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„Exploring the Communication network of the Civil
Society organizations in Austria dealing with Ukrainian
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Introduction

The full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine on 24th of February 2022 triggered yet another wave of migration in Europe. Almost 13 million people fled their homes in the first three months of the invasion (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022). 6.3 million people have left the territory of Ukraine to Europe and neighboring countries. Austria announced that it welcomes displaced Ukrainians and more than 100 000 of them arrived in Austria (Brickner & Krutzler, 2022).

Austrian local CSOs have been a major force in dealing with the arriving displaced people. However, to provide additional support, Eastern European diasporas and international communities self-organized in dozens of volunteer groups. They organize transit procedures such as short term stays for the refugees seeking to travel further; settling processes such as finding housing and supplies; and coordinating humanitarian aid for displaced people both within Austria and sent to Ukraine. Austrian and international NGOs enjoy social credit, trust, and, therefore, funds and access to large material, organizational, and human resources. Volunteer groups are small and usually issue specific, thus they can provide targeted aid and coordinate swiftly. However, despite all the visible effort of the CSOs and volunteers, most Ukrainians tend to leave Austria (Brickner & Krutzler, 2022).

In my master's thesis I investigate the communication in the network of the CSOs and volunteers located in Austria. In particular, *I (1) examine the structure of their communication network, (2) define the issues they face in communication, and (3) review the communication strategies in the network.* On the base of this, I provide discussion for future research and potential policymaking to aid communities' self-organization and connective action.

Literature review

Mapping the actors

Despite Europe has seen a steep rise of refugee numbers over the past decade (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.), Russia-Ukraine war escalation of 2022 brought up new challenges. Most Ukrainians stay in Europe under tourist visas and under temporarily protection status (more than 2,6 million Ukrainians have already been granted with the temporary protection status (Eurostat, 2022)). Very few people apply for refugee status. However, in this thesis I refer to all people displaced from Ukraine due to war as “refugees” regardless of their legal status as these peculiarities are not focal to this research.

Similar to other refugee crisis responses in the European Union, numerous actors take part in the relief actions (Larruina et al., 2019). Naturally, these include governmental institutions such as city administrations and police. NGOs also take part in addressing the crisis. NGOs are mainly defined as private, self-governing organizations that work to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged people, driven by a commitment of shared values on a nonprofit basis (Boulding, 2014; Thomas, 2019; Vakil, 1997). In the context of Austria, there have been several organizations that have been dealing with refugees and related issues for years (e.g., Volkshilfe). Overall, NGOs’ success in achieving their goals depends on their ability to communicate their point to get support from the society (Duong, 2017). Therefore, a large part of any NGOs daily work is communication. NGOs use a variety of communication strategies to mobilize people (Duong, 2017; Pierce, 2001; Powers, 2014; Tavernor, 2018). Moreover, in achieving their aims NGOs also heavily rely on communication networks with other organizations and individuals who share their goals (Duong, 2017).

Austrian migration and humanitarian NGOs play a big role in dealing with Ukrainian refugees (The Local, 2022). However, due to the unprecedented scale of the crisis, many other

entities emerged to address the urgent issues. These entities are often based on strong pre-existing Eastern European diasporas in Austria. They include individual volunteers, informal volunteering groups, small NGOs that emerged after 24th of February 2022, small charity foundations, and religious organizations. Therefore, to better capture this landscape, I turn to the concept of civil society organizations (CSOs).

When discussing modern civil societies, there are other entities that operate in the similar manner as NGOs and belong to neither the government nor the commercial sector. To express this, the umbrella term is used - civil society organizations (CSOs) that includes community-based organizations and NGOs (Salamon et al., 2004; Sánchez-Salgado, 2007; UN Guiding Principles Reporting Database, n.d.).

Considering the fulminant development of the crisis and the changing situation, it is important to grasp the structural changes that occurred in the civil society as well. To this end, I employ the topology proposed by the researcher of the Disaster Research Center of the University of Delaware. They distinguish between four types of organizations: established, expanding, extending, and emergent (Dynes, 1994; Quarantelli, 1966; Quarantelli, 1994) (see Table 1).

		Structure	
		Old	New
Tasks	Old	Established	Extending
	New	Expanding	Emergent

Table 1. Organizations topology (Quarantelli, 1966; Quarantelli, 1994).

Established organizations are traditional response actors that keep on carrying out their usual tasks (e.g., AMS – Austrian labor market service). *Expanding* organizations employ small permanent staff and can mobilize significant numbers of volunteers when necessary (e.g., Caritas Internationalis, the International Red Cross). *Extending* organizations start acting outside of their original roles (e.g., churches and diaspora community groups and centers, Ukrainian Saturday schools in Austria). *Emergent* organizations are improvised, and often inconsistent groups of volunteers occupied with non-regular or regular tasks. Their action plans are usually spontaneous.

During the crisis emergent CSOs appear because already existing structures are not able to provide sufficient relief. These groups consist of individuals who work together to address specific issues. Oftentimes their activity evolves into grass-root organizations that receive small financing from funds or the government (Larruina, 2019). Further, literature shows that cooperation between CSOs and the governmental organizations enables more successful crisis management (Boersma et al., 2018; COA, 2017; Drabek & McEntire, 2003; Jong & Ataç, 2017).

In the context of the Ukrainian migrant management situation in Austria, indeed many of the actors are emergent CSOs that have been established after the 24th of February 2022. However, the governmental organizations and other CSOs also play a significant role. All actors concerned have a similar overall goal: help the refugees and provide humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, we observe that organizations still work separately, each having own facilities, pools of volunteers, websites, and logistics. This creates overlaps and communication problems (as derived from my pre-study and field observations). For example, the lack of translators on the ground which is particularly urgent at the train stations and arrival centers. Another example would be a complex and overlapping network of websites, social media

pages, and information leaflets that might have contradicting information about humanitarian centers, working hours, available items. All these resources seem impossible to sustainably update and monitor. Further in this paper I define these communication related issues more rigidly and provide a deeper understanding of their reasons and the barriers Austrian CSOs are facing in dealing with the crisis.

Crisis management through connective action

Crisis management is a complex management problem that requires swift exchange of information and coordination (Ley et al., 2014). In the case of this research, crisis is of high emergency and urgency in character, meaning an extreme speed of the situation change and new challenges arising. Such situations require improvisation, in other words, performance in which thinking and action occur at the same time (Ciborra, 1996; Perry, 1991). Crisis managers need to be ready to improvise (Mendonça & Wallace, 2007), as is indeed shown by my thesis' findings.

Further, migration crises exemplify complex societal challenges which engage numerous actors working on the local, regional, and national levels. The complexity of these issues requires effective horizontal and vertical collaboration (Deverell & Hansén, 2020; Granåsen et al., 2019). Moreover, voluntary organizations, individual volunteers, and other CSOs participate in the crisis relief effort. Therefore, a broader theoretical lens is needed to cover the collaborative work of various actors. It is only natural to refer to the connective action theoretical lens. Connective action is a social phenomenon of a group voluntarily working together to achieve a common goal (Dowding, 2013; Hardin, 2015; Ostrom, 2010; Shumate & Lipp, 2008; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). In literature, connective action frame derived as an extension of Olson's (1965) "collective action". Collective action problem highlighted the weak commitment of individuals to the group action, in cases when they could

benefit without extra involvement. However, Lupia and Sin (2003) show that radical lowering of communication cost alters this effect. When it becomes easier for the actors in the network to communicate and participate, their motivations and identification change. In this way, recognition of digital technology as “organizing agent” is at the core of connective action logic (Bennett & Segerberg, 2015).

Technology has already played role in Ukrainian struggle for sovereignty in forms of digital resistance (e.g., Doroshenko, 2022; Shore, 2022), protest organization, and advocacy (Nikolko, 2019). In the Russia-Ukraine war refugee crisis relief action, technology also play a role, allowing to organize massive connective action effort in protest and volunteering. Further in this thesis I discuss the ways technology and social media are used.

Communication network taxonomy and metrics

Organizational interdependence varies in form and, consequently, inter-organizational networks exhibit a wide range of structures (Raab, 2018). Deriving from the theory on collaborative governance, it is established that networks of organizations provide the flexibility, coordination, and innovation that is necessary to better address complex challenges that single-standing entities could (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Huxham et al., 2000; Vangen et al., 2015).

In order to theoretically ground this thesis, I use a comprehensive taxonomy of communication relations developed by Shumate et al. (2013). They distinguish between flow, affinity, representational, and semantic networks with reference to a paper by Shumate & O'Connor (2010). Flow relations describe such ties between the nodes that refer to the exchange of messages, information, or data. Therefore, this network visualizes the flow of information between the subjects. Affinity relation describes enduring ties among the nodes. In the context of organizational communication, they include collaboration and alliances.

Communication is implied in this relationship, but not the key aspect to it. Representational relations indicate an association among actors that is communicated to the public or a third party. Such relations include hyperlink networks (e.g., Tateo, 2005) and networks of name mentions on online resources (Shumate & O'Connor, 2010). Semantic relations refer to the similarities in the meaning or symbol usage among some nodes. Semantic relations indicate that actors have a shared understanding of a concept, however, this relation does not imply communication between them.

Considering the actors in this network represent diverse types of CSOs, I choose to use three classes of the taxonomy presented above simultaneously. Flow relation – represents communication between SCOs or volunteers, exchange of information without cooperation. Affinity – represents cooperation between actors, shared projects, resources. Representational relations indicate that two actors are aware of each other, they mentioned each other (or one mentioned the other) during the interview, however, they did not report collaborative actions or regular information exchange. Additionally, I indicate “affiliation” relation in the graph – it represents actors in ambiguous positions, who used to be independent volunteers but got employed by a SCO, or a smaller CSO that got direct financing of the government or a bigger SCO. This relation implies cooperation, communication, and additional loyalty and involvement that results from a financial tie between the actors.

Research gap and research questions

There are plenty works on volunteering groups and/or NGOs and/or CSOs role in dealing with in refugee crisis (works on civil connective action aid to the refugees: Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2021; Dean & Nagashima, 2007; Dessewffy, 2016; European Economic and Social Committee, 2017; Fehsenfeld & Levinsen, 2019; Skleparis & Armakolas, 2016; spontaneous volunteering: Simsa et al., 2019; relevant Ukraine-specific studies: Carlsen,

2022; Lapshyna, 2019; Nikolko, 2019). Also, some literature provides an overview of NGOs work with refugees in Austria (De Jong & Ataç, 2017; Verwiebe et al., 2019). There are methodological guidelines for the social network analysis of CSOs (Kocks & Raupp, 2016; Marshall & Staeheli, 2015). Some papers have addressed CSOs inter-organizational communication and cooperation as well (e.g., collaborative crisis management: Bynander, & Nohrstedt, 2020; inter-organizational communication networks: Brummel et al., 2012; Monge et al., 1998; Pirnejad et al., 2008; Shumate & Lipp, 2008). What still lacks in the research, is a comprehensive analysis of such a CSOs network with a multidimensional dynamic perspective and a large scope. Therefore, I am bringing together in this study notions of crisis management CSOs cooperation and connective action lens. I pay attention to the use of social media as a strategic way to bridge gaps in the network. Further, I am regarding nation-specific aspects of this network and map dynamic aspects of the network emergence and evolvement.

For this, I conduct a case study of communication network of CSOs located in Austria using in-depth interviews and network social analysis logic. The following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: *What are the properties of the network of Austrian CSOs dealing with Ukrainian refugees and humanitarian aid?* To be more precise, I include the following sub questions:

- a. *What are the centrality measures in the network?*
- b. *What is its national constitution?*
- c. *What is the structure of the network regarding the 1) CSOs' organizational type and organizational topology?*
- d. *What is the structure of the network in terms of the communicational relations taxonomy?*

RQ2: *What are the communication problems and issues in the network?*

RQ3: *What are the communication strategies in the network?*

- a. *To generally coordinate crisis relief efforts,*
- b. *And to overcome the communication problems and issues.*

Method

To answer the research questions, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the respective CSOs and volunteers (see sample information below). The questionnaire was tested in the pre-study and was adjusted accordingly to the results (see Appendix A). Research question one is answered with social network analysis (SNA) with Gephi. Research questions two and three are addressed with analysis of the qualitative interview data.

I use network interviews to collect the data. In principle, these are in-depth semi-structured interviews with several questions aimed at finding social network relevant information (Kocks & Raupp, 2016). Despite the face-to-face semi-structured interviews are laborious and demanding, they allow to explore the issues deeper and especially for sensitive topics, they allow a better assessment possibility (Borgatti et al., 2013).

Sampling strategy

I use the snowball sampling method and elements of purposeful sampling reasoning. Some organizations are easy to find online and contact while some operate exclusively via closed Telegram groups. I know of these organizations through my volunteering experience. Therefore, to collect more contacts of the organizations, I ask the participants “Can you recommend other organizations to talk to? How did you learn about them?” In the pre-study the participants have mentioned several new organizations. This also allows to draw connection between the CSOs. However, I also apply purposeful sampling reasoning, when deciding which organizations to contact from the list. I considered which organizations can potentially provide me new information, like this I tried to include diverse organizations in terms of their structure, geography, purpose, media presence, and so on. This helped to create a more representative sample, than if I had talked to only Vienna-based organizations.

Pre-study results and adjustments

Pres-study was conducted to test the questionnaire in early June 2022. Six people were interviewed from large Austrian NGOs. First, after the pre-study I have rephrased and clarified the questions with which the participants were struggling. Second, participants seemed reluctant to acknowledge the problems of the organizations openly. Therefore, I have adjusted the questions avoiding the words like “problems”, “obstacles”. Third, I’ve developed new questions and sub-questions for different types of organizations.

With these adjustments, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Vienna. The interviews were conducted in English, Ukrainian, and Russian. The participants received and signed Information booklets and Declarations of consent in the respective languages. The participants were carefully informed about their rights in the study.

Final sample

The final sample was collected in August 2022. I conducted the interviews in-person, over the phone, and via Zoom. I have also travelled to several Austrian cities for on the ground observations and in-person interviews. Reaching some CSOs via email or phone was not possible, therefore, I travelled to talk to them without prior arrangement. The majority of CSOs accepted the urgent request, however, some also declined it or talked to me but refused to sign the Information booklets and Declarations of consent.

In total, 16 interviews were conducted officially, with the Information booklets and Declarations of consent signed. However, while being in the premises of the organizations and while travelling to conduct the interviews, I have spoken to around 10 more people, who did not sign the papers. Additionally, 6 interviews were conducted as a pre-study in June 2022. This results in 16 more interviews that are not part of the official sample. I stopped at 16 interviews since I have reached a confident level of data saturation. This is supported by

the fact that the additional “unofficial” interviews did not provide new information and only supported the findings.

I have asked participants for 20 minutes interviews, however in many cases, they volunteered to speak for longer. This was true especially for the Eastern European diaspora representatives and for one international individual volunteer. Representatives of formal NGOs tended to ask to keep the time limit. The interviews lengths fluctuated from 20 minutes to 2 hours.

Some of the CSO names are mentioned on the network graph, however, other organizations did not consent to be mentioned. Therefore, the list of organizations is not provided here.

Social network analysis (SNA)

Using the data from the interviews, I build the network of the CSOs in Gephi to visualize the communication and cooperation connections. This allows to find communication gaps in the network.

I use the following SNA metrics to further analyze the network: 1) *density* which indicates network activity (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Measured from 0 to 1, where 1 means all possible ties exist in the network. A network with higher density can promote shared identity and collective action (Diani, 2003). 2) *Average degree* – the average number of edges for all nodes in the given network. 3) *Average path length*, that is equal to the average distance between every two nodes in the network. Therefore, it can be defined as the metric of the network’s cohesion (Wasserman and Faust, 1994) Nodes with low scores in average path lengths are able to communicate more effectively across the network (Hanneman and Riddle, 2005). 4) *Network diameter* that is equal to the longest shortest path in the network. (Barabási, 2016). 5) *Page Rank* measure that evaluates the importance of each node

in the network by running parallel equations evaluation the in-degrees of each node (Page et al., 1999). I use this measure to scale the nodes in the visualization and provide an illustration of their likely influence in the communication network. 6) *Average clustering coefficient* (transitivity) that indicates the tendency of a network to form closed triangles of edges (Barabási, 2016; Latapy, 2008; Luke, 2015). It is measured between 0 and 1, where 1 means high clustering tendency. 6) *Modularity class* analysis that allows to find separate communities in the network (Blondel et al., 2008; Lambiotte et al., 2008; Stoltenberg, 2019).

Results

In this section I first answer research question one by presenting the results of the social network analysis with Gephi and explore network properties. Then I answer research questions two and three by structuring the results of the interviews. Conscious of the SNA analysis results, I provide the key themes that were brought up by the participants.

Composition of the network from the interview data

Nodes

To create the network, I have assembled a node table with all names of organizations and individuals mentioned by the interview participants. Additionally, I surveyed the official social media pages of the organizations to verify and clarify connections they have mentioned in the interviews and find more connections they might have forgotten to mention. In total, this procedure resulted in a network of $N = 113$ nodes and $N = 151$ edges. The nodes have the following characteristics:

Organizational Type

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization: includes NGOs and other non-profit organizations, charities, juridic person created for non-profit purposes.• Governmental institution: local authorities, city administrations, embassies, ministries.• Individual volunteer (persons affiliated and non-affiliated with an organization) or volunteer center (a group of volunteers that continuously work together but do not have a legal base)• Church.• Educational Institution: schools, universities, educational centers.• Group \ Community: diaspora or other community that continuously communicate and/or acts as a group. |
|---|

CSO Topology type	In line with topology discussed in the literature review (Quarantelli, 1966; Quarantelli, 1994). ○ Established ○ Extending ○ Expanding ○ Emergent
Size	● Individual volunteer – 1 person ● Small – up to 15 people ● Medium – 15-30 people ● Large – more than 30 people
Founders	Refers to the initiators of the organization, its main national constitution, or location in case of foreign actors: ○ Austrian and International ○ International ○ Ukrainian ○ Russian ○ Belorussian ○ Located in Germany ○ Located in Ukraine

Table 2. Characteristics of the nodes.

Edges

The edges were created according to the Communication network taxonomy discussed in the literature review. In line with Shumate et al. (2013), I distinguish between the relations

of ‘flow’ (communication between actors), ‘affinity’ (cooperation between actors), ‘representational’ (awareness of one another). Additionally, I include ‘affiliation’ to represent employment and financing ties between actors. Therefore, I included all organizations mentioned by the interview and additionally those ones stated as collaborators on the official pages of the organizations. I classified the relations between the organizations according to the taxonomy mentioned above.

The network is treated as undirected. The vast majority of ties represent mutual flow, affinity, and representation. Some edges did indicate a directed representational relation, when one actor mentioned another in the interview, however, the later did not or this information could not be verified. Nevertheless, these ties are not numerous and would not contribute to the network analysis, therefore, I decided to treat all ties as undirected.

The edges have the weights of 1 and 2 to represent the intensity of a relation between the actors. The weight value was assigned according to the interview data and the survey of the official social media pages. Such factors as durability of a relation, its context and intensity were taken into account.

Social network analysis results

Centrality measures

The network consists of one giant component and one isolate node (Figure 1). The network’s density is quite low ($= 0.024$). This is a quite low measure, meaning that around 2% of possible connections are present in the network. Therefore, the network is far from reaching its potential to produce shared identity and collective action (Diani, 2003). Average degree = 2.673. The average path length = 4.195 and the diameter = 9. The average clustering coefficient = 0.319. To sum up these results, the network is not densely connected and has a

moderate tendency to clustering. Further, it takes on average more than 4 steps to connect two nodes. This severely limits and slows down potential communication.

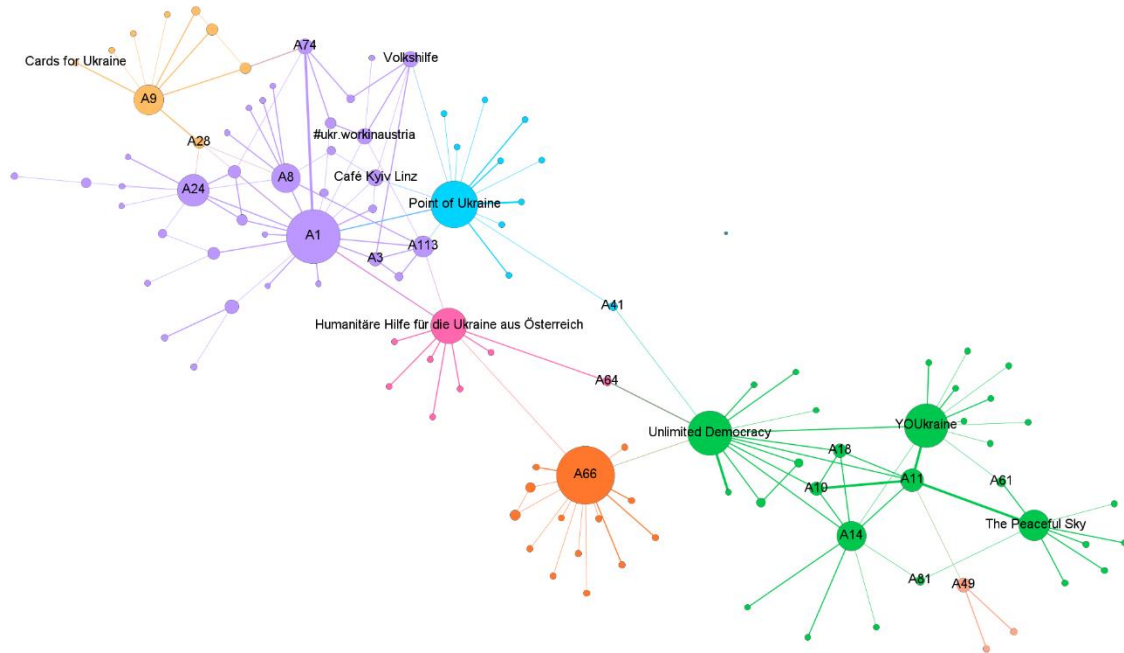


Figure 1. CSOs and volunteers' network. Nodes scaled according to the Page Rank. Colors represent communities detected by Gephi.

Figure 1 presents the network with the nodes scaled according to their Page Rank. In this case, Page Rank statistics help to further define the observed hubs of the network (A9, A24, A8, A1, Point of Ukraine, Humanitäre Hilfe für die Ukraine aus Österreich, A66, Unlimited Democracy, The Peaceful Sky, YOUkraine, A14) (Waldherr & Schmid-Petri, 2017). From the graph it is evident that the hubs tend to have fan-like unique connections to other nodes which would be isolates otherwise as well as they connect among each other.

Further, broker nodes are detected that provide a connection between several components of the graph that would not be connected otherwise. The broker nodes are: A66, Humanitäre Hilfe für die Ukraine aus Österreich, A41, and A64. Unlimited Democracy with a relatively high Page Rank score also serves as a unique broker node between two large network components.

Communities

Modularity Class analysis in Gephi, detected 11 communities in the network which are easily observed on the Figure 1. The majority of communities correspond to the hub and broker nodes described above. In addition, there are two larger communities (large community one (LC1) colored as violet with hub nodes A1, A8 and so on; and large community two (LC2) colored as orange with hub nodes A14, The Peaceful Sky, and YOUkraine). When reducing the resolution of the modularity class algorithm in Gephi, these two large communities include more of the surrounding nodes, resulting in 8 communities in total.

Nationalities

Figure 2 demonstrates a network visualization where the nodes are colored according to the nationality of the founders or initiators of a CSO or the nationality of an individual volunteer. It is evident that most communication hubs are either Ukrainian or Austrian-International organizations. They serve as mediators between various other organizations.

Also, they tend to cluster in respective communication groups: large Austrian and international CSOs A1, A3, A16, Volkshilfe – all share many ties. As seen from the Figure 2, actor A1 is also central to one of the communities.

Comparing Figure 2 and Figure 1 it is evident that the LC1 is mostly Austrian and International and includes Russian and Belorussian actors with high Page Rank (A8 and A24). The LC2 is mostly mediated by Ukrainian CSOs. Further, if evaluated for these communities separately, LC1 density = 0.046, and the average clustering coefficient = 0.323. LC2 has respective measures = 0.08 and = 0.437. Therefore, compared to the network average, density and the clustering coefficients are higher in both large communities.

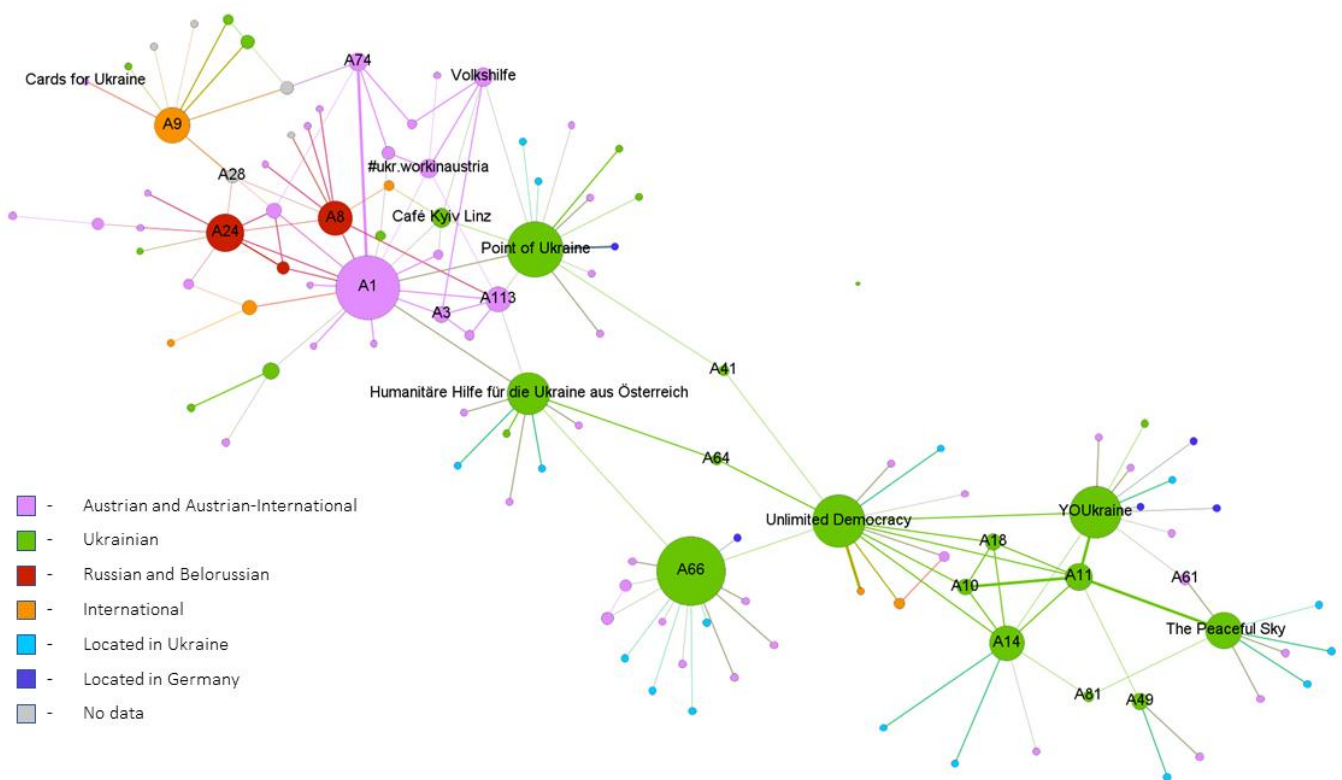


Figure 2. CSOs and volunteers network. Nodes scaled according to the Page Rank. Colors represent nationality of the CSO initiators or founders or the nationality of the volunteer.

Further exploring Figure 2, it is noticeable that Ukrainian founded CSOs (A66, Unlimited Democracy, YOUkraine, The Peaceful Sky, A14, and Humanitäre Hilfe für die Ukraine aus Österreich) have numerous unique connections to nodes, many of which are located in Germany or located in Ukraine. This means that Ukrainian volunteer centers often focus on getting international support and on sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

CSOs topology, types, and sizes

Figures 4 and 5 allows us to further explore the structure of the CSOs network. The nodes are scaled according to the CSOs' size ranging from small (up to 15 people), medium (up to 30 people), to large (more than 30 people). The smallest nodes indicate individual volunteers – actors who may be affiliated with a CSO or may work completely independently.

These scaling is the result of the interview data analysis that allowed to group the CSOs according to their size.

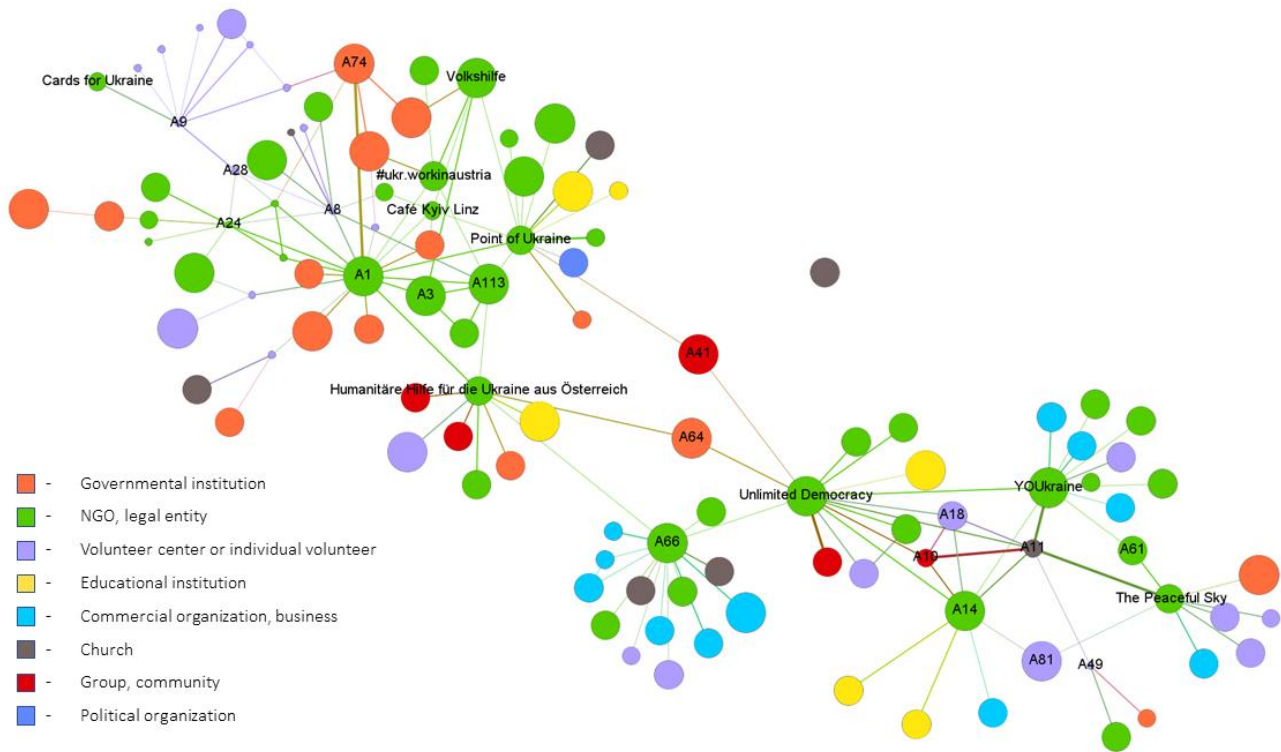


Figure 3. CSOs and volunteers network. Color represents types of the organizations. Nodes scaled according to the CSO size. The smallest nodes indicate individual volunteers.

This graph indicates that 38% of CSOs are NGOs or otherwise legally registered non-profit organizations. 22% are volunteer centers and individual volunteers. 13 % are governmental institutions (such as local authorities, city administrations, and state services).

Comparing Figure 3 to the previous figures, it is clear that Austrian and international CSOs tend to communicate with governmental bodies, and they have ties with numerous individual volunteers. On the other hand, Ukrainian CSOs cooperate with commercial organizations (mostly for transportation, event hosting, and food needs). Also, it is exclusively Ukrainian organizations that communicated or cooperated with educational institutions, according to the data.

Further, individual volunteers often serve as broker nodes (e.g., A24, A49, A28, A9, A8) to other individual volunteers and to CSOs. This brings up a concern that if one of these broker individual volunteers resigns, gets ill, or interrupts their work for other reasons, the communication network will lose connection to smaller components, more nodes will become isolates.

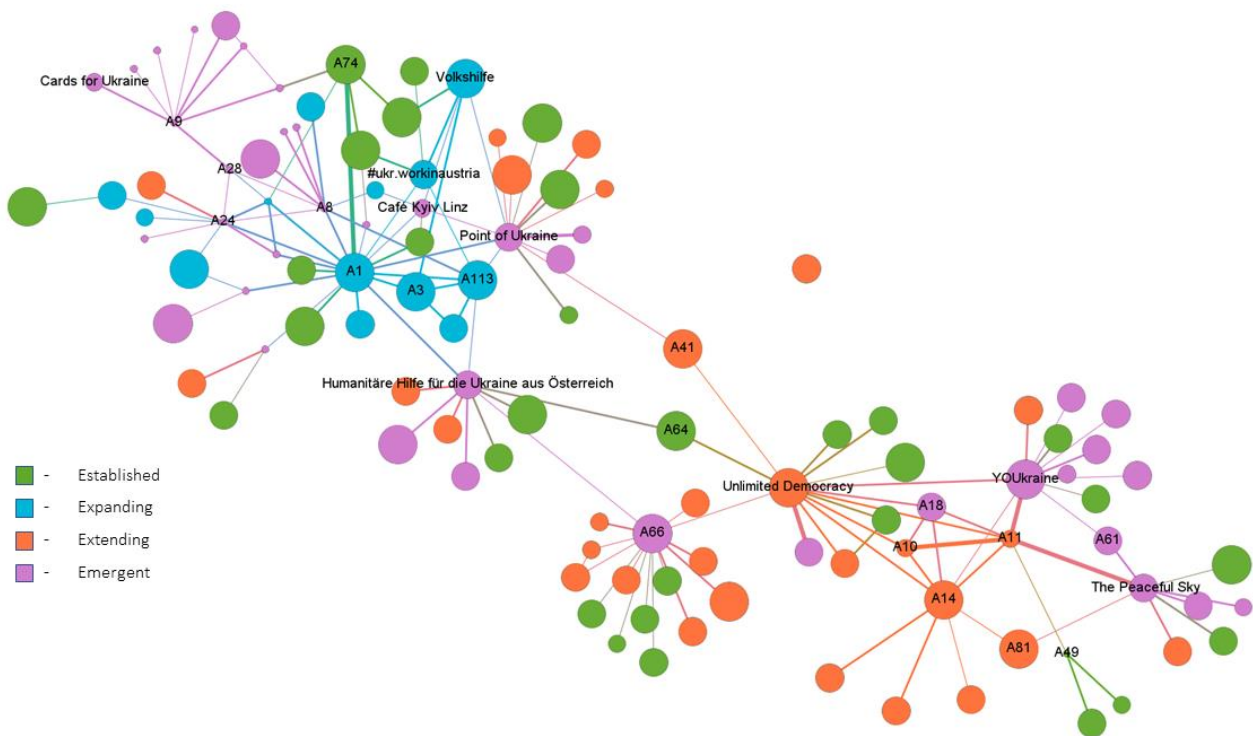


Figure 4. CSOs and volunteer's network. Color represents the topology of the organizations (Quarantelli, 1966; Quarantelli, 1994). Nodes scaled according to the CSO size. The smallest nodes indicate individual volunteers.

Figure 4 allows us to analyze the network with temporal and organizational topology perspective. Only LC1 with predominantly Austrian and international CSOs has expanding CSOs – organizations with large staff, publicity, social credit to expand in the times of crisis and mobilize large pools of volunteers. Emergent and established CSOs and volunteers are almost equally spread around the network. Finally, it is mostly LC2 and Ukrainian CSOs that communicate with extending organizations (churches, educational institutions, business).

Lastly, Figure 5 shows the communication relation taxonomy (Shumate et al., 2013). More than 50% of relations in the network are affinity (cooperation) relations between the actors, and 13% are flow (communication). This means that the actors usually not only exchange information, but also conduct projects together, assist each other and endorse each other's work via social media. Such structure of the network should be more effective for crisis management than mere communicational or representational networks (which are more useful to engage the general public). For example, as mentioned by Shumate et al. (2013) representational communication networks such as hyperlink networks do not necessarily imply information flows among the actors. Affinity relations vice versa imply communication, further, successful collective projects can lead to further integration and cooperation in the network, as we will see later in the interview results.

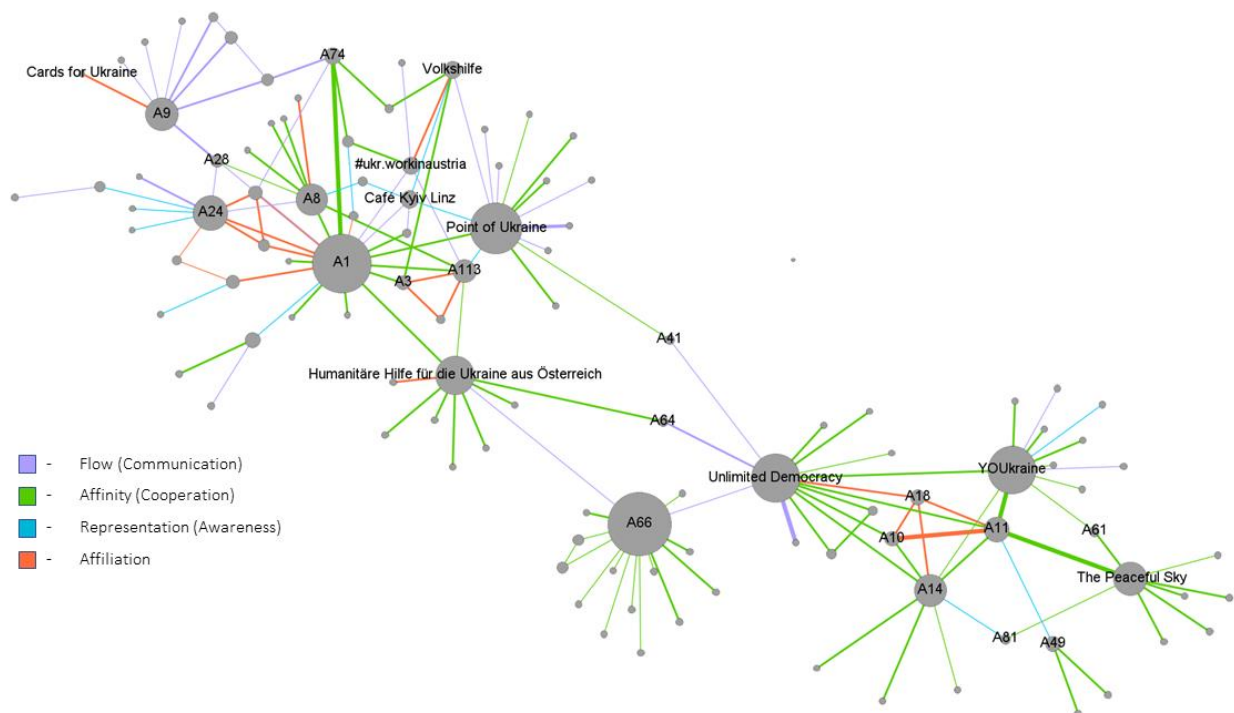


Figure 5. CSOs and volunteer's network. Nodes scaled according to the Page Rank. Edges colors represents the taxonomy of the communication relations (Shumate et al., 2013).

Interview results

Novelty

The situation with Ukrainian refugees is extremely novel. The representatives of the NGO established before the escalation already had experience with other refugees and crisis situations. However, no-one of them felt completely prepared for the wave of Ukrainian refugees.

Firstly, the legal conditions of Ukrainians differ from many other refugee groups and previous refugee crises (Mascareñas, 2022). Ukrainians often have biometric passports or Schengen visas which allows legal entry to the EU. Ukraine shares an immediate land border with four EU member states. Secondly, EU has reacted quickly allowing all Ukrainians even without documents to cross the border (European Commission, n.d.). As a result, thousands of people were arriving in the first days of the escalation, however, it took up to a few weeks to develop action plans by the local authorities. Still, six months after the February 24th, the interviewees state:

“It’s all very new” - Large Austrian NGO representative.

Further, several participants explained that Ukrainian refugees are predominantly female, children, multi-children families, and people over sixty. Therefore, it brings up many immediate needs, like finding the place for children in schools or helping elderly people to visit doctors. Many Ukrainians start looking for jobs as soon as they arrive and often they refuse to take up unqualified labor and want to find jobs according to their competence. This creates a high demand in German courses and integration events among the refugees.

“I just want to open business here, I have all the skills and experience, but it is still hard to integrate”, - says a Ukrainian refugee-volunteer.

Dynamics of the network evolvement

Following the previous point, with the novelty and a rapid expansion of the crisis, large Austrian and International CSOs needed time to develop strategies and organize response measures. In the meantime, international individuals, Ukrainian and other Eastern European diasporas were active from the first hours of the full-scale invasion. On the February 24th, they organized demonstrations and communicated with local police in the matter of several hours (which is usually close to impossible in Austria), so around 11 am demonstrations began across Austrian cities. As reported by several Ukrainian CSOs, on the 24th in the night some have already sent first cars with humanitarian aid to the border.

Churches were first hubs to collect humanitarian aid and to provide space for the volunteering work, as clear examples of extending organizations. Some churches are still involved with humanitarian aid or help refugees in other ways, other churches stopped. In particular, there are several Ukrainian churches in Austria with active communities, all of which naturally served as community mobilization hubs and continue to play a role in it.

Similarly, volunteer work on the train stations and arrival point of the refugees was first initiated and organized by individual volunteers.

“There was nothing when we came. The volunteers were buying food and water with their own cash. (...) someone brought kettles and tea from home and were boiling it right there on the floor” – an individual volunteer from a train station, one of the major arrival points in Austria.

Overall, the observations and interviews reveal that often people who met by chance in the first days after the full-scale invasion later formed clusters and even founded legal entities together (emergent CSOs). Communication in the most extreme crisis time formed

enduring trust and sympathy between the individuals. This results in lasting connections that strengthen the communication network. For example, some volunteers have already changed their work focus, got involved or employed with other CSOs, however, they still keep in touch and exchange information. Examples of such durable communication channels are mutual follows on the social media and group chats from the previous projects that volunteers keep using to spread information and find aid. People report continuously using these ties even after changing the workplace.

Social Media Use

This brings us to a more detailed discussion of the social media use in the network. All participants reported the usage of media in their work. Organizations tend to have internal group chats for coordination and communication of platforms like WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram. However, when it comes to big CSOs or governmental structures, majority of them do not have group chats and rely on telephone communication and emails. Further, in bigger organizations the workers on different levels have different communication practices. For instance, several large Austrian expanding CSOs report having no communication between some branches in different federal states. Information flows there are limited, and the workers often focus only on their immediate tasks. One of the workers comments:

“We are an autonomous branch, so we work only with Ukrainian refugees, only transit, only here. This allows us to focus, but often situations happen, or question arise where we don’t know the answer. Other refugees and vulnerable groups come to us. We unfortunately cannot help them as we don’t have the information. (...) A lot of information we have here we collected from our own initiative, such as these leaflets. (...) Communication between the cities is especially lacking.”

All Ukrainian participants and many of the individual volunteers of other nationalities report intense use of Facebook.

“Facebook is an enormous power” – says one Ukrainian CSO representative.

There have been various Facebook groups and communities running long before the war escalation. For example, diaspora groups of Ukrainians and Russian speaking communities, international people in Austria, groups of local Austrian communities, thematic groups (such as Russian speaking mums in Austria), groups for exchange of items (such as “Free Vienna”) and groups for finding accommodation. All these groups had thousands of members and in the moment of crisis people started using them to mobilize resources. For example, individual volunteers from a train station give account of using “Free Vienna” Facebook group to encourage people bringing food and other items at the train station. Arguably, this was one of the initial sources of visibility the volunteer community found later as the locations of the humanitarian aid centers and volunteering hubs became known to the general public.

Additionally, three interviewees (two Ukrainian and one international: A9, The Peaceful Sky, The Point of Ukraine) explain that the starting point of their successful volunteering was their previous reputation and publicity. They have public jobs and social media blogs. Therefore, as these participants reflect themselves, they used their connections and trust toward them to kick-start and continuously support the volunteering projects they were engaged in, all of which resulted in powerful emergent CSOs.

On the contrary, the experience of a few individual volunteers who did not have any such publicity in Austria. Here are examples of five female Ukrainian refugees who all arrived in Austria in seek of help themselves (among them: A26, A49, A50). When they settled in Austria, they started volunteering work. All of them report as key problems – the

lack of language proficiency and the lack of contacts. Additionally, they mention cultural barriers and lack of understanding of the procedures of the local authorities. They started working without clear idea what to achieve and how. One of the women (A49) conveys, after getting to the Arrival Center on Stadion in Vienna, she started wandering around the city in search of rent agencies. There she met a few people on the street who helped her. Then she started using Facebook local groups and slowly reaching publicity when local media reported on her successful work in collecting and sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine. This is an example of a spontaneous emergent civil society actor who started working and found the way in the process.

Generally, this type of volunteers does not have many connections in the network. They report having severe problems with finding resources and infrastructure for volunteering. Further, these problems, language, and cultural barriers make them feel isolated and mistreated by the local authorities or the CSOs they have addressed. “*No-one cares there*” – says one of the interviewees about her experience talking to large Austrian NGOs. However, on the other hand, there are examples of Ukrainian-initiated emergent CSOs that report mostly positive experience working with Austrian established and expanding NGOs. The difference is that the actors of these emergent CSOs have been located in Austria before the escalation, they speak German and are integrated in the society. Therefore, it was easier for them to reach the Austrian CSOs, the government, and explain what they need. There are several examples of direct organizational or financial aid provided to the Ukrainian emergent CSOs by the Austrian organizations. It happened so that the Austrian organizations observed the work of Ukrainian groups, cooperated with them, and later agreed to support them further.

Cross-cultural communication, language use, and cross-border ties

Firstly, most Austrian and international participants reflected positively on their cross-cultural communication experience in their work. They mentioned it strengthened the team by providing various perspectives and made work more interesting. However, Ukrainian participants were extremely heterogeneous on this matter. Firstly, almost all interviewed Ukrainian CSOs did not include Russian volunteers. Some have been operating in a closed circle and did not include Russians from the start. Some have thanked them for initiative and asked them to leave for reasons that they call “obvious”.

“We appreciate their initiative. However, imagine a refugee comes, escaping Russian bombings, they reach our center, and when they ask one of the volunteers ‘Where are you from?’, they would hear ‘Moscow’. I don’t see how this can be comfortable” – explains one of the Ukrainian volunteers’ organizers.

Still there are examples of teams that include diverse nationalities, also Ukrainian and Russian. There are also groups of Russian mostly volunteers and groups initiated and operated by Russians.

Some of the Ukrainian CSOs also disagree on their language policies. The question of the use of Ukrainian and Russian languages keeps causing friction even among otherwise completely solidary volunteers. Further, members of the Ukrainian diaspora who have lived for years in Austria reflect on cross-cultural communication with Austrian and international bodies differently than the refugee-volunteers. They are more patient about it and comment *“We know everything is much slower here and we need to deal with a lot of bureaucracy”*. All in all, the comments and opinions of Ukrainians are quite polarized. A serious limitation here is a small sample size that does not allow to generalize. Therefore, Ukrainians’ feedback ranged from

absolute positivity and reports on impressively successful work and cooperation to remarks of total hopelessness and frustration with the local authorities and other CSOs.

As to cross-border ties, it is almost exclusively Ukrainian volunteers who have strong affinity and flow relations across borders. The participants report having close cooperation ties with CSOs in Germany and in Ukraine for the purposes of delivering humanitarian aid and organizing other help. Further, due to language, social, and cultural ties it is easier for Ukrainians to send targeted aid. Like this CSO “The Peaceful Sky” delivers targeted cargos of various aid to Ukraine. They advertise their service via social media and have already received hundreds of messages from people located both in Ukraine and in Austria asking for help. They constantly cooperate with CSOs and volunteers in Austria and Ukraine to conduct these tasks. When asked how they managed to get such a publicity, their representative answers that it was firstly, his personal communication and publicity ties that helped initially, with time, the flow of connections grew by itself, however, it still requires his daily attention and work to keep the social media presence going and find new and new cooperators and donors.

In several cases, Austrian and international CSOs recognized the importance and need in such targeted and competent work the Ukrainian CSOs are doing. This resulted in fruitful cooperations and funding of the Ukrainian grass-root initiatives (expressed in affiliation ties at Figure 5) and allowed them to further grow and develop.

Discussion

The response to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 gave an impulse to new research on connective action, such as research on digital resistance (e.g., Doroshenko, 2022; Shore, 2022). In this study I provide a case study of the CSOs and volunteers located in Austria. The results show that self-organized connective action of multinational, Ukrainian, and Eastern European diaspora communities allowed a buffer time for profile CSOs to step in and organize crisis response actions. There, spontaneous unorganized mobilization gave birth to numerous grass-roots emergent CSOs that found their niches and continue working up till now. *“I will be volunteering as long as the war goes and afterwards as well”* – says a Ukrainian CSO founder. They explain that even after the war, there will be other needs for reconstruction and aid, and that civil society work will remain relevant and needed. As a prospect for the future studies, I see interest in the further exploration of the volunteering dynamic network, which I plan to partly address in my future research.

SNA brought up several points. *First*, the communication network has low density, which means a small portion of potential ties is realized. This results in potential communication problems, such as 1) slower information exchange, 2) lost connections (in case broker nodes resign), 3) lack of a shared identity. *Second*, the network can be divided in eleven communities, the largest of which are Austrian-International and Ukrainian CSOs communities. The density in these communities is higher and the average path length lower, which allows a faster and more efficient communication. However, it is problematic that the two large communities lack ties between them. This limits the capacity to exchange information and resources, coordinate activities, and produce informed solutions. *Third*, several important broker nodes are individual volunteers that endangers the connections in the network if the brokers resign.

Further, I distinguish the following communication problems of the network: 1) lack of social integration for some of the volunteers, 2) language barrier and cultural barrier, 3) differences in the organizational structure, which blocks affinity due to legal reasons.

As to communication strategies I distinguish between those of the expanding and emergent CSOs. Expanding Austrian and International CSOs focus on their normal tasks and expand their staff and resources to provide aid. They tend to use established communication paths and practices. However, adapting to the situation, they employed new staff who speaks Russian. In some cases, established CSOs find emergent CSOs and form flow, affinity, or even affiliation relations with them to cover more tasks. As to emergent CSOs (in my sample most of them are Ukrainian-initiated), they use all communication channels they can find indiscriminately. Such as private channels, their previous publicity, all kinds of social media and press. In mitigation of the “differences in the organizational structure” communication problem, many volunteer groups founded legal entities and became grassroots CSOs.

To conclude the findings, the self-organized connective action enabled a momentarily response to the crisis. However, without the structural resources of the organizationally enabled connective action, this response would probably not sustain the resilience for as long as it has. The CSO network is, therefore, highly dynamic and it managed to adapt to the situation by employing transformations. Some communication problems leave lasting barriers in the network; however, the actors find strategies to mitigate or compensate for those.

The findings of this study should be interpreted with caution as it has several important limitations generally characteristic to the qualitative research. Firstly, the sample consists of 16 interviews which limits representability and generalizability of the findings. This also potentially leaves out some edges and nodes from the network data. However, to mitigate this I applied purposeful sampling strategy logic, and I was consciously choosing

more diverse subjects to interview, given the time and resources constrain. Therefore, I travelled around Austria and conducted some phone and Zoom interviews to represent volunteering and CSO activity in different landscapes. Second, the limitations include a swiftly changing environment and the major shifts in the war (de-occupying territories, freeing cities, daily new attacks and bombings, new waves of migrants from different parts of Ukraine). The interviews covered the whole period from 24th of February 2022 up to late August 2022. The interviewees often refer to this period as if they have lived a whole another lifetime as many aspects of their work changed, therefore, this thesis presents the most prominent themes mentioned in the interviews but is not exhaustive.

Future directions for the research include perspectives for both quantitative and qualitative approaches across different disciplines. The literature would benefit from panel studies on the motivation and attitudes in the volunteer network and deeper discussions on dynamics of the network evolvement and change. NGOs also change their policies, for example, at the moment of finalizing this thesis, two arrival centers mentioned in the network no longer operate. The local authorities state they are no longer needed. Additionally, analyzing the communication strategies of the CSOs with the public may produce thought-provoking results.

The study also brings up some policy making considerations. SNA shows that very few of the possible communication ties do exist in the network. It is possible and desirable to provide more grounds for inter-organizational communication. This may be realized in form of periodical networking events for CSOs representatives, inviting representatives of business, and the government. From my side, I tried to fill in some of the needs of the participants and introduced some of them to each other after the interviews for future cooperation.

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Appendix

Questionnaire in English

Where are you from? What language should we speak?

1. What are your organization's main goals when dealing with Ukrainian refugees/humanitarian aid?
 - a. How does the organization achieve those goals?
2. What are your personal main responsibilities when dealing with Ukrainian refugees/humanitarian aid? (further questions depending on the specialization of the organization)
 - a. How do you achieve those? / What do you do exactly?
 - b. How does your day normally look like?
 - c. How many volunteers usually come?
 - d. How many translators do you usually have on the shift?
3. How do you feel when approaching the refugees / your daily tasks?
4. What would you say are the biggest obstacles you face in your work? Can you please provide an example?
5. How do you use media in your work? Can you think of a recent example?
6. How do you communicate in the team? What software do you use?
7. How international is your team? How does the international aspect impact your teamwork in terms of communication?
8. With which other organizations does your organization communicates and/or cooperate?
9. Describe how your organization communicates or cooperates with other volunteer groups or organizations.
10. Describe your personal experience communicating with other organizations' representatives in your work. (if any)
11. What software do you use for this communication? How does the communication usually go? Give an example.
12. How do you feel about the cooperation with other organizations?
13. Is there something else we forgot to ask?
14. Can you recommend other organizations to talk to? How did you learn about them?

Questionnaire in Ukrainian

Звідки ви? Якою мовою вам зручніше говорити?

1. Які основні цілі вашої організації у роботі з українськими біженцями/гуманітарною допомогою?

а. Як організація досягає цих цілей?

2. Якщо говорити особисто про вас, які ваші основні обов'язки у роботі з українськими біженцями/гуманітарною допомогою? (додаткові питання в залежності від спеціалізації організації)

а. Як ви досягаєте цих цілей? / Що саме ви робите?

б. Як зазвичай виглядає ваш день?

в. Скільки зазвичай приходить волонтерів?

д. Скільки перекладачів зазвичай у вас на зміні?

3. Що ви відчуваєте, коли працюєте з біженцями / виконуєте ваші щоденні завдання?

4. Які, на вашу думку, найбільші перешкоди, з якими ви стикаєтесь у своїй роботі? Чи можете ви навести приклад?

5. Як ви використовуєте медіа\технології\соціальні мережі у своїй роботі? Чи можете ви згадати недавній приклад?

6. Як ви спілкуєтесь в команді? Яке програмне забезпечення\ Які додатки\ соціальні мережі ви використовуєте?

7. Наскільки ваша команда інтернаціональна? Як інтернаціональний аспект впливає на вашу командну роботу з точки зору спілкування?

8. З якими ще організаціями спілкується та/або співпрацює ваша організація?

9. Опишіть, як ваша організація спілкується або співпрацює з іншими волонтерськими групами чи неурядовими організаціями.

10. А у вас особисто був досвід спілкування з представниками інших волонтерських груп чи організацій? Опишіть цей досвід спілкування. (якщо є)

11. Яке програмне забезпечення ви використовуєте для цього спілкування? Як зазвичай відбувається спілкування? Наведіть приклад.

12. Які ваші враження щодо співпраці з іншими організаціями?

13. Як думаєте, чи ми забули щось запитати?

14. Чи можете ви порадити інші організації, до яких нам варто звернутися? Як ви про них дізналися?

Questionnaire in Russian

Откуда вы? На каком языке вам удобнее говорить?

1. Какие основные цели вашей организации в работе с украинскими беженцами\ гуманитарной помощью?

а. Как организация добивается этих целей?

2. Если говорить лично о вас, каковы ваши основные обязанности в работе с украинскими беженцами\гуманитарной помощью? (дополнительные вопросы в зависимости от специализации организации)

а. Как вы достигаете этих целей? / Что именно вы делаете?

б. Как проходит ваш обычный ваш день на волонтерстве?

и. Сколько обычно приходят волонтеры?

д. Сколько переводчиков обычно у вас на смене?

3. Что вы чувствуете, когда работаете с беженцев\выполняете ваши ежедневные задания?

4. По вашему мнению, какие наибольшие препятствия, с которыми вы сталкиваетесь в своей работе? Можете ли вы привести пример?

5. Как вы используете медиа\технологии\социальные сети в своей работе? Можете ли вы привести недавний пример?

6. Вы работаете в команде? Как вы общаетесь в команде? Какое программное обеспечение\ Какие приложения\ социальные сети вы используете?

7. Насколько интернациональная ваша команда? Как влияет интернациональный аспект на вашу командную работу с точки зрения общения?

8. С какой еще организацией коммуницирует и/или сотрудничает ваша организация?

9. Опишите, как ваша организация коммуницирует или сотрудничает с другими волонтерскими группами или неправительственными организациями.

10. А у вас лично был опыт общения с представителями других волонтерских групп или организаций? Опишите этот опыт общения. (если есть)

11. Какое программное обеспечение используется для общения? Как происходит общение? Дайте пример.

12. Каковы ваши впечатления от сотрудничества с другими организациями?

13. Как думаете, мы забыли что-нибудь спросить?

14. Можете ли вы посоветовать другие организации, с которыми нам следует поговорить? Как вы о них узнали?

Abstract

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has triggered the biggest forced migration wave in the recent history of Europe. Civil society immediately mobilized to assist the refugees and organize humanitarian aid. In this thesis I present a study of communication network of the civil society organizations and volunteers located in Austria that aim to help Ukrainians. I use network interviews and social network analysis to investigate the structure, communication problems, and communication strategies on the CSOs network. The findings suggest that the network has been rapidly changing and evolving from self-organized connective action to organizationally enabled connective action frame. This is expressed in specialization of volunteer groups and their transformation into emergent CSOs. Further I discuss the structure of the CSO network and elaborate on the differences and similarities of communication strategies of its actors. The study provides a generous overview of the CSOs operation and perspectives for future research and policymaking.

Keywords: Inter-organizational networks, civil society organizations, connective action, social network analysis, Ukrainian refugees, Austria, crisis management.

Zusammenfassung

Der russische Einmarsch in die Ukraine im Jahr 2022 hat die größte erzwungene Migrationswelle in der jüngeren Geschichte Europas ausgelöst. Die Zivilgesellschaft wurde sofort mobilisiert, um den Flüchtlingen zu helfen und humanitäre Hilfe zu leisten. In dieser Arbeit präsentiere ich eine Studie über das Kommunikationsnetzwerk der zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen und Freiwilligen in Österreich, die den Ukrainern helfen wollen. Mit Hilfe von halbstrukturierten Leitfadeninterviews und sozialer Netzwerkanalyse untersuche ich die Struktur, die Kommunikationsprobleme und die Kommunikationsstrategien des ZGO-Netzwerks. Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass sich das Netzwerk schnell verändert hat und sich von selbstorganisierten, verbindenden Aktionen zu einem organisatorisch ermöglichten, verbindenden Aktionsrahmen entwickelt hat. Dies äußert sich in der Spezialisierung von Freiwilligengruppen und ihrer Umwandlung in aufstrebende ZGOs. Außerdem erörtere ich die Struktur des ZGO-Netzwerks und gehe auf die Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten der Kommunikationsstrategien seiner Akteure ein. Die Studie bietet einen umfassenden Überblick über die Funktionsweise der ZGO und Perspektiven für künftige Forschung und Politikgestaltung.

Schlüsselwörter: Interorganisatorische Netzwerke, zivilgesellschaftliche Organisationen, konnektives Handeln, soziale Netzwerkanalyse, Ukrainische Flüchtlinge, Österreich, Krisenmanagement.