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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Translating Protest: Networked Diasporas and Transnational Mobilisation in Ukraine's Euromaidan Protests

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ABSTRACT:

This study combines ethnographic and computational approaches to critically examine what gets 'lost in translation' when studying intersecting social contexts of diasporic mobilisation around homeland politics. Considering how Ukrainians living in the U.S. engaged with homeland politics during the Euromaidan protests, we map transnational diasporic mobilisation, shining light on the various material, discursive, and affective connections that emerged in the process. We find that Euromaidan protests were a point of passage – and thus, convergence – between the often incongruous notions of national identity across regional as well as national territorial borders. Translating the local meanings and cultural codes associated with the Euromaidan protests, diasporas sought to amplify them to reach global audiences through their use of the grammars and vocabularies of socially mediated protest. Situating our inquiry in networked diasporic discourses and building on a decolonial understanding of Ukraine's history and politics, our approach illuminates the possibilities for studying transnational mobilisation and activism as a heterogeneous network of publics, discourses, and identity practices.

KEYWORDS:

Mobilisation, diaspora, social media, protest, Ukraine, postcolonialism

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1. Introduction

Digitally mediated protest politics are an important component of studying transnational mobilisation in the Global South. While playing a pivotal role in connecting remote diasporic communities to on-the-ground action in their homelands, such diasporic mobilisations are often examined through the lens of predominantly Western theoretical frameworks for understanding protest such as networked individualism (Wellman, 2003; Rainie and Wellman, 2012) or connective action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012), mostly grounded in and structured by English-language scholarship and methodologies stemming from North American and Western European case studies. We believe there is a need to shift this theoretical framing and to critically examine what gets 'lost in translation' when these approaches are applied to the study of 'peripheral' geographies and diasporic communities connected to them across the globe.

Akin to scientific collaboration (Star and Grisemer, 1989), transnational protest is a heterogeneous endeavour: it often involves multiple, geographically dispersed actors who work together to achieve their goals across various local, national, and international institutional contexts (Kok and Rogers, 2017). For this reason, understanding transnational mobilisation requires attention to the broader protest ecology in which its participants are embedded. This is where the problem of translation arises at the intersections of social contexts, in which actors operate on different sets of meanings and assumptions (Star and Griesemer, 1989).

This study combines semantic mapping of communications in diasporic social media groups during and in the aftermath of Ukraine's Euromaidan protests and in-depth interviews with Ukrainians living in the U.S. conducted during and immediately after the protest period to understand how Ukrainian diasporas in the U.S. engaged with homeland politics surrounding the Euromaidan protests. Combining ethnographic and computational methods, we map transnational diasporic mobilisation, shining light on the various material, discursive, and affective connections that emerged in the process. We conceptualise diaspora communities as actors collectively performing translation or articulation of protest politics and discuss the implications of this conceptualisation for understanding diasporic mobilisation more broadly.

Drawing on our intersecting experiences as women from the Global South in academic positions in the Global North, as well as having been active participants in the events described and analysed below, we call for a more nuanced approach to understanding the grammars and vocabularies of diasporic communities in transnational mobilisation around key political transformations in their home countries. With this in mind, we use the case of digitally mediated transnational mobilisation around the Ukrainian Euromaidan protests of 2013-2014 and the ensuing occupation of Ukraine by Russia to offer a postcolonial perspective on how transnational diasporas and their political participation might be understood, studied, and framed. Adopting the lens of decoloniality and the ways that it manifests in postcommunist contexts (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Tlostanova, 2012), we argue that Ukraine presents a liminal case – marked by a multiplicity of passage points– between different sources of knowledge on social movements and digitally mediated protest. Thus, examining it presents an opportunity to translate these knowledge frameworks into productive dialogue, as well as decentre the dominant Western academic perspectives and account for the continued influences of colonial histories, including histories of violence and resistance, on producing knowledge on mobilisation in the Global South.

The case of Ukraine offers an opportunity to critically address the conceptual and methodological approaches that dominate digital protest studies and studies of networked social movements. We argue there is a need to decentre the methodological nationalism of institutional and structural approaches to mobilisation and resistance studies in favour of the vernacular and affective dimensions of transnational mobilisation which is experienced, performed, and documented differently by geographically dispersed participants across the globe. The dominant mainstream approaches often assume organic unity of protests and fall short of fully

explaining the spectrum and the dynamics of diasporic participation, while the latter draw attention to crucial drivers of diasporic protest and social movement activity. Our goal, therefore, is to foreground those 'other' heterogeneous drivers and boundaries of diasporic protest and to offer a nuanced, actor-centric postcolonial approach to understanding how protest translates when it circulates in digitally connected diasporic communities.

2. Diasporas and their role in transnational mobilisation

As a construct that spans multiple disciplinary literatures, diasporas are alternatively viewed as both drivers and outcomes of specific social and political processes (Adamson, 2012): they are seen as emerging out of boundary-crossing processes such as migration, exile or dispersal (a largely essentialist and more traditional view often adopted by IR scholars, e.g., Conner, 1978) or as socially constructed through discourse, identity formation and political mobilisation (a constructivist and arguably more productive view reflected, e.g., in Anderson, 1983). In either case, diasporas are complex actors arising out of multiple histories of transborder movement spurred on by various forces: those of injustice, persecution and displacement; of economic hardship and the search of a better life and future; and ultimately, of the power differentials between the oppressors and the oppressed realised through categories such as race, class, or ideology (Tlostanova, 2012).

The high level of political engagement of diasporic actors and their mobilising potential therefore stem from their origins; as diaspora communities, they remain continually engaged with both the past and the future of their countries of origin, being an embodiment of nonlinear histories and trajectories of their development. At the same time, Adamson (2012) argues that diasporas themselves can also be understood as products or outcomes of transnational mobilisation by key politically engaged actors ('social entrepreneurs') who engage in strategic identity construction to create and maintain a transnational 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). This points to a complex understanding of diasporas as simultaneously actors and outcomes of transnational mobilisation processes and underscores the need to study their communicative acts and political engagement in concert with their identity and community co-construction work.

Too often, diasporic mobilisation is subsumed into scholarship of mobilisation more broadly and examined through the lens of predominantly Western theoretical frameworks for understanding civic and political participation such as networked individualism (Wellman, 2003; Rainie and Wellman, 2012) or connective action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). These are mostly grounded in and structured by English-language scholarship and methodologies stemming from North American and Western European case studies. There is, however, a growing body of work arguing for a non-media centric understanding of protest mobilisation and participation (Onuch 2015; Jost et al., 2018; Onuch et al., 2021), questioning the centrality of networked technologies and arguing instead for a more nuanced understanding of mobilisation mechanisms involving a combination of political, social, cultural and affective factors.

