fluent in English eliminated ethical challenges during the data collection and translation process. I knew and understood the local culture and cultural aspects of communication in Georgia. As part of my IRB application, I provided the following documents (letter to the organizations’ leadership, informant consent, and informational flier) in both English and Georgian. I asked the organizations’ leadership to provide me with their research permission letter in both Georgian and English.

The research topic was organizational capacity, organizational culture, and the structure of the regional NGOs in Georgia, which are new to the country since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the research did not require any specific accommodation with the local culture, customs, and traditions. All research participants were adults who did not require special permission from family members for participation in the research. During the observation process, I took no pictures or audio records of minor beneficiaries of the program, and I made no audio, video and photo records without permission of the research participants or observed groups or individuals.

The confidentiality of the program participants was my top priority during and after data collection process.

### **Summary**

This qualitative case study was undertaken to explore the organizational culture, structure, and nature of the regional NGOs in Georgia. I examined how the post-Soviet sociopolitical transformation had affected the development of NGOs and their capacity as democratic institutions to influence democratic processes in the society.

I used the multiple case study method to investigate three NGOs in three different location, cities and villages of the regions of Georgia. The multiple case study method significantly enhanced reliability and validity of this study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). As with many qualitative studies, I used a purposeful sampling method to locate three registered NGOs in medium or small towns of 40,000 or fewer people. Each NGO had at least one ongoing functional program or activity, a basic organizational structure, an address, and a bank account.

To collect data, I used observations, conducted one-on-one interviews, and reviewed relevant documents. I conducted semistructured interviews with three to five representatives of each organization. I interviewed the organization's executive leader, one board member, and one staff member or program management team member. In total, I interviewed nine individuals. The observation process was conducted on-site in natural settings. During observations I was noticeable on site; however, I did not engage in any activity or meetings. As a part of the document review process, I reviewed public records, organizations' bylaws, program proposals, program reports, strategic planning



documents, and board meeting minutes, and physical materials (photo video and other materials). I used the triangulation method to analyze documents and corroborate data collected from the three different sources and places. For collecting and storing the qualitative data, I used a digital audio recorder, digital photo and video camera, Apple computer, and iPad. Data were coded and analyzed with the MXQDA software package

As a native Georgian speaker and fluent speaker of English, I could understand and provide top-level translations of the collected data. During the entire research process, I followed IRB requirements to satisfy the norms and procedures for conducting the study ethically and professionally.

In chapter 4, I present the findings from observations, document reviews, and in-depth interviews conducted in the regional NGOs in Georgia. I also describe the study settings, demographics and data collection process, along with the methods I used to code and analyze the findings.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will present the findings from observations, document reviews, and in-depth interviews conducted in the regional NGOs in the country of Georgia and regarding their culture, structure, operations, and nature. The purpose of the study was to find evidence of the influence of the post-Soviet transformation on the day-to-day decision-making processes, structural development, and strategic planning of the regional NGOs. I intended the results of this study to fill the gap in the literature and provide information about regional NGOs and CBOs separately from the elite NGOs in the capital city of Georgia.

Several studies have identified the critical role of the nongovernmental sector in the development of Georgia's open civil society. Moreover, the vast majority of international development funds are channeled through nongovernmental, noncommercial organizations and CBOs in Georgia. However, the nongovernmental, third sector has a relatively short history in the country. This organizational form was introduced to the masses in Georgia only in mid-1990s after the collapse of USSR as a part of the rapid democratization process. The dominant Soviet mentality and habits of the robust and centralized system influenced the dynamics of the NGO development in the country, and as a result, the nongovernmental sector mostly developed in the capital of Georgia and the regions did not get enough attention. Accordingly, the majority of existing studies outlined the dynamics of NGO development in the capital city Tbilisi, and little is known about the organizational capacity, structure, and culture of regional

NGOs in Georgia. Many peer-reviewed research and reports from credible international organizations indicated a wide developmental gap between nongovernmental, CSOs in the capital city and outlying regions of the country.

Understanding the organizational culture, structure, and nature of regional NGOs was critical to measure the democratization process in the regions of the country. Furthermore, understanding the capacity and challenges of the third sector in the regions of Georgia fills the existing gap in the literature and can assist the government of Georgia and international institutions in expending the development of democratic institutions, an open civil society, active citizenry, and positive social change in the country.

A general qualitative case study method was appropriate for this study to gain an in-depth understanding of an identified case as well as to compare several cases (see Creswell, 2013). The case study approach is widely used to study organizations, interorganizational and intraorganizational dynamics, and organizational cultures. In this study, I researched three different regional NGOs in three different regions of the country: Kakheti, Imereti, and Samegrelo. To answer the research questions, I observed and reviewed the documents of three regional NGOs and interviewed nine participants, three representatives from each of the researched organizations. I focused on answering the following three research questions:

RQ1: How does the post-Soviet socio-political transformation of Georgia affect the organizational culture of the NGOs in the regions of the country?

RQ2: What is the organizational capacity of the regional NGOs for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia?

RQ3: What are the prospects for the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia?

In this chapter, I will provide a detailed description of the research settings, which will include information about community partners and the regions where the research took place. I will also provide the overview of the three local organizations with coded names that participated in the study as well as participants' relevant demographics and characteristics. I will elaborate upon the data collection tools and protocols that I used for each of the data collection methods and describe the interview participants, locations, and frequency and duration of data collection for each data collection instrument. Later in the chapter, I will analyze the data, report the process used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations, and describe the coding system and categories. The chapter will also contain a discussion of the evidence of trustworthiness including implementation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Finally, I will provide the results of the study by addressing each of the research questions and providing the data supporting the findings.

### **Study Settings**

I conducted this study of three organizations located in three regions of the country of Georgia: Kakheti, Imereti, and Samegrelo. Table 1 indicates information about each setting.

Table 1

*Study Settings*

Organization	Region	Area of Georgia	No. of municipalities	Studied municipality	Administrative center
A	Kakheti	Eastern	8	Lagodekhi	Telavi
B	Imereti	West central	11	Samtredia	Kutaisi
C	Samegrelo	Western	9	Senaki	Zugdidi

**Regional Nongovernmental Organizations**

The three studied organizations were regional NGOs. Each was registered as a nonprofit, noncommercial legal entity focused on the local community development; informal education; and the development of an open, civil society. Organization A showed the strongest organizational, programming, and funding/financial capacity compared to Organization B and Organization C. Although Organizations B and C were equivalently sized, the differences in capacity among the studied organizations were minimal.

**Organization A**

Organization A was located in one of the largest and most populated villages of the Lagodekhi municipality and is the only NGO in the village. The goal of Organization A, as the organization's bylaw states, is to improve the intercultural relations and strengthen the democratization process in the local communities. The office was located in the center of the village in a three-story, Soviet-era concrete building. Like most old Soviet buildings in the regions of Georgia, the exterior of the building has not been renovated and is in poor condition. The organization's offices have been renovated,

reconditioned, and equipped with modern office furniture and computers. In the suites, the organization has two classrooms for informal and formal education classes as well as for computer classes. Also, the organization has a separate office space for staff and a small kitchen.

I visited Organization A on a cold, snowy winter day, but the organization had managed to heat the office space and classes. Organization A's director and staff were friendly and open to sharing information. They were proud of their achievements and did not hesitate to talk about their programs. I met with four staff members and the Peace Corps' volunteer from the United States who lived in the same village and assisted Organization A in a program development and implementation. I also attended and observed the informal education classes for two different groups of beneficiaries.

### **Organization B**

Organization B was located in downtown Samtredia. The goal of the Organization B as stated in the organization's bylaw is to promote civic education through formal and informal learning. Organization B has an office in the first floor of the local municipality's administrative building. The office space that Organization B held had an entrance from the main lobby of the administrative building. The lobby is mostly busy with the heavy traffic of municipality administration staff, local elected officials, and municipalities' executive leadership members. Such a location helps representatives of the organization to stay in close interaction with the representatives of local government. The organization has one sizable multiuse room for different purposes, such as meetings, educational classes, presentations, and as an office space. In one section of the large

room, the organization has four office desks for the staff and one meeting table. The office is equipped with three computers and basic office equipment. During my visit, I interacted with five staff members and a group of youth who were beneficiaries of the organization. Although the hosts were welcoming, the head of the organization interacted with me most often and rest of the staff members seemed to be a bit shy.

### **Organization C**

Organization C is located in Senaki municipality, in a Soviet-style residential area. The residential area is poor, the five-store residential concrete buildings in the area are not well maintained, and the neighborhood roads are in poor shape. It is a typical Soviet signature urban development built for the Soviet working class. The vast majority of the population in the neighborhood is unemployed. Organization C has a small stand-alone one-floor building in the urban development. The interior has been renovated and is equipped with computers and office furniture. The organization has three rooms. One room is large and used mainly as a classroom for various classes and for meeting and presentation. The organization has a separate room for staff. The room is equipped with three desks, three computers, and basic office equipment.

I met and communicated with six members of the organization and one volunteer. It was a family-style environment in the organization. Members of the organization were assigned to particular tasks and frequently reported to the director, much like the head of the family. The director of the organization held formal conversations with me, introducing the organization's ongoing programs and achievements. In general, the environment in the Organization C was friendly and welcoming.

### Demographic Information

According to the sampling criteria, I chose research participants from the three studied organizations. I interviewed three individuals from each organization for a total of nine, face-to-face, open-ended interviews. The first five questions addressed demographic information from each participant. Table 2 shows the breakdown of their responses.

Table 2

#### *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Organization	Pseudonym and number	Age	Gender	Role	Education	Years of Experience
A	Keto 1	40	Female	Director	Univ. Dipl.	10
A	Karlo 2	37	Male	Board Member	Univ. Dipl.	10
A	Kristina 3	37	Female	Program Staff	Univ. Dipl.	9
B	Ineza 1	41	Female	Director	Univ. Dipl.	11
B	Inga 2	29	Female	Program Staff	Univ. Dipl.	4
B	Irma 3	31	Female	Program Staff	Univ. Dipl.	9
C	Sara 1	51	Female	Director	Univ. Dipl.	7
C	Sesili 2	29	Female	Board Member	Prof. College	1
C	Soso 3	43	Male	Administration	Univ. Dipl.	4

*Note.* Univ. dipl. = university diploma. Number 1 indicates the position of director, Number 2 are board members, and Number 3 are staff members.

### Data Collection

Before going to the respective organizations to begin the data collection, I contacted the organizations' directors and sent them a letter of introduction in which I provided detailed information about myself and the research study. Each organization sent me a letter of cooperation for participation. In collaboration with the organizations'



directors, I set up the date and time for each visit. As a result, I traveled from the United States to Georgia and visited from February 19 until March 12, 2017. First, I visited Lagodekhi municipality, in the region of Kakheti, then in the region of Samegrelo, and, last, Samtredia in Imereti. I spent 3 days with each respective organization. The first day of each visit I started with a 30-minute introductory presentation. In this presentation, I introduced myself and the research study to the organization's team (personnel and leadership); distributed consent forms to the interview participants; and explained my role for observations, interviews, and the document review process. During the remainder of the first day, I observed the functioning of the office. The second day I continued observations, and by the end of the working day, I conducted interviews lasting 45 minutes to 1 hour with three representatives of each organization. I spent the final day doing document reviews. Each action was approved and agreed to by the organization's leadership and personnel. The times for conducting the interviews also were advised by the organization's leadership and interview participants.

