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“‘Support Depends on Us’: How Ukrainian Diaspora
Activists Mobilize for the Homeland on the Streets of
Prague and Vienna”

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List of Abbreviations

AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FSI	Full-Scale Invasion
GT	Grounded Theory
Hlas	Hlas Ukrainy (Czech: Voice of Ukraine)
MCH	Milion Chvilek pro Demokracii (A Million Moments for Democracy)
NAFO	North Atlantic Fella Organization
POS	Political Opportunity Structures
RBI	Raiffeisen Bank International
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SSI	Single Source of Information
TUMA	Tovarystvo Ukrainins'koi Molodi v Avstrii (Assoc. of Ukr. Youth in AUT)
UD	Unlimited Democracy

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Foreword

My memory of the events of the full-scale war that lie behind is still firmly marked by a vivid experience on day one. On a public square in Vienna where Ukrainians had gathered to seek mutual support, an elderly woman started to ask about the purpose of the rally. She had not gotten the news yet. As my friend and I showed her a map of confirmed missile strikes on Ukraine that had already occurred by that time, she broke out in an uncontrolled hysterical attack of a kind I had never witnessed before. As we tended to her with water, the square was filled not just with the heartbreaking sound of her cry against the background of a deafening silence. It was permeated by a sensation of extreme emotional calamity that reverberated in every face and every look.

Some brave individuals took up microphones and sought to rally the spirits with words of hope and resistance. But they also had a clear message to everyone else: We will not submit to Russian subjugation. Do not forget our struggle and sacrifice. Support us.

I position this work as a personal contribution to the myriad forms of collective resistance to a war that seeks to erase Ukraine both materially and ideationally.

Dedicated to all defenders of Ukraine. To those who represent it on the streets, and to those who listen.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Russian full-scale invasion mobilized large parts of the Ukrainian society around the idea that prevailing over the aggressor state is a concerted effort involving each citizen of the country, no matter his or her place of residency. Existing and newly formed migrant organizations of Ukrainians abroad engaged in a myriad of activities connected to aiding the invaded homeland. These ranged from collecting humanitarian and military aid, assisting incoming refugees, and carrying the call to support the homeland to the streets of their host states. Within this latter endeavor, activists may find themselves in very different conditions and political opportunities for espousing a firm pro-Ukraine stance in public space according to Ukrainians' shared interpretations of collective action as a form of resistance. Becoming active and visible on the streets of another country to evoke the urgency to assist the own requires courage and is firmly linked to opportunities and constraints found within the host states political and public spheres. These will ultimately determine whether Ukrainian voices find a corresponding stage, whether allies support and amplify these voices, and whether participants of the mobilization are able to imagine a common purpose capable of elevating individual engagement to a larger social movement. All these factors relate to the specific form pro-Ukraine activism takes on the streets. The latter constitutes an expression of not only how activists represent Ukraine to the larger public, but also how they imagine their role, and the role of Ukrainian migrants at large, in the host state context in wartime. This thesis compares two distinct contexts, and the protagonists of the qualitative research have found diverse formats of mobilization along the two dimensions of outer representation and inner imagination as pro-Ukraine activists abroad.

Volunteerism, including donating to military or civilian efforts to minimize the effects of the full-scale war on Ukraine, has become a core part of Ukrainian public and private spheres. Prominent public figures and organizations routinely hold donation rallies, mobilizing their audiences to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine directly or through volunteer organizations. Large-scale donation calls take place on occasions of heightened tension or rapid developments at the front, and some notable purchases for donation money include a spy satellite, dozens of armored vehicles, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Citizens of other countries have also held their own public donation calls. For example, the Czech government-supported organization Weapons for

Ukraine, with their Darek pro Putina (“gift for Putin”) campaign (Dedek 2023), has collected over ten million Euros as of September 2023 from fundraising for the purchase of a tank, a rocket launch system, drones, air defense, and other assets for Ukrainian defense (Murphy 2022). Many smaller groups and individual volunteers hold their own donation rallies, and the number of items like drones collected this way is difficult to assess. Other organizations and volunteers assist in the sphere of humanitarian aid, including with medical supplies and technology.

I conceptualize Ukrainian diasporic wartime activism as an expression of collective imagination based on frames of urgency to help the homeland. Even though the shock of the full-scale invasion and related atrocities committed by Russia create a constant emotional burden, apathy and disengagement are far from dominating in Ukrainian public space. The latter is permeated across Ukraine’s state borders through social media and online news channels, as well as personal connections and family ties. Thus, a salient and widely shared rationale for action during the war is to assist the homeland through individual and collective action, chiefly including donating to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), but also physical participation in volunteerism. A national public opinion survey by International Republican Institute showed that as of February 2023, 97% of Ukrainians believed that they would win the war against Russia, and 74% believed that Ukraine would recuperate all internationally recognized territories (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2023). A face-to-face opinion poll conducted in December 2022 by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation in cooperation with Razumkov Centre asked about volunteerism for the country’s defense as well as refugee support (Democratic Initiatives Foundation and Razumkov Centre 2023). The survey found that 30.8% of respondents across Ukraine contributed financially through donations, whereas 10.4% became active through physical participation, and 17.5% said that they had not engaged in any form of volunteering and did not plan to.

To raise spirits and draw attention to the cause, Ukrainian activists in many countries have also engaged in protest action to rally support and call to action, vocally expressing pro-Ukraine claims and demands in public space. Their activities include contentious rallies complete with demands towards individuals and authorities to support Ukraine, the public display of information on the war and Russia’s war crimes, or events commemorating significant dates and anniversaries. Such activities aim at maximizing engagement to reach the highest possible number of people to positively impact support for the homeland. I therefore set out to study how diaspora activists

mobilize pro-Ukraine collective action, i.e., the form that such activities take within a specific host country context. The goal is to identify the main forms of generating engagement and social interaction around the purpose of rallying support for Ukraine. The focus hereby lies on collective action in public space, such as rallies and marches, as they attract most attention and create opportunities to display political claims that may interrelate with, or remain in opposition to, host state policy and collective frames regarding Ukraine-support. Thus, by comparing mobilization forms in Vienna and Prague, I aim at assessing how the different contexts play out on pro-Ukraine mobilization in general, and diasporic activism in particular.

The next section presents main findings from prior research about diasporic activism, especially focusing on how studies conceptualized the dependent (diaspora mobilization) and independent variables (contextual factors), after which the relevance of the present study is considered. Subsequently, I discuss the main theoretical concepts informing the analysis, narrowing down the definition of *diaspora* as an expression of a collectively constructed shared identity perpetuated through action, thus constituting an instance of a social movement. After considering relevant aspects of social movement theory, I introduce the research interest and question guiding my empirical approach. Before turning to the methodology chapter, I lay out the main findings in the form of a grounded theory. This serves to structure the subsequent presentation of empirical results and inform the discussion chapter which builds up the main argument of the grounded theory in detail.

1.1. Opportunities and Constraints of Mobilization: A Literature Review

Diaspora mobilization has been studied under various aspects related to the respective group, its history, the political context, as well as the type of claims made. For example, Karabegović (2017) categorizes diasporic mobilization of Bosnians abroad across the three studied country cases (Sweden, Germany, and France) as inactive, reactive, involved, and engaged. Ordered in this way, the four types represent a scale of increasingly active diaspora mobilization, ranging from the inactive type to one that engages both the homeland and the host state, has translocal connections, and makes political claims in both countries (ibid: 98). For Moss (2016), increased diaspora mobilization of Syrians, Libyans, and Yemenis in the UK and US during the Arab Spring is conceptualized in broad terms as the ability of diaspora groups to

intervene in a productive way towards democratization efforts in the home country. In this context, the author also found that diaspora mobilization is more likely to persist over time if activists professionalize and formalize into long-term advocacy groups, which allows them to channel their voice in the host-country and be recognized as a legitimate constituency. Finally, the homeland context has been considered especially in relation to translocal ties to diaspora groups (Karabegović 2017), which facilitates certain types of diaspora engagement such as the provision of humanitarian aid (Moss 2016).

When studying sustained versus episodic mobilization of diasporic activists of Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs in the Netherlands, Koinova (2016) found that only Bosnians engaged in sustained mobilization. The author argues that this was possible because of the reference to a traumatizing past event, the failure of the Dutch peacekeeping forces to protect the Srebrenica enclave, which connected homeland, host state, and diaspora. The continuity of mobilization also relates to the effectiveness of advocacy undertaken by the organized diaspora and helps mitigate negative mobilization outcomes due to a lack of resources or deteriorating host-country conditions (Moss 2016). Other diaspora-specific factors may include whether collective claims are made (Karabegović 2017) and how diaspora groups position themselves in relation to host-state institutions and actors (Koinova 2014). Kozachenko (2018) also found that the application of collective frames and understandings of national identity mattered in diasporic mobilization in the case of Ukrainian activism abroad. According to Koinova (2016), making recurring claims about a particular historical event enabled sustained mobilization, whereas on the individual level, a higher degree of integration and settlement in the host-country, together with better educational resources, favored continued political activism of immigrants (Guarnizo et al. 2003).

The host-country context and related structural factors have been emphasized as an important predictor of diaspora mobilization: "Once 'rooted' in a new and differentiated political environment, immigrant activists are conditioned by the domestic structures and political cultures of their environments" (Tarrow 2005: 52). However, homeland and international factors must be considered if diasporic activity is understood within the logic of transnational social movements. For Moss, diaspora mobilization happens in a multi-level environment including host-country, homeland, and third-party structures and social relations. Successful mobilization, in terms of the scale and longevity of collective action, depends on whether diaspora groups forge

“working relationships with *allies in the home country, political elites and allies in the host-country, and relevant third parties*” (2016: 273, emphasis in original). Thus, the specific constellation of transnational networks and coalitions that form around common frames and shared imaginations is likely to also play out on which channels and addressees collective action focuses on. Karabegović (2017) also found that diaspora activists were most likely to engage in a wide range of transnational advocacy activities if they had stronger social ties in the host country.

The question which channels diaspora activists use to formulate demands, claims, and pursue mobilization practices has been studied by Koinova (2014). Diasporic mobilization actors can choose to engage with host-state or transnational channels but are constrained by the perceived relative organizational strength of diaspora entrepreneurs and their relationship with the host state, what Koinova calls “diaspora positionality” (ibid: 1065). The host state’s foreign policy stance towards the homeland also plays a major role in the author’s analysis. Thus, if diaspora positionality is weak, transnational channels will be preferred, whereas an open foreign policy stance of the host country towards the sovereignty claims of the homeland will favor the use of state-based channels for collective action (ibid).

The state-diaspora nexus has also been studied extensively, considering both the host state and the homeland. Apart from the foreign policy stance towards the homeland (Koinova 2014), and the presence and relative strength of far-right parties (Koinova 2016), variation in migrant inclusion regimes has been named as an important factor to immigrant activism and mobilization (Karabegović 2017). The distinction is often drawn between ethnic and civic assimilationist approaches to immigrant organizations, having varying effects on the way that immigrant groups organize in networks and engage in politicized or depoliticized collective action (Eggert 2014, Eggert and Pilati 2014). On the homeland level, a pro-active stance towards the engagement with the own emigrant population can lead to the founding of institutional arrangements or entire ministries for this purpose (Gamlen 2014; Délano and Gamlen 2014; Gamlen et al. 2019), or the conferral of citizenship liberalization and voting rights for emigrants (Vink et al. 2019), often to channel remittance flows (Guarnizo et al. 2003). However, none of these factors applies to the context of Ukraine, which has a strict foreign citizenship regime and has not been actively engaging its diaspora in the past (Melnyk 2016, Lapshyna 2019).

Finally, the role of individual diaspora actors is especially significant for the initial mobilization around a new impulse or cause, whereas prior involvement with diasporic activism may influence the way this formative process takes place (Sökefeld 2006). For example, the existence and strength of local Ukrainian diaspora networks and formalized organizations prior to the full-scale Russian invasion is likely to play a significant role in collective action in support of Ukraine. Sökefeld notes in this context that leadership positions may be disputed due to factionalized and competing organizations representing different views and frames of diaspora (2006: 278). As prior research on Ukrainian diasporic civic action in the post-Euromaidan period has shown, mobilization actors sometimes engaged in competition and concurrent interpretations of the most appropriate form of collective action (Lapshyna 2019, Kozachenko 2018). The role of single leaders within movements is difficult to assess, but “even the most macro-level phenomena often reflect the influence of one or a few individuals” (Jasper et al. 2015: 407). Koinova defines diaspora mobilization as “... individual and collective actions of identity-based social entrepreneurs who organize and encourage migrants to behave in a concerted way to make homeland-oriented claims, bring about a political objective, or contribute to a cause” (2016: 501), while activating shared ideational frames and interpretations. Tarrow also emphasizes the level of perception, i.e., the way that conditions within a political environment are perceived by mobilization actors in relation to expected success or failure of collective action: “This means that communication and learning are important mechanisms in mobilization around opportunities” (2011: 163).

1.2. Relevance of the Topic

Studying the activities of Ukrainian CSOs abroad directed at aiding the homeland is important to gauge the potential of diaspora organizations to contribute towards development and reconstruction of Ukraine, including within platforms and initiatives extending the diaspora. Prior research has paid little attention to this aspect, prioritizing instead identity-based mobilization specific to a diaspora group (e.g., Koinova 2014, Koinova 2016, Karabegovic 2017, Moss 2016). Thus, part of the research interest includes understanding under which conditions and in what form pro-Ukraine mobilization by diaspora groups can exceed ethno-national boundaries and universalize homeland-oriented claims within transnational frames. A potential benefit also lies with studying the nexus between states and their migrant populations,

especially in contexts of development, and not limited to the sending of remittances alone (cf. Guarnizo 2003). Prior research has shown that the Ukrainian state has not been actively engaging its diaspora towards democratization and development in the past (Melnyk et al. 2016, Lapshyna 2019). Thus, understanding the developmental potential of Ukrainian diaspora, i.e., avenues for possibilities of its productive implementation for the country's post-war reconstruction, is of special interest. The institutionalization of relationships between the Ukrainian state and its diaspora population, for example in the form of a ministry or committees, may strengthen processes not only related to reconstruction and development, but to a more pressing issue after the end of active hostilities: the return migration of refugees. Another avenue of development of diasporic engagement may lie with the building and expanding of translocal ties with civil society allies in Ukraine (Karabegović 2017, Moss 2016), for example in the form of hometown associations (Guarnizo 2003). Related research goals include understanding to what extent Ukrainian diasporic CSOs could contribute to these processes given the scarcity of resources stemming from the prevalence of voluntary, rather than professional arrangements of engagement. In the face of such long-term challenges as resource scarcity, maintaining a sustained diasporic mobilization gains even more importance as a strategy to prevent engagement for the homeland from dissipating, and to generate new engagement. Host country conditions for pro-Ukraine collective action, both in public space and beyond it, are likely to play a crucial role. Exploring how diaspora actors are embedded in host state institutional and social networks for joint action is another area of interest.

1.3. Theoretical Lens

I now turn to discussing theoretical concepts informing my empirical approach. The first major aspect is the understanding of diaspora in constructivist terms as a social movement based on shared frames and imaginations. Next, relevant aspects of social movement theory are considered to provide a basis for the development of the research interest and question informing the thesis.

1.3.1. The Social Construction of Diaspora

In the face of varying existing definitions and conceptualizations, a clarification of *diaspora* is needed, as it also represents one of the central elements in my conceptual framework. A central tenet of a constructivist definition to diaspora is that

individuals are mobilized by a sense of identification with a homeland, which Sökefeld encapsulates in diasporas as “imagined transnational communities” (2006: 267). Thus, diasporic civic engagement is understood as a process in which key events help mobilize individuals and groups for action towards a common cause, reproducing shared imagination and thus a collective diasporic identity (ibid). The mutually reinforcing aspect of a shared identity and action, which perpetuate each other, is what leads Sökefeld to conceptualize diasporic activism as an instance of a social movement. Apart from this mobilization through ideation, the author identifies two other core issues within social movement theory that are of relevance for the study of diasporic civic engagement: political opportunities, as connected to the structural and institutional conditions enabling the rise of social movements, and framing, referring to shared group interpretations of ideas and events that facilitate common definitions of problems and grievances, and the mobilization of action (ibid: 269f). Through this lens, diaspora is not essentialized, and its diversity and interaction with its social environment are emphasized.