On the other hand, academic inquiry into diasporic mobilisation tends to focus on conflict-driven mobilisation or radicalisation of diasporic communities (Brinkerhoff, 2008; Koinova, 2009) or on exiled or refugee publics (Moss, 2016). Such framings and approaches inadvertently contribute to placing these publics within dominant Western geopolitical paradigms and operationalising their agency as mobilisational actors as either hostile to or dependent on the Western social and political environments which they come into contact with.

There is, however, a growing body of scholarship advocating for a poststructuralist view of diasporic mobilisation and for a renewed attention to diasporic discourses, affective publics, and collective imaginaries that highlight the role of engaged diasporas as agents of collective memory construction (Paul, 2000), of processing historical traumas or of transitional justice (Nikolko, 2019). Other scholars (Candidatu et al., 2019;

Leurs, 2016; Leurs and Ponzanesi, 2018) are drawing attention to the importance of adopting relational and postcolonial approaches to the study of digitally mediated diasporic networks and transnational connectivity as central to mediating diasporic identities, affective connections and communicative practices. We seek to contribute to this body of work by engaging a postcolonial lens to examine the grammars and vocabularies of digitally mediated diasporic mobilisation around Ukraine's Euromaidan protest and to decentre Western analytical frameworks by foregrounding the affective and discursive elements of protest mobilisation among the Ukrainian diasporas in the U.S.

Writing about the use and conceptualisation of the term 'diaspora,' Edwards (2001) discusses Stuart Hall's notion of diaspora (1990) as *articulated* through a combination of elements "related as much through their differences as through their similarities" (Hall, 1980, p. 325). The differences articulated through diasporic discourses are, Edwards argues, as much about what is or can be said, as about "what resists translation" (Edwards, 2001, p. 64). Borrowing from Star and Griesemer's understanding of scientific collaboration, when geographically dispersed and heterogeneous actors collaborate to produce and represent protest through many-to-many communication channels online, they inevitably engage in multiple acts of translation to satisfy information environments of each of their intersecting social worlds populated by the networked publics. These sets of translation occur through negotiating points of passage – clear sets of parameters to organise information (in this instance, a combination of social media affordances and the regimes of truth produced through them). As individuals and communities participating "in the intersecting worlds create representations together, their different commitments and perceptions are resolved into representations… This resolution does not mean consensus. Rather, representations, or inscriptions, contain at every stage the traces of multiple viewpoints, translations, and incomplete battles" (Star and Griesemer, 1989, p. 413).

We therefore propose to conceptualise the communicative role of diasporas as transglocal actors engaging in transnational mobilisation as one of *articulation* or *translation*, bridging the discourses and vocabularies of their homeland and the broader world. In this sense, we aim to show in our research that the Ukrainian diaspora communities played a translational role within the Euromaidan protest in more than one way: transmitting and translating the protest events to a global audience but also articulating Ukraine's complex postcommunist and postcolonial history without which it is impossible to understand the root causes of the protest itself. This simultaneously gives us an opportunity to critique the dominant Western approaches used to explain transnational protest mobilisation in the Global South and to argue for an alternative framework informed by postcolonial sensibilities and a heightened attention to the affective and discursive components of contentious political engagement.

3. Postcommunist/postcolonial Ukraine and its diasporas

In this section, we proceed to offer a critical analysis of the digitally mediated transnational activism among Ukrainians living abroad, while also engaging with Ukrainian diasporas as a product of postcommunist and postcolonial transformations. We then theorise on the obligatory points of passage that have historically been used by diasporas to articulate and translate their concerns regarding Ukraine to diasporic and Western audiences – a dynamic which we continue to examine in the contemporary settings in the subsequent sections of our paper.

Ukraine is rarely considered from a decolonial perspective by Western scholars, and few would place it on the map of the Global South (Mignolo, 2017). It might be helpful to think of Ukraine as a country in the Global East (Müller, 2020), if not for the complex histories and geographies that reach before and beyond the USSR. As Tlostanova (2012) contends, while the experiences of postcommunism often intersect with those of

postcoloniality through their common origins in modernity/coloniality, they each have distinct local histories of oppression and resistance. For the purpose of this article, we could consider this particular instance of postcommunism as a "nonclassical instance of postcoloniality" (Zychowicz, 2020, p. 12), recognising the nonlinear temporalities that shape the contemporary moment in Ukraine, particularly with attention to communities that "do not necessarily fit linear definitions of 'progress' in more mainstream conditionings of post-Soviet time and space" (ibid., p. 17).

Individuals and communities existing in a geopolitically fraught space of multiple geographical delineations such as Ukraine are inextricably tied to the Western world, both through myriad connections with the numerous diasporic communities scattered across the Global North and through their perception of Western democratic societies as an aspirational ideal (Yermolenko, 2014). Simultaneously embedded in and peripheral to this global space of norms, standards and values, Ukrainians perceive themselves as part of it and at the same time see themselves as being on the outside, as 'the other' (Lokot, 2021b). This intersectional duality owes as much to Ukraine's own fraught postcommunist past as to the continued suspicion with which the Western world tends to view transitional democracies.

Decoloniality cannot be understood without engaging with the modernity/coloniality that had engendered it (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018; Tlostanova, 2012). Throughout its history for the past 300 years, Ukraine has been subject to various forms of imperial rule: while never officially a colony, it had the status of an imperial borderland, as evidenced by the literal translation of its name into the English language (Reid, 2015). Located at the crossroads between Western Europe and Russia, the country had often served as a gate, and sometimes as a battleground, between various empires: Romans and Ottomans, Habsburgs and Romanovs (Plokhy, 2017). Having been governed from Vienna, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and Istanbul through most of the 18th century, it had then been divided between Moscow and Vienna in the 19th century until its consolidation under the Moscow rule in the 20th (ibid.). The fact that many continue to refer to the country as "*the* Ukraine" – a rhetorical move that undermines Ukrainian sovereignty, reinforcing its marginal status of a territory within a larger imperial formation – highlights the lasting impact of imperialisms that Ukraine and Ukrainians continue to experience, especially within the Western academe.