### **Participant Selection**

I used a purposeful sampling technique to identify interview participants with a minimum of 1 year of experience of working in the regional NGOs. Each interviewee knew about the organization's programs, daily activities, and structure. In addition, the sampling criteria were used to identify and conduct interview with one individual from the organization's executive leadership; one from the organizations legislative and representative branch, such as the administrative or executive board; and one person from the organization's program staff. Study participants verbally volunteered to participate in

the study during the research presentation session, and I provided them an informed consent form to read and sign (see Appendix D). The informed consent forms were written in both in English and Georgian. All interviewees were native Georgian speakers with limited or no English language skills. Interview participants had one day to review the informed consent form and ask me questions. Each participant affirmed with a signature that he or she had read and understood all the information provided in the document. Each understood that confidentiality would be maintained. Before starting the interview, I also read the informed consent asked participants to verbally affirm their voluntary participation and ask me questions if they had any. None had any questions.

I conducted all nine interviews in Georgian, in which I am fluent. I offered to conduct interviews on Saturdays or Sundays or after working hours inside of the studied organization's offices. Per interviewees' preference, all the interviews were conducted after working hours on the second day of my 3-day visit to the organization. Each interview was recorded on a digital audio device and lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face. I guided the interviews with the semistructured interview guide. The sample size was sufficient to answer the research questions.

### **Observations**

I used observation as one of my data collection instrument for the study. I informed the organization's leadership and members of the organization about my role as an observer and the role of the observation process in the research. I provided the detailed description of the data collection methods in my introduction letter and collected letters

of collaboration from each participant organization before engaging in the data collection process. In addition, during my 30-minute oral presentation, I explained my role as an observer and the role of the observation process in the research. I informed the staff I observed about the voluntary nature of the study and their right to refuse to participate in the observation at any time. I did not engage in the processes as a participant or take any functional role in the event or other activities. However, several times I engaged in informal communication with the organization members when I needed clarification of the facts or additional information about observed activities (program, event, meeting, and operations).

I conducted the observations during the first and second days of my 3-day visit in each organization. On the first day I observed daily routine activities such as meetings, task allocation process, activity planning, organizational structure, management system, and general operations. On Day 2 I observed programs implemented by the observed organization. I attended classes of informal education and the discussion group meetings with the program beneficiaries. I made notes of my observation in my handbook and in my laptop computer. I made handwritten notes in Georgian and then translated them in English and typed the notes in my laptop.

### **Document Review**

The main goal of the document review was to verify organizations' official legal status and structure, determine organizations functionality and scope of activity, and identify organization's role and capacity as democratic CSOs in the community. I informed respective organizations' executive leaders about the procedures of the

document review and the use of the provided documents as a source of qualitative data for the study.

I reviewed three categories of documents. First, I verified documents showing the organization's official NGO status in Georgia. These included the organization's registration document, bylaw, and chart indicating the organizations' structure. Second, I verified the organization's functionality through documents showing the organization's program proposals, newsletters, and annual, quarterly, or monthly reports. The third of documents showed the organizations' role, capacity, and activities in the community. These documents were website publications, brochures describing organization's activities, pictures of the organization's activity available to the public, and news media articles about the originations.

I spent about one day reviewing documents and made notes in my handbook and laptop. Also, I scanned the majority of provided materials, such as official registrations, brochures, project reports, newsletters, and bylaws. I organized the collected data in three folders, one for audio and photo materials, one for Word documents, and the third for scanned files. I stored the contents on my computer and on the external hard drive and on my Dropbox cloud storage.

### **Coding Analyses**

All the interview transcriptions, observation notes, and document review notes were uploaded to the computer-assisted qualitative data analyses software MAXQDA. I transcribed audio files in Georgian and then translated them into English and as a Word

document file. I read each transcription minimum three times to identify common patterns, and to code specific sections.

I used complex coding to code collected data by several criteria simultaneously. I used color-coding, number coding, letter coding, and word coding. I organized data according to the research questions, research source, and research case. I used general inductive analysis, an approach “that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (Thomas, 2006. p. 238). Accordingly, I developed category labels, provided category descriptions, assigned texts coded into the category, outlined the links between the categories, developed subcategories, and structured them in accordance with the research questions.

As I stated earlier in the chapter, I used letter codes to code studied organizations, Organization A, Organization B, and organizations C. To ensure the confidentiality of the research participants I used pseudonyms for each participant. The names of the participants from Kakheti region start from the letter K, from Imereti region from the letter I, and from Samegrelo region from the letter S. All the names are widely used in Georgia.

In addition to word codes and letter codes, I used the color codes for interview transcripts, observation, and document review notes. I assigned the color blue to RQ1, yellow to RQ2, and green to RQ3. Finally, I used a combination of word and number coding. I assigned numbers to the fictional names of interview participants to identify the position of the interviewee in the organization. Number 1 indicates the position of

director, Number 2 are board members, and Number 3 are staff members. For example, Keto 1 indicates that the respondent represents Organization A from Kakheti region and holds the position of director.

For data analyses, I used two cycles of coding. First, I used the structural coding and set themes by three conceptual phrases related to each research questions. Structural coding, according to Saldana (2009), “applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview” (p. 66). I used following word codes: *influence*, *capacity*, and *impact*. Under the word code influence, I organized data that demonstrated post-Soviet transformation and influence of Soviet mentality in the organizational culture and decision-making process. Under word code capacity I organized data that shows studied organizational capacity, structure, culture, and operations. Finally, under the word impact I organized data that demonstrated challenges or achievements of studied organizations for promoting democratic processes in the society, citizen participation, and impact on positive social change.

After that I used pattern coding as a second cycle coding. Pattern coding is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs (Miles & Huberman, as cited in Saldana, 2009, p. 152). I grouped the retrieved data under more specific categories that showed patterns in the interview responses and my observation notes. Those pattern codes were functional organizational structure and daily operations, limited of intersectoral collaboration, need for training and capacity building, lack of citizens participation and influence of Soviet mentality, and high dependence on

international donor's agencies. These themes and patterns gathered from the raw data guided my analyses.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Ensuring trustworthiness of the study is crucial. For the credibility of my research, I researched three NGOs in three different regions of Georgia. I used corroborated data collected from three different cases by triangulating them with observations, one-on-one open-ended interviews, and a document review. On the first day of my visits in the studied organizations, I conducted a 30-minute presentation to the organizations' leadership and staff. I explained the purpose of the study and informed audience about data collection methods, confidentiality and volunteer nature of the study. I also provided information about the criteria of purposeful sampling and choose volunteers for the one-on-one interview. Each participant organization and individual interviewees received information about their rights. Before starting the data collection, I received the letter of cooperation from each organization and signed consent forms from each interview participants. I made the audio record of each interview and stored it in three different digital storages. After conducting the interviews, I used member check strategy and brought the collected interview transcripts back to the participants for their confirmation. Each participant read their interview transcripts and confirmed with their signature that the information provided in the transcripts were plausible.

During the observation process, I worked closely with the organizations' members, but I did not influence the process. By using persistent observation, I mostly focused on the elements that are relevant to the topic of the study. I attended the two

training programs in Organization A, a meeting with the young leaders in Organization B, and attended meeting with community members in Organization C. I observed program and activity planning processes and staff meetings in each organization, brainstorming sessions, and computer classes. After receiving a verbal permission from the organizations' leadership, staff, and beneficiaries, I took pictures of observed actions. I stored photos in three different digital storages along with interview audio records. To reduce the influence of my personal biases I made a special section in the observation notes. In one section I was stating pure facts, and in the special section for the additional notes, I made notes of my assumptions and thoughts. This strategy helped me later during the data analyses to distinguish observed facts from my perceptions and discussions about those facts.

There are several factors to ensure transferability of the study. My goal was to identify and research typical regional NGO that could be generalized to the majority of the third sector organizations in the regions of Georgia. Accordingly, I provided detailed information about originations, size, location, setting, annual budget, and the scope of activities. In addition, I offered descriptions of three separate cases from three different regions of the country, which also increased transferability of the study. In Chapter 3 I provided precise justification about the research methods, tools, and data collection instrument.

One of the keystone of the scientific research it to precisely follow ethical norms and guard transparency of the study. For this purpose, I conducted several actions. I provided a letter of introduction to the organization and explained the research purpose.



Following, I collected letters of collaboration from each studied organization. I conducted the 30-minute oral presentation in each organization and introduced the research topic, purpose, and data collection method, confidentiality, and volunteer nature of the study to organizations' leadership and staff. Next, I distributed consent forms to interview participants. After the participants delivered signed consent forms, I read the forms to them again and collected their verbal confirmation on audio records. Finally, I conducted member check strategy allowing each interview participants to review and confirm the interview transcripts. All the above-mentioned documents were delivered both in English and Georgian because the official and spoken language in the country is Georgian. Every photo and audio materials used for the study has the permission of organizations' leadership and recorded individuals. Some of the organizations' documents, such as registration forms, are public information and do not require special permission to be reviewed. However, each item collected for the study is permitted, approved, and provided directly by the organizations' leaders.

### **Research Findings**

In this section, I provide a detailed discussion of the findings. I discuss the research participants, the observed activities in each organization, participants' thoughts about the culture structure and nature of the regional NGOs in Georgia. Further revealed are their views about problems and changes that the local third sector faces in providing the positive social change in the society. I outline the core themes gathered from the interview transcripts and observation and document review notes. Finally, I provide answers to the three research questions.

## **Research Participants**

Three individuals from each of the three organizations participated in face-to-face open-ended interviews. Interviewees represented the executive leadership, the organizations' board, and the program staff. I screened the opinions of individuals who had a minimum of 1-year experience of working in the regional NGOs. Because most of the individuals in the researched organizations were women, I interviewed seven females and two males.

The most informative interviews those with the organizations' directors. All three directors and one codirector of the studied organization showed a deep knowledge of existing situation and challenges of the regional nongovernmental sector. Moreover, directors answered each question in detail and provided ample information about their organizations' ongoing programs, donors, challenges and plans, and relationships with local government, local businesses, and the public. Most importantly, the directors were instrumental in providing information about challenges of the nonprofit sector in the regions of the country in contrast to the large NGOs from the capital city.

The rest of the interview participants were less active and informative. They tried to answer the interview questions to the best of their ability and were descriptive about their personal role and work in the origination. However, these board and staff members offered limited information about the organizations' relationships with donors, local government, local businesses, and challenges. In several cases, the nondirector research participants were unable to provide sufficient answers to the interview questions and

referred me to the director of the organization for the answers. Nevertheless, each interviewee provided valuable information.

All participants were very cooperative, welcoming, and communicative. Every participant demonstrated his or her understanding of the purpose of this study and their willingness to participate and support the researcher. Those who offered relatively little information during the interviews showed more enthusiasm and engagement in the off-the-record personal conversations about the same topics.

I read the interview transcripts, observation notes, and document review notes several times. I analyzed data in relation to each research questions looking for consistencies between them. I also viewed the data from the angle of each studied organization as stand-alone cases and looked for correlations among those cases for generalization.

I used the research question as the primary guide for organizing, coding, and analyzing the collected data. This section provides a discussion of the common themes and describes participant responses cultivated from the raw data.

### **Research Question 1**

RQ1: How does the post-Soviet socio-political transformation of Georgia affect the organizational culture of the NGOs in the regions of the country?

To answer this question, I used observation, document review, and one-on-one interviews with the representatives of the studied organizations. My primary focus was to observe daily routines in the organization, screen the horizontal versus vertical leadership, decision-making process, leaders' personal involvement in the planned

activities, and leaders' and subordinates' interactions. During the interview, I asked a series of open-ended questions about the interviewees' role in the origination and the organization's daily activities, mission, structure, and methods of communication with the public, government, and businesses. I also asked about the challenges that regional NGOs face in Georgia. I reviewed each organization's bylaws and the allocation of decision-making power in the organization.

**The organizations' missions.** The mission statements of the three studied organizations were similar. Each focused on providing educational programs and vocational training for adults and youth in the communities, suggesting the needs in requalification for a large number of the workforce to address the challenges of post-Soviet changes in the job market and community development.

Ineza 1 said, "The goal of our organization is to create a free, tolerant, and educated society in our community. Also, to support the creation of educated, active, responsible citizens with modern standard skills."

Sara 1 said,

The goal of our organization is to increase educational capacity of our population through informal education. The objectives of our organization are the development of socioeconomic skills of the population, promoting the healthy lifestyle, establishment of the social enterprise, and socio-economic integration of IDPs and the local population.

Keto 1 stated,

The goal of our organization is community development and promotion of inter-community relations in Kakheti region. As for the objectives, those are increasing the level of education and awareness raising of the population in the community via various educational and self-development courses including professional courses, as well as cultural-creativity activities.

The document review also revealed that primary goal of the researched organizations was to promote community development via educational and vocational courses to increase the capacity of local citizens for employment and to engage them in the active citizenry.

From Organization A's strategic plan document: "The organization works in the communities of Kakheti region, to facilitate the development processes. The organization engages the young and adult population in informal education, organizes various civic engagement, cultural or sporting programs."

From Organization B's bylaw: "The mission of organizing is the development of democratic processes in the country, the establishment of civil society, the worthy employment and welfare for the population, the social integration of the socially vulnerable groups of society."

From Organization C's bylaw: "The goal of the organization is to provide the formal and informal educational courses for public education, also, public awareness and continuing education."

### **Relationship with local government, local businesses, and general public.**

Modern NGOs in democratic societies have changed from charity organizations to the

service provider partners to the public administration. The active collaboration with local government and local businesses makes NGOs one of the principal players for providing positive social change. Contrasting with a democratic society, the Soviet system was based on ultimate state authority without sharing the decision-making power. To learn the influence of the post-Soviet transformation on the development of the regional NGOs I asked respondents the open-ended questions about their organizations' relationships with local government, local businesses, and the general public. The representatives of one organization indicated the group had a good relationship with local government; the other two showed there is inadequate collaboration, recognition, and even understanding of the NGO sector from the government.

Karlo 2 said, "Of course, everything is not as good as we wish; however, I think we always were able to be their [local government] partners as well as they were our partners in particular programs."

Keto 1 noted, "There are probably about 10 projects we've had collected letters of co-funding from the local municipality. In the beginning, before restrictions apply by the law, we were receiving funds in our account, or they were purchasing other material resources."

Sergo 2 said, "There were some meetings, so we were visiting local municipality to inform them about ongoing situation. In several occasions, they were visiting us, and we had a meeting. However, we did not receive funding from [the local government]."

Sara 1 stated, "We had several projects submitted to the municipality council (Sakrebulo), but we got the answer that indicated that [Sakrebulo does] not have the

resources to fund the NGOs. All this is good, but it should wait as we have other priorities, they said.”

Sesili 3 stated,

I do not know. . . I have all negative [things] to say; it would be very good if we could have collaboration. It was a time when there was some superficial collaboration, more like collaboration for collaboration. There was also a time when the organization’s existence was in danger, and the government was watching from the ambush hoping that this will happen. I do not know; indeed, it would be very good to have a good relationship with government, but for this moment I cannot confirm it. We always need to remind to the local government that we are non-governmental organization. Actually, we are only NGO in the municipality, and unfortunately, we do not get enough attention from the government. We could do a lot together with the government for people, and I do not see this from their side.

Ineza 1 said, “We collaborate with local government; however, I cannot say that we got funding from them to support any significant initiative or project.”

Irma 3 stated, “Local government provides funding for the informational center, but, in term of nongovernmental origination, there is none.”

**Observation notes.** The question about the relationship with the government made the majority of interview participants a bit uncomfortable. In many cases, they smiled, and took a pause by looking for “politically correct phrases” to avoid negative remarks about the government and NGO relationship. However, during the off-microphone

personal conversations, many respondents indicated there was a lack of collaboration with the local government.

As I mentioned above, another indicator for the successful functionality of NGOs is the relationship with local businesses along with the local government. The triangle of cooperation with NGO sector, public administration, and business is the millstone for developing a positive social change in the democratic society. The Soviet system had no private businesses sector. Accordingly, there is no tradition of business contributions to civil society initiatives or programs in Georgia. I asked interview respondents an open-ended question about the relationship of their organizations with the local business. Five respondents had no information about the NGO-business collaboration, and four indicated that there are no financial contributions from the local businesses to the regional NGO sector.

Keto 1 said, “In our case, businesses are not as developed to have an extra resource, so we could go and ask them for [financial contributions].”

Karlo 2 noted,

Local businesses are not very involved. However, there were some cases, for example, when we had a project for renovating the square in the center of the village they donated cement and paint. In our villages, local businesses are not developed in a way to have enough funds so they could willingly provide financial support.



Ineza 1 said, “We did not have any funding from local businesses. We had several attempts by trying to assure them that posting their information on our website could bring profit for them, but with no results.”

Sara 1 stated,

None, because, local businesses are not coming for cooperation. However, a couple of our members of our administration recently created agricultural cooperative which will have its small factory. We are hoping that the main mission of our factory will be to provide some help to the nongovernmental organization. I think it is important, because our municipality is very poor with businesses, and a couple of existing businesses are not interested in nongovernmental organizations.

To continue exploring the influence of post-Soviet transformation on NGO development in the regions of Georgia, I screened the level of citizens engagement and participation in civil society organizations’ programs such and NGOs and CBOs. Existing literature reveals the low level of citizens’ involvement in the self-governing democratic processes in the post-Soviet countries.

**Observation notes.** Citizens participation is still very low in the regions of Georgia. Local NGOs are trying to engage their community members in the programs by spreading information mainly through social media and websites posts. Also, information is disseminated with personal communication mouth-to-mouth, and in some cases via informational boards. But only small groups of the community members, the program beneficiaries who are directly engaged in the training programs, are informed about the

NGO's role and function as a democratic institution in the society. Nevertheless, the smaller the community is, the higher is the involvement of citizens in the process of NGOs, mainly because the established strong personal relationships among community members and spread of information.

During the one-on-one interviews, I asked an open-ended question about the communication methods with the general public and program beneficiaries.

Keto 1 stated,

We have informational meetings. Also, when we start any professional courses, we are posting it in the informational board, because we have people who can access the information in the social media. However, there are people who we need to approach directly; otherwise they will not come to us. Therefore, we are using different forms of communication for informing the public as well as for their participation.

Karlo 2 said,

In the community, we already had the relationship with the public because everyone knows everyone, so we were using personal communication to spread the information about the programs we were planning. However, at the beginning people were very skeptical [and had a] sarcastic attitude about our organization's capacity for fixing the problems in the community. But we proved that it is not the right approach, and they need this organization. With our active communication, by showing the projects' outcomes, and sharing information about the plans the circle of skeptics got more and more narrow, and now an only low number of

people remain in the community who are not involved in our organization's activities.

Kristina 3 said,

Mainly the beneficiaries of our organization are spreading the information. Of course, we also are informing the public via our website, an informational board in the village, as well as with personal communication and phone calls. However, the personal relationship is a core, and then program beneficiaries who already are engaged in the programs. . . These two are most useful for spreading the information.

Ineza 1 said,

We are actively using social media and also direct communication methods in the community. We do not have a problem in spreading information with social media. Also, we have an active group of yang individuals who can actively disseminate the information in the community, and we have good experience with it.

Irma 3 said, "Every day we have students for computer classes, for English classes, and also respondents who are visiting us for the interviews on our informational website."

Sara 1 said The communication method with the community depends on the project's frame. In general, our organization has an initiative group and youth's club. These groups are working twice a week. Actually, the initiative group and

youths' club help us to keep our hand in the pulls of the local community, and we know what their needs are.

Almost every interview participant indicated that their organizations have no problems in communicating with the community to identify beneficiaries of their program and engaging them in the program activities. I asked participants what they think about the citizens' participation in the processes. The responses were not positive.

Sara 1 said, "There is not much desire in the community for participation. We [only] have about 15 or 20 individuals in this community and two or three people in other communities as a support group of this organizations."

Sergo 2 stated, "It is a significant challenge for us, to change the civil consciousness of the society itself. I think we need more active citizenry and citizens' participation in the organizational topics and processes."

Sesili 3 said, "Indeed, we should have more involvement and participation, because we should have initiatives coming from the citizens. I would not call the communication that we have now an active participation, more I could say about fifty-fifty."

Ineza 1 stated, "Unfortunately, we have a very low sense of civic responsibility in the community. That is why the goal of our organization is to enhance this sense of responsibility in our citizens."

Irma 3 said, "In general, the problem is an existing social background, so the population [and government] simply do not understand the nongovernmental

organizations. Mainly I meant the local government; everyone looks at the nongovernmental organization with skepticism.”

**Organizational culture and structure.** The Soviet style of organizational culture and structure fundamentally opposed the organizational culture and architecture in democratic civil society organizations. Soviet organizations were built on authoritarian leadership and consolidation of power under one individual who was the ultimate decision-maker in the organization. Accordingly, unquestionable obedience was the dominant culture in the Soviet organizations managed by the vertical hierarchy. In democratic society organizations have an organizational policy as a primary guide. In many cases, the leadership of the organization exercises horizontal leadership style and shares decision-making power within the team.

During my 3 days visit in each organization, I observed the dynamics of organizational culture and explored the structure of the organization via reviewing organizations documents. I also asked open-ended questions to interview participants about organization’s structure and their roles in the organization and organization’s daily activities.

**Observation notes, Organization A.** The organization is successful in terms of organizational management and program development. It has a good reputation with donors’ circles, which guarantees them funding security. Organization A has two leaders: Director Keto and Deputy Director (and board member) Karlo. Keto and Karlo held nearly equal decision-making power in the organization as codirectors. The organization started a day with the staff meeting with Keto reviewing the tasks for the day and

discussed upcoming activities with the staff. During the day the organization hosted several classes for computer literacy and various training programs for adults and youths. Keto and Karlo were actively engaged in the activities and fully orchestrated the processes. The rest of the staff members were assigned to their tasks and frequently asked questions to the two leaders. Keto manages relationships with donors, attends meetings in the capital city Tbilisi and regional center, represents the organization, and drafts program proposals. Karlo is more focused on the daily management of the organization, allocation of the resources, and administrative management as well as the program development processes. The relationship between leaders and staff were friendly; it was a family-style organization where two leaders were guiding and nursing entire processes in the organization.

*Observation notes, Organization B.* Organization B is a one-leader organization. The relationship between the leader and staff of the organization is friendly, driven by personal relationships. However, the main voice in the organization is Director Ineza. She is responsible for fund development, communicates with donors, drafts program proposals, and manages the programs. The staff assists her in coordinating the program activities, translating proposals into English, and spreading the information in the community. In general, I observed a harmonious relationship within the organization. Mainly I communicated with the director of the organization; the rest of the staff members were a bit shy and passive.

*Observation notes. Organization C.* Like the Organization B, the Organization C driven by one strong leader, Sara. However, the organization has active and

communicative staff members. The relationship between staff and organization's leader is a bit more formal compared to the same relationships in Organizations A and B. Sara holds most decision-making power in the organization. She represents the organization, communicates with donors, local government, designs project proposals, and manages the programs. Like with Organization B, the staff members help Sara coordinate planned program activities and logistics.

*Observation notes of the interview process.* During the one-on-one interview with the organizations' representatives, I asked open-ended questions about their experience in program development, relationship with donors, and about reporting systems in the organization. Question about relations with donors caused tension and confusion on the respondents, except the organizations' leaders. The question about the relationship with the local business was hardly understood and needed additional explanation. The question about fundraising from individual private donors caused confusion with every interview participant, and I had to provide an additional explanation with examples. Only organizations leaders were able to provide clear answers to the question about the organization's structure.

Sara 1 said,

The administration governs origination. The administration appoints management and sets annual goals. Main activities are carried out by the director, program coordinator, and trainers. The director is entrusted to support the functioning of the organization, as well as design programs, write proposals, also, define strategies, set up a plan for the current year, and set up ways for its

implementation. Of course, the administration is in charge of monitoring. The administration receives the report from the director's office at the end of the year and provides new plans for the next year. If necessary, the administrator has the right to dismiss the director and choose a new management team.

Ineza 1 said,

When founding council was formed, six persons were members of the board, [indicating] that organization has six founders. Then, the director is selected among the founders. The director is elected for one year, and any other founders can take the position of head of the organization if they want.

Keto 1 stated,

We have organizations general council, and . . . an executive board, which is quite functional. Also, we have administrative team and staff with allocated functions. However, I want to mention that organization has a head person who is leading the organization with her team.

Directors of the researched organizations have a multifunctional role. Directors are entirely running the organizations as ultimate leaders; accordingly, the survival of their organizations mainly depend on directors' skills and ability to cultivate funds, craft project proposals, and maintain the relationship with donors, and other counterparts.

Keto 1 added,

I am sure you noticed my smile while you were asking this question. This is because you have to be multifunctional when managing regional organization (NGO). When necessary, I am a manager, when needed I can be in a role of



hostess running with a cup of coffee from one room to another. When we have an ongoing project, we can have paid staff, but sometimes we have a situation when we do not have a project funding, and we run entirely on volunteer resources. This organization is not an only service provider, but it is a social environment for people where they can come and talk to you with a cup of coffee.

Sara 1 said,

I am the founder of this organization together with my other colleagues. My role as a director is to work on fund development, write project proposals, communicate with local government and non-governmental organizations, and so on. . . . I organize training programs and also organize meetings.

Ineza 1 said,

I am the director of the organization, but I do not work with the status of this position. . . . I work in fund development for the organization, as well as writing projects, and also, I am a director of several projects, and I am a journalist.

## **Research Question 2**

RQ2: What is the organizational capacity of the regional NGOs for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia?

Nongovernmental organizations are one of the main players for delivering positive social change in democratic society. The various service provider, advocacy, and watchdog organizations are addressing needs and challenges of local communities or particular social groups in the society. Moreover, the NGOs are echoing the voice of the open democratic society and reflecting the magnitude of democratic processes. It is

important to mention that NGOs are free, independent, goal-driven organizational entities governed by the group of people, the organization's board, assembly, or members' union of different size and form. The independence from the government or any other sectors gives NGOs unique role of the democratic institution. In the democratic societies, NGOs are well organized, goal-focused, and independent organizational entities with suitable structure and capacity for addressing the mission of the origination.

The shadows of the Soviet mentality are still present in the Georgian society. The existing literature reviles the low level of citizen participation in the democratic processes as well as mistrust and nihilism towards NGOs in Georgian society. As such, one goal of this research was to screen the capacity of regional NGOs in supporting democratic processes and developing the open society.

To answer this question, I used several data collection methods during my visits to the studied regional NGOs. I used the one-on-one interview with the representatives of the organizations and asked the open-ended question about daily activities of the organization, as well as about program development, fundraising, reporting systems, and processes in the organization. I also asked questions about challenges that regional originations have in Georgia. I thoroughly reviewed organizations' documents including program proposals, program reports, brochures, newsletters and media publications about the organization activities. During my three days visit in the organization, I observed the dynamics of organizations' operations and communication with the originations' staff and program beneficiaries.

**Organizational capacity.** Each studied organization showed enough structural and organizational capacity to function as NGOs within the determined legal norms in the country of Georgia. Every organization was officially registered in the national agency of public registry of Georgia. Each origination has functional board, adopted bylaw, bank account, and management team led by the director of the organization. Organization A slightly stronger funding stability for their programs that keep the organization proactive in collaboration with the local community. But Organizations B and C are in the same level of organizational development. These organizations have a structure and capacity for running the programs; however, the struggle to secure long-term funding and are entirely depended on the small budget short-term grants and the enthusiasm of the organization's members. In all three organizations, I observed the high enthusiasm and dedication to the mission of the organizations' members. Leaders and team members clearly understand fundamental principles of the NGO, which requires close communication with the community, assessment and identification of the needs, and finding the ways for addressing the identified problems of the community. Each studied organization is engaged in the direct communication with the local community members. It is a convenient and affordable process for the regional NGOs as they serve small communities where almost everyone knows each other. Interviewees disclosed that they were looking for available grant competitions with the donors, introducing the initiative to the community, and asking community members about their opinions. It clearly indicates the domination of the top-down processes versus bottom-up among the NGO sector and local communities in the regions of Georgia.

Keto 1 said,

At the beginning, we had to run from organization to organization in in Tbilisi so that we could get the information about the upcoming competitions [i.e., call for proposals] and simply to meet with these people during the informational meetings. . . . After hard work, it was not difficult to obtain funding in Georgia. Presently as we have discussed inside of the organization, we do not even need to write project proposal as if someone [from the large organization from Capital city Tbilisi] looks for partner organization in Kakheti region they directly calling us by saying “We are planning a project and looking for partner organization if you have desire and time.” This is a big success for us.

Karlo 2 added,

Because of the success of our previous projects we have high credibility with donors, so we can approach previous donors and ask them to provide us with reference letter for the new donors to become more reliable partners. We are looking for announced grant competitions and participating in those. Often, [the donor organizations] are offering us to participate in their programs as partners if the participation is in our interests and agreement.

Sara 1 said,

We, the nongovernmental organization in the regions are not spoiled by heaving many professionals who can write grant proposals. When we have a grant competition we are analyzing if it is our topic. If it is our topic than we have community workers who work in the community, collect information about the

needs and then we are analyzing these needs. We work in this community already for seven years and well aware of the problems that the community faces. So, we collect information from the individuals about their needs and analyze it. I would lie to say that we are writing the project proposal as a team. We do work as a group to come up with the general frame, but mainly I am the one who writes proposals.

Soso 2 stated,

I started working with this organization last year. Accordingly, last year was the first time I got involved in the process of researching the information about educational courses. We collected information from local youth and young people in this community about their interests and then board members chose the [professional and educational courses that organization provides for the community] that were most requested in the local population. This was my first participation. We have similar programs for this year.

Ineza 1 said,

In our organization, we are working on the development of young people as active citizens. Also, another part of our work is journalistic activity. We have ongoing projects, these are English language classes, computer classes also we work with the groups of youth. . . . We administer and manage three websites including youth website where youth journalists are working and updating information. I am the one who mainly works on the fund development and writing the proposals.

To learn more about the organizational capacity of the studied organizations, I reviewed following documents: project narrative and financial reports, strategic planning document, brochures, newsletters and also screened organizations' web pages, and Facebook pages. Each studied organization has a functional reporting system. Project reports are structured according to the guideline provided by the donor organizations. The reports provide sort summary of the project implementation as well as the summary of the benefits to the direct beneficiaries, stakeholder engagement, and a summary of monitoring and evaluation plan. Organizations also use Excel sheet to report statistical, quantitative, and demographic information. The narrative reports in all three studied organizations structurally are similar, and the design and information allocation in the Excel sheets are identical, as it is provided to the local NGOs by the same donor organization. Another type of the report that all three organization have is the well-illustrated narrative report. These are documents that provide one or two paragraphs of information about each activity with appropriate photo illustration. Web pages and Facebook pages of the studied organizations also provide information about the organizations' activities with adequate photo illustrations.

*Observation notes, Organization A.* Organization A's director writes and submits the reports to the donors. Structure and task allocation are well organized in the organizations. The organization acts both as an implementer of the local initiatives and also as a foundation for providing small (\$100 to \$300) grants to the initiative groups in different villages of the community. The small grant distribution significantly increases

the engagement of community members with the organization as the financial incentives are great motivation for local citizens.

**Observation notes, Organization B.** Organization B offers educational classes for different age groups, a training program for teachers, English language, and computer classes, informal education for youth, multicultural camps for youth and many others. The director was working on the project proposals, projects reports, and communicates with the donors. The organization has a structure and the capacity to implement small and midsize projects. However, the main projection, fund development, operations, and in many cases project management is let by one person the organizations director. The level of community engagement in Organization B is less than in Organization A. However, Organization B still manages to keep the local community informed about ongoing programs and upcoming initiatives.

**Observation notes, Organization C.** Organization C is located in the heart of the compact settlement in Senaki municipality Samegrelo region. The IDPs are one of the main target groups for the origination, accordingly, the placement and the presence in the community of the target social group significantly increases organizations capacity for the direct interaction with the community as well as the community members' engagement in the organization's programs and community mobilization initiatives. In the conversation with me, organization's members stated that the community is very poor, and most of the population is looking for financial support or job placement to afford basic leaving condition for their families. The organization mainly supports the

community with the vocational training and programs of social reintegration. The final report of one the main program of the Organization B states:

The aim of the project is to support the socio-economic integration of refugees and the local population in the municipality of Senaki. To achieve the goal, Senaki CEC works in the following directions: a) Increasing the level of knowledge of the population in the municipality of Senaki through non-formal education; b) Assistance people to integrate in society; c) Facilitating employment; d) Supporting civil education; e) Promotion of healthy lifestyles among young people. The quantitative indicator success of the above-mentioned program is that eventually minimum 400 beneficiaries will pass different educational courses and qualitative indicator are specific stories of participants of the project.

Indeed, Organization B has a capacity, structure, and experience to implement the small and midsized community projects and initiatives. Like Organizations A and B, Organization C's director is the leader who cultivates funds, develops project proposals, and manages projects. This solo-player approach may not be efficient for implementing complex, multiyear, and large budget programs.

**Challenges of regional nongovernmental sector in Georgia.** The post-Soviet transformation has not been an easy process for Georgian society. Citizens who were raised with the Soviet rules and ideology now are engaged in the process of building a democratic society. Western society tries to support, promote, and guide democratization in Georgia through empowering NGOs by providing financial support for specific



programs both in capital city and regions of the country. However, it is unknown how successful is the nongovernmental sector in the regions of Georgia in influencing democratic processes, and what are the challenges that the sector faces. To learn about the problems and core barriers that regional NGOs face, I asked an open-ended question to the interview participants about the main challenges for the regional NGOs in Georgia. The responses of each respondent were informative and specific. The representatives of three different organization from different regions of the country who held different positions in the organizations provided very responses and raised same topics as main challenges for regional NGOs in Georgia.

Keto 1 said,

We are continually thinking where we could get primary funding and by what programs. I told you a moment ago when you were not recording that we should be creating the projects and programs that local community needs. In reality, it is very difficult to find such a donor who will give us the opportunity to address the particular needs of the community. It is a big problem. Therefore, we think that when a new donor comes in the region or existing donor wants to create change, minimum they should learn what are the needs in the region and tailor their grant competition to those needs.

Kristina 3 said, “Main challenge? Probably independence. I would say they are dependent on those projects that they have . . . which is still not stable.”

Karlo 2 noted,

There are many challenges that prevent development of the local NGOs. The first reason could be migration. People may get some education, but such people could not sustain leaving in the villages because salary wages are too small. They have increased demands, and they can go in the city, or regional centers or even abroad and get employment with better salaries. The second reason can be connected to the first one, and this is low funding. The programs that [the regional NGOs] are nourishing from are not sustainable. Often programs are only 6 months or one-year long. After those organizations may have several months gap in funding and the organization's team can get dissolved.

Sara 1 said,

In my opinion, it is very important to have programs created based on the needs of the local community and not have imposed by someone else from the top. When I am a partner organization, I always say to the donors that we need to change that, because it is not like that. . . . There is a different mentality here and requires different approaches. . . . Also, when the regional organization raises critical issues based on their vision and work experience on the topic in the community, these issues are not considered actually, if it does not match the vision that the project have setts initially. I think regional NGOs should have more flexibility, and it is better to see the problem and needs addressed from the bottom-up.

Ineza 1 said, "In general, the challenge is that the regional organizations have no priority comparing to the big organizations, even though the programs of those big organizations are implemented by the small regional organizations and their strong staff."

Inga 2 stated,

I think regional nongovernmental organizations should get more attention in Georgia and our municipality. Because, as I know we are an only nongovernmental organization in our municipality, and it is unfortunate that they cannot see us in a way to realize how much we can be used/utilized for implementing innovations.

It was clear that all three studied organizations struggled with the sustainable funding for their programs as well as with the freedom of the choice and level of independence when planning and designing initiatives for the local communities. Another problem that the representatives of all three organizations raised was related to the process of application submission during the grant competitions. Both one-on-one interviews and document review revealed that majority of the donor organizations require submission of the grant applications in English. In Georgia official spoken and written language is Georgian. The majority of the population also speaks Russian as a second language inherited from the Soviet time, but English is not common for the majority of the people, especially in the regions of the country. Accordingly, submitting the competitive grant application in English is a big challenge for the regional NGOs. In addition, local, regional NGOs do not have a qualified staff for designing top standard grant proposals to compete with the state of art proposals submitted by international or large Georgian NGOs from the capital of the country. Mastering the design of the competitive grant proposals require special training or grant writing classes, which the representatives of the regional NGOs in Georgia cannot access and afford.

Ineza 1 said,

I know many small organizations in municipalities with very good, energetic and experienced human resources. However, increasing the qualification is very important for them. The programs that provide additional training goes to the big organizations, already well-known organizations, and small organizations are left with a minimum chance of development.

Sara 1 said,

This is very important to mention. . . . At this moment I have a big protest. I do not know English very well. I understand when I read, but I cannot do project proposals in a good quality level in English. It is ridiculous when big organizations announcing the competition by declaring regional NGOs as a target group and at the same time posting everything in English. Because they know there is no such a qualification in the regional organization and this is very difficult for them.

Keto 1 stated,

For regional organizations, it is very difficult to fill up the European Union's and other big donors' grant applications, because no such a resource in the regions who would know how to write such a quality project proposal in English. You would not find such a resource in the regions this is impossible . . . unless a stable, good salary is available for such a person. Regional NGOs have very low wages and recruiting someone from the city is very difficult.

It is difficult for regional NGO to compete with the large organizations from the capital city who has well-trained program teams and established channels of continues collaboration with the international donor organizations. Accordingly, in many cases, the small regional organizations are secondary recipients of the small funds distributed by the big Georgian or international NGOs for the purpose of implementing particular activities in the field. Correspondingly, the programs that regional organizations implement in their communities are the projects under the big umbrella programs that big organizations design and then dictate from outside of the region. Such a distribution of power from top to bottom restricts regional organization to develop as a strong, independent, democratic institutions and limits their organizational capacity to influence democratic processes in the regions of Georgia.

### **Research Question 3**

RQ3: What are the prospects for the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia?

The answers to the RQ 1 and RQ2 are the key indicators for analyzing the prospects of the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia. Understanding the influence of post-Soviet transformation on the NGO development in the regions of Georgia as well as defining the current capacity and challenges of the sector gives enough information to screen the avenues for the sector's future development. However, I collected data from the interviewees about their views on the future of the regional NGO sector in Georgia. I asked participants what they would change in the culture and structure of the regional NGOs if they could. All the

participants indicated that regional NGOs need more attention, capacity, independence, and training to create positive social change and influence democratic processes in the local communities.

Soso 2 stated, “I would focus on civic education to increase citizens’ participation in governing processes in the municipality. . . . I would support these processes as much as could.”

Sara 1 said,

I think it is very important to create a real association of regional originations, this is very important. Also, it is very important to provide proper training for administration of those organizations, because those people should be able. . . . I would speak based on the example of my organization. I have to write everything, I am writing project and program proposals, and it is vital to have a group of trained professionals so that I could ask questions with no hesitation. This will be a great support for the regional organizations. It is also essential that regional organizations could do group initiatives and design joint proposals grounded on the local problems so that initiatives could serve as a base for grant competitions, and not like now dictated from the top. . . . In this case, we will have better chance to evolve, work effectively and address the real need of the communities. This is what I would change.

Ineza 1 said,

First, I would train organization’s staff. I would introduce and explain to them what are the modern standards, and accordingly how we should work. It could be

some small nuances; however, it could be crucial for the organization's development. On this ground, [regional NGOs] will fundamentally change the structure of their work, will increase efficiency and become productive.

Irma 3 said,

I would change many things, for example, NGOs should have a robust trained staff. And now even staff is not well aware. . . . In general, the team should have a training minimum in fund development. There are many things, for example, trainers. . . . Locally what we do. . . . For example, I am a trainer, but I am not a trained trainer, so I do what I do by myself.

Inga 2 said,

I would change the fact that regional nongovernmental organizations are less visible. I would get more attention to the regional NGOs, so that donor organizations could give them a better chance to get more active. I mean they should provide some funding to make [regional NGOs] more active in the future.

Kristina 3 said,

Information should be more accessible and understandable. Also, organizations should have a capacity to fill up the grant application in the English language.

Based on my personal experience, I can say that whenever English application is required, I keep silent because I cannot . . . . I do not know [English] . . . .

Accordingly, regional NGOs are less competitive to those big organization who have the strong system in place. I remember, based on the example of our organization that many times director were hiring a translator to translate not only

application but all the supporting documents in English, and she was paying her personal money for it. This service should be more accessible, because many originations cannot afford this.

Karlo 2 stated, “I would change the structure of funding, I would more focus on local funding because when local taxpayers are providing funds, they better control and better accept your services.”

Keto 1 said,

It will be very good if donors would have direct grant competition for regional nongovernmental organizations with simplified conditions and requirements. I mean the application. The application should be simple. However, they can provide sorrow monitoring. They should have dedicated staff who would help us in reporting, for example how to write a report. The project should not have only minimal salaries for the local staff so that we could keep qualified human resources in the region. In this case, local teams will have the motivation, and we will not lose them to capital Tbilisi. We should have 2 or 3 years program so we could attach qualified personnel to the village.

All interviewees believed that regional NGOs need more attention and support in capacity building and equal opportunities in fund development to influence positive social change and develop as an equal, independent, democratic institutions. All three directors indicated that regional NGOs have disadvantages in grant competitions compare to the larger, stronger NGOs from the capital city or international NGOs. Accordingly, the prospects of future development of the NGO sector in Georgia as interview



participants indicated deepens on overcoming the above-mentioned challenges. Another aspect that can strengthen the future development of the regional nonprofit sector is proper training for local teams. Six of the nine interviewees emphasized the need for training and educational programs both for local community and organizations' staff as a necessary step for future development.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of post-Soviet transformation in development of the nongovernmental sector in the regions of the country of Georgia and study the nature, organizational culture, and structure of regional NGOs. Chapter 4 provided the overview of data collection, data management, and data analyses processes. The data were collected from the three NGOs from three different regions of the country. Participants both in organizational and individual levels were selected by using purposeful sampling based on initially defined criteria. Each participant organization was informed about the purpose of the study with a letter of introduction; each then provided a letter of cooperation before my visit. Each one-on-one interview participant was provided with a consent form and informed about their rights, the purpose of the study, and the volunteer nature and confidentiality of their participation. Each interview participant signed informed consent forms prior to beginning the interview process. I spent 3 days with each organization and conducted observations, document reviews, and in-depth one-on-one interviews with three representatives of different roles and position in each organization.

In Chapter 4 I provided evidence of trustworthiness to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. To ensure credibility, I studied multiple cases, implemented multiple data collection methods for the data triangulation. To ensure credibility, I used the reach description of each studied cases and descriptions from the study participants. To ensure dependability of my study I audio-recorded the one-on-one interviews and collected copies of comments and pictures during my observations.

The first question examined the influence of post-Soviet socio-political transformation processes on the organizational culture and structure of NGOs in the regions of Georgia. All three organizations' missions and goals addressed the increased needs for requalification and vocational training for the community members, the result of the transformation of sociopolitical and socioeconomic systems after the collapse of the USSR. The collaboration of the nongovernmental sector with the local government and local business sector was minimal because of the lack of the tradition and experience during the Soviet time. The limited cooperation among the three core sectors created a gap in understanding of the nature and purpose of NGOs in the local societies.

Interview participants indicated the low level of citizen participation in the self-governing processes and reflected the influence of the Soviet mentality in the regional communities. Regional NGOs were led and managed by one strong leader, the organization's director, who designs the project proposals, writes project reports, communicates with donor organizations and the local government, and manages the programs after receiving the funds from the donor. Accordingly, the one strong leader

culture, with a family-style vertical leadership, is dominant in the regional NGOs in Georgia. Organizations have dedicated staff serving as the support team for the leader. Each studied organization has a board that oversees and monitors strategic decisions. The organizations still need decentralization and delegation of managerial tasks.

Research Question 2 explored the organizational capacity of regional NGOs for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia. A document review showed that each studied organization has bylaws and a bank account and is registered in the national registry of Georgia. All three organizations had a structure that outlined and distinguished roles of the board and executive leadership. Organizations' staff members understood their duties and responsibilities with the assigned tasks. The document review indicated each organization methodically followed every legal requirement to register as a noncommercial legal entity and then to keep the legal status of the organization. Observation revealed positive organizational dynamics and intraorganizational communication among organizations' leadership and staff members as well as organizations' program staff and organizations beneficiaries.

I observed a friendly and welcoming environment in all the three studied organizations. In one-on-one in-depth interviews with the representatives of the organizations, I detected a number of challenges that might limit regional NGOs to support processes of creating an open democratic society in Georgia. Interviewees indicated regional NGOs disadvantages in competing with large organizations from the capital city and also with international NGOs. The difficult grant application process and requirements for submitting a grant application in English created challenges for the

regional NGOs. As a result, regional NGOs often take the role of local partner organization for implementing larger organizations' programs in the regional communities. Thus, the organizations had a limited capacity for initiating and getting funding for their own programs based on the needs of the local communities. Many interview participants admitted that the programs that their organizations implement are dictated from the top by the large NGOs or international organizations that may not know the real needs and priorities of local communities.

Another problem the interview participants noted was the lack of opportunities for training and capacity building for the representatives of regional NGOs. Low-cost, short-term programs that regional NGOs implement cannot provide competitive salaries for the staff resulting in migration of qualifying human resources to the capital city.

Research Question 3 explored the prospects for future development of NGO sector in Georgia. The answers to the RQ1 and RQ2 informed the answers to RQ3. During the one-on-one interview process, the respondents provided significant information about the prospects of future development of regional NGOs in Georgia. All the interview participants indicated that regional NGOs need more visibility and attention from the donor organization as well as from the local government. Also, donor organization should focus on providing direct grants to the regional organizations and simplify their grant application process. Local governments should have funds available for the initiatives of the regional NGOs. Participants suggested that to develop regional organizations as influential democratic institutions the initiatives should come from the

needs of the communities rather than being dictated by the large NGOs and international organizations.

A majority of interviewees said future development depends on training and capacity building for regional NGOs. The funding for training and capacity building for the organizations' staff is available for the larger organizations, but smaller local organizations cannot afford to increase professional skills for their team, and build qualified staff. Accordingly, the increasing collaboration with local government, developing direct channels to the donors' funding, ability to initiate and implement programs based on communities needs and requests, and accessing the training programs for developing qualified staff are necessary steps to make regional NGOs a strong, distinguishable player in local communities for developing positive social change and influencing development of the open democratic society in country of Georgia.

In Chapter 5 I offer an interpretation of the findings, its limitations, and recommendations for future research, along with implications for positive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature, culture, and structure of regional NGOs in the country of Georgia. I also explored the influence of post-Soviet socio-political transformation on the development of the third sector in the regions of the country to understand the capacity and impact of regional NGOs on the development of an open, democratic society in Georgia. The existing literature had not provided information about the organizational capacity, culture, and nature of regional NGOs in Georgia separately from the large and strong NGOs in the capital of the country. The nongovernmental sector is new to former Soviet republics, including in Georgia, where the NGOs started developing after the collapse of the USSR. The existing literature suggested the NGO development process was not equally facilitated in the regions comparing to the capital of the country. Accordingly, studying the nature, structure, culture, and capacity of regional, nonconsensual organizations was essential for supporting the development of an open, democratic society and influencing positive social change in Georgia.

I conducted this study to address the following three research questions:

RQ1: How does the post-Soviet socio-political transformation of Georgia affect the organizational culture of the NGOs in the regions of the country?

RQ2: What is the organizational capacity of the regional NGOs for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia?

RQ3: What are the prospects for the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia?

To study regional NGOs in Georgia, I used the multiple case study method. I identified and studied three regional NGOs in three different regions of Georgia: Kakheti, Imereti, and Samegrelo. I used a purposeful sampling to identify three representatives with different roles and positions in each organization, for a total of nine respondents. I observed the dynamics of daily operation in each organization and reviewed the organizations' legal and program documents. Interviews were audio-recorded and stored on my personal computer, an external hard drive, and in my Dropbox cloud storage. I used MXQDA data analysis software to code, organize, and analyze the data.

In this chapter, I will interpret the research findings based on the themes identified and outlined in Chapter 4 in the context of the conceptual framework of the study. This will be followed by the discussion of the limitations of the study and my recommendations for future research. In the final part of the chapter, I will discuss the potential impact of the study for positive social change.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

NGOs are one of the main actors for providing a positive social change in democratic society. They are goal-oriented, nonpolitical, voluntary, and not-for-profit organizations that pursue activities for the common good (Lang, 2013). Such organizational entities are characteristic of a democratic, open society where citizens are actively involved in the governance by demonstrating a strong voice and power for implementing positive changes in the society. Former Soviet countries, including

Georgia, have no tradition and history of raising independent, nongovernmental civil organizations. The formation of the third sector in Georgia began in 1992–1995 (Vasadze & Davitashvili, 2010) after the active intervention of Western international NGOs in the country (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002). Initially, NGOs were concentrated in Tbilisi, which created an imbalance among third sectors of the center and regions of the country.

Vasadze and Datuashvili (2011) outlined the dramatic difference between activity in the capital and the regions and imbalance of development between urban and rural areas of the country (p. 233). Nevertheless, there was a gap in the literature in understanding the culture, structure, and nature of regional NGOs.

Three regional NGOs in three different regions of the country of Georgia participated in this study, revealing dynamics and the nature of NGO development in regions of Georgia as well as challenges that create limitations for regional NGOs in influencing the development of a democratic, open society. All the participants disclosed significant disadvantages of regional NGOs in professional, financial, and impact capacity compared to the international organizations and large NGOs from the capital of the country. Moreover, research participants indicated the limitation of their organizations in initiating and implementing the programs of their choice based on the needs of the local community. Most programs are dictated from the international NGOs or local large organizations who can provide funding. Limited access to training, low salaries, and the high migration of professional staff to the capital city has prevented regional NGOs from becoming strong, independent, competitive organizations.



Accordingly, the results of the study confirmed the imbalance in the development of the nongovernmental sector in the regions and the center of the country.

### **Research Question 1**

The post-Soviet socio-political transformation still influences Georgian society. The sudden collapse of the USSR and momentary shift from the Soviet regime to democracy was a shocking and confusing process for the Georgian society. While having no experience and knowledge in building democratic governance and institutions, the local society simply continued functioning with the familiar habits and the same Soviet mentality. The Soviet system was based on strong, centralized, ultimate state power, and there were no other sectoral players in the Soviet society as the private businesses and civil society organizations were not in existence. The Communist Party's approach to civil activism promoted mandatory participation with regulations and restrictions (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2013). Findings from this study suggested that the regional NGOs are influenced by the post-Soviet socio-political transformation that reflects on the intersectoral collaboration, citizens engagement, and organizational leadership.

The literature outlined the vital role of collaboration among three core sectors in democratic society: the civil sector organization, local businesses, and public administration Vernis compared these sectors to a three-legged stool that must "work together to drive toward balance" (Vernis et al., 2006). Lang (2013) mentioned the three main communication channels for NGOS: the reflective internal communication, institutional communication, and public communication. Anheiner (2004) especially emphasized the necessity of cooperative relations between government and nonprofits.

NGOs are extension agents for public administration in welfare provision and service delivery.

In contrast to the literature about the effective functioning of the third sector in a democratic society, the studied regional NGOs lacked effective collaboration and communication with the local government, local businesses, and the general public. Two thirds of the interview participants indicated the low level of collaboration with the local government and lack of recognition and understanding of the NGO sector from the government representatives. My document review did not reveal any program proposal or program report that could demonstrate any direct funding from the government. The same applied to the collaboration with the local businesses. Seven interview participants had no information about the contributions of local businesses toward their organizations, and four of the participants indicated that there were no financial contributions from the local businesses to the NGOs. Such a lack of cooperation between local government and local businesses leaves the regional NGOs in the sectoral vacuum where NGOs have limited capacity for influencing positive social change.

One of the reasons for such a sectoral noncooperation is the influence of Soviet mentality that discourages civil activism and envisions the government as an only the public service provider in the society. The literature outlined the influence of Soviet mentality on Georgian society. Civil activism is discouraged, and civil responsibility is perceived to reflect the communist past (Mockverashvili, 2013; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2013; Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011). Interview participants confirmed the problem of Soviet mentality in regional communities and admitted that the changing the civil

consciousness and increasing the sense of civic responsibility are the challenging topics in their organizations' agendas.

With limited collaboration with the local government and local businesses, the regional NGOs stay fully dependent on the donor organizations' funding. In many cases, the local NGOs are subcontracted partner organizations for the big NGOs from the capital city in implementing programs dictated from the center in the regions. Similar to the centralized Soviet system when the center was an ultimate distributor of the agendas and funds to the regions, the regional NGOs are dependent on the funding sources from the center and have limited and almost no capacity to survive on the local resources.

I observed a family-style organizational leadership structure in the regional NGOs. Directors demonstrated a strong decision-making power and direct involvement almost in every aspect of organizational management, including the program planning and design; fund development; program management; reporting; and communication with donors, partner NGOs, and local government. In the one-on-one interviews, all three studied organizations' directors noted they were in control of the majority of day-to-day managerial decisions by having a low capacity for task delegation because of a lack of qualified personnel in their organizations. In addition to the lack of qualified staff in the regional NGOs, such a one-leader driven organizational leadership culture can be an echo of the Soviet past. Typically, Soviet-style leadership culture was the manifestation of strong-hand vertical power distribution culture in the organizations. Accordingly, the similarity with the family style organizational leadership used by the regional NGOs and

Soviet-style organizational management structure can be the result of the influence of the Soviet mentality and habits.

Without supplying regional NGOs with special training and requalification programs, it is difficult to avoid the influence of Soviet mentality on the organizational development and leadership culture. Almost every participant emphasized the need for training and learning opportunities for the regional NGO teams to learn modern management cultures, strategic planning, program design, and implementation mechanisms. I observed the high dedication and enthusiasm of the regional NGO teams to pursue goals of their organizations. However, the lack of qualifications and limitations in accessing training programs lowered the regional NGOs' capacity to develop as independent democratic institutions.

### **Research Question 2**

The existing literature indicated that local CSOs have limited capacity, and they are 95% dependent on their international donors (USAID, 2012, 2013, 2014). There are dramatic differences between the activities in the capital city and the rural regions of the country in Georgia (Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011). However, there are no data available about the organizational capacity of the small regional CSOs (USAID, 2015).

My analyses of the one-on-one, in-depth interviews; observations; and document review notes showed that the regional NGOs have significant limitations in influencing the process of creation of a democratic and open society in Georgia.

**Top-down versus bottom-up program development.** NGOs are the product of civil activism and citizens' participation in the democratic society. Those organizations

represent and echo the voice of a civil society and implement initiatives based on demand of the local community or target social groups. The literature outlined that in post-Soviet countries NGOs are highly dependent on the international donors' funding; therefore, they more tend to focus on the donors' agenda and citizens are largely isolated from public deliberation about important issues because of the low capacity of the local NGOs for helping them (Lutsevych, 2013). Interview participants confirmed the high dependence on donor organizations' funds because the local philanthropy is not sufficiently developed in the regions of Georgia. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, the local government and local businesses are not providing financial contributions to the regional NGOs. The culture of individual financial contributions practically does not exist due to economic hardship in the regions of the country, and social enterprise initiatives are insufficiently developed. Consequently, the only funding source available for the regional NGOs is international donor agencies. However, local and regional NGOs have significant barriers to accessing international funds. Research participants stated that it was hard for them to compete with the large organizations from the capital city and with the international NGOs with better organizational capacity in submitting quality proposals in English to the donor agencies, even for the programs targeting their regions. The regional NGOs are still the chief implementors of the program activities in their regions but only as subcontractor partners to the big organizations. Accordingly, in many cases, the programs that the local, regional NGOs implement in the regions are designed by big organizations and might not address the demands of the local communities. Such a monopoly on the access to the donor funding leaves regional NGOs

with no choice but to implement the programs dictated from the top. Consequently, regional NGOs have limited capacity to initiate and implement the programs and services based on the needs of their communities that limits their capacity for developing as strong, independent, democratic institutions in the regions. Interview participants from all the three studied ingestions indicated that regional NGOs have challenges in getting funds for the initiatives of their choice.

The literature has suggested “Western NGOs are not familiar with domestic settings and relying on foreign experts and advisors to formulate strategies” (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002, p. 233). Interview participants confirmed this information and added that the big organizations from the capital city who are winning the grant competition for the regional programs are not familiar with the need in regional communities. Mac Ginty (2013) and Lutsevych (2013) also indicated the disconnection between the elite-led NGOs and society in former Soviet countries. As a result, regional NGOs have several barriers for providing services based on the needs of their local communities. The first is a lack of local funding in the regions. Second, capable staff are unavailable to write program proposals in English to submit to the international donor organizations. The third barrier that large NGOs from the capital city and international service provider NGOs have monopolized direct access to the international donors’ funds.

**Organizational capacity.** Analyses of the collected data showed that regional NGOs have an organizational structure required by the law in Georgia. Each studied organization had a board, executive leadership team, and program staff. Still, the regional

NGOs have a limited organizational capacity for remaining as independent organizations and competing with the organizations from the capital city.

One of the disadvantages of the regional NGOs is a lack of qualified staff.

Interview participants admitted that qualified people migrating to the capital city is a problem for the regional organization. Regional NGOs have a low budget and short-term programs, which cannot supply qualified professionals with the competitive salaries. Many times, regional NGOs have a gap in funding, and organizations run purely on the enthusiasm of volunteer resources. International organizations have a difficult and complicated grant application that must be submitted in English. One interviewee disclosed that a director hired a professional translator from her personal budget. But not every organization can afford that every time. Accordingly, the interview participants highlighted the needs for training and capacity building for the regional organizations' personnel. But funds for training and capacity building are accessible only for larger organizations.

The limited organizational capacity creates a negative chain reaction for regional NGOs. The lack of training creates a deficit in the qualification of the staff that itself keeps regional organizations uncompetitive to the large international or local NGOs. Consequently, regional NGOs cannot win the grant competitions for large-budget multiyear programs and remain as the subcontractor implementing-partner organizations for the large NGOs. Thus, the programs that regional NGOs implement are dictated from the center and not from the local community. This top-down power distribution dynamics in the program development decrease the sense of ownership of the community members

on the programs and initiatives implemented by the regional NGOs. It results in a low level of citizens participation and civil activism, a key attribute for building an open democratic society in the regional communities. Accordingly, regional NGOs have a limited organizational capacity for creating a democratic and open society in Georgia.

### **Research Question 3**

Findings from RQ1 and RQ2 contributed to the analysis of prospects for the future development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia. All the interview respondents' answers about the future development of the regional NGOs reflected the challenges that third sector faces in the regions of the country. Interviewees focused on simplifying the grant application processes, more recognition and collaboration with the local government, increasing in organizational capacity via training sessions and other learning opportunities, increasing in the level of citizens participation in the NGOs programs, and getting attention and funding to the programs requested from the local communities.

**Crafting versus grafting.** The collected data, along the literature on NGO development in Georgia, showed a need for a core conceptual shift in understanding and developing a strong civil society sector in the regions of the country. The post-Soviet transformation process will continue to affect local communities if the transformation processes itself keeps moving in the wrong direction. A historical overview of the NGOs' development in Georgia shows that NGOs were implanted in Georgian society in the early independence period right after collapse of the USSR. Accordingly, Georgians who were raised as communists with Soviet habits were unable to understand the role of the



CSOs. Nevertheless, the aggressive intervention of Western international agencies in the country and their hard push for developing local CSOs forced the creation of the NGOs in Georgia. Paradoxically, Georgia established civil organizations while civil society itself was insufficiently developed. Such a revolutionary approach to the NGO development in Georgia created a gap in understanding of the nature, structure, and culture of CSOs. Interview participants admitted the influence of Soviet mentality in the regions of Georgia and the challenges in understanding the nature of NGOs in local communities, in local government, and even, in some cases, within the staff of the nongovernmental organization.

It is evident that NGO sector did not have a chance for evolutionary development in Georgia. It was grafted, much like plant grafting, on the Soviet social-cultural environment without preparation of the ground and adaptation to the environment. Such a grafting method detonated an organizational transfiguration process. As a result, the regional NGOs in Georgia has developed in a form of one leader driven organizations, heavily dependent on the centralized system of the grant-fund distribution and with limited capacity in implementing independent initiatives for addressing local communities' demands. This hybrid NGO-ecosystem has an organizational structure of a democratic institution but is affected by the Soviet organizational culture and leadership style. In such circumstances, regional NGOs have little hope for a dramatic advancement and better development. For the past 20 years the small, regional NGOs have faced the same problems with no significant progress, and therefore no substantial improvements are expected with such an environment and organizational dynamics.

Based on the analyses of the interview participant responses, the regional nongovernmental sector needs immediate support in capacity building to increase the understanding of the modern NGO system. It is necessary to invest in training and develop technical skills for organizations teams and change the top-down program development system to the bottom-up initiatives. Regional organizations can then have a voice and access to the donors' funds for initiating and implementing programs exclusively based on the need of the local communities. The representative of local government and local businesses should receive training in the role of the civil society organization and develop a great triangle of successful intersectoral collaboration in the local communities. These processes will craft a new shape of the NGO sector and provide greater perspectives for its evolutionary development and transformation into a strong, independent, and democratic civil society institution capable of influencing positive social change in the regions of Georgia.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Morgan's (2006) notion of the images of the organization served as a conceptual framework for this study to describe the nature of the NGO system in the regions of Georgia. The three organizational metaphors organization as an organism, organization as a culture, and organization as a political system guided the development of my research questions and built a foundation for data analyses and discussion of findings.

The organism metaphor describes an organization as a biological organism that is dependent and adaptable to the external environment. Based on the current findings, the process of NGO development in the regions of Georgia was largely influenced by the

surrounding environment. The development of NGO sector in the regions of Georgia did not grow naturally from the roots of civil democratic society; it was grafted on the existing organism of the Soviet system. Accordingly, the adaptation to the new environment transformed the NGOs into a hybrid semidemocratic institution in the regions of Georgia. Regional NGOs have democratic, self-governing organizational structure taken from its natural sources. At the same time, the organizations have a lack of independence by entirely relying on the centralized fund distribution system. Lack of collaboration with local government and local businesses, and limited citizen participation was influenced by a Soviet mentality in the surrounding environment, thus limiting regional NGOs' ability to develop as strong and independent civil society organizations.

Morgan (2006) argued that "the organization itself is a cultural phenomenon that varies according to society's stage of development" (p. 112). Regional NGOs in Georgia also showed an influence of Soviet organizational culture where one strong leader was the ultimate decision-maker in the organizations. The study showed that regional NGO leaders try to adapt to the democratic governance style. They have meetings and brainstorming session with the staff and board members of the organization. But they still hold significant decision-making power for strategic and day-to-day operational decisions. Accordingly, regional NGOs in Georgia exercise Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1998) family-style leadership culture based on the strong personal and hierarchical relationships. It mimics family structure when a caring father has a main power and authority and the most experience. Such an organizational culture also echoes Georgian

strong patriarchal family tradition, where the head of the family is ultimate decision-maker and absolute leader of the family.

According to the Fielder's (1970) contingency theory, the organizational structure address requirements set by the ecology of surrounding endowment where structure fits contingencies (Burton et al., 2006). Consequently, regional NGOs have a functional organizational structure to function as a subcontractor style, small-grant oriented organizations who remains under permanent supervision and monitoring of their donor agencies. The passive nature of the local communities does not stimulate rapid development of the structure of the regional NGOs. Based on the population ecology views (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), the regional NGOs in Georgia can be screened as a specific unit, the group of similar organizations in separate to the large NGOs both international and local from the capital of the country. The population of the regional NGOs has a broad niche that translates to the Hannan and Freeman's (1977) generalist organizations, which address general areas rather than focusing on specific tasks. Nevertheless, the two populations, the small regional organizations and large organizations from the capital of the country, share the same environment, which increases competition for resources. The large organizations have a better organizational capacity and are less vulnerable to the risks than their small competitors (Hannan & Freeman, as cited in Clegg & Hardy, 1999, p. 73). Therefore, small regional organizations from the small towns and villages of Georgia cannot compete with the large organization from the capital city.

Morgan (2006) suggested organizations are essentially political systems (p. 148), as each person has an agenda and interests and attitude toward the organization. In many cases, the differences in interest may create conflict that should be addressed by using the power of negotiating and compromising. The same applies to the interorganizational relationships. This study suggested regional NGOs have a conflict with the existing grant distribution system provided by international donors in Georgia. Interviewees complained about the difficult grant application process and about international organizations' requirement for submitting grant applications in English by knowing that regional organizations in Georgia have no capacity to write the proposals in English. Regional NGOs cannot compete with NGOs from the capital that win most of the large grants and then hire small regional organizations as subcontractor partners for implementing the program activities in the regions.

According to Levis (2007), there are two types of people: linear-active and multiactive. Linear-active people follow the chain of tasks and to one thing at a time. Multitaskers do several things at once. During my observations, all three leaders were multiactive individuals who remained flexible and multitasking most of the time.

This study was not aimed to measure the scores of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) cultural demotions in the regional NGOs. However, the defined influence of Soviet mentality and the observed dynamics of the interorganizational and intraorganizational relationships indicates the existence of power distance between small regional NGOs and large international and local NGOs in Georgia.

Regional nonconsensual organizations do not raise this problem actively in front of international organization and large NGOs, as they are fully dependent on their funds. Consequently, regional NGOs are using power compromise to sustain their funding sources by giving up their financial independence and ability to implement programs based on their communities' demands. According to Morgan (2006), there are four types of political organizations: democratic, autocratic, bureaucratic, and technocratic. In this study, regional NGOs showed themes of semidemocratic organizations. They are not bureaucratic organizations, as they do not have a large staff and complex organizational policies. They lack skilled professional resources that would make them technocratic organizations. The family-style leadership culture and compromises with the dependence on the international organizations and large NGOs from the capital of the country limit regional NGOs to develop in a form of CSOs and keeps them as semidemocratic institutions in the society.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study had several limitations. The small sample size of nine interviewees may not fully represent the views, beliefs, and understanding of every regional NGO team members in the country. The study explored only three regional NGOs with a purposeful sampling, which limits any generalization of the findings. NGOs in only three regions of the country were explored. The findings were grounded on the observation and personal interview with organizations' participants. My presence in the organization might have affected routine daily activities and behaviors of the organizations' leadership and staff. Moreover, interview participants might have had recall bias or misrepresented

facts. Besides, many interview participants were more candid and informative outside of the formal interview when talking about organization's challenges in achieving effective collaboration with local government and donor organizations. Finally, I had access only to the documents that organizations' leadership provided for me for review and the documents from the public domains, which might not have shown the complete image of the organizations' structural, operational, and functional dynamics.

### **Recommendations**

This study presented a look into the nature, culture, and structure of regional NGOs in country of Georgia. The findings contribute to the understanding of the influence of post-Soviet transformation on the development of the nongovernmental sector and outline the challenges of the small CSOs in the regions of the country. The assessment of day-to-day operations of the regional NGOs revealed several factors that require immediate attention. There is need for improvement in intersectoral collaboration among local NGOs, local businesses, and local government. The literature emphasizes the importance of such an intersectoral collaboration by metaphorically comparing it to the three-legged stool, wherein each leg should contribute to a balanced chair (Vernis at al., 2006). To achieve improvement in the intersectoral collaboration, the governmental agencies should engage in cooperative relations with the NGOs in service and welfare provision (Anheiner, 2004). The government and parliament of Georgia should consider reforming the tax legislation for encouraging the local business to play an active role in supporting local NGOs and becoming co-owners of local social initiatives.

Research findings also highlighted a need in capacity building for the regional nongovernmental organizations. International donor agencies should invest in special training, various learning opportunities for regional NGO teams in proposal writing, fundraising strategies, strategic planning, organizational leadership, and public relations, as well as introduce them to the best examples of the modern CSOs. In addition, international donor organizations should simplify grant applications and accept proposals in the Georgian language. Regional NGOs would have a chance for receiving funds for multiyear programs directly from the donor organizations. The literature also highlights that Western NGOs are unfamiliar with domestic settings (Glenn, 2002). Accordingly, the Western-funded NGOs tend to focus on the donors' agenda and remain disconnected from the local society (Lutsevych, 2013; Pearce, 2000). The findings confirmed that regional NGOs in Georgia have limitations in initiating programs based on their communities' priority needs. The grant competitions are dictated from the international donor organizations. Consequently, international donor organizations should increase their capacity in learning local communities' needs and provide regional NGOs with the opportunities to respond those needs and reconnect with their original social change objectives. Interview participants confirmed that international organizations and large NGOs from the capital city do not know the needs of the local communities in the regions of Georgia. However, the study cannot confirm nor disconfirm this information as it requires separate research.

This study provided findings and views from the angle of the regional NGOs and their representatives. However, further research is also needed to learn about local



regional governments' role and understanding in building a democratic civil society in the regions of Georgia. Further research is required in learning the local regional communities' understanding of regional NGOs and their role in the developing democratic processes in the regions of Georgia. Lastly, this study may serve as a basis and trigger future researchers for studying the capacity of the regional NGOs in the other former-Soviet countries.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The findings can lead to positive social change by addressing the gap in understanding the regional nongovernmental sector and its capacity for influencing democratic processes in the regions of Georgia. The findings contribute to the existing knowledge of NGO sector in Georgia and add new information about the regional nongovernmental sector and its challenges in the country.

The knowledge gained from this study contributes to the building of a democratic, open society in the regions of Georgia. Understanding the nature, culture, and organizational capacity of regional NGOs is equally important for international donor organizations, local government, and local businesses, as well as for the local society. Building an open civil society is a complex process that requires contribution of each sector accompanied by the active participation of citizens. Accordingly, the findings for the regional NGOs can guide increased capacity of intersectoral collaboration in the regions of Georgia for positive impact on the development of the local communities. The findings also can be useful for the international donor organizations that are focusing on the civil society development, community mobilization, and other social programs in the

regions of Georgia. Based on the findings, the international donor organizations may consider adjusting the grant distribution and grant application systems in a way that local communities and local NGOs could have a better decision-making power over the development and implementation of local initiatives for their communities. The findings also can contribute to the development of regional and national policies that would stimulate local government and local businesses for providing financial contributions and, in some cases, outsource the provision some of the social services to the local NGOs.

The study contributes to empowering the local NGOs in the regions of Georgia for addressing the need of individual local citizens and families. It develops the foundation for starting an open dialogue among NGOs, governmental agencies, local businesses, and international organizations for the collaborative approach to addressing the local challenges. Finally, the multisector, inclusive approach to the community development will stimulate the development of the open democratic society and positive social change in Georgia.

By disseminating the results to a wider audience, I will raise awareness of the nature, culture, and structure of regional NGOs and about their vital role as democratic institutions in developing the open civil society in Georgia. I intend to disseminate the results of this study with multiple venues including professional conferences, presentations, and peer-reviewed journals. I will share results of the study to the international donor organizations in Georgia and send a copy of the study to the office of prime minister of Georgia, as well as to the Committee of Healthcare and Social Issues of

the parliament of Georgia, and ministry of regional development and infrastructure of Georgia.

### **Conclusions**

The goal of the study was to understand the nature, culture, and structure of regional NGOs in the country of Georgia. In addition, the study focused on understanding the influence of post-Soviet transformation on the development of the regional nongovernmental sector in the country. The existing literature showed a gap in understanding the organizational structure and capacity of the regional NGOs by only emphasizing a difference in development between the regions and the center (Ritvo 2013; USAID, 2015; Vasadze & Datuashvili, 2011). The literature showed a low level of citizen participation, lack of understanding of NGOs in the society and mistrust of general public to the civil society sector in Georgia (Lee et al. 2012.; Lutsevych, 2013.; Paturyan & Gevorgyan, 2014; Ritvo & Janzashvili 2012). Accordingly, the study focused on three main directions: (a) the influence of post-Soviet transformation processes on the development of the nongovernmental sector, (b) the organizational culture structure and capacity of regional NGOs for influencing democratic processes, and (c) the prospects of future development of regional NGOs in Georgia.

Research Question 1 explored the influence of post-Soviet transformation processes on the development of NGOs as a new organizational entity in the regions of Georgia. Findings confirmed the influence of post-Soviet mentality on the local, regional communities of Georgia, affecting day-to-day activities and culture of regional NGOs. Regional NGOs struggle with the low level of citizen participation and the lack of

substantial collaboration with local government and local businesses. Like in the Soviet time, the government remains as an ultimate decision-maker and service provider for social programs without outsourcing social services or providing noticeable funds to the local NGOs. Government-funded social programs remain highly centralized with few exceptions. Local private businesses are the new development, as Soviet system tolerated only government-owned enterprises. Consequently, local businesses have no tradition and sense of providing financial contributions to social initiatives.

These circumstances keep regional NGOs entirely dependent on the international donor organizations. The international donor organizations, on the other hand, dictate their agenda for programs initiated from outside of the regional communities which limits local NGOs to implement the local initiatives based on the need of local communities. Hence, citizen participation is limited due to lack of local initiatives that keeps local NGOs detached from the organizations' primary audience. The Soviet mentality also influences the organization's leadership culture in the regional NGOs. NGO leaders mainly exercise family-style leadership, where one strong leader holds the central decision-making power both for strategic and day-to-day operational decisions.

Research Question 2 explored the organizational capacity of the local, regional NGOs in Georgia. The findings showed that regional NGO teams lack professional skills in program design, proposal writing, strategic planning, program management, and program evaluation. Regional NGOs cannot compete with the large organizations from the capital city in cultivating international funds. Thus, they often have a role of implementing subcontractor partners for the large NGOs and international NGOs with

short-term and low funding programs. The organizations' directors are most experienced and skilled members of the organizations, and they cannot delegate managerial tasks to the other members. Regional NGO members recognize the need in capacity building; however, they have limited accesses to the training programs because of insufficient funding. The insufficient organizational capacity limits regional NGOs to initiate, cultivate funds, and implement the programs based on the needs of local communities and develop as an independent and effective civil society organizations.

Research Question 3 addressed the prospects of future development of nongovernmental sector in the regions of Georgia. The results indicated there is insufficient grounds for successful development of the NGO sector in the regions of Georgia within the existing environment and organizational capacity. I provided recommendations that may boost the process for evolutionary development of the nongovernmental sector in the regions of Georgia.

Promoting and facilitating the intersectoral collaboration between local government local business and local NGOs is a core milestone that will strengthen the financial and sectorial independence of the local regional NGOs. International organizations should invest in capacity building of the local nongovernmental sectors and engage regional NGO teams in the professional training and experience exchange programs. Donor agencies may consider simplifying their grant applications and accept those applications in the Georgian language to give a change to the regional NGOs to initiate and implement their own initiatives grounded on the local communities' needs. International donor agencies should engage in direct dialogue with the local NGOs,

especially for the programs intended for the regions. The bottom-up program development process supported by skilled regional NGO teams and the increased collaboration with local government and businesses with sufficient financial contributions will develop regional NGOs as strong and influential CSOs. The increased sense of ownership on the local initiatives will trigger citizen participation processes and build sense of active citizenry in the regions of Georgia, which itself will promote the development of civil society and positive social change in the country.

Morgan's (2006) organizational metaphors was a theoretical framework that guided my research questions and served as the foundation for the data analysis. Organization as an organism metaphor defined organization as a living organism highly dependent on the surrounding environment. Similarly, the regional NGOs were influenced by the environment of limited collaboration at the institutional level and lack of citizen participation in the individual level. The regional NGO sector that was grafted on the roots of Soviet culture and habits adapted to the existing environment and developed in the form of semi-democratic institution.

Organization as a culture emphasizes the influence of the societies' cultural habits and customs. Regional NGO leadership cultures have influenced both Georgia's national patriarchal culture and the Soviet one strong-handed leader culture. Accordingly, regional NGOs leaders exercise family-style leadership culture with one dominant strong leader influencing every managerial decision in the organization.

Every organization is a political system, where every member of the organization, as well as every organization as a unit, has a special interest, agenda, and attitude.

Accordingly, every organization must use the power of negotiation and compromise for harmonized relationships in the shared environment. Representatives of the regional NGOs showed their discomfort with the international organizations' grant distribution system. But regional NGOs are not raising these topics actively, as they are fully dependent on the international donors' funds. Therefore, regional NGOs use the power of compromise to keep the funding source and remain with limited organizational capacity and independence.

In this chapter I offered recommendations for future research and implications for positive social change. The findings contributed to understanding the nongovernmental sector in Georgia and added information about nature culture and structure of regional NGOs in the country. The research outlined the influence of post-Soviet transformation processes on the development of CSOs in the regions of Georgia and enhanced awareness of the challenges that regional NGOs face for influencing the creation of an open democratic society in the regions of the country. Additionally, the results can be used to influence the development of local and national policies for stimulating intersectoral collaboration among NGOs local government and local businesses, as well as to influence the adjustment of grant allocation and grant distribution policies for international donor agencies and organizations in Georgia. The findings can contribute to increasing the organizational capacity of regional NGOs, which can influence democratization processes and positive social change in the regions of the country.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

## Letter of Cooperation from (Organization Name)

Organization's Name  
 Address  
 Date

Dear Shota Shubladze,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Post-Soviet Transformation: Nature and Organizational Culture of Regional Nongovernmental Organizations in the Country of Georgia on the property of (Insert Organization Name).

As part of this study, I authorize you to provide observation during business hours, review organizations' documentation available for the public, and conduct up to 3 semistructured in-depth interviews with organizations' leadership and staff during non-working hours. Proper names will not be used. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity as well as the organization's privacy.

Interviews can last up to 1 hour. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

To ensure validity, Mr. Shubladze may audio record interviews (with consent from study participant) using a digital recorder. All interviews will follow a structured interview worksheet to aide in consistency between study participants. Furthermore, to ensure validity Ms. Shubladze can return to the site to review interview transcripts with study participants to ensure accuracy. If requested, (Insert Organization Name) will receive an electronic copy of the study when complete.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing access to conduct observation, to review documents, and to speak with organization's leadership and staff members, and permission to conduct interviews on organization's property.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Introduction Letter

Shota Shubladze  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Date:

Organization's Name  
Address

Dear:

My name is Shota Shubladze. As a doctoral student at Walden University, I am working on my dissertation and writing this letter to ask for your assistance with my study. My research topic is the Post-Soviet Transformation: The Nature and Organizational Culture of Regional NGOs in the Country of Georgia.

Studying the nature, culture, and structure of regional NGOs in Georgia is vital to understanding the roots of the problems and eliminate challenges that regional nongovernmental organizations face in delivering positive social change. I argue that those small civil society organizations in the regions of the country, and their capacity to serve as democratic institutions, are a litmus test for measuring Georgian democracy. For my qualitative study, I will research three nongovernmental organizations in the regions of Georgia, and I will use three data collection methods: observation, document review, and Interview.

For observation, I will be observing processes in the organization without interrupting or engaging in activities. For the document review, I will review program proposals, the organization's by-laws, and any program related materials that you can provide to me. I will also interview three representatives of the organization.

I am kindly asking you to give me permission to conduct the case study research in your organization.

Upon request, I can submit a list of questions I will be asking to my respondents and provide a copy of the study when completed.

If you have any concerns or further questions, please contact me at XXXXXXXX or by email at XXXXXXXX. Additionally, my advisor can be reached at XXXXXXXX.

If you are in concurrence of my study please SIGN and RETURN the Letter of Cooperation in the return envelope or SIGN letter with email address and EMAIL the letter to IRB@waldenu.edu and XXXXXXXX

Sincerely  
Shota Shubladze

## Appendix C: Interview Guide English/Georgian

### Interview Guide in English

#### **Demographics**

Please identify your

1. Age.
2. Gender.
3. Level of education.
4. Occupation.
5. How long you have been working in the NGO field.

#### **Interview Guide**

1. Describe the vision and mission of your organization.
2. Describe your role in the organization.
3. Describe the structure of your organization.
4. Describe the ongoing programs and daily operations of your organization.
5. Describe the program planning, designing, and fundraising processes in your organization. *Maybe better:* Describe how you plan and design programs, and how you raise money.
6. Describe who are the main donors to your organization.
7. Describe how you communicate with your donors and the relationship between the organization and the donors.
8. Describe the communication methods and process between the program beneficiaries and your program staff.

9. What is your experience in fundraising with local businesses?
10. What is your experience in fundraising with local private donors?
11. What is the relationship between your organization and the government?
12. To what extent does the general public know about your organization, and how do you communicate with the public?
13. Describe how citizens participate in your organizations activities.
14. What are the main challenges for local regional NGOs in Georgia?
15. What would you change in the structure, culture, and activities of regional NGOs if you could?