At this stage it is necessary to discuss an important nuance to my understanding of transnationalism in the context of diasporic activism which differs from Sökefeld's conceptualization. I concur with the author that the ontological premise of diaspora as a product of social processes and imaginations is collectively constructed, but not entirely with the common application of transnationality in diaspora mobilization that his analysis follows. From this view, transnationalism is understood in geographical terms as signifying cross-border connections between members of the same diaspora group (e.g., the Alevi diaspora in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland). This conceptualization is common for studies of transnationalism at large, and not necessarily focused on diaspora groups as in Sökefeld's account. For example, Tarrow (2005) understands transnationalism as the universalization of claims beyond national politics as an expression of activists' fight for values such as changes in social justice systems across state borders. This conceptualization stems from a “classic” approach to studying contentious action, which is most of the time directed at ruling elites to challenge existing power hierarchies. In the context of this understanding of transnationalism, Tarrow asks whether, in the context of a globalized world, we are “witnessing a short cycle of internationally oriented domestic contention or a fusion between international and domestic contentious politics” (2005: 12).

Even though pro-Ukraine action can be instantiated by individuals and groups who mobilize on the grounds of shared values and beliefs, rather than national or ethnic identity, it is nonetheless instructive to consider specificities of Ukrainian diaspora and immigrant activists abroad, as in many cases they are the carriers of continued pro-Ukraine mobilization. For the purposes of reflecting Ukrainian mobilization in support of the homeland, I contend that transnationalism takes a different form from the classical view because claims and demands are not directed against existing power hierarchies in host states but project a call to support Ukraine. Rather, I define transnationalism as the *engagement of Ukrainian diasporic and migrant activists in protest networks with non-Ukrainian activists*, which can be seen as an expression of activating shared political frames. In this way transnationality is not conceptualized in mere geographical terms signifying the dispersal of a diaspora group across different countries, but the ideational merge of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian activists' imaginations around a common purpose of rallying for Ukraine as an instantiation of shared universalized frames. Thus, Ukrainian diaspora, refugees, and recent immigrants form a cross-border imagined community (i.e., Ukrainians living in different countries), while engaging in joint collective action with the local public of the respective host state represents the transnational connection.

To sum up the constructivist approach, diasporic activism is conceptualized as part of a larger diasporic civil society, and thus an instance of a social movement. Continued mobilization depends on renewing imaginations, i.e., mobilizing practices that channel shared beliefs and frames related to aiding the homeland into concrete action, allowing an active diaspora to re-constitute itself (Sökefeld 2006: 276). Thus, mobilization resembles a social process rather than a pre-determined outcome based on the constitution of a Ukrainian migrant population in each country. Collective action in support of Ukraine, and recruitment of new supporters, are likewise re-constituted over time based on continuous reproduction of shared imaginations, identities, and claims revolving around pro-Ukraine sentiment and related demands.

1.3.2. Social Movement Theory

Conceptualizing Ukrainian diasporic activism in constructivist terms, activity in support of Ukraine becomes a result of social processes that are reproduced by individuals and groups who share common ideational frames, and who engage in activities that aim at generating more engagement with the cause. In this context, the

notion of mobilization potential, which stems from social movement and public protest literature, is useful to describe how such an issue- and identity-based social process comes to grow and reproduce itself – i.e., become a social movement. Mobilization potential links the demand-side and supply-side of protest activity in a political system (Klandermans 2015). The demand-side refers to the “proportion of the population in a society that is sympathizing with the cause”, while the supply-side generally refers to the level of organization and formalization of groups that engage in contentious collective action (ibid: 221). Thus, it is the appeal by social movement organizations to existing sympathizers’ grievances, identities, and emotions, since “... grievances and identities must politicize and emotions must be aroused” (ibid: 221). Klandermans further distinguishes between two main dynamics within mobilization efforts – consensus and action mobilization. While the former works on the informational level to convince the audience of the actor’s point of view by appealing to “grievance interpretation, causal attribution, possible measures to be taken...”, the latter denotes the concrete transformation of sympathizers into activists (2015: 227). Once individuals are mobilized for collective action, they find themselves engaging in various types of ad-hoc and long-lasting groups that pursue activities and formulate demands based on common ideas and values. This intersection between individual and formalized action is among the defining elements of social movements (Della Porta and Diani 2020).

The Role of Information and Morality in Recruitment

Information, its presentation, and distribution play a defining role in mobilization, especially in the recruitment of new movement participants, and the formation of networks or coalitions. A central element of advocacy networks’ activities is situated at the informational level, where its emotionalized presentation plays a significant role: “... both credibility and drama seem to be essential components of a strategy aimed at persuading publics and policymakers to change their minds” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 27). Moreover, the definition of mobilization by Klandermans emphasizes the arousal of emotions, and mobilization actors serving as their catalysts: “... social movement organizations, then, are carriers of meaning. Through processes such as consensus mobilization they seek to propagate their definition of the situation to the public at large” (2015: 223). When looking at diaspora and immigrant activism in isolation, existing evidence for long-term collective action points towards the significance of information

and its dramatic presentation described by Keck and Sikkink (1998). For example, facts involving bodily harm and other sensitive topics are likely to be invoked by mobilization actors in a dramatized way to arouse emotional response in the target audience and externalize claims from a domestic context to an international arena based on human rights advocacy (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Tarrow 2005).

A common term in social movement theory to designate the process by which activists attempt to approximate their target audiences' interpretation and understanding of a given phenomenon to a desired one is frame alignment (Snow et al. 1986). Commonly, three stages or types of framing are named that build on each other. Diagnostic framing presents an issue as a problem that needs to be addressed; prognostic framing proposes suitable strategies and tactics to address the issue; motivational framing, as the final stage, communicates to target audiences the need to get involved and act (Snow and Benford 1988). All framing efforts depend on the proximity of existing interpretations between movement participants and the target audience, which for the authors is constituted by the latter's beliefs, life experience, dominant narratives, and the credibility of claims presented by the movement (ibid). Recruitment literature stresses the important distinction between people who already sympathize with the movement, and outsiders to the movement. In this context, Jasper and Poulson (1995) note that theory has focused on recruitment of movement sympathizers based on existing interpersonal networks, while the meaning of culture and frames in a given public have been neglected when analyzing the recruitment of strangers, or outsiders to the movement. The authors also introduce nuance into Snow and Benford's framing theory, stressing that claims appear as credible or non-credible according to people's existing beliefs: "Frames resonate with potential recruits precisely because these recruits *already* have certain visions of the world..." (Jasper and Poulson 1995: 496, emphasis in original).

In the context of pro-Ukraine advocacy abroad during the full-scale war, the documentation of war crimes and the presentation of war-related atrocities to host state publics is a likely sphere of activity for activists is to engage in. The comparative design of this thesis allows to study such moral and informational aspects of activism in two settings with diverse cultural relations to Ukraine. A major aspect of interest of this protest format is how activists in both countries engage in frame alignment with their target audience, and whether the chosen format is conducive to recruiting new members or sympathizers to the movement. I expect the form of such advocacy to

differ across the two contexts along the opportunities and constraints each country presents.

Growing the Movement Through Networks and Coalitions

While the empirical focus lies on Ukrainian diaspora and immigrant mobilization, I also consider other actors who mobilize in support of Ukraine. A related aspect of interest in this context is the presence or absence of links and alliances between Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian groups. I treat such linkages in civil society action for Ukraine as an instance of transnational coalition formation (Tarrow 2005), or transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Both perspectives help to make sense of the formation, longevity, and form of cooperation between different groups and individuals who share goals. For the purpose of this thesis, the two concepts are combined within my understanding of transnationalism as the joint action of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian activists focused on representing pro-Ukraine claims and demands in public space, based on shared frames and imaginations.

Keck and Sikkink's study on transnational networks helps to understand how such alliances come about, and in what form cooperation takes place. The authors put discursive constructions of identities, shared values, and beliefs center stage, and treat transnational networks as not only the main actors within a common ideational framework, but also as the locus of the active shaping of political space (cf. Keck and Sikkink 1998: 12). The process within which networks engage in the active negotiation and projection of their frames is termed *advocacy*, which "captures what is unique about these transnational networks: they are organized to promote causes, principled ideas, and norms, and they often involve individuals advocating policy changes that cannot be easily linked to a rationalist understanding of their 'interests'" (ibid: 16). Thus, networks shape public space and opportunity structures for participation in civil society action by "acting as conduits for the flow of information, the development of pro-movement attitudes and values, and the development of collective identities" (Tindall 2015: 231), in addition to linking individuals and groups within collective action for a common cause. Tarrow's account on coalition formation is useful in this context as it conceptualizes the longevity, and thus the strength and influence on society at large, that groups with shared values and goals can have. In his typology, transnational coalitions are classified according to the intensity and duration of their cooperation, ranging between the low-intensity and short-lived "instrumental coalitions" to long-term

comprehensive cooperation within “campaign coalitions” (Tarrow 2005: 167ff). The author predicts that campaign coalitions will have the biggest chance to engage in transnational collective action because of their “... focus on a specific policy issue, their minimal institutionalization, their capacity to shift venues in response to changing opportunities and threats, and their ability to make short-term tactical alliances according to the current focus of interest” (ibid: 179).

The Role of Contention

I focus on street protest in the classic sense but keeping the conceptual lens wide enough to consider other forms of collective action in public space with the goal of positively influencing Ukraine-support and pro-Ukraine sentiments. A related dimension is the purpose, or intention, behind collective action, i.e., the rationale guiding the choice to raise certain demands and claims, and not others, in pro-Ukraine mobilization. In this regard I depart from social movement literature to adjust the concept to specificities of diaspora mobilization. For social movements, “conflictual collective action” (Della Porta and Diani 2020: 21) and “contentious collective action” (Tarrow 2011: 7) respectively constitute a key defining element of the phenomenon itself. In the case of my comparative approach to pro-Ukraine mobilization in two diverse contexts where political opportunities vary pronouncedly, contention, which for my purposes I define as the *politicization of claims and demands targeting specific host state or international institutions for concrete action*, becomes part of the research interest itself. This is because the central rationale of *diasporic* pro-Ukraine mobilization is not to invest resources into challenging existing power structures of governments, as is the case in defining contention as a struggle for political power (Tilly 2017). Instead, the goal here is to arouse feelings of sympathy and call individuals and groups to action in support of Ukraine. Contention in this sense, i.e., whether activists engage in the targeting of concrete institutions with demands, is likely to differ in the two mobilization contexts. Furthermore, pro-Ukraine mobilization by diaspora actors may be directed at various addressees at the same time, e.g., at the national or international level, or at the diaspora itself, if the space for raising political demands for Ukraine is closed or highly constrained.

Finally, as a social process, collective action for a common purpose requires some form of organization to facilitate interaction between various members of the movement and channel common ideational frames into concrete action (Della Porta

and Diani 2020). Through a context in which “no single organized actor, no matter how powerful, can claim to represent a movement as a whole”, informal and formal actors together constitute what the authors call “dense informal networks”, a feature by which social movements are distinguished from other forms of collective action (ibid: 22). This represents another important mobilization dynamic of interest for the analysis – the interplay between formalized and non-formalized collective action, the role of individual activists vis-à-vis established organizations, and leadership structures within existing organizations.

1.4. Research Interest: Political pro-Ukraine Activism

To sum up theorization thus far, the Russian full-scale invasion constitutes a critical event in the formation of a diasporic response whereby Ukrainians abroad identify with the common goal of working collectively to alleviate the devastating toll of the war. Doing so, the organized part of this imagined community, diasporic CSOs, engage in activities to raise awareness for their cause, speak to host-country publics, create more engagement, and forge transnational alliances. The main assumption is that the format with which these goals are instantiated in public space depends on contextual host-country factors as well as the diaspora’s social ties that interrelate with the political opportunity structures immigrant activists find themselves in. In the thesis, I explore how Ukrainian diasporic activists mobilize collective action in public space and communicate the idea that Ukraine must be supported. They do not act in isolation in this process, but in each country find themselves in a unique environment of political opportunities and constraints. I thus set out to compare how Ukrainian diaspora and immigrant activists in two cities, Prague and Vienna, engage with given opportunity structures and how their range of activities is shaped by them. The reasoning behind this case selection follows the premises of a most different systems design (Anckar 2008), as key contextual factors in both countries are likely to play out on the political opportunity structure of diaspora mobilization in different ways.

I consider two main aspects, which vary in both contexts to a great extent, to be of particular importance for enabling or impeding political pro-Ukraine action in public space. The first is host country uptake for pro-Ukraine claims, including institutional arrangements and the salience of shared historical and ideational frames. This encompasses the diplomatic and foreign policy positioning towards Ukraine, the kind of material aid the country provides Ukraine with during the full-scale invasion, and the

discursive approximation (or frame alignment) of Ukraine's fate with own lived or imagined experience. The second dimension is the organizational strength and past mobilization record of pro-Ukraine collective action, initiated by both local activist groups, and by Ukrainian diaspora organizations. Related factors include continuation with mobilization since 2014, which sparked activism in support of the Euromaidan in various countries (Korzh et al. 2022), and the strength and density of existing diasporic associations and networks. As this second dimension constitutes a major difference between the two cases and strongly relates to present mobilization, especially in Prague, it will be considered in detail in the Results section of each case.

Host State Uptake

Shared frames between the host state and Ukraine, and their salience in the political and public spheres, may greatly influence the form pro-Ukraine mobilization in public space takes. Most obviously, the Czech Republic actively provides military support to Ukraine, and thus perpetuates a frame that sees Ukraine liberate its occupied territories by defeating the aggressor state militarily, while Austrian neutrality impedes this frame from gaining public resonance. Understanding the diversified nature of shared imaginaries conducive to pro-Ukraine sentiment is key to categorizing the political opportunity structure in relation to mobilization potential for contentious collective action for Ukraine in both contexts. At the spectrum's end, i.e., a maximum level of uptake, I place frames and discursive devices that a) conceptualize Ukraine-support in a way which not only accepts, but also reinforces Ukraine's sovereignty and self-determination, and b) creates links between Ukraine and the own country related to a shared imagination. The first condition is present in Czechia but not in Austria because Czechia's geopolitical orientation allows for the activation of frames related to acting upon assisting Ukraine towards victory in the war. The second is present in Czechia and only partly in Austria, as the imagination of a shared European fate with Ukraine is much stronger in Czechia due to historical frames relating to the experience of invasion in 1968, and post-transitional democratization. Thus, even though general solidarity with Ukraine is likely to be on similarly high levels in both countries, I expect the Czech historical experience to contribute to a higher discursive approximation with Ukraine than in the Austrian case, increasing public uptake for pro-Ukraine claims.

Austrian official foreign policy stance on the Russo-Ukrainian war favors a diffuse and ambiguous stance which sometimes leads to the balancing between

aggressor and victim and assigning legitimacy to Russia's diplomatic position. For example, Austrian chancellor Nehammer had been one of the first Western leaders to travel to Moscow on April 11, 2022, to seek diplomacy with the Kremlin regime (Schmidt, Robertson, and Picheta 2022). Czechia's state-level support for Ukraine is more unambiguous and pronounced. However, this does not stop pro-Russia narratives from circulating in public informational and political space, permeating also into collective contentious action and protest such as in the context of anti-Western populist mobilization that started in September 2022 (Tait 2022). Austrian neutrality allows for Ukraine-support compatible with humanitarianism as an effort to reduce civilian suffering, but not for support directed at strengthening Ukrainian defense, or contributing to tipping the odds in the uneven fight to Ukraine's favor. Czechia adopts a different approach, and apart from state-level military aid, civil society organizations also collected significant amounts of money for the purchase of equipment like tanks and self-propelled artillery.