Ukraine's status as an imperial borderland also carries a legacy of physical and epistemic violence experienced by the local population (Reid, 2015), as Ukrainian language and identity had often been maintained and negotiated as an act of resistance to the homogenising influence of other cultures and religious doctrines (Plokhy, 2017). As Mignolo contends, "Borders are everywhere and they are not only geographic; they are racial and sexual, epistemic and ontological, religious and aesthetic, linguistic and national. Borders are the interior routes of modernity/coloniality and the consequences of international law and global linear thinking" (2017, p. 112). Among the numerous frontiers that have come to shape contemporary Ukraine, borders between nomadic and agricultural lifestyle, Christianity and Islam, Eastern and Western Christianity, Europe and Russia have had a profound and at times detrimental impact on Ukraine's social and cultural fabric (Boichak, 2022; Plokhy, 2017).

Throughout its complex history, especially during the 20th century, we can also witness an increasing role played by the Ukrainian diasporas in the development of border thinking around the issues of Ukrainian identity that did not always map onto its territory. Even when Ukraine was formally part of other territorial structures or traversed by various geopolitical borders, diasporas served as the keepers of the ontological categories related to being Ukrainian and played a crucial role in creating the epistemological underpinnings that made Ukraine and Ukrainians known to the world – a process in which translation played a vital role. In these instances, throughout Ukraine's history, diasporas were the keepers of the boundary objects which Star and Griesemer (1989, p. 410-411) call "coincident boundaries." In the context of Ukrainian territory that has, over time, been part of various empires, maps served as such 'boundary objects' – a seemingly universal

referent that nonetheless encompassed a different set of meanings and imaginaries of homeland among Ukrainian migrant and diasporic communities.

One of the prominent examples of translation-led diasporic mobilisation took place in the 1930's during the Holodomor – an artificially created hunger-genocide in which between three and 10 million people had starved to death for their refusal to comply with Soviet collectivisation policies (Applebaum, 2018). In early 1933, when the daily death toll from starvation had reached tens of thousands and nearly every Ukrainian family had lost loved ones (Applebaum, 2018), Western media were demonstrably slow to reckon with the real costs of the Soviet modernity project. In fact, Walter Duranty, a notorious *New York Times* journalist who was the Moscow bureau chief at the time, was shamefully awarded a Pulitzer prize and allowed to keep it despite his best efforts to delegitimise the Holodomor and thus obscure the human toll behind the discourses of industrial progress and modernisation (Pulitzer Prizes, 2003). Crucially, in the context of one-to-many communication acts prevalent at the time, the spectrum of boundary objects – common methods of communication across geographically dispersed groups – was restricted to broadcast and print media, which limited diasporic actors' autonomy to frame and legitimate their concerns to their host country governments.

Figure 1. Leaflet of the anti-communist organisation of Ukrainians in the United States, Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (1962). *Source: Collection of the Press Museum-Archive, Kyiv, Ukraine.*

Nonetheless, Ukrainian diasporic communities in the United States were successful in creating obligatory points of passage and were the first to sound the alarm on the Holodomor cover-up, campaigning extensively to raise awareness of the man-made tragedy in their country of residence.

Throughout the 20th century and particularly during Ukraine's Soviet period, key diasporic organisations, such as the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, continued this translation work through framing Russia's influence and involvement in Ukraine in colonial terms and as detrimental to Ukraine's political, historical and cultural independence (see, e.g., Figure 1) and mobilised diasporic movements to oppose it. In addition to broadcast and print media – traditional repertoires of diasporic mobilisation, leaflets also played the role of boundary objects through which diasporas could mobilise the members of their local communities for naming and resisting Russian colonialism. It is noteworthy that these leaflets were bilingual, which allowed them to serve as a means of translation across social worlds in a more literal sense.

Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, diasporic communities have been actively involved in their homeland politics through their engagement in material, as well as informational, economies. Remittances – monetary and in-kind transfers from migrants working abroad to friends and family in their home country – are frequently mentioned in the diasporic studies literature (Brinkerhoff, 2008). Comprising a substantive proportion of Ukraine's GDP, remittances are also used to fund local social, economic, and religious development projects in the country (Kupets, 2012). Advocacy and lobbying of host governments, international organisations, and the general public is another prominent channel of diasporic involvement (Berkowitz and Mügge, 2014; Tatar, 2020). Throughout the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, Ukrainian diasporic communities in the United States raised considerable funds to support local non-profit organisations in support of opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, and lobbied to increase democratisation funding by large international donors such as USAID, National Endowment for Democracy, Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute and the National Republican Institute (Wilson, 2006). Although the scale of diasporic translation efforts has seen a manifold increase and was immensely consequential, until the Euromaidan the repertoires and grammars of diasporic mobilisation had remained largely traditional. In the next section, we investigate the significance of Euromaidan in the process and dynamics of diasporic mobilisation, situating them in the intersecting contexts of postcoloniality and digitally mediated protests.

4. Translating Euromaidan

The political and social upheaval in Ukraine since 2013 resonated with Ukrainian diasporic communities internationally (Lapshyna, 2019), including in the U.S. The digitally augmented nature of Euromaidan protests in 2013-2014 also made protest participation highly accessible to diasporic actors (Lokot, 2021a; Krasynska, 2014) and allowed them to embed into the transnational discursive networks that emerged around Euromaidan, thus radically expanding the number of obligatory points of passage in the many-to-many communication contexts. In this sense, the diasporic communities co-constituted overlapping affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015) which found themselves compelled to engage in the protest as an attempt to fulfil their imagined community's destiny, as if fulfilling the desires of the displaced generations of Ukrainians that have traditionally constituted the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States. When examined through this lens, digitally mediated diasporic activism reveals itself to be highly connective – not only through information and communication technologies, but through diaspora members' alliances with each other and with their imagined community, which includes the community in the homeland. Papacharissi recognises the significance of digitally mediated protest narratives in these affective information economies: "Technologies network us but it is narratives that connect us to each other, making us feel close to some and distancing us from others" (2015, p. 5). Thus, the emergence of many-to-many communication channels has also expanded possibilities for

translation and facilitated the emergence of new boundary objects – standardised forms of engagement – that could be used for these purposes.

Social media have emerged as a prominent space for diasporic mobilisation and activism, opening new avenues for studying transnational communities living outside of their countries of origin (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti, 2013; Moss, 2016), not least through their communicative connections (Leurs, 2016) and linkages with networks and issues back home (Boichak, 2017; 2019). Unlike social actors that map onto a distinct territory, diasporas are *transglocal* (Aparicio, 2010; Kok and Rogers, 2017) networks that traverse and reconstitute state and identity borders of national identity through their strategic use of technological and communicative affordances. Being 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983), diasporas often exist as complex assemblages of personal and shared histories, tensions, hopes and grievances, sharing in both collective and personal identities increasingly constituted in and through digital networked spaces. In this context, we argue that social media afford the creation of a variety of obligatory points of passage where translation – as the process of enlisting allies into networks to legitimise claims (Star and Griesemer, 1989) – occurs.

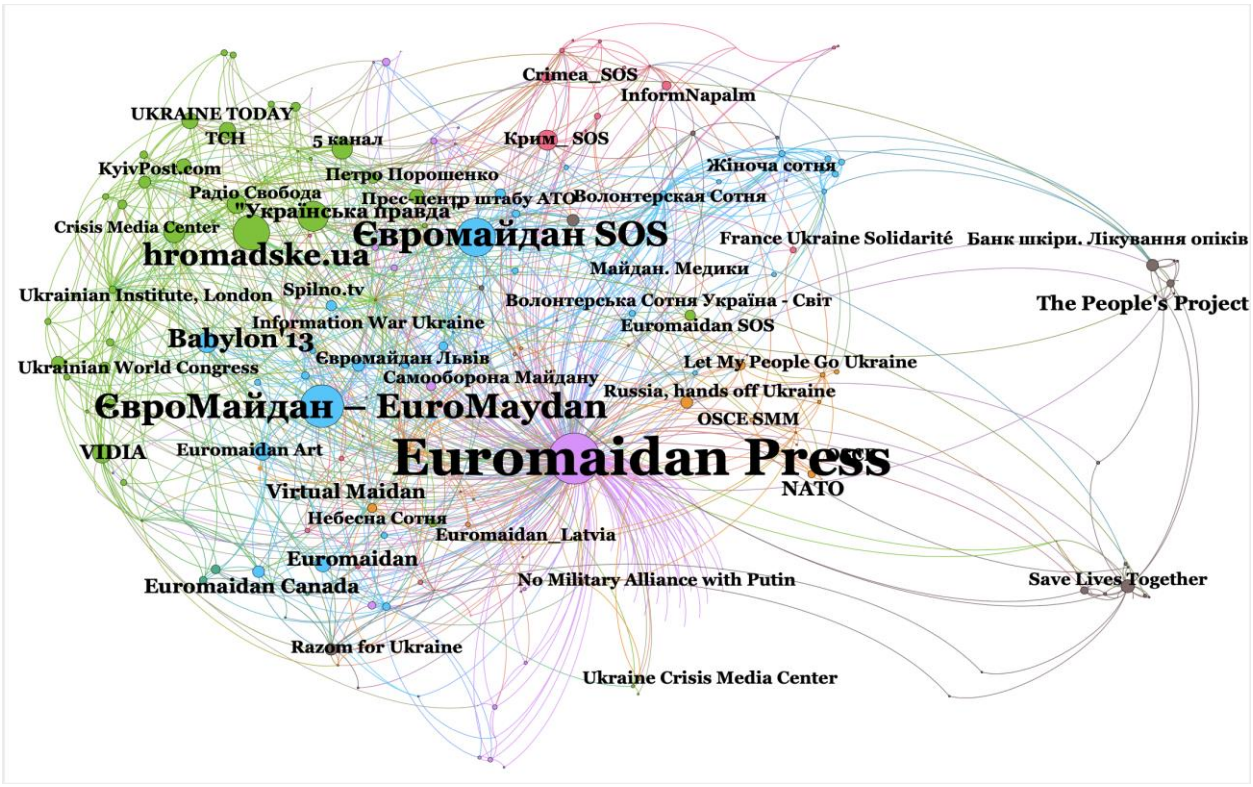

Figure 2. Issue network demonstrating involvement of diasporic and other actors in translating Euromaidan protests.

We can witness the involvement of diasporic actors in translating Euromaidan protests in Figure 2, which represents an issue network generated by the authors in 2016 from social media data collected from Facebook during the Euromaidan protest in 2014 using Netvizz software (Rieder, 2013) and visualised in Gephi. This network presents key actors and sources of information (protest groups and communities, media outlets, NGOs, public figures and other actors who engaged with the issue of Euromaidan) as interconnected nodes. We can see the Ukrainian diasporas (Euromaidan Canada, France Ukraine Solidarité, Euromaidan Latvia, and Ukrainian Institute London prominent among numerous smaller pages/groups that were not marked) co-constituting the fabric of digitally mediated protest: these communities were prominent parts of the

Euromaidan network and were framing key Ukrainian news and issues in real time, 'translating' them both literally – into English or other languages – and figuratively, by making them visible and legible to Western audiences. The page represented by the central node – Euromaidan Press – was created specifically for the purpose of broadcasting protest news in the English language, and many diasporic activists have contributed to this effort. Euromaidan Press was thus a crucial point of passage that served to frame and mediate the protesters' political agendas across distributed local and national sites of protest. In doing so, they relied on a set of boundary objects, such as social media affordances which afforded the production of legitimacy and truth that not only incorporated the multiplicity of local and national protest goals and experiences, but also allowed to fight adversary attempts to delegitimise the protests on the part of Russia (Boichak and Jackson, 2020).

This network visualisation also supports claims made by scholars elsewhere (Lokot, 2021a; Zychowicz, 2020) about the expanded boundaries of the protest square – in this instance, we can witness the radical expansion of the Euromaidan protest to include communities from afar, both physically and digitally. In the next section, inspired by Zychowicz's work on the expansion of the Maidan square (2020), we combine ethnographic and computational methods (Boichak and Kumar, 2021) to investigate the grammars and vocabularies of these translation processes as the key drivers of protest mobilisation.

5. Data and Methods

Methodologically, this paper draws on the concept of translation (Star and Griesemer, 1989) to trace how Ukrainians living in the U.S. engaged with homeland politics during the Euromaidan protests and their use of social media as a boundary object in translating protest politics. The analysis of mediated discourses produced by these publics is coupled with ethnographic and computational approaches to empirically study the grammars and vocabularies of translations or articulations of key political concerns that emerge in the process of affective mobilisation.

We collected historical data from January-April 2014 (encompassing the second half of the protest period and its aftermath) from three public U.S.-based Ukrainian diaspora groups on Facebook (Table 1). The three groups were selected to represent Eastern and Western U.S. coasts, as well as the Midwest, and were chosen as the largest in their particular location. We then used the data to produce a series of semantic maps – networks of nouns that co-occur in a unit of speech – to map the semantic structure of discourse within these groups that evolved around the time of the Euromaidan protests (vocabularies). In semantic networks, nodes represent the nouns found in the text corpus extracted from posts and comments within a given group over the studied period (Boichak, 2019). Nodes (terms) are linked through edges. Each edge has a weight (value) assigned to it indicating the frequency of co-occurrence of two terms in users' posts and comments.

Table 1 – Sample descriptives

Group location[1]	*Membership*	*Number of posts*
Chicago	12,823	940
Boston	2,229	1,357
Seattle	2,695	824

This networked approach to text mining allowed us to detect and map topics – clusters of terms that co-occur in a conversation. Due to the three groups in the sample communicating in three languages (English,

[1] **Group names have been removed to protect the privacy of group participants**

Ukrainian, and Russian), we used Google's automated translation services to translate the text corpus into English automatically. In this context, the Google tools were the boundary object that fostered the production of semantic maps. We then used VosViewer (van Eck and Waltman, 2011) – another boundary object – to create visual representations of the mobilisation vocabularies used by the groups. To visualise the text corpus, we imported it into VosViewer using binary counting, which allows for each term to only be counted once regardless of the number of times it appears in a certain post/comment. We set the minimum number of occurrences of each term to three and the relevance criteria to 100%, so as not to exclude important general terms that might erase key vocabularies.

To complement the semantic mapping, we conducted 33 in-depth interviews with Ukrainians living in the U.S. who self-identified as protest participants to understand how they engaged with networked protest discourses and how they articulated their digitally mediated participation in the context of their diasporic connections with their country of origin and their current country of residence (grammars). The interviewees were recruited through invitations posted to public Ukrainian diaspora pages on Facebook and disseminated through Ukrainian community organisations in the U.S., with interviews taking place between January 2014 and August 2015. The interviews provided rich ethnographic material that allowed us to further examine the affective and discursive components of diasporic protest mobilisation and the translational role of mediated diaspora networks.

6. Findings

6.1 Vocabularies

In the process of protest translation, civic vocabularies are bridged across intersecting social contexts to articulate the protesters' goals for multiple heterogeneous audiences. For it to be a true boundary object, social

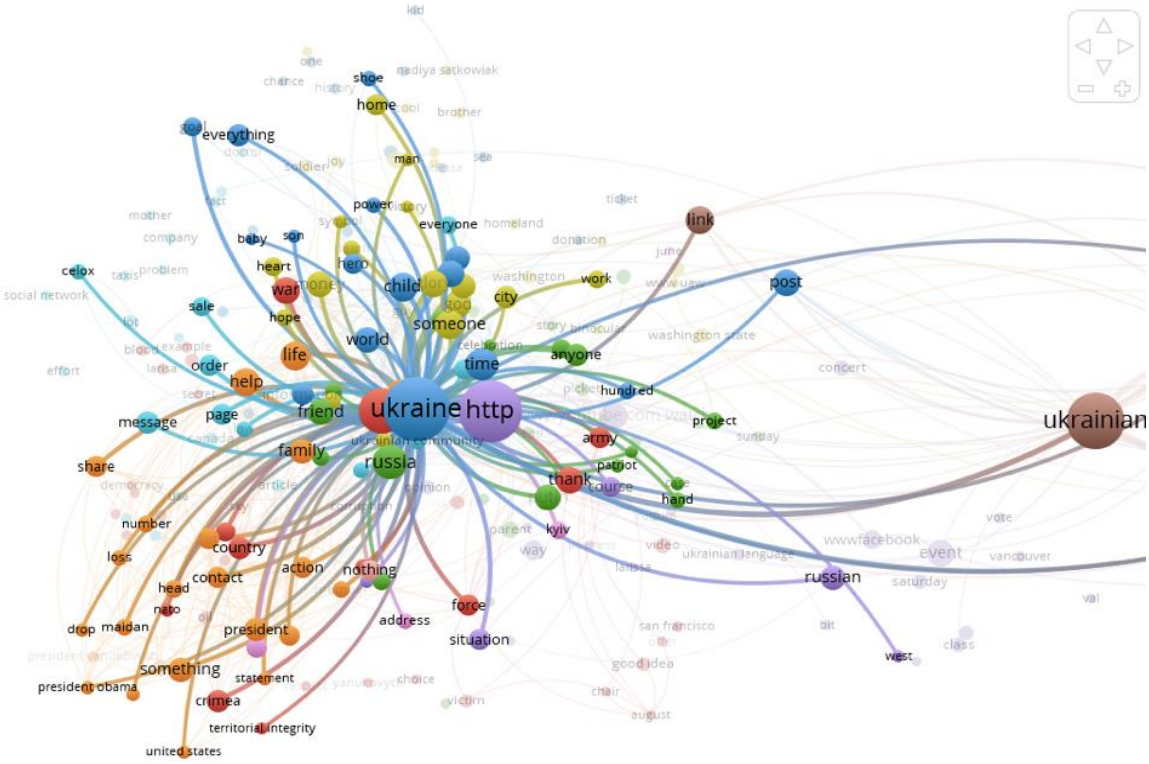

Figure 3. Centrality of Ukraine-related topics in discussion in the communities located in Seattle.

media would have to be flexible enough to accommodate divergent viewpoints, all the while being "robust enough to maintain identity across them" (Star and Griesemer, 1989, p. 387). The semantic networks from each of the Facebook groups in the U.S. revealed broad similarities in the Euromaidan-related vocabularies used by the diasporic actors.

These vocabularies include: the centrality of Ukraine-related topics (Figure 3), the prominence of political narratives (Figure 4), discussion of mediated protest practices, and, post-Euromaidan, the emergence of a war-focused discourse in connection to the post-protest conflict initiated by Russia (Figure 5).

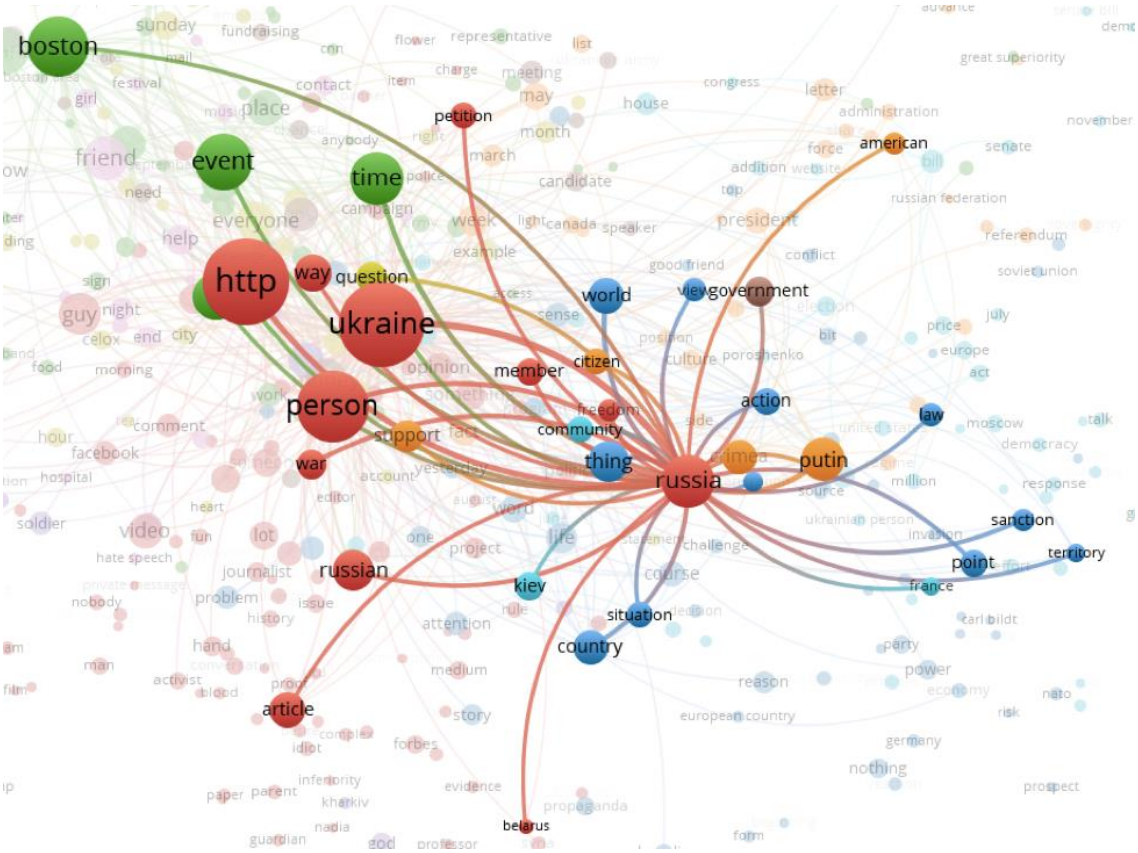

Figure 4. Discussion of Ukraine-related political topics in the communities located in Boston.

The centrality of Ukraine-related vocabularies is evident across all three Facebook groups, which indicates the high mobilising potential of these vocabularies, while also suggesting context collisions between the topics having to do with Ukraine (Davis and Jurgenson, 2014). For this reason, while centrality and modularity in these networks remain low, it is possible to distinguish clusters of words that denote topics in the diasporic discourses. We can see patterns in the use of affective civic vocabularies, particularly when it comes to raising funds (purple, yellow, and green clusters across three groups), discussing local, national, and international politics (orange and red clusters), as well as linking to other platform-mediated collectives or soliciting signatures for petitions to host country governments and international institutions (blue and brown clusters respectively, Figures 3-5).

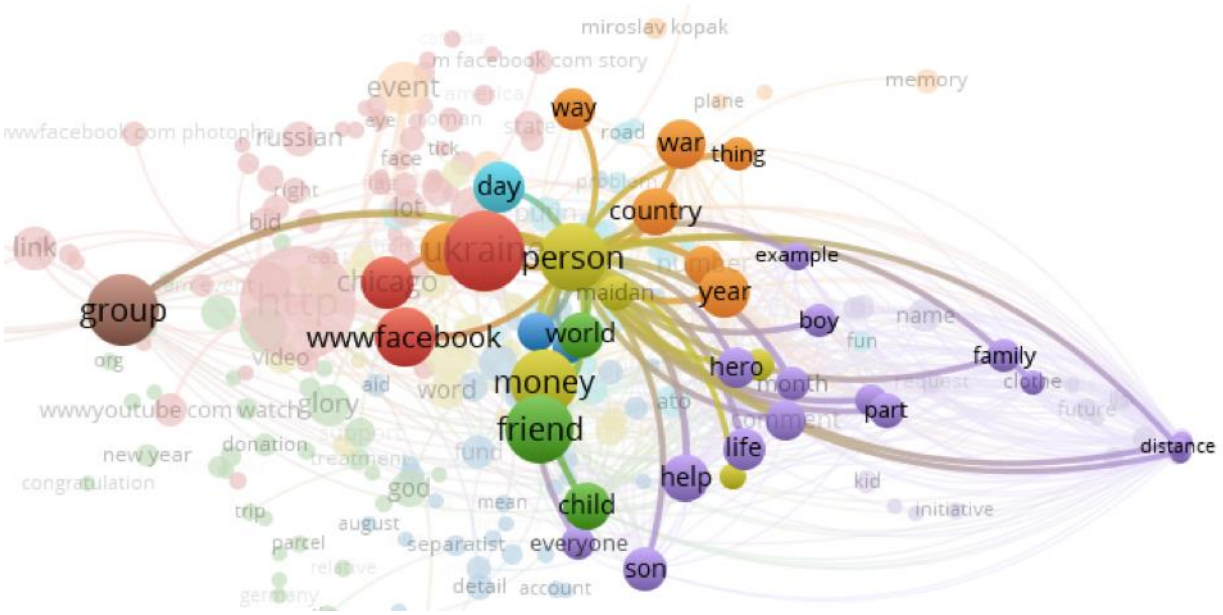

Figure 5. Conflict- and war-related discourses, centring on fundraising, among the Chicago-based communities on Facebook.

The centrality of protest discussion and related activity in the semantic maps illustrates the key role of social media in mediating diasporic protest participation by layering digital networks over existing diasporic personal connections. This hybrid tandem of personal connections and social networks afforded respondents crucial opportunities for engaging in Euromaidan politics (Onuch, 2015): they were primarily relying on their close family ties or ties of friendship, but also achieved wide reach and visibility to the weak ties in the networks, allowing them to translate the protest events and their political context for others in the diaspora communities or their allies in their host countries.

Among the Euromaidan-related vocabularies emerging from the semantic mapping, we also find evidence of affective articulations of protest claims and events, which suggests that diasporic protest vocabularies were at least in part used with the aim of translating the affective components of the resistance into the geopolitical ones. In Figure 3, we see smaller nodes around emotive terms such as 'family,' 'loss,' 'god,' 'child,' 'hero,' 'patriot,' etc., revealing how diaspora communities were seeking to translate their emotional investment in the protest outcome, the state violence against protesters, and the valorisation of those who lost their lives during the darkest days of Euromaidan. Some of the same terms ('hero,' 'life,' 'example') are also found in the discourses seen in Figure 5 in conjunction with nodes for 'war' and 'country', suggesting that affective articulations continued to be prominent in diasporic vocabularies during the ensuing Russia-Ukraine conflict that sparked immediately after the protest drew to a close. These overlapping vocabularies point to the complex nature of diasporic mobilisation and the centrality of the translational role of diasporas as participatory actors bridging the discourses between their home territories and host countries.

6.2 Grammars

The semantic mapping findings gain deeper meaning in combination with themes that emerged from interviews with protest participants and activists in the Ukrainian diaspora, articulating the grammars of transnational mobilisation. The interviewee responses also reveal the centrality of affective connections in diasporic mobilisation and provide further evidence for understanding diasporic communities as translational actors.

According to Papacharissi, affect represents "a key part of how people internalise and act on everyday experiences" (2015, p. 12), and this was certainly in evidence when interviewees spoke about their digitally mediated but also affectively connected experience of the Euromaidan protest. The participants felt strongly that their participation in the Euromaidan events was an expression of their political position, but also a representation of their identity and belonging to Ukraine. An interviewee in Washington, DC suggested that expressing "being Ukrainian" was key to joining the protest activity, both offline and online:

> We can't actually go to Euromaidan and occupy the square, so we have to get creative: I still want to express myself as Ukrainian, so I go and stand in front of the White House or the Ukrainian Embassy in Georgetown and protest. Or I see people changing their [social media] avatars to Ukrainian flags and I do the same, because that creates some sense of unity.

The affective self-identification of diaspora users as Ukrainian and as part of the protest using the vernacular tools of social media platforms was a prominent feature of the grammars of transnational mobilisation. As one interviewee discussed the final days of Euromaidan, which saw the deaths of dozens of protesters in Kyiv at the hands of state forces, they noted that "suddenly everyone's profile pic looked the same and, overall, it made quite a powerful impression — that of a country, a people in mourning."

Several interviewees spoke about the centrality of digitally mediated engagement in creating a feeling of emotional connection for diaspora participants with the protesters and events on the ground in Ukraine. A banking software specialist interviewed in Washington, DC said that being able to watch coverage from the ground in real-time online was, as he put it,

> ...the closest you could get to being there and living through it without actually being there. I really don't know if I can compare it to anything, this feeling when you're sitting on the edge of your chair watching the crowd in Instytutska engage in a battle for every meter of space with the police, pushing forward and pulling back.

Another interviewee, a graduate student in Washington, DC, said that being online and following the Euromaidan news was "like a drug" and added that "the fear of missing something crucial, like another attack by riot police" had made her keep her phone by her person at all times, even at night. This sentiment of a constant, visceral connectedness with the protest was echoed by another respondent who also stressed the importance of mediated protest participation in connecting diasporas to both the action back home and to other diaspora members in their host country:

> Knowing that there were thousands of other people watching these live streams, seeing these photos, scrolling through tweets, just like I was [...] felt somehow reassuring, like this wasn't just going to happen and be forgotten, like all of us were watching history being made, watching these brave people and feeling we were part of this history.

Interview participants defined diasporic protest engagement as a combination of offline and online actions, including direct action (street rallies); advocacy efforts in mainstream media, social networks and official channels (e.g., letters to Congress); needs-based fundraising and charity work; and other indirect engagement in activism efforts. However, they also underscored the intermediary role of diaspora activists as one of translating the claims, grievances and meanings of the protest movement to audiences in host countries, as well as articulating the needs of Euromaidan and opportunities for diasporic organising and assistance.

Several respondents pointed out that social media was important not only for connecting with the events back home, but also for sharing the materiality of diasporic protest engagement with home audiences, strengthening the affective connections underpinning transnational mobilisation. A Washington, DC-based interviewee recalled:

> Apart from just watching the streams from Kyiv, which we all did all the time, religiously, we could also stream our own protest rally near the White House on YouTube and [...] knowing that someone in Kyiv or in Ukraine might see it and feel we had their back, that there were more people joining the protest, I think that was important to show our support, to show we were together.

Over time, the grammars of diasporic mobilisation evolved and diversified, coming to encompass not only networked discourses and local protest rallies, but also "seeking out people to start doing fundraising," "writing letters to senators, the congresspeople" as Ukrainians abroad recontextualised their actions, both material and digital, as part of the protest effort, as pointed out by another interviewee:

> Everyone wanted to go to Maidan [in Kyiv] to be part of the action there, because it was so exciting… But I realised that we were worth more, more useful here, with our connections and our networks of influential people. So, this is our protest experience, too, the sitting by the phone, by the laptop, the fundraising emails and Facebook auctions—that's how we protest.

Trust-building was cited as an important part of the grammars of diasporic mobilisation, and social media were also said to have played a part in this process. A diaspora representative engaged in fundraising for the protest underscored the connection between emotional engagement and building ties with supporters in networked communities:

> People will only give you so much money based on passion, or if the violence in Kyiv is flaring up and things are bad. But to make it last, to keep the funds flowing, you have to show people they can trust you. And being ultra-transparent is a good way to do that. "Look, here's how much you gave us and here's who got it, and here's a photo of the guy after he recovered from his injury." That makes the protesters in Kyiv risking their lives more real and gets your donors to trust you as the intermediary.

Articulating the stakes of the Euromaidan protest to diasporic networks and building trust as part of transnational mobilisation revealed the crucial role of diasporic activists as translational actors embedded within both their home and their host country's contexts. During the events of Euromaidan, these acts of translation sometimes took on a literal form, with members of the diaspora participating in ad hoc or organised efforts to translate protest-related social media posts and updates into multiple languages to increase reach. For some of our interviewees, this experience was also meaningful in affective terms, as it helped mitigate the physical remoteness from the site of protest:

> When you're just watching this online, it's a dumb feeling of sorts, because you can see it from many angles, see the confrontations, the action, but there's nothing you can do apart from sharing the news online, reposting the videos and livestreams, translating what is going on into different languages.

> It helped alleviate the guilt of not being there a little [...] a small thing, sharing the news widely, retweeting the images, the livestreams, translating what I retweeted into English, to make sure the important stuff gets seen. Some other Ukrainians here were doing this as well, so it was just our personal contribution, but it also gave us something to do besides simply taking in the news.

The unique diasporic vocabularies and grammars of digitally mediated transnational mobilisation persisted long after the end of the active phase of the protest, extending into the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in spring of 2014, as evident both from the semantic maps (Figure 5) and the comments of our interview participants, many of whom redirected their efforts and attention to supporting Ukrainian volunteer efforts

during the war (Boichak, 2019). The interviewees underscored the centrality of personal connections and existing diasporic networks to the mediated expression of their Ukrainian identity:

> I also know some charitable foundations who work with the volunteers, knew some personal friends of mine, and, you know, truth is, there are lots and lots of people who are trying to help. Social media is very important because it connects a lot of people together; it shows us that we are not alone, and we can find people that are similarly minded – it is so easy with Facebook!

Another interviewee in Philadelphia described writing an article for a Ukrainian diaspora media outlet that created significant affective resonance with communities across the country and resulted in multiple donations to the volunteer support fund:

> I was so impressed that the checks came from all over, from as far as North Dakota. One woman even sent us $1,000. I said, 'you could either send us money, or you could send a package directly to this address [at the Ukrainian Home, where they were accepting packages] – I've been there myself and saw people bring everything they had – rice, carrots, all they have and leave it there at the warehouse, and then they have lots of vans, pack them up and drive to the battlefront. The Weekly is a link that connects us all – it tells us what's happening in the Ukrainian community. I call it a lifeline… You should have seen the beautiful letters people wrote with their checks – they were thanking us and said, 'please let me donate, I want to help.'

The vocabularies and grammars of Ukrainian diasporas mobilised around events in their home country allow us to argue for decentring the idea of the mediated connective action grounded in and structured by platform affordances and networked individualism. Instead, we find that it was affective action rooted in personal connections, community values, shared imaginaries and histories of resistance, and propelled by emotional resonance and a sense of destiny and community belonging that characterised how Ukrainian diasporas engaged with the Euromaidan protest from abroad.

Though mainstream Western scholarship has conditioned us to give preference to media-first theorising about activism and protest mobilisation, our findings echo existing critiques of this approach (e.g., Onuch, 2015; Jost et al., 2018) and show that media-centric protest communication theories fall short of fully explaining how diasporic actors participate in homeland politics, and that the non-media-centric aspects of transnational protest mobilisation are equally important (if not more so), though they are often implied or unsaid, and remain understudied. Attending to affective action as one of the key drivers of diasporic mobilisation constitutes an important part of de-Westernising mainstream scholarship on global activism and protest and creating space for critical scholarship and perspectives from the Global South.

6. Conclusion

In our study, we explored the role of diasporic networked communities as *translational* actors who engaged with homeland politics as part of their identity maintenance and everyday networked practices but also strove to articulate the less explicit sensibilities, values and emotions fuelling the Euromaidan protest. Situating our inquiry in networked diasporic discourses and building on a decolonial understanding of Ukraine's history and politics, our approach illuminates the possibilities for studying transnational mobilisation and activism as a heterogeneous assemblage of identity practices, discourses, and events brought and held together by affective intensities that open possibilities for different futures.

Euromaidan, which emerged as a symbolic marker of Ukraine's national identity, was, itself a major point of passage for diasporic engagement in Ukraine's nation-building project. While prior attempts at remote

involvement in creating the country's historical memory have not necessarily contributed to the production of an inclusive, uniting civic identity, Euromaidan became the pivotal moment of possibility when the civic vocabularies of Ukrainians living within, as well as outside the country's borders were able to merge (Yekelchyk, 2015). In this way, the Euromaidan protest was a point of passage exactly due to the processes of translation – and thus, convergence – between the often incongruous notions of national identity across regional, as well as national territorial borders. Translating the local meanings and cultural codes associated with the Euromaidan protest, diasporas strove to amplify them to reach global audiences (including other diaspora members and external actors in their host country) through their use of the grammars of vocabularies of socially mediated protest. Interestingly, despite evidence of context collisions happening at the topic level, the grammars of diasporic protest participation were largely similar and aligned well across the different diasporic groups whose communication we analysed.

In this study, we mapped remote diasporic participation in protest, shedding light on how various material, discursive, and affective connections emerged as the Euromaidan protest was taking place in Ukraine. Our findings show that while digitally mediated spaces were important for transnational mobilisation, these networked connections were underpinned by affective intensities, emotional resonance and trust-building tactics. Diaspora activists used social media platforms as a 'boundary object' and aspired to play a translational role, as they strove to articulate the key claims and grievances of the protest, but also to frame them in terms of their own postcolonial Ukrainian identity and the attendant historical memory and affective experiences of Ukrainian diasporas globally. It is no wonder, therefore, that over time, Euromaidan came to be known as the Revolution of Dignity, as it was a singularly important and pivotal moment for a reinterpretation and a rearticulation of critical civic grammars and vocabularies that came to represent a Ukrainian identity that was shared, glocalised, and inclusive of various communities that mobilised around it.

This study contributes to the broader field of transnational mediated protest participation by using a hybrid methodological approach to examine diasporic mobilisation of Ukrainians living in the U.S. during the Euromaidan protests. Triangulating semantic mapping of online diasporic community discourses with in-depth interviews, we show how diaspora members engaged in the protest despite distance and how their translational role was mediated by social networks. We specifically show how diasporic personal networks and networked technologies enmesh to enable affective action and articulation of both protest grievances and identity claims, enabling the spectrum and the dynamics of diasporic participation in social movements happening simultaneously at the local, national, and transnational levels.

Though our study is inevitably limited and based on a sample of social media content and interviews tied to the Ukrainian context, we argue it has implications for the study of transnational mobilisation more broadly. Our findings indicate that digitally mediated protest politics can be an important component of studying transnational mobilisation in the Global South and can play a pivotal role in connecting remote diasporic communities to on-the-ground action. As a boundary object in and of itself, this study joined decolonial perspectives, including those shared by interview participants with the authors, with knowledge frameworks from mainstream Western scholarship of protest mobilisation and transnational activism. Mapping the datafied representations of diasporic political practices and discourses, and triangulating them with findings from ethnographic fieldwork contributes to the growing field of methodologically and conceptually diverse scholarship on the social and political transformations in the Global South.

Our approach and findings could be further tested by examining cases of diasporic mobilisation around pivotal political events in other former Soviet states, e.g., the ongoing political turmoil in Belarus. Our contributions could also be developed by putting the Ukrainian context into conversation with experiences and imaginaries of other postcolonial communities in the Global South, to elaborate a richer body of theoretical

and empirical knowledge about the role of digitally mediated diasporic movements in transnational politics across postcolonial contexts.

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