A related research goal is to explore how the political context of each country conditions and shapes the formation of transnational networks including Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian actors in protest activities. In contexts where Ukraine-support is less one-sided and unconditional, I expect mobilization in public space to be more episodic, de-politicized, and featuring less contention. The lack of a uniting narrative for mobilization stemming from difficult conditions for uptake of pro-Ukraine claims may also lead to disagreements over the purpose of collective action, and thus splits and competition between diaspora actors. Indeed, analysis has shown that the political space for Ukrainian and pro-Ukraine activists in Prague is more open to engage in continuous mobilization with elements of transnationalism based on shared identity and frames. On occasions in which Czech-Ukrainian frames intermingled in public debate and political processes, they combined their claims and created rhetorical and physical instances of solidarity, as expressed most visibly by joint protest action.

Mobilization Potential

The aspect of prior mobilization by both local and diasporic groups for Ukraine is likely to play a significant role in determining renewed action, as "... the best predictor of activism is past activism" (Tarrow 2005: 47). A related factor is the strength and organizational structure of existing Ukrainian groups abroad that formed and mobilized during the Euromaidan period (Lapshyna 2019, Melnyk et al. 2016, Korzh et al. 2020).

As it constitutes an important contextual factor for the mobilization outcome and form of interest for this thesis, I will discuss prior pro-Ukraine action in the Results chapter of both cases in more detail. For now, a brief statistical comparison as to current and past shares of Ukrainian migrants in both countries suggests itself. Despite the similar population sizes of the two studied countries, Czechia hosted 357,540 Ukrainian refugees registered for temporary protection status as of July 31, 2023, whereas Austria hosted 77,065 (Eurostat 2023). Pre-invasion figures of Ukrainian migrants also differed starkly: Ukrainians in the Czech Republic constituted the largest immigrant group at 196,637 as of December 2021 (Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) 2021), whereas Ukrainians in Austria accounted for only 12,673 people as of January 2022 (Statistik Austria 2023).

1.5. Conceptualizing Mobilization Form

As Ukraine relies heavily on Western support both politically and militarily, activists abroad mobilize towards positively influencing this solidarity in different ways, and their mobilization is constrained or empowered by host state conditions. At the same time, and in line with the constructivist approach to diasporic mobilization, engagement and action serve as expressions of the formation of a common identity as Ukrainian activists abroad. Thus, Ukrainian migrant organizations and activists fulfil two basic roles in their respective host country within wartime activism: a) rallying within the diaspora to perpetuate identity construction and b) doing public political advocacy to positively impact the host public's Ukraine-support. Pro-Ukraine mobilization under conditions of the felt urgency of the full-scale war constitutes a unique empirical case, especially in the case of diasporic and immigrant activist. To account for this nuance, I complement the constructivist approach to diasporic mobilization with the element of identity construction as a two-way process, whereby diaspora constitutes itself through both inward-oriented imagination, and outward-directed representation. That is, diaspora organizations attempt to mobilize for the diaspora itself, and at the same time represent and communicate political claims related to the host state's support of Ukraine. My main argument in this thesis is that both processes are interrelated, and the inhibition of one not only frustrates the other, but diasporic identity construction altogether. For example, if unfavorable host state uptake for Ukrainian political claims impedes outward representation, the repercussions will be felt in the inward-oriented

diaspora construction as well, resulting in controversy and competition between various groups' interpretations of a desired Ukrainian identity.

The basic conceptual frame is that the receptiveness for political pro-Ukraine claims in the host state's public space, as well as the strength and constitution of existing pro-Ukraine mobilization and diaspora organizations, greatly influence the way activists perceive the purpose of pro-Ukraine mobilization, and its resulting format. Depending on the specific arrangements of these factors, mobilization outcomes (the interplay between purpose and form of mobilization) may vary vastly. I expect the variance between the two cases to highlight this dynamic, which supplies the main rationale of choosing two very different mobilization contexts. In Prague, where pro-Ukraine sentiment in the public is already strong, and thus the existing mobilization potential bigger, I expect stronger and more long-lasting social movement formations to emerge. The main interest, then, is to explore the difference between how Prague and Vienna activists represent their movements to the larger public. The research question reflects the wide interest in possible mobilization forms, and focuses on the publicly visible representation of pro-Ukraine claims in the form of street action: How do pro-Ukraine activists in Vienna and Prague mobilize for collective action in public space during the Russian full-scale invasion?

The choice of empirical case studies within each mobilization context is informed by the research question, as I focus on studying the mobilization of the diasporic groups in each city which claimed to represent Ukrainian interests in street-based action. In Prague, this description best applies to the group *Hlas Ukrajiny*, which has amounted considerable attention from both Ukrainian and local audiences on social media and in street mobilization, engaging in protest coalitions and networks with local activist groups. In Vienna, the initial empirical focus during research was on *Unlimited Democracy*, which had existed since before the full-scale invasion and mobilized from its onset in various formats. However, the Viennese case presents a conceptual challenge as another group called *MRIJA* attempted to monopolize street mobilization in opposition to *Unlimited Democracy*. Thus, further research took this development into account as it proved to present a significant element of the overall mobilization outcome in Vienna, which is why both groups will be considered in the remainder of this thesis.

2. METHODOLOGY

My research interest is to explore how varying host country conditions, especially regarding uptake of pro-Ukraine claims and existing diasporic networks, play out on the form that street-based pro-Ukraine action in public space takes. The main goal is to study how pro-Ukraine mobilization in public space is undertaken by diaspora groups across the two building blocks of diasporic identity construction laid out earlier – inward imagination, and outward representation. To achieve this, I employ an exploratory qualitative research design based on data gathered from semi-structured interviews with individuals engaged in pro-Ukraine mobilization in public space. Additional data was collected through content analysis of relevant social media and web-based material, as well as participant observation mostly in the case of Austria. Not much data and especially theorization exist on wartime Ukrainian immigrant activism. As the focus of this thesis is to understand diasporic mobilization as embedded in a multi-level context, a qualitative approach can provide in-depth accounts on how activists' experiences relate to the given environment. To explore diasporic mobilization in a wide sense, Grounded Theory is employed not only to guide data collection and analysis, but also for theorization by embedding findings and conclusions in interviewees' accounts to arrive at a mid-range theory explaining mobilization outcomes in the two contexts.

2.1. Studying Mobilization with Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory has been rarely employed in social movement research, mostly because the exploration of in-depth aspects of social movements that have to do with perceptions, emotionality, and cultural aspects of mobilization has been neglected (cf. Mattoni 2014: 22). Mattoni (2014) argues that Grounded Theory is particularly suitable for studying phenomena that are new or poorly studied. In addition, with its special attention to action and meaning, "... answering such questions through grounded theory might also lead to the development of in-depth knowledge about specific causal mechanisms that are usually linked to "why" research questions as well, providing tentative explanations and hypotheses about the causes that are behind such processes and mechanisms" (ibid: 39). Grounded Theory methodology also favors the combination of data sources, such as qualitative interviews and participant observation (Saldaña 2013). There are important aspects to consider when applying

this methodology. Grounded Theory may be considered a time-consuming approach due to its iterative research design in which data collection and analysis often happen simultaneously, and the freedom in conceptualization and application it gives requires the researcher to explicate their approach in detail (cf. Peters 2014: 23f).

This section serves such a purpose. First, I present my approach to sampling and data collection, including interviewing and participant observation. In the section on data analysis, grounded theory coding is presented as the main method of data analysis. I also explicate an adjustment of the research focus I made after initially setting out to conduct data analysis in a poorly reflected way, followed by laying out the solution in the form of a more precise analytical approach. This reflection resulted in a change to the original research question, which will be briefly discussed before turning to ethical aspects of qualitative research.

2.2. Sampling and Data Collection

My approach to sampling was influenced by Grounded Theory in that I employed elements of initial and theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2014), as well as the snowball technique (Weiss 1995). Concretely, I selected a range of social movement organizations (SMOs) that were important to the research interest and the original research question. At this stage, I conceptually structured civic action in support of Ukraine along three areas of activity: *a)* street activism, *b)* humanitarian aid, and *c)* cultural diplomacy. This choice was influenced by my knowledge of existing diasporic organizations in Vienna, some of whom had already been active before the full-scale invasion (in the spheres *a)* and *c)*). I did not have any prior knowledge or contacts of activists in Prague, but my attention was quickly grabbed by the group *Hlas Ukrajiny* which at the time (January 2023) had a considerable visibility in social media, organizing street-based pro-Ukraine action. I was primarily interested in comparing how the full-scale invasion affected the forms of organization of collective action within all three branches in Vienna and Prague. Social media constituted the main method of gaining interview partners. Table 1 below presents basic demographics of interview partners, while Table 2 shows interview lengths with summaries for both cases.

Table 1: Overview of qualitative interviews¹

Date	Location	Interview ID	Respondent ID	Demographics	SMO affiliation
16.01.2023	Vienna (volunteer center)	AT1	YOU	male, 26-35	YOUkraine
01.02.2023	online	CZ1	Hlas1	female, 18-25	Hlas Ukrajiny
03.02.2023	Prague (café)	CZ2	Hlas2	female, 26-35	Hlas Ukrajiny
04.02.2023	Prague (PM HQ)	CZ3	PM	female, 36-45	Prague Maidan
05.02.2023	Prague (café)	CZ4	Hlas3	female, 18-25	Hlas Ukrajiny
07.03.2023	online	CZ5	Hlas3	female, 18-25	Hlas Ukrajiny
16.03.2023	Vienna (café)	AT2	UD1	female, 18-25	Unlimited Democracy
22.03.2023	Vienna (UD HQ)	AT3	UD2	female, 18-25	Unlimited Democracy
28.03.2023	Vienna (café)	AT4	EU	male, 36-45	Vienna goes Europe
09.07.2023	online	AT5	UD3	male, 26-35	Unlimited Democracy (past: YOUkraine)

Source: Author, based on own interview data

Table 2: Length of qualitative interviews analyzed (no spacing, rounded)

	Words	Characters
AT1	11.670	59.160
AT2	14.360	70.390
AT3	10.270	50.300
AT4	16.050	86.070
AT5	12.840	62.340
Total	65.200	328.250
CZ1	15.860	77.250
CZ2	17.920	77.620
CZ3	6.860	32.450
CZ4	6.880	33.230
CZ5	25.840	121.540
Total	73.350	342.100

Source: Author, based on own figures based on qualitative interview data

Interviewing was likewise informed by Grounded Theory, especially by Robert Weiss's approach developed in his seminal "Learning from Strangers" (1995). The

¹ CZ2 was conducted in English, AT4 in German, the rest in Ukrainian.

author emphasizes the importance of focusing on the respondent's own experience within events, allowing interview participants to "... provide concrete descriptions of something he or she has witnessed" (1995: 66). This approach aims at steering the respondent away from generalized and de-personalized descriptions of abstract phenomena, focusing instead on their role and actions within concrete events, as well as their impressions thereof. Corresponding interviewing techniques include asking to provide examples and descriptions of concrete events, especially when the respondent is talking in abstract terms ("Can you give me an example of such a situation?"), asking about the course of events ("What happened then?", or "How did it continue?"), asking about other people involved in the event, and the respondent's reflections and feelings about what happened (Weiss 1995: 73ff). Another crucial element of this interviewing technique is to actively take note of, and then ask about, clues (called "markers" in Weiss's terms) in the respondent's speech (ibid: 77f). These can be understood as taken-for-granted terms and short expressions used by a person to indicate, but typically not elaborate on unless asked, larger processes and phenomena.

To openly explore motivations and frames of activists while not straying away too far from the research question focusing on the mobilization form, a semi-structured interview design suggested itself as a middle ground between openness and a theme-guided approach (Prainsack and Pot 2021: 102). Providing a loose structure to my interviews, I prepared interview guidelines for the ten interviews I consider for analysis. In the guidelines, I prioritized a maximum of four major topics per interview, with one "grand tour" question introducing each of them (cf. ibid: 107), followed by questions about the respondent's detailed account of, and own experience within events that illustrate those topics. Grounded Theory often calls for an iterative research design in which data collection and analysis are intertwined (Peters 2014). Thus, I included insights and clues from one respondent's account into the guideline of the next interview from the same mobilization context to explore certain elements further.

Participant Observation

Studying instances of social movement mobilization in-depth is crucial to understanding underlying processes and requires the researcher to "... take part in the same situation in order to understand the contradictions, the stakes, and the social expectations that people being studied experience." (Balsiger and Lambelet 2014: 146). Experiencing instances of mobilization firsthand may also help the researcher to

understand underlying processes and activists' actions within them deeper (Mattoni 2014). The distance between theory and practice in social movement research has been critically addressed before. Frampton et al., for example, formulate a critique against the "... authoritative academic voice on social action...", where "... the researcher is not required to participate in movements and often writes about them as an outsider." (2006: 11). This critique is directed at social movement theory's categorization of collective action rather than the detailed study of meanings that are produced within a movement's recurring actions and practices in opposition to a perceived power hierarchy it finds itself opposing (ibid). With Grounded Theory methodology and approach to researching a phenomenon in-depth, I hope to address this critique and enrich social movement theory with insights gained from the close study of mobilization actors' actions and meanings. At the same time, the closeness to the studied groups and individuals, and the processes and actions they engage in, requires a high level of reflexivity from the researcher on positionality and interaction with the field. I address positionality as a researcher of the specific topic and empirical phenomenon at the end of the Methodology chapter, and the aspect of my interaction with the field as a participant observer in section 2.4. "Iterative Research Process".

A major drawback to the empirical work is that I did not have the same opportunity to conduct participant observation in Prague as I did in Vienna. Even though it is not possible to substitute or reproduce the insights gained from the Viennese case, the interviews with Prague activists were deeper and covered more detail of mobilization processes. Participant observation in Vienna also served another purpose, as my impression during research was that to gain their respect and increase the chances of an interview, I was expected to help activists with rally organization, especially in the case of the anniversary rally. Indeed, after one of the interviews with a UD member, the respondent said something akin to *"well, this was my deed to you, as you also helped us."* Of course, I also had a strong internal desire to not be a mere "armchair" researcher but to participate in pro-Ukraine mobilization myself, having a personal stake in the matter (see "Positionality" section). Finally, *Hlas Ukrajiny* and other pro-Ukraine groups in Prague conduct thorough social media communication and documentation of rallies, which allowed to partly compensate the lack of first-hand data.

2.3. Data Analysis

The overarching goal with Grounded Theory coding, and the methodology in general, is to preserve participants' meaning and actions. Following the Grounded Theory dictum of combining data collection and analysis (Charmaz 2014: 34), I started to code my interviews as soon as I had transcribed them. For this, I primarily used process codes (Saldaña 2013: 96ff), a type of coding that employs gerunds to highlight participants' meanings and actions (Charmaz 2014: 120f). In addition, I occasionally used In-Vivo codes to make the respondent's own words and phrases stand out (Charmaz 2014: 134f, Saldaña 2013: 91ff), but also to create hints and open pathways for future categorization of existing codes. This coding procedure corresponds to initial or open coding. According to Saldaña (2013: 100ff), initial coding mostly consists of, but is not limited to, process and in vivo coding. This crucial initial analysis must be further accompanied by thorough reflection, as "[a] personal debriefing or 'reality check' by the researcher is critical during and after the initial coding of qualitative data..." (ibid: 104), where the writing of analytic memos is employed to capture impressions and help generate analytic codes and categories. As Charmaz advises: "Staying close to the data and, when possible, starting from the words and actions of your respondents, preserves the fluidity of their experience and gives you new ways of looking at it. These steps encourage you to begin analysis from their perspective. That is the point." (2014: 121). Unfortunately, my initial coding lacked reflectivity, which prepared the ground for analytical inconsistencies and mistakes.

Thus, the main caveat of my initial coding phase was to unreflectively mix up techniques from two distinct qualitative analysis methodologies. While I followed Grounded Theory in using process and in vivo codes (Charmaz 2014, Saldaña 2013), I started assigning them to a deductive-inductive category system that I drafted following the content-structuring Qualitative Content Analysis based on Kuckartz (2018: 95ff). The result was that much information and nuance were getting lost and reduced when pressed into the categories, while new analytical insights were limited. This ran counter to my initial intention of focusing on activists' meaning making, as manifested in their actions and the engagement in mobilization processes within the conditions they found themselves in. In addition, the respondents' agency, and actions, even though accounted for in my process codes, were pressed into a mold of reduction that did not account for their uniqueness. The most significant difference between Content Analysis and Grounded Theory is the analytical handling of the data, including

the approaches to coding, categorization, and memo writing. This is far-reaching not only due to the fact of the incompatibility of these methodologies itself, but also because by mixing apples and oranges I ultimately failed to properly apply either of the techniques. That is to say, the unclear constitution of the thematic categories I had arrived at was conditioned by the fact that I had not defined clear-cut definitions and criteria of inclusion and exclusion of data under those categories, which is a precondition for full coding of the data (Kuckartz 2018). On the part of Grounded Theory, my process codes lacked substance, analysis, and abstraction, as they were often too descriptive, rather than elevating a phenomenon to a higher conceptual level.

The methodological literature supplies understanding and remedies for such fallacies: “A researcher can inadvertently attempt to place data into a category where it does not analytically belong, but by means of making systematic comparisons, these errors will eventually be located and the concepts placed in appropriate classifications” (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 423). Furthermore, Charmaz provides another valuable advice: “If perchance your line-by-line codes remain at a mundane level, then *code these codes*. Ask yourself, what larger analytic story do these codes suggest? What process do they indicate? By coding the codes, you push yourself to look for patterns and think more analytically – and you keep interacting with your data and codes.” (2014: 127f; emphasis in original). I implemented this advice in a revised first cycle coding, while also focusing much more on writing analytical memos to reflect on the data and initiate the formation of concepts, which can later constitute the grounded theory (ibid). The next subsection briefly lays out how I conducted the first and second coding cycles, improving on my original approach by closely following GT methodology.

To sum up, the existing coding work constituted initial coding (Charmaz 2014), or first cycle coding (Saldaña 2013), whereby I used process and in vivo codes. The mistake in data analysis was that, rather than incorporating these codes into analytical groupings constituting concepts and themes, I formulated thematic categories with numerous levels of subcategories, rendering the initial codes difficult to work with and taking away their analytic import. In addition, many of the codes I have formulated were too descriptive, and sometimes simply summarized an event or action, rather than teasing out its analytical value. Thus, I followed Charmaz’ (2014: 127f) advice to code existing codes, i.e., conduct a revised first cycle coding procedure. This was a time-consuming process, but it allowed me to make my codes more analytical and write

many memos that not only captured important nuance, but also helped to arrive at concepts. In fact, memo-writing proved to be crucial for my overall data analysis and theory development, as I arrived at the main argument of the thesis primarily by iteratively comparing memos and more abstract codes with each other.

Coding Examples

I illustrate the approach I have employed in coding by presenting two chunks of coded interview transcripts, in the two stages of first and second cycle coding. After presenting the coding scheme in the first cycle (initial coding), I illustrate the second iteration of coding, for which I follow Charmaz' (2014: 138ff) constructivist approach of focused coding. For this, existing codes were grouped in MAXQDA's "Creative Coding" feature, which allows to visualize connections and create new categories for the purpose of conceptualization and further theory development.

Example I below (Table 3) is taken from an interview in German with an activist who has many years of experience with pro-Ukraine mobilization in Austria (AT4).

Table 3: Coding example I (first cycle coding)

#	Code name	Coded segment
1	overcoming barriers at rallies	Bei einer statischen Demo, wenn die klein ist, ist es, kostet es viel Überwindung da hinzugehen und das Gespräch zu suchen.
2	making rallies inclusive	D.h. da muss... Material auf Deutsch sein, Plakate auf Englisch-Deutsch.
3	enabling contact-making	Da muss ganz klar sein, es ist ganz leicht da hinzugehen und da in den Austausch zu kommen,
4	„niederschwellige Anknüpfungspunkte“	dieses... diese... da gibt's so ein eigenes Wort... was mir jetzt nicht einfällt... nicht usability, weil es ist ja kein Produkt... ein ganz wichtiges... die, die Anknüpfungspunkte müssen auf jeden Fall sehr... niederschwellig sein, ja.
5	enabling contact-making	Also es muss einfach niederschwellig möglich sein sich auszutauschen,
6	making rallies interactive	ja, es muss irgendwie auch so einen call-to-action Punkt auch geben, wo man sagt "da kann ich mir Informationsmaterial nehmen, was auf Deutsch ist, und...", vielleicht gibt's was zu trinken, usw. Was zum Abholen, Give-Away.
7	making people feel welcome	I: Was meinst du mit diesen call to action points? P: Ahm, das ist eben wenn man das Gefühl hat, man kann dort hinkommen, und kann dort Fragen stellen und hat... ist als Österreicher oder Englischsprachiger oder EU-Bürger willkommen,

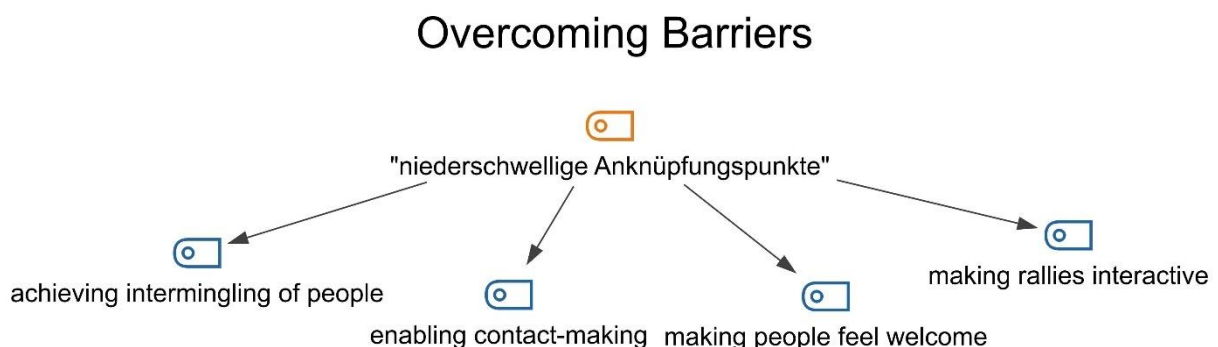
8	overcoming barriers at rallies	weil es könnte ja einfach sein, dass die einfach ihr Event haben, was nur für die Diaspora ist. Und so wirkt's manchmal ein bisschen, dass man sich denkt, ist man da überhaupt erwünscht.
9	achieving intermingling of people	Und das, das muss diese... diese Vermischung muss klar sein, das muss... vielleicht auch Österreicher, die sichtbar sind, irgendwie dass man sieht das ist schon vermischt und da kann ich da auch dazu gehen und mitfeiern.

Source: Author, based on own coding scheme in MAXQDA

Following the Grounded Theory approach to coding as described by Charmaz (2014: 128ff), I employed incidence-by-incidence coding rather than line-by-line or word-by-word. Still, when compared with other techniques of qualitative data analysis, such as coding in Qualitative Content Analysis (cf. Kuckartz 2018), coded segments are overall shorter, while the code labels capture more nuance and contain analytical value, rather than simply summarizing the data. In the example above, segment 4 was assigned an In Vivo code, which is singled out by quotation marks. In this case, the term “niederschwellige Anknüpfungspunkte” constitutes a clue or marker (cf. Weiss 1995), which may have value for conceptualization in the subsequent stage of analysis. Segments 3 and 5 have been assigned the same code, as the difference in nuance is very slight. This level of abstraction and generalization is necessary to keep the final number of codes manageable.

In the next step, I employed Charmaz’s (2014) approach of focused coding to analyze the data: compare codes with data, with other codes, and group similar codes into analytically more salient categories. I include a MAXQDA screenshot (Image 1 below) of the resulting code system after focused coding (i.e., the arrangement of codes on the mind map).

Image 1: Coding example I (second cycle coding)



Source: Author, based on own coding scheme in MAXQDA (“Creative Coding” function)

Note that Code 2 “making rallies inclusive” was merged with Code 7 “making people feel welcome”, as both segments mention language. In a further iteration within focused coding, which would include more data chunks, “welcomeness” or “inclusivity” related to rallies may become a larger theme of itself, featuring subcategories describing its properties. In the mind map shown in Image 1, the respondent’s terminology (“niederschwellige Anknüpfungspunkte”; from German: “low-threshold contact points”) and thought structure are preserved. This In Vivo code, which proved to be analytically salient to describe a range of phenomena, was linked and compared to other relevant instances in the data and become a major theme in further analysis. It was also used as the name of a category, with the other coded data serving as its subcategories or properties. The theme for the resulting mind map / developed concept was likewise taken from the respondent’s introduction to this section, which is the normative question of how to make rallies more inclusive to engage not only Ukrainians, but potentially all people living in Vienna in pro-Ukraine rallies. Thus, the respondent does not describe a particular event or course of action, but a desired situation. This important aspect of normativity is made explicit in the Results and especially Discussion sections, as this aspect differs strongly from Prague.

Example II below (Table 4) is taken from an interview in English with a grassroots activist from Prague, well-versed in protest organization, who became a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* (CZ2).

Table 4: Coding example II (first cycle coding)

#	Code name	Coded Segment
1	motivating for action	... yeah, at this event about the emotions, at this event we also asked people to, we had a microphone, and we had like 500 people,
2	including multiple languages	and N. was doing the Ukrainian part, and I was doing the Czech part,
3	complementing rally with participants' accounts	and... uhm, we didn't have text prepared, at all (LAUGH). And uhm... it was also a lot of Czech people so we had to improvise, and also this improvisation led us to... we have an open mic, if someone wants to say something out loud, to get it out, and you know
4	crying collectively	the first girl, she came and she started to like really cry into this microphone, and a lot of people of course were crying
5	crying at sensitive rallies	and a lot of people are crying on this kind of events, especially when you gather also big things like... bombing the civilian houses, or...
6	healing collectively	but I think that... eventually, that they can scream in the microphone on the Wenceslas Square, that they can share it with this group on this protest, eventually it will help them heal faster.
7	giving voice purposefully	So, it's not only because we have time, and let's give the microphone to the people. But I really feel that some people, they are just standing there, you know, they just want to be there with their friends, they don't have courage to say something to the microphone, but some of them, they are like, they wanted to add something, you know. You didn't say enough and I'm very, uhm... pro for giving these guys the voice. Yeah.

Source: Author, based on own coding scheme in MAXQDA

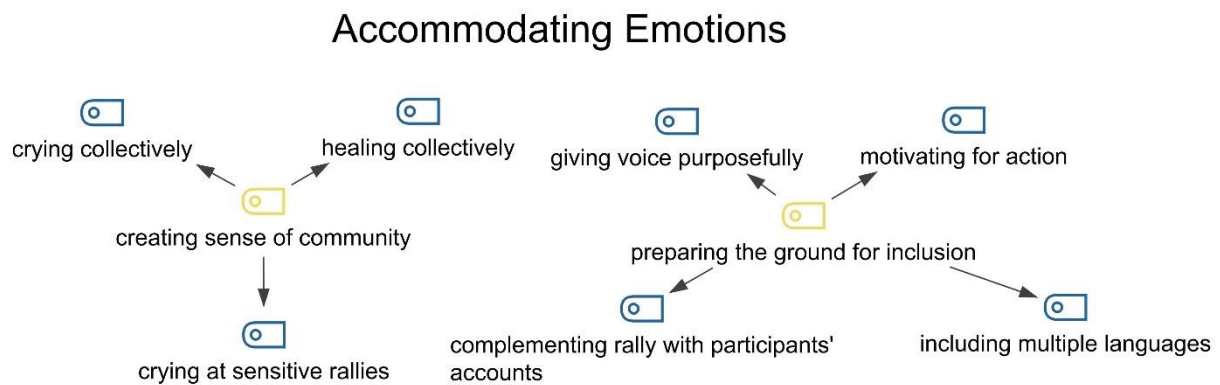
Memo for code 3:

- *Instead of only having own program and content for the rally, activists supplemented it by giving voice to participants, which served to release emotions and create an inclusive space.*

Overall, this segment contrasts the example from Vienna in a significant way, even though a similar theme is evoked. However, the respondent is describing a concrete event rather than a desired situation. The codes attempt to capture the aspects of collectivity, emotionality, and inclusivity present in the data, thus staying close to the source material and capture its nuance. I have also written a memo for code 3, which reflects on a potentially salient idea – that the content of inclusive rallies such as the one described by the respondent may be co-produced by both organizers and participants (“supplemented”). This gave a clue for exploration in further data analysis

of the role of emotionality in collective action. Image 2 below shows how these codes were conceptually linked.

Image 2: Coding example II (second cycle coding)



Source: Author, based on own coding scheme in MAXQDA ("Creative Coding" function)

In this example of focused coding, I have created two new codes (in yellow) which act as descriptors for the phenomena I have identified in the data. The first relates to conditions that allow for inclusive rallies to happen, while the second emphasizes the role of rallies as a space for the collective living of emotions. Finally, a major goal of focused coding was to explore similarities and differences between the two cases along the main common themes regarding formats of mobilization, such as emotionality and inclusivity in collective action from the two examples.

2.4. Iterative Research Process

A common postulate of Grounded Theory is that data collection and analysis go hand in hand, constituting an iterative approach to research (Charmaz 2014; Peters 2014). Therefore, this section presents the empirical process of data collection, and, relatedly, my involvement in the field as a researcher. After this, I elaborate on first hypotheses derived from this initial stage before discussing how the insights I gained informed an adjustment of the research question to guide the main analysis.

Empirical Process and my Involvement in the Field

Being based in Vienna and having relatively easy access to the organizations here, I joined TUMA (a cultural diplomacy SMO) and conducted some first participant observations at two team meetings in January 2023. To complement these first

impressions by exploring another sphere of activity, I conducted the first interviews² with volunteers active with *YOUkraine* in the same month, an organization founded shortly after the start of the FSI that specializes in collecting and sending humanitarian aid to hospitals in Ukraine. Eventually, however, my focus shifted away from cultural diplomacy, but not entirely from humanitarian aid, as I became primarily interested in political advocacy as an expression of pro-Ukraine claims in public space. Later, it proved that the latter two areas were related to each other in both cities, as activists involved in political advocacy had ties to, or were themselves engaged in, humanitarian aid organizations. At the end of January 2023, I joined a project initiated by the Vienna-based political advocacy SMO *Unlimited Democracy* aimed at preparing installations in Vienna thematizing the main war crimes and atrocities of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and their effect on the population for the occasion of its anniversary on February 24, 2023. During the time leading up to this date, I joined three team meetings that included brainstorming and planning the installations and helped with researching background information to be displayed on info stands for passers-by. I observed how extremely overworked, stressed, and emotionally drained most activists were during this preparation stage, and thus refrained from conducting interviews until after February 24.

In early February, I made a field trip to Prague during which I conducted four interviews with representatives of two SMOs, one of which is active solely in political advocacy (*Hlas Ukrajiny*), and the other combines activities of both political advocacy and humanitarian aid (*Prague Maidan*). Three of these were “cold” contacts that I reached out to on social media myself, whereas CZ2 was a referral by another Hlas activist. A major caveat of this “condensed” research experience was that due to my engagement and participant observation with UD, I had time to do a first analysis on the Prague interviews only in March. Once the anniversary action in Vienna and my involvement in it was finished, I revised those interviews and conducted a follow-up in-depth interview with an activist of Hlas Ukrajiny on March 7 (which lasted over three hours and thematized many valuable topics), focusing on this SMO’s experience with organizing the anniversary action in Prague. Activists were very open and keen to

² I conducted three interviews with *YOUkraine* members, of which I consider only one for the final analysis. This is partly due to time constraint and a shift in focus towards political advocacy, but also because I treated the first interview as a pilot for testing my interviewing approach and gaining an overview knowledge of the activities of Ukrainian volunteers up to that point.

share their experience and organizational and technical details, including numerous aspects that I had not considered before. This is reflected and accounted for in the length and level of detail and depth of the interviews. For this reason, even though I ultimately interviewed only four respondents (one of whom twice with over a month in-between) and did only a sliver of participant observation in Prague compared to Vienna, for a long time up until the final Vienna interview on July 9, I felt that I knew more about activism in Prague than in Vienna. This is also due to the much stronger social media presence of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, which, unlike UD, actively uses multiple social media channels for updates on upcoming rallies, but also for sharing relevant news on Czech-Ukrainian relations, as well as Ukraine-related events in Prague.

In the second half of March, I was finally able to conduct three interviews with activists associated with *Unlimited Democracy*, aiming at utilizing the shared experience from the preparation of the anniversary action and thus tease out the respondents' impressions and reflections. However, it proved to be very difficult to establish a working research relationship in two cases, as the respondents did not feel comfortable talking about the details of most of their engagement, and the concrete form of the installations and actions prepared for the anniversary. This aspect became a major hunch which led me to conduct an additional interview to explore it better (see next section).

First Hypotheses and Grounded Theory Development

As I am interested in the specific way mobilization in both settings happens, I aim at exploring and comparing processes and activists' actions associated with collective action. Early during data analysis, I noticed that political pro-Ukraine mobilization in Vienna was shrouded in a sense of controversy and competition related to disagreements between the two organizations *Unlimited Democracy* and MRIJA. This realization became a hunch after I noticed an unwillingness to speak about rally details and rationales during interviews with UD activists in March. Thus, I became more interested in exploring the reasons for this controversy, as it seemed to introduce constraints to collective action in the mobilization context of Vienna. Overall, my working hypothesis at the time was that diasporic pro-Ukraine activism in Vienna was marked by two mutually reinforcing inhibiting factors. The first factor is infighting and competition between various activist and volunteer groups, that stemmed from disagreements about goals and purpose of political mobilization. This manifested itself

vividly in the collective action of UD and MRIJA. Whereas the former split its target audiences, engaging non-Ukrainians with activist installations about Russia's crimes in Ukraine, MRIJA organized its own pro-Ukraine rallies, but engaged almost exclusively Ukrainians in Austria while using ethno-nationalist rhetoric to mobilize around a confrontational sentiment of grievance over perceived Austrian inaction and ignorance towards Russia's actions. The second factor is that activists find themselves in an environment closed for uptake of pro-Ukraine positions that are widely shared and supported by Ukrainians regarding the desired outcome of the war. Indeed, Austrian neutrality makes it difficult to publicly advocate in support of the conviction that Russia would not take seriously any negotiations, and that the liberation of Ukraine's internationally recognized territory through a military victory over the invading forces is necessary. The Austrian form of solidarity is reduced to the humanitarian dimension, adding to activists' feeling of isolation from the Austrian public discourse, and a sentiment that Austrian solidarity is porous as it is often interpreted with the normative goal of considering also Russian claims.

To corroborate this hypothesis, I conducted one more interview in early July 2023 with a volunteer who was involved in various Vienna-based Ukrainian SMOs, including *Unlimited Democracy* and *YOUkraine*, and was active with UD during the anniversary mobilization. The interview indeed provided substance for my working hypothesis, as it supplied much detail on the disagreements surrounding activities of the two organizations. The next goal was to conduct data analysis to arrive at an explanatory mid-range theory grounded in the data and explaining this specific outcome of pro-Ukraine mobilization in Vienna, to ultimately contrast it with the Prague case. Ukrainian activists there were able to claim both protest ownership and create a single source of information for street action, mobilizing to conduct political advocacy through rallies and street protests. With the first concept I denote a diasporic group's uncontested claim to represent pro-Ukraine claims through Ukrainians' agency in street mobilization. A single source of information, for the purposes of this thesis, represents a channel aggregating news and announcements on upcoming pro-Ukraine street actions, regardless of the initiator. Both aspects were achieved in Prague, but not in Vienna. Much of this outcome can be attributed to the more favorable conditions and political opportunity structures for such activities in Czechia, especially the existence of local activist networks mobilizing for pro-Ukraine collective action since 2014. The resulting protest form features inclusivity of new activists and sympathizers,

intermingling of Czech-Ukrainian imaginations and claims, as well as concrete protest demands that provide a stage for Ukrainian political voice.

Adjustment of the Research Question

The overall research goal is to arrive at mid-range theories explaining the form of mobilization under the existing conditions, which can be addressed with Grounded Theory. As Corbin and Strauss write: “The analyst can say: ‘Under these conditions, action takes this form, whereas under these conditions, it takes another.’ A major intent of grounded theory strategy is to systematically seek the full range of variation of the phenomenon under scrutiny.” (1990: 423). To do this, the initial research question needed to be adjusted to the type and quality of data I collected, as well as the original intention I had in mind – to study underlying processes and forms of mobilization, and the meanings that activists assign to their actions. When specifying the methodological approach to data analysis, I adjusted the research question to reflect this shift in focus. Such changes are common in qualitative designs, as qualitative researchers “... can add new pieces to the research puzzle or conjure entire new puzzles *while we gather data*, and that can even occur late in the analysis.” (Charmaz 2014: 25; emphasis in original). The old research question (“**What** are **determinants** and **dynamics** of Ukrainian diasporic mobilization practices in Vienna and Prague during the Russian war on Ukraine?”) lacked focus as it combined elements of a “**why**” (“determinants”) and a “**how**” (“dynamics”) question with a “**what**” question. Further, the meaning of “diasporic mobilization practices” was not obvious as it is in fact a variable of interest of the research itself but was treated as a given fixed category in the original research question. Thus, the dispersal of focus to multiple aspects at once made it difficult to arrive at a specific focus during data collection and analysis with the method I employed. The interest in dynamics and especially determinants also implied description of causal mechanisms which is difficult to achieve qualitatively.

The adjusted research question (**How** do pro-Ukraine activists in Vienna and Prague **mobilize** for collective action in public space during the Russian full-scale invasion?) addressed these shortcomings. The focus here is solely on a “**how**”-question, which is epistemological rather than ontological, and thus lends itself better for a Grounded Theory approach (Saldaña 2013: 61). In addition, using the verb “mobilize” rather than the noun “mobilization” implies action, process, and human agency, which can be addressed with Grounded Theory methodology, as well as the

specific coding method I employed. The specific aspect of mobilization of interest for the thesis is defined with “collective action”, avoiding the use of the undefined “practices” of the old RQ. However, this descriptor of mobilization is still flexible enough to allow for variation and openness during data collection and analysis. Rather, the specification of the type of mobilization is implied with the focus on activists and their actions. Overall, the new RQ does more justice to Grounded Theory’s focus on highlighting activists’ meaning making through the act of mobilizing within the conditions they find themselves in.

2.5. Ethical Aspects

On the theoretical level, scholars generally agree that ethical considerations primarily concern the outcome of the research and participants’ rights and interests. These can be conceptualized into four principles: non-maleficence and beneficence, related to the level of the research outcome, and autonomy/self-determination and justice, related to participants’ rights (Murphy and Dingwall 2007: 339). Thus, it is generally considered that a study is justified if its benefits outweigh negative implications (*ibid*). However, what is beneficial or not cannot be objectively defined and rests upon subjective interpretations of the researcher, which must be made explicit. In the case of the present thesis, the results may serve to provide activists, other members of (transnational) civil societies, and representatives of relevant institutions with insights into mobilization outcomes under vastly different conditions. This may potentially inform the choice of future projects, collective action, and initiatives, especially regarding the format of their implementation. Participation in interview studies may also help respondents to reflect on their actions during interviews, which may have an empowering effect. A related ethical step I took was to offer the possibility of getting in contact after the interview, in case the respondent wished to add something, or withdraw some of their answers, or their participation.

The last point leads to the next dimension of ethical aspects – participants’ rights, as primarily related to anonymity, and self-definition. Unlike quantitative research, where anonymity can be ensured by technical steps, qualitative ethnographic research presents a much greater challenge in this regard and full anonymity can never be guaranteed, especially when research is embedded into certain contexts, time periods, and groups of interest (Murphy and Dingwall 2007: 341). Importantly, study participants themselves and their close environment are very likely

to identify certain individuals in a study. For this reason, I refrain from assigning pseudonyms or codenames to interview quotes presented in the Results chapter, instead referring to their sources in generalized terms as “an activist”. Lastly, the possibility of deducing a person’s identity can remain even after combination of data because personal data is stored within study records, which, if combined with results, may be connected to participants (Prainsack and Pot 2021: 58). To ensure safety, such data was stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.

Giving informed consent to study participation is another crucial element of respondents’ rights. In theory, it requires full understanding of the study’s purposes and implications, which is virtually impossible to relay to participants completely. This is especially true if the research focus changes during analysis (Murphy and Dingwall: 343), as in my case. To ensure transparency and enable informed consent, participants were informed fully about the research aims and interests, as well as their rights. When conducting interviews, I was aware of the possibility of a later change or adjustment in the research question. Thus, in addition to stating the original question, I explained to participants that the research interest was still broad, but thematically aligned with the format of mobilization, i.e., how Ukrainian, and pro-Ukraine groups mobilize, and what activities they choose.

Finally, participants’ right of self-definition must also be considered, as the interpretative authority of researchers over their study’s findings exists within the ontological postulate that social truths cannot be objectively defined, and that many possible interpretations coexist (ibid: 344f). Thus, explicating research and analysis procedures to ensure reproducibility is as important as questioning and eliciting the method of interpretations to expose existing biases and judgments. In addition, a balance must be struck between “letting the people speak” (ibid: 346) and interpreting the data with the awareness of participants’ accounts’ embeddedness in a particular social context.

2.6. Positionality of the Researcher

Thus, to help elicit analysis and interpretation procedures, it is important to reflect on my positionality as a Ukrainian researcher studying Ukrainian diasporic mobilization in two European countries. As someone whose family is directly affected by Russian occupation and its erasure of Ukrainian identity, I do not claim impartiality to the topic of my research. Neither do I claim neutrality or academic distance from the

participants and respondents in my research, and their struggle to make Ukrainian voices heard abroad. This internal motivation also led me to join some mobilization instances as an activist and volunteer, whereby I made explicit to others involved my role as a researcher. Belonging to the same national group also created trust and facilitated access to respondents' more detailed accounts based on common frames and interpretations. Having lived most of my life outside of Ukraine, however, I believe to be able to make certain implicit biases explicit, or at least recognize them. During data analysis I also talked to and interviewed non-Ukrainian activists and sympathizers to arrive at more robust results, but also to grant more nuance to my own analytical perception. Still, some obvious biases remained which I want to briefly mention. For example, early on in my research I noticed an air of controversy surrounding talks about pro-Ukraine mobilization in Vienna, which was partly because the two main organizers of political rallies were engulfed in competition. As I was engaged as a participant observer and researcher in only one of them (*Unlimited Democracy*), it led me to adopt a suspicious perception about the other group (MRIJA) myself. However, this perception was already formed for the most part from my personal aversion to the latter group's mobilization format of using confrontational rhetoric and espousing ethno-nationalist ideology in its rallies. This, combined with a severe limitation in time and resources for the empirical process, led me to refrain from conducting interviews with members of this group. However, I attended several of their rallies and followed social media communication to compensate for this, while also raising the topic of this group's mobilization in some of the interviews I conducted (bearing in mind the bias contained in these accounts).

3. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The presentation of results is informed by the grounded theory developed during data analysis and introduced in Chapter 1.5. Each case is considered separately but laid out along the same conceptual elements of the grounded theory.

3.1. Czech Republic

The Czech Republic actively provides Ukraine with both humanitarian and military aid during the full-scale invasion, and in addition to receiving large numbers of refugees has a significant historical as well as pre-war Ukrainian migrant population. NATO and EU membership, symbolic linkage between Ukraine's victimhood and own experience via historically significant dates (e.g., 1968), and a common history of a peripheral status in a Moscow-dominated bloc provide a base for shared frames. This is evident from significant collective efforts of Czech civil society groups to support Ukraine against the Russian invasion with both humanitarian and military aid. Despite this, a populist mobilization around "Czechia first"-sentiments and in support of an isolationist approach to foreign policy, with pro-Russia and anti-West expressions, took place during the months leading up to the presidential elections of January 2023.

What specific characteristics of pro-Ukraine civil society mobilization in Prague may influence wartime street activism, and how do Ukrainian activists and their local allies position their claims and protest strategies in this context?

3.1.1. Mobilization Context: Diversity of pro-Ukraine action

This section introduces the past and present activities of three key SMOs focusing on the way they have influenced and informed the mobilization of the group that constitutes the focus of analysis – *Hlas Ukrajiny*. The sum of their activities has provided a crucial political opportunity structure (POS) – precedents for pro-Ukraine and pro-democracy mobilization in public space. Each of the groups has done this in different ways and with a unique focus.

Prague boasts significant potential for pro-Ukraine action, which is partly represented by a continuity with mobilization in support of Euromaidan from 2013-14. The range of collective action includes both political, humanitarian, and cultural activities. One example of political mobilization in public space is the *Prague Maidan* group which has been organizing a weekly "stanek", or stand, on Prague's Old Town

Square since 2014. Some of the Czech and Ukrainian founding members from Prague visited Kyiv during the key events early that year and set up a Prague-based network in support of Euromaidan. After Russia's invasion of Crimea and Donbas, their weekly stand came to focus on displaying information on Russia's hybrid war, along with call-to-action points in the form of petitions to sign, as well as to donate for the recovery of Ukrainian war veterans. The petitions thematized pressing issues related especially to European Ukraine and Russia policy, such as calls to boycott the construction of the Nord Stream II pipeline. With the help of new volunteer members, *Prague Maidan* continues to organize its weekly stand in the Old Town Square during the full-scale war, where it displays current information and calls for donations to Ukraine's military. As a long-term activist put it: "*Petitions are of no use anymore. We need weapons, only weapons.*" A notable effect of this routinized mobilization in the heart of Prague over multiple years has been the formation of interpersonal connections and networks around political pro-Ukraine claims and activism. These networks extend to this day and provide vital support in terms of informational and material resources needed for collective action in the mobilization of *Hlas Ukrajiny*.

While some founding members of *Prague Maidan* came to act as information activists and media gatekeepers for modern-day street action in support of Ukraine, others focused on humanitarian relief, building on prior experience of working with Ukrainian war veterans, as well as orphans visiting summer camps in Czechia. Upon the outbreak of the full-scale invasion, *Prague Maidan* merged with the *Ukrainian European Initiative* group to set up a community support and crisis response center in Prague's 4th district with the building being provided by the city administration. Thus, members of the Ukrainian diaspora who became activists in 2014 were able to build on prior experience, resources, and networks to contribute to aiding and housing incoming refugees and collecting donations for humanitarian and military aid, while also opening a space for newly arrived refugees to become active in the center themselves.

Before the full-scale invasion, a small but active pro-Ukraine activist network of local groups engaged in both informational advocacy work, and street-based protest. One mobilization rationale that emerged shortly after Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine had been to openly condemn the Putin regime, notably in the form of the *Kaputin* activist group. Using ridicule, satire, and politicized activist street-based action, one of the group's most notable mobilization formats was to display in front of the

Russian embassy a handmade life-size figure of a naked Vladimir Putin sitting on a toilet, with a toilet brush in his right hand ridiculing his imperial ambitions (Gosling 2022). This mobilization, carried by Czech citizens, set a vivid precedent for activism in opposition to Russian aggression against Ukraine. The staging of opposition to Russia's imperialism on Prague's streets also created grounds for strengthening solidarity with Ukraine by appealing to a sentiment of Czech co-involvement in Moscow-initiated wars of conquest as a former victim of invasion itself. Apart from targeting Russian imperialism, the group also raised political demands directed at Western Russia-policy in its activist rally design, primarily against German Ostpolitik. One example is the symbolic destruction of a tube representing the Nord Stream II pipeline in front of the German embassy in Prague in January 2022 (Horák 2022).

Upon the outbreak of full-scale war, *Kaputin* continued in the same style, using even stronger visual representation. On the anniversary of the full-scale invasion in 2023, activists were cutting off the head of a figure of the Russian imperial eagle in front of the aggressor state's embassy, attracting much attention from local journalists (Šula and Turek 2023; Kaputin 2023): "... *the media just swallowed it wholesale, and even licked the plate*", recounts a *Hlas Ukrajiny* activist referring to the strong visuality of the action. *Kaputin* also engaged in networking with *Hlas Ukrajiny* to contribute to its mobilization by providing knowledge on suitable narratives and rally content. A notable instance of the mobilization potential of this newly formed network were the two groups' joint counter protests against pro-Russia rallies that were held periodically in Prague from September 2022, which will be discussed in more detail in the section on *Hlas Ukrajiny's* mobilization.

The last group has had a more indirect effect on *Hlas Ukrajiny's* mobilization, but a much more direct and significant one for the broad civil society mobilization in public space: the NGO *Milion Chvilek pro Demokracii* (Million Moments for Democracy), which mobilized hundreds of thousands of Czech citizens for anti-Babis protests throughout summer and fall 2019 (Michelot 2019). Its record of organizing mass public protests around anti-Babis and pro-democracy claims in 2018 and 2019 has "*taught the Czech public [to participate in] this kind of mass events*", as a respondent reflected. Some local pro-Ukraine activists who became members or allies of *Hlas Ukrajiny* attended and supported these mass demonstrations against the Babis government and were inspired by the bottom-up nature of this mobilization. *Milion Chvilek* was also the group to organize the first large public solidarity actions for

Ukraine in Prague shortly after the outbreak of the FSI. In these rallies, the CSO projected a conceptual link between support for Ukraine and support for democracy and freedom, and the co-involvement of the Czech public in these endeavors (Lazarová 2022).

To summarize, three SMOs of different sizes and focuses contributed to creating favorable POS for pro-Ukraine mobilization, and informed aspects of protest strategy and form of *Hlas Ukrajiny*. *Prague Maidan* politicized an important public space in the city for pro-Ukraine activism since 2014, also serving as a point of interpersonal exchange and individual action towards political Ukraine-support. *Kaputin* set a precedent for contentious activist protests directed against Russian imperialist ambitions, and Western policy (willingly or unwillingly) supporting or appeasing it. The use of visually strong symbols in politically and publicly significant locations attracted considerable media attention and provided a source of inspiration for *Hlas Ukrajiny*. *Milion Chvilek* created a precedent for mass mobilization in public space both for democracy and for Ukraine, communicating to the wider public this link as an important ideational driver for Czech support and solidarity. Interpersonal exchange between members of all three organizations further informed much of the wartime pro-Ukraine protest strategy and form, which will be explored in the next section after discussing conditions of the formation of *Hlas Ukrajiny*.

3.1.2. Initial Mobilization: Creating a Bottom-Up Movement

The first large public protest in support of Ukraine was held by *Milion Chvilek*, which attracted tens of thousands of attendees. However, large-scale protests quickly subsided, and contentious action came to be organized by small activist groups like *Kaputin*, and other local activists. Local mobilization actors included political demands and clear addressees in their rallies. One of the first grassroots protests was held end of April 2022 in front of the German embassy to hold the German government accountable for its lack of support for Ukraine. Activists highlighted the role of emotions in these initial protests as the feeling of shock and anger they experienced due to the horrific news of atrocities committed by Russia in Ukraine found its expression in activism. For example, bloodied crosses were displayed in front of the German embassy building as an implication of co-responsibility due to lack of resolve in providing military aid to Ukraine: “... *it was like, it was already... visible that some other countries are delivering tanks, and Germany is delivering excuses*” stated one activist.

In addition to these contentious but small-scale and infrequent rallies, members of the Ukrainian diaspora in Prague organized their own street actions, often following calls from cross-border online coordination groups such as *Army of Ukrainian Communities*. Such campaigns mostly reacted to pressing issues related to the Russian FSI of Ukraine, or advocated for more pro-Ukraine Western policy, and a harsher stance on Russia. Activists who later became founding members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* lamented the disorganized nature of these initial ad-hoc rallies and deemed them too emotional and lacking concrete content such as calls to civic action. Furthermore, none of the protest organizers used a formalized image to represent a larger movement, mobilizing instead as single individuals or groups. Reflecting on this aspect, a *Hlas* member stated that “... at a rally... people want to feel that they are doing this for Ukraine, not for this or that person”.

Recognizing these shortcomings, a group of Ukrainian activists who participated in these initial rallies networked and started deliberating on how to improve rally organization to better reach and interact with the local public. The first step taken collectively was the creation of social media channels as a central repository of information on pro-Ukraine rallies in Prague – a single source of information (SSI). Activists quickly decided on the Czech name “Hlas Ukrajiny” (Voice of Ukraine), as they strived to unambiguously espouse the intention for the newly founded group to become the main representative of Ukrainians’ political voice in Prague’s pro-Ukraine street mobilization. The idea was also to include the local public as much as possible in their actions. Thus, *Hlas Ukrajiny* emerged in a bottom-up fashion from active young Ukrainians who formed a network around the idea of improving initial diasporic pro-Ukraine mobilization by politicizing it.

The group’s emergence must be seen also in light of existing pro-Ukraine mobilization organized by local activists, whose rallies *Hlas* members valued more than their Ukrainian-organized counterparts. Specifically, respondents stressed the clear and timely demands and calls to action, i.e., the higher level of politicization and contention, especially the targeting of concrete institutions with demands, present in this mobilization. In fact, it did not take long for *Hlas Ukrajiny* to engage in a protest network with local pro-Ukraine activists, exchanging resources and benefiting from the knowledge on salient protest topics and demands of the “veterans”. On their part, Czech activists expressed a sense of relief when a Ukrainian group with the same politicized claims emerged: “... we felt that we are doing something pro-Ukrainian,

and... we are not doing it with Ukrainians, they should be out there somewhere. And... we just needed to meet them", recounts one of them. Apart from resource pooling, this network formation increased the base of sympathizers and participants in street rallies, enhancing visibility. *Hlas Ukrajiny* now shared information on upcoming rallies on its rapidly growing social media channels, and actions organized by local activists that used to attract dozens now attracted hundreds. Relatedly, the visibility in public space as well as media attention of politicized pro-Ukraine protests contributed to the continuation of mobilization. Overall, this development led to an increase of the base of protesters and activists involved in pro-Ukraine street action in Prague.

3.1.3. Mobilization Purpose and Form: Dual Representation

The main purpose as envisioned by *Hlas Ukrajiny* activists is derived from the group members' formative experience with initial pro-Ukraine mobilization in Prague – wanting to represent and channel Ukrainians' political voice to the larger public and rally its members for civic action in support of Ukraine. Activists see the mobilization purpose of representing pro-Ukraine political claims and demands as a salient protest strategy. *"This kind of activity is important, and if it is not present in Prague, it would be really extremely sad,"* contended a *Hlas* member when reflecting on the function of their rallies. Activists believe that with their mobilization they can positively influence political decisions regarding further Ukraine support, as well as Czech public opinion and individual action in support of the invaded homeland. When further describing the purpose of their mobilization, an activist reflected that *"we must be the voice of the AFU in Czechia. The voice of Ukraine, and of the AFU... support depends on us."* Physical participation of both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians, as well as political contention in the form of concrete demands, accompany this rationale in street action.

The desire to communicate agency and voice of Ukrainians living in Prague to the larger Czech public is combined with the creation of a space for the staging of pro-Ukraine voices, which finds its expression in *Hlas*' mobilization format. Rallies often feature an open microphone which is used by participants to express opinions and demands. Giving a stage for rally-goers' voice is also seen by *Hlas* activists as a way to help them release emotions collectively. However, the main goal of implementing participants' voice in mobilization remains the expression of political demands and claims. Thus, shouts and mottos are prepared beforehand to fit the theme of the respective rally, and the avoidance of silence at protests is seen as a way to maximize

involvement of participants while also increasing noticeability to onlookers. Loudness during street action remains limited to rallies predominantly attended by Ukrainians living in Prague, however. Ukrainian *Hlas* members were surprised to march alongside locals on February 25th at a rally organized by *Weapons to Ukraine* and find that it was largely silent as almost no political or contentious shouts were uttered. For Ukrainian activists, such silence at protests is to be avoided since loudness and a sense of contention are seen as a feature that aligns with their vision of representing the political voice of Ukraine through Ukrainians' agency.

Rally contents are commonly informed by the expression of specific demands in the form of concrete actions to be taken by individuals and institutions in support of Ukraine. *Hlas Ukrajiny* activists emphasize the importance of political contention for their protest tactics and focus on a few main campaigns in their mobilization. One of the campaigns most often advocated for is the call to boycott Western companies who did not leave the Russian market after the start of the FSI. It featured in *Hlas Ukrajiny's* anniversary protest action, where an activist device of bloodied hands around the logos of Western companies operating in Russia during the FSI was employed to arouse urgency to act and imply the businesses' co-responsibility. A call-to-action point in the form of QR-codes leading to the "Push to Leave"-app accompanied this visual aspect. Other examples of protest contents include the call to sign petitions to expel Russia from the UN Security Council, or for the Czech Parliament to recognize Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism. Information displayed at protest events is often prepared in cooperation with former and current *Prague Maidan* and *Kaputin* activists specializing in research and advocacy. Another example were rallies held to address the first mass bombardment of Ukraine's critical infrastructure on October 10th, 2022 (Schneibergová 2022). Indeed, activists were able to not only quickly react by rallying, but also display a strong politicized visual representation of the demand to provide Ukraine with more Western air defense systems. The rally's success, as activists proudly recall, was attributed to the fact that it attracted international media attention in the form of an article by Al Jazeera featuring a title photo of the demonstration (Biden Promises Air Defence Systems 2022). The idea of displaying the activist installation representing "Umbrellas for Ukraine", as the main motto for the rally and a reference to the demand to provide Ukraine with air defense systems, was supplied by long-term activists formerly involved with *Prague Maidan*.

Transnational Action for Ukraine

The protest network between Ukrainian and Czech activists around *Hlas Ukrajiny* resulted in more physical participation during rallies, enabling the organization of larger events and actions. On one occasion, Czech activists were able to hold an activist rally as planned by benefiting from *Hlas Ukrajiny's* mobilization potential of Ukrainians living in Prague. In this protest action, activists lacked the people to hold all thirty crosses representing Ukrainian cities bombed by Russian missiles and implying co-responsibility for this to companies still operating in the Russian Federation. When Ukrainian *Hlas* members shared the information on their Telegram channel, over three hundred people attended, and thus the thirty crosses found more than enough hands to hold them: *"And then we met them. And when I texted my friend: 'I met people from a Ukrainian activist group, and they are helping, they will help us with crosses, let's do the crosses', and he was like 'bingo, finally we met them!'"* remembered one activist.

Activists were able to activate and appeal to Czech-Ukrainian frames and imaginations already present in Czech political and public spheres. The shared experience of invasion by a Moscow-dominated political entity is one of the most salient instances which was also used in street mobilization. One notable example is the rally held on August 21, 2022, a date marking the 1968 invasion and subsequent occupation of Prague and Czechoslovakia. Appealing to historical memory and frames of the Czech public, *Hlas* activists used the occasion to connect these imaginaries with the Russian FSI of Ukraine, evoking a sense of urgency and moral obligation to the brand boycotting campaign advocated for at the rally: *"And there was an absolutely clear message – that Czechs know how it is to be under Russian occupation, Czechs know how it is to have Moscow's tanks in their own capital, and that's why cooperation with companies who still have not left the Russian market should be stopped..."* recounts one activist. The activation of shared Czech-Ukrainian frames on this day was not confined to street action but enjoyed nationwide salience. A major TV channel televised a campaign calling to donate CZK 1,968 to the Ukrainian embassy, which directed the final collected sum of nearly one million euros to buy weapons for Ukraine (Indrová 2022). In 2023 on the same occasion, the Czech government sponsored a public advertisement campaign displaying billboards that reminded of 1968 and drew a parallel with the Russian FSI of Ukraine, featuring the slogan "1968. We lived through this ourselves. So now we are helping".

Thus, activists aim at projecting the interwovenness of Czech-Ukrainian realities in street mobilization, evoking frames of a common struggle for democratic values, and calling members of the Czech public to act upon these frames to support Ukraine. Inclusivity of rally attendees as a prerogative follows from this normative goal. Reflecting the transnational nature of the newly formed protest network around *Hlas Ukrajiny*, rallies were often held in Ukrainian, Czech, and English to ensure inclusivity of attendees, as activists recognized the need to display the heterogeneity of pro-Ukraine collective action: *“I knew, that for them it would be really convenient if the Czech is pronounced right, so people are not thinking that this event is only by Ukrainian people, so it looks like Czech and Ukrainian event, which it is”*, stated an activist. Mobilization around the anniversary of the full-scale invasion likewise reflected the transnational protest coalition formed around pro-Ukraine collective action. *Hlas Ukrajiny* was the main organizer, but the speakers invited by the group to the demonstration represented different Czech NGOs supporting Ukraine, as well as individual activists. The event was bilingual and attracted the attention of Czech media and TV. It featured collective commemoration of the victims of the war, and a recap of the most notable events and tragedies. However, activists stressed their intention to raise the spirits of attendees by showing that important civic action was being done to assist Ukraine by a wide range of diverse actors, evoking the idea that anyone can become active for Ukraine.

On the other hand, members of Czech organizations working towards aiding Ukraine during the full-scale war were also targeted with strong frames of interwovenness with Ukraine. *Hlas Ukrajiny* members awarded representatives of the organization *Zbrane pro Ukrajinu* (“Weapons to Ukraine”) on an event commemorating Ukrainian Defenders Day on October 1, 2022, organized by the Ukrainian embassy, with an award signed by the Commander-in-Chief of the AFU Zaluzhnyi. Activists framed this action as the extension of the designation “defender of Ukraine” to individuals and groups working towards aiding Ukrainian defense during full-scale war, while expanding this designation also to other forms of action. As a respondent summarized:

“We took as our main theme that the defender of Ukraine is primarily the one who is armed, but also the one who helps the one who is armed. That is, if you save gas, you are doing good, if you donate, you are doing good, if you go to rallies, you

are also a defender of Ukraine... So, we invited them and told them that we regarded them as defenders of Ukraine, and defenders of democracy in their country."

Politicizing the Representation of the Homeland

The outward-directed presentation of frames to the Czech public is connected to the question of who represents them, and thus to the inward-oriented **imagination** of diaspora. On this level, *Hlas Ukrajiny* activists envision their role as voice-givers to Ukrainian migrants in Prague who in their view had been largely de-politicized and inactive, promoting diasporic engagement by both providing a platform for it and serving as an enabler for others' initiatives. The stated goal of activists in this area is to form a "*conscious Ukrainian community in Prague*", while also countering assimilation and disengagement with the civic and political identification with Ukraine, rather than only a cultural one which is often the case with long-term diasporas. This desired goal relates to the representation of modern Ukraine to the Czech public, with *Hlas* members intending to showcase "*... contemporary Ukrainian culture... not just varenyky and vyshyvanky*", as one activist stressed. In line with the dictum of representing modern Ukraine in Prague, *Hlas* activists aim at supporting cultural initiatives that represent their homeland as a future-oriented and ambitious state. One example includes *Hlas*' engagement in organizing a discussion after a screening of the Ukrainian film "Olha", which retells the story of Maidan and the Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014. The goal of the discussion was to sensitize and inform non-Ukrainian attendees to the significance of these events, while also evoking shared historical frames by comparing Maidan to Prague Spring of 1968. The screening itself was organized by long-term Ukrainian migrants in Prague whom *Hlas Ukrajiny* supported in this endeavor. This cooperation is exemplary of *Hlas*' stated goal of connecting and empowering existing initiatives representing modern and political Ukraine to "*form the diaspora piece by piece*", as one activist put it.

The politicization of Ukrainian diaspora, and its engagement for street action representing pro-Ukraine claims during the full-scale war, is expressed in *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s horizontal structure for voluntary engagement. From its inception, the group prioritized its role as an aggregator of individual contribution to political pro-Ukraine rallies in Prague and a communication channel on social media to mobilize action. The creation of a Telegram group for activists, which quickly attracted over one hundred members, allowed for ad-hoc mobilization in timely response to events in Ukraine. This

broad inclusion of movement participants extended also to the empowerment of individual engagement by keeping the threshold for participation low. That is, members of the growing group chat could suggest a course of action for a planned rally, quickly organize task forces, exchange resources and contacts. While main decisions were taken by a core team of around ten individuals, this “outer circle” of volunteers allowed the group to quickly mobilize ad-hoc events. Thus, a central element of Hlas Ukrajiny’s mobilization is to provide a platform for the active and politicized engagement of diaspora by creating conditions for inclusivity of individual contribution to protest organization. Indeed, activists see this element as part of the purpose of mobilization: *“I don’t think there is a need for this ‘big boss’ for the diaspora... people form the movement themselves, and thus the need for leaders”*, stated one activist. Many rallies have been made possible by utilizing engagement of activists and sympathizers in this way, including for topics that core members would not have prioritized, such as a demonstration raising awareness to the ecocide in Ukraine.

Finally, *Hlas Ukrajiny* cooperated with existing diaspora organizations to share resources and contacts. For example, it engaged with the long-established *European Congress of Ukrainians* (ECU), which has its seat in Prague, to work on the strengthening of diasporic activism by building networks. Thus, the two groups jointly organized a summit for leaders of diaspora organizations based in and around Prague in spring 2023.

Creating a Shared Public

By basing its mobilization on the purpose of representing Ukrainian political claims in Czech public space while politicizing diasporic engagement and voice, *Hlas Ukrajiny* creates spaces in its rallies for the intersection of Czech-Ukrainian frames relating to shared values. This allows for the projection of a shared public, whereby all residents of Prague, no matter the ethnic or national background, are potential movement participants. The most vivid example was the group’s protest network with *Kaputin*, who initiated street action countering populist anti-democratic mobilization in the autumn and winter of 2022-23. The initiators of the latter, known as “Czech Republic on the First Place”, organized the first large protest on September 3rd in Prague representing claims in opposition to the government’s Ukraine support, and especially rising energy prices (Guasti and Bustikova 2022). On that day, around 70,000 protestors gathered on Prague’s Wenceslas Square, combining Czech-

sovereigntist, anti-establishment, populist, anti-European and anti-NATO frames, while partly displaying Russian flags and parroting Russian propaganda narratives that portrayed Ukraine as a “Nazi state”. Indeed, rhetorical devices of demonization of Ukrainians commonly found in Russian propaganda were routinely present in this movement: “*I was shocked... this one lady went: ‘you’re a Nazi... a Banderite... Zelensky is a drug-addict... go fight in the war’*”, as a *Hlas* member recounted a first-hand experience. Thus, *Hlas Ukrajiny* quickly joined *Kaputin*, and both groups merged their demands and claims in a common struggle against authoritarian tendencies by jointly organizing counter protests against this mobilization. Counter protestors gathered nearly every time to defend the Ukrainian flag in front of the National Museum, which was the major target for the opposing side, under the motto “European values on the first place”. Subsequently, activists devised a visually strong and provocative sign to display opposition to the pro-Russian element in their adversaries’ mobilization – a large sign consisting of separate letters held by individual protestors, which together created the phrase “Putin je v prdeli”, and “Slava Ukrajini!” when flipped (see images below).

*Image 3: Rally by Kaputin and Hlas Ukrajiny defending the Ukrainian flag (1)*³



Source: @hlas.ukrajiny (2023a, January 21). *Kaputin and Hlas Ukrajiny Rally*. Prague. Retrieved from: https://www.instagram.com/p/CnsGgl6tMtH/?img_index=8. [Last accessed: 29.09.2023]

³ Translation: “Putin is in the hindquarters”.

Image 4: Rally by Kaputin and Hlas Ukrajiny defending the Ukrainian flag (2)⁴



Source: @hlas.ukrajiny (2023b, January 21). *Kaputin and Hlas Ukrajiny Rally*. Prague. Retrieved from: https://www.instagram.com/p/CnsGgl6tMtH/?img_index=8. [Last accessed: 29.09.2023]

Hlas Ukrajiny also actively mobilized on its social media channels to support *Kaputin* in the counter protests. When communicating the protest purpose, activists evoked a common struggle in defense of European values against groups wanting to undermine them, while appealing to Ukraine's European integration. Thus, mobilizing Ukrainians on the group's Telegram channel, activists explained the importance of joining this rally by activating frames of a common struggle for democracy in Czechia and the support for Petr Pavel's candidacy, while also warning against the dangers of the opposite side's electoral success for future Czech Ukraine-support. Subsequently, as the numbers of the populist rallies were shrinking, counter-protests were growing over time thanks to *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s mobilization of Ukrainians for Czech pro-democratic struggle. Czech activists noted and appreciated this move: "... so, it's what I appreciate from, from their side, that if there is something to support Petr Pavel, they will come, because they know it's good for us, for them, and it's like a... coalition." A large-scale demonstration organized by *Milion Chvilek* also greatly contributed to countering anti-

⁴ Translation of upper sign: "We want peace? Then let's help Ukraine win!"; lower sign: "If Russian imperialism defeats Ukraine, it will destroy us as well".

democratic protests in public space. Former members, who in the meantime had become pro-Ukraine activists, were emphasizing the need for the organization of such a large pro-democratic rally to create a publicly visible counterweight to the populist mobilization. The event was finally held on October 30th, rallying tens of thousands of people and broadcasting a speech by Olena Zelenska (Czech News Agency 2022): *“It was this event against hatred, and... it was pro-Ukrainian, pro-EU, pro-NATO... and you can see the different mood... different people are coming and they are like... less aggressive”*, reflected one activist.

Hlas Ukrajiny thus functioned as a bridge between Ukrainian migrants and Czech political contestation around democracy, contributing to an action and solidarity-based instance of transnational mobilization. In addition, Ukrainians were empowered to stand up for their own representation using personal agency in opposition to pro-Russia mobilization, while imagining own political identity as a reaffirmation of Ukraine’s position in a civic and democratic Europe.

To summarize, *Hlas Ukrajiny* centered its activities on politicizing the Ukrainian diaspora by including it in pro-Ukraine mobilization to represent Ukrainian political agency and voice to the host state public. Activists recognized the importance of espousing concrete demands and political claims in the name of Ukraine in their mobilization format, while at the same time acting to politicize the depoliticized Ukrainian diaspora in Prague. By mobilizing Ukrainians for political and contentious topics like the counter protests with *Kaputin*, the group created a shared Czech-Ukrainian public space by ensuring Ukrainians’ physical and ideational representation. *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s declared purpose of representing the political voice of Ukraine and call on the Czech public to contribute to Ukrainian victory through civic action also increased activists’ motivation, as this mobilization purpose was clearly communicated and credible. This allowed *Hlas* to monopolize protest ownership and combine multiple rally formats under one name, including ad-hoc mobilization, activism, political rallies, marches, and televised speeches. Activities go beyond physical public space into the digital and media spheres. For example, *Hlas Ukrajiny* is given a wide audience among Czech accounts on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, where the strong presence of the Czech branch of the NAFO online activist network certainly contributes to the amplification of pro-Ukraine voices.

To serve the purpose of projecting the political voice of Ukraine in Czechia, *Hlas Ukrajiny* took active steps towards politicizing and empowering Ukrainians in Prague,

for example by emphasizing the connection between Czech-Ukrainian relations and political realities. Activists saw their role in creating a sense of collective purpose for the Ukrainian diaspora to unite around the projection of Ukrainian agency and political voice to the larger Czech public, and appeal to the latter by projecting interwovenness of Czech-Ukrainian shared frames. This also allowed for the implementation of universal pro-democratic claims in transnational mobilization in the instance of the protest coalition in opposition to populist mobilization with the *Kaputin* group. *Hlas Ukrajiny* was able to mobilize Ukrainian protestors by appealing to their agency of instantiating the desired political representation of Ukrainian voice to the larger Czech public. Thus, diasporic imagination and representation were firmly intertwined in this mobilization, as the overarching vision of activists was to represent a modern democratic and future-oriented Ukraine, and to call upon individual civic action in support of this vision against the existential threat posed to it by Russia's war effort.

3.2. Austria

Austrian political and public space present less favorable conditions for pro-Ukraine street action. Unlike the Czech Republic, it lacks such grounds for frame alignment with Ukraine as shared historical experience and a common struggle against Russian imperialism. At the same time, Ukraine-support is not clear-cut across all parties. Unsurprisingly, the far-right FPÖ has been consistently absent from public protests in support of Ukraine and has boycotted the speech of the Ukrainian president in the Austrian parliament on March 30th, 2023. Moreover, it organized its infamous Akademikerball on the day of the anniversary of the full-scale invasion. More surprising has been the absence of more than half of MPs from the Social Democrats (SPÖ) during Zelensky's speech (Mayer 2023), as well as the lack of verbal support of both FPÖ and SPÖ local politicians during a visit of the mayor of Bucha to the town of Klosterneuburg in April 2023 (SPÖ und FPÖ schweigen 2023). In public debates, the perception that peace can be achieved by negotiations with the aggressor state, whose "security interests" are often seen as legitimate, enjoys popularity (cf. Mangott 2023), and a lukewarm stance towards Russia persists since 2014 (Geets 2022). Austrian economic ties to Russia are another important matter of international criticism, such as the continuing dependence on Russian gas imports (Baumann 2023), and the presence of Raiffeisen Bank International (RBI) in Russia, which increased its revenue there in 2022 (Hilpert 2023). Occasionally, mainstream media reporting falls for

disinformation, for example in a recent episode when the main Austrian TV broadcaster ORF distributed videos alleging that they showed forced mobilization in a Ukrainian university, which was proven to be a mistake (Rauscher 2023). Overall, the conditions of neutrality, the absence of an unambiguous pro-Ukraine stance in the political sphere, including mainstream parties, and attempts to spread the blame for Russia's actions between the aggressor state and the West present in public debates limit the range of realistic protest demands activists can use in mobilization.

3.2.1. Mobilization Context: Diaspora on Its Own

Explicitly political pro-Ukraine mobilization in public space comparable with Prague activism had been absent from Vienna since its short-lived appearance as a reaction to the Euromaidan and subsequent first Russian invasion in 2014. As interviewees recalled on multiple occasions, those rallies were disorganized, and for the most part non-inclusive of the local population as they were held predominantly in Ukrainian or Russian. Internal efficacy of activists, as well as physical participation, decreased rapidly as Austrian public frames of events in Ukraine came to be increasingly perceived as impenetrable for claims representing a clear-cut and unambiguous pro-Ukraine position. Thus, mobilization actors at the time became disillusioned and frustrated by Austrian neutrality's "ripple effects" in the public sphere, with much of the debate at the time containing attempts to apologize or downplay Russia's actions and questioning the efficacy of sanctions. A political organization, *Unlimited Democracy* (UD), emerged only in 2019 but was largely inactive until 2022, when it played a key role in initial mobilization. Local pro-Ukraine mobilization had likewise been absent when considering street mobilization, but existed in other forms such as public informational events and roundtables organized by groups like *Vienna goes Europe*, or *Paneuropa*.

Other organized diaspora groups in Vienna had been active before the full-scale invasion mostly in non-political spheres, such as the organization of summer camps for children, or rehabilitation for Ukrainian war veterans. A prominent organization engaging in cultural diplomacy, TUMA, spoke to a broad Ukrainian public while also engaging with the cultural sphere of the host state. Activities included a yearly charity "Ukrainian Ball" that supported orphanages in Ukraine, screenings of Ukrainian cinema, and showcasing Ukrainian music, paintings, and folk traditions. The group had become less active leading to an almost complete pause in engagement during the

COVID-19 period, resulting in a highly limited mobilization potential upon the outbreak of the full-scale war. Whereas some of its long-term members organized pro-Ukraine rallies in the first weeks on the streets of Vienna, this activity quickly subsided as it did not correspond with the organization's profile of focusing on cultural events. Instead, it did serve as an aggregator of information and enabler of others' engagement, focusing strongly on cultural and historical ties between Ukraine and Austria. For example, TUMA runs a website collecting traces of prominent historical figures from Ukraine in Vienna (TUMA 2023). It was also co-involved in hosting a Facebook group and multiple Telegram groups which became repositories for announcements on upcoming rallies, as well as information for refugees on life in Austria.

3.2.2. Initial mobilization: Helping Wherever Possible

Within a few days after February 24, 2022, the Ukrainian *St. Barbara church*, together with its adjacent community center *Barbareum*, became a makeshift warehouse for humanitarian aid, while also acting as a hub for voluntary engagement. With no pre-defined structure or hierarchy in place, *Unlimited Democracy* activists attempted to introduce a system by devising teams working in the three issue areas of humanitarian aid, refugee support, and "information and media work", as it was called by activists. The latter sphere included the organization of rallies and marches, which took place on a weekly basis during the spring of 2022. Activists regarded public actions at this stage as a component of their overall work in humanitarian response, and thus rallies often contained donation calls and served as a platform for exchange of information and resources. Thus, unlike in the case of *Hlas Ukrajiny* in Prague, street mobilization in Vienna was from the start of the FSI connected to humanitarian work, which is partly because diaspora activists and organizations regarded Viennese authorities' response as slow and lackluster. In fact, respondents emphasized how the diaspora "took the first blow" of the invasion in terms of humanitarian response, acting much faster than local authorities and NGOs to establish supply lines of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and set up a support infrastructure for incoming refugees. As an activist recalls: "... *Oksana* (name changed), a coordinator for refugees, who is 20 years old, on the 4th day after the full-scale invasion had launched 17 hotlines for Ukrainian refugees. [The] vice mayor of Vienna, after two or three weeks, told us that 'On Monday, we will launch 5 or 10 hotlines for Ukrainians.' I think this is a very vivid example". Viennese authorities held frequent joint meetings with Ukrainian activists to

discuss cooperation in humanitarian response, while aid organizations like *Diakonie* and *Caritas* built upon and expanded on some of the existing work done by volunteers, such as with hotlines and websites for refugees.

Volunteers at the *Barbareum* “Crisis HQ”, as it was commonly referred to, transformed their outrage and moral shock from the outbreak of the FSI into action. Immense personal resources were put into the crisis response center and many activists worked tirelessly. Some recall working up to 16 hours per day in the first month at the church premises in conditions of extreme disorganization. During this phase, “*voluntary engagement seemed nearly endless*”, as one respondent recalls, but the lack of leadership and human resource management, i.e., a formalized structure, had far-reaching implications on further activity. Individuals who showed the most initiation took on leadership roles, creating small teams around themselves specializing in a specific task or process, while building on existing skills and networks to the benefit of operations. This eventually resulted in a split in the “*Barbareum system*”, whereby some teams founded their own organizations. One example is the humanitarian aid NGO *YOUkraine* which started in April 2022 with its own warehouse provided free of charge by the Vienna Chamber of Doctors. Upon formalizing, such newly-founded groups remained at a small-scale level, with individual core team members being responsible for entire areas of operations, rather than delegating tasks and responsibility to branch out into multiple teams. Thus, activism remained tied to small groups, and much voluntary engagement of individuals outside of such teams was not used to its full potential, as there was no system for human resource management that would match volunteers’ skills with new or existing processes.

On 26.02.2022, the largest political pro-Ukraine demonstration was held in Vienna (Tausende Teilnehmende 2022), jointly organized by *Unlimited Democracy* and local activists from *Vienna goes Europe* and *PanEuropa*. The rally featured speeches by Ukrainian diaspora leaders, as well as representatives of local civil society organizations and political parties. Examples of represented groups include Fridays for Future, student unions, members of Austrian political parties and their respective youth wings, save the far-right FPÖ. In addition, diaspora activists of other European nations were present at the rally, as evidenced by the display of Georgian, Latvian, Polish, and other flags. However, this mobilization proved to be short-lived, as representatives of individual groups did not network or exchange contacts for future joint action, and no long-lasting cooperations were formed. Instead, already-existing pro-Ukraine networks

in Vienna were reinforced, consisting for the most part of pro-European groups (*Vienna goes Europe, Paneuropa*) and a few notable politicians. The diverse attendance of pro-Ukraine rallies and marches, organized primarily by *Unlimited Democracy*, decreased within the next weeks and especially after Ukraine started liberating its territory in March and early April 2022 during the Battle of Kyiv. Thus, participation decreased as the initial shock in the Austrian public subsided, and the perception of Ukraine as a defenseless victim was shattered by its ability to not only defend itself, but also fight back and liberate territory. As a result, rally participation became homogenous, coming to be attended almost exclusively by Ukrainians living in Vienna, including recently arrived refugees. The marches along Ringstrasse of the spring and summer 2022 resembled community-building and spirit-raising events directed primarily at Ukrainians, in which concrete political demands, apart from the generalized calls to support Ukraine and condemn Russia, were exceptions rather than the rule. When reflecting on which kind of demands were raised during this phase, UD activists referred to them in a generalizing way as “*the standard ones*”, i.e., especially using the slogans “Stand with Ukraine” and “Russia is a terrorist state”.

From the start of street mobilization in early spring 2022, another group organized its own rallies of a different nature than *Unlimited Democracy*. These protests were contentious in the sense that they targeted specific institutions and businesses, demanding their responsibility and action in the face of Russia’s FSI. Thus, activists rallied at the headquarters of the OSCE, the United Nations, and Raiffeisen, focusing much of the rally content on assigning blame for complicity or inaction in the face of Russia’s actions. However, this mobilization attracted only small amounts of participants. Leading activists of this group formed the NGO “MRIJA” (Ukrainian for “dream”) by summer 2022. After this, the group started competing for protest ownership and SSI with UD, attempting to monopolize on Ukrainian engagement and rally participation by positioning itself as the main organizer of pro-Ukraine public actions. As a result, different protest forms in Vienna came to be concentrated in two separate organizations representing Ukrainian political voice. But the obvious feud had far-reaching effects for further (contentious) collective action as such.

3.2.3. Mobilization Purpose and Form: Dichotomous Representation

By September 2022, the organization of large-scale homogenous (i.e., attended mostly by Ukrainians) went over to MRIJA. Whereas *Unlimited Democracy* was able

to organize rallies in the first weeks of the invasion that attracted many non-Ukrainians, MRIJA rallies made no such effort from the start, and the group's communication on social media was specifically aimed at Ukrainians in Vienna. This development points to polemics and competition for protest ownership within the organized Ukrainian diaspora.

On the level of protest tactics, it led UD to largely cede the organization of major rallies to MRIJA and focus on its original declared purpose of mobilization, which can be seen as frame alignment. Concretely, activists describe mobilization aims as informing the local population about Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine, and against Western publics with its disinformation campaigns since 2014. The organization's official mission is to "highlight Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine since 2014 and to improve Ukraine's image in Austria". Understanding that narratives in public debates resulting from such disinformation cause a reduction in solidarity and contribute to the balancing between aggressor and victim in Austrian public debates, UD focused on displaying atrocities caused by Russia in Ukraine to both strengthen solidarity with the victim and condemnation of the aggressor. This specialization represents an attempt to implement street action for influencing public opinion by aligning Austrian cognitive and emotional frames with the Ukrainian perception of the war, and especially of Russia. The following quote by an activist captures the rationale behind this choice:

"Then came, well, the phenomenon, which unfortunately is international, called normalization of war. Like, 'oh, you have 10 corpses today - and? That happened yesterday as well. You had a 12-meter rocket fall on a high-rise building? Why don't you just surrender?' Well, like... then it's difficult, it's difficult to work with this, if you do some kind of information campaign, then it's, you know, as if you hit a wall. And you have to find different formats, how to work with the local population, how to evoke empathy, how to evoke support, how to stop them from spreading Russian propaganda, and how to provide them with something else."

Thus, UD activists saw the main purpose of their mobilization in Vienna as appealing to and expanding on existing sentiments of empathy and solidarity in the local public, while also raising awareness on the countless human rights violations committed by the invading army. This rationale is reflected in the protest format of activism, i.e., the performative advocacy rallies organized by *Unlimited Democracy*.

Much thereof aims at highlighting the atrocities and war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine in an artistic and visually appealing way. Referred to by activists as “political performances”, these actions were specifically aimed at passers-by to display war crimes and atrocities in a dramatic and artistic fashion. Realizing that political opportunities for calling for Austrian support in a resolution of the war in a way favorable of Ukraine’s official policy is futile, these installations remained on a purely humanitarian level by appealing to sentiments of compassion with victims. Thus, installations aimed at communicating a simple truth difficult to disagree with even for the most ardent supporter of the idea of negotiations with the aggressor state – that Russia is committing horrible crimes in Ukraine. Importantly, activists explicitly attempted to not spread information on upcoming activist rallies on Ukrainian social media groups and channels, fearing that installations would be overcrowded by Ukrainians, discouraging other passers-by from approaching and interacting with them. Finally, such activist actions typically did not call to specific actions apart from occasional donation rallies. The main aim was to trigger attention and an emotional-cognitive response of outrage or curiosity of onlookers.

A vivid example of an activist rally that activists recall with pride was held on the eighth anniversary of the 2014 Russian downing of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Eastern Ukraine. On July 17, 2022, activists marched through the largest Austrian airport of Schwechat in the appearance of ghosts and corpses representing the 298 victims of the crime, carrying a large sign designating Russia a terrorist state. After the march, an installation was put up near the entrance to one of the airport’s terminals with pieces of airplane debris, with activists and personal belongings scattered around lifelessly. When describing the purpose of UD’s activist actions and other rallies, respondents felt that the mere act of holding such events in Austria was a way of counteracting public disengagement with Ukraine, and general war fatigue. Frequency and emotional “shock value” were emphasized as the most salient elements of street mobilization, which one respondent captured as *“a constant dripping on people’s brains that... Guys! The war is still going on, it’s hell over there!”* The author of the last quote did not differentiate between the purposes of different kinds of street actions, whether mass mobilization in homogenous rallies that UD organized initially, or targeted activist polit-performances, as long as attention of the local public to the suffering in Ukraine was raised.

Much of this rationale can be explained with activists' own emotional shock from waking up to, for example, another mass bombing of Ukraine, especially during the fall and winter months of 2022-23. Feeling the host state public's disengagement, activism with the purpose of effectuating a moral shock in onlookers became a way to sensitize to the suffering in Ukraine while also put own outrage into collective action. The lack of engagement and interest that activists perceived contributed to a feeling of alienation with Austrian discourse concerning the war: "... *it's a literal hell over there, and you're saying your butter got more expensive!?*" The following account by one respondent when asked about their first reaction upon getting the news of a major mass bombing of Ukraine's energy infrastructure on October 10, 2022, captures activists' frustration well: "*I remember I was sitting in a class at University of Vienna. Funnily, they were discussing the war. Something about the necessity of talking to Russia as well, or of negotiations. I got tired of it, so I stood up and went to organize a rally.*" The political claims in this rally remained on a generalized level, declaring Russia a terrorist state, and calling on the local public to further support Ukraine (see image below). Compared to Prague, where activists demanded air defense for Ukraine on this occasion, the organization of the rally in Vienna was a self-purpose, rather than setting an agenda and trying to influence policy in a pro-Ukraine way. This was possible in Prague due to a larger spectrum of possible demands supported by the local public, but not in Vienna.

Image 5: Rally by Unlimited Democracy condemning Russia's mass attack on Ukraine's critical infrastructure on October 10, 2022



Source: @unlimited.democracy and @hilfefuerdieukraine (2022, October 12). *Unlimited Democracy Rally*. Photo by Valerie Maltseva (@maltseva). Vienna.
Retrieved from: https://www.instagram.com/p/CjnlxSTtCgs/?img_index=1. [Last accessed: 29.09.2023]

In much of its mobilization, UD also espouses the desire to approximate Ukrainian-Austrian frames based on common democratic values. A notable example is the groups' participation in the June 2022 Vienna Pride (Regenbogenparade 2022), which took place in cooperation with Kyiv Pride on the streets of the Austrian capital. Activists recall how important for them it was to represent a modern, inclusive, and tolerant Ukraine on the path to European integration in terms of equality and freedom and evoke these values in their transnational target audience to strengthen sentiments of mutual solidarity. A respondent reiterated that this instance was an exceptional situation that stood in stark contrast to the usual experience of organizing pro-Ukraine action in Austria, as *"it was a perfect bubble of unconditional Ukraine support"*. This is because many attendees expressed not only compassion and solidarity with Ukraine's victimhood, but also shared the Ukrainian point of view on the necessity of a complete defeat of the aggressor state. The respondent's emphasis on this event's significance suggests that the overall sentiment in pro-Ukraine mobilization in Austria is that of being misunderstood by the public, which elevates the value of such experiences of

broad participation and inclusion as at Vienna Pride. Lastly, the format of UD's march column at the event was chosen quickly and kept simple: no intricate activist installations or costumes; only a few protest signs, a megaphone, Ukraine flags, and physical participation. Having clarity on the purpose of their participation, and a feeling of being included and understood by most attendees on the matter of Ukraine's own interpretation of its sovereignty and self-determination, activists felt that their physical presence was a strong enough message itself.

By contrast, MRIJA has nominally set out to target both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians, but its street mobilization remains largely homogenous. Crucially, whereas UD's mobilization utilizes emotions to project Ukrainian victimhood for the arousal of compassion, in MRIJA's rallies emotionality takes a more radical turn. Confrontational rhetoric is frequently used to assign blame and shame on members of the Austrian public for the perceived lack of support and creation of conditions for Russian influence in Austria. In speeches at rallies and in the group's communication on social media, Austria is often painted as a state that is hostile towards Ukraine, or at best complicit in Russia's war due to neutrality and the participation of Austrian businesses in the Russian market. On one occasion, activists attended a general assembly of Raiffeisen Bank International to interrupt it with shouts assigning blame to the attendees for the bank's continued operations in the aggressor state, and its increase of revenues therein. Attendees of rallies were also frequently reminded of more negative examples, such as the presence of engines produced by an Austrian company in Iran-made "Shahed" strike drones used by Russia to attack Ukraine (Gepp 2022). Accompanying rhetorical devices assign blame to the Austrian political elite for allowing it to happen, as well as to the public for not showing interest or demanding investigations.

MRIJA frequently called Ukrainians in Vienna to action to support its initiatives. In fact, in their public campaign for a Volksbegehren to recognize Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism by the Austrian parliament, the group explicitly called Ukrainian followers of their social media to convince their citizen-friends and acquaintances of signing the petition. As of fall 2023, the initiative had not achieved wide resonance in Austria. Likewise, the content of the Volksbegehren is a far-reaching idea that is not widely known or pursued in Austria. In the public communication promoting the initiative, the group uses an image of a man in balaclava, i.e., a visual representation of a terrorist.

Thus, contention in MRIJA's mobilization is expressed primarily through the creation of a sentiment of animosity and confrontation, including between Ukrainians living in Vienna and the local public by condemning the latter for its passivity in the face of Russia's blatant aggression. The idea of Austrian "complicity" in this aggression due to its neutrality is directed not so much against the state of Austria as such, but is frequently directed against single individuals as well, especially through the group's "Labyrinth of Shame". This installation, which has been exhibited by MRIJA in various locations of Vienna and other major Austrian cities, leads the visitor through a series of large-scale photographs attached to a labyrinth made from a metal fence and a concrete base, covered in tarp in military colors. The photographs display extremely graphic images of war-related injury and death of both civilians and military. At the end of the labyrinth, a mirror with the phrase "Be ashamed!" in German completes the traumatizing experience for the visitor.

On the other hand, local pro-Ukraine mobilization actors center much of their work around countering disinformation and pro-Russian narratives that circulate at the fringes of the Austrian information space, but occasionally make their appearance in statements of mainstream politicians and public figures. One key task they see is to assist Ukrainian voices to be heard in the public sphere: "... *the absolute goal is to place more Ukrainian voices with the right people... because at the moment it's still too little and... people talk, in Austria, maybe **about** Ukraine but they don't talk **with** them, and that has to be changed in a very targeted way*" (intonational emphasis), as a respondent stressed. In addition, common transnational claims and frames are activated most frequently in the context of the European integration of Ukraine. *Ukraine goes Europe*, the splinter group of the European federalist *Vienna goes Europe*, is an attempt to counteract the existing divisions between pro-Ukraine groups by providing a space for networking between Ukrainian and local civil society actors, and Ukraine sympathizers in general. However, it has so far not managed to attract a large follower base or create a publicly visible representation.

Commemorating the Anniversary of Full-Scale War

The difference in approach to public action between UD, MRIJA, and local pro-EU and pro-Ukraine groups was expressed vividly in the case of the mobilization around the anniversary of the full-scale invasion. As my empirical work focused

primarily on *Unlimited Democracy*, I will address its case in detail, while only briefly mentioning the other two instances for basic comparison.

In accordance with its typical mobilization format, UD opted for the display of information on war crimes and war-related atrocities committed by Russia in Ukraine in seven different locations in Vienna with activist installations. The main aim apart from informing about the cruelty of the Russian invasion was to arouse feelings of sympathy and compassion. Respondents explained how they felt that it was necessary to show an unambiguous and transparent account on what was really happening in Ukraine to passers-by. The activist actions reflected a desire to present events as unfiltered through neutrality-laden rhetoric devices relativizing Russian guilt, and the lackluster reporting on topics like the abduction of Ukrainian children and torture of civilians in occupied territories. "*I'm not sure what to say about it, it's very simple...*", as a respondent stated about the rationale behind the action. Activists not only aimed at creating a feeling of moral shock by means of presenting shocking and outrageous visuals, but also arouse sentiments of co-involvement by appealing to links between atrocities in Ukraine and topics that activists perceived as especially salient in Austrian public debates, like violence against women and the war's toll on the environment. Installations included a model of a 12-meter-rocket installed on Mariahilferstraße, and of a ruined house on Stephansplatz, both meant to raise awareness on the scale of destruction that Russian missile barrages caused to civilian buildings (see Image 6 below). Other installations thematized torture on occupied territories, the destruction of Ukraine's cultural heritage and symbols, and the violence of Russian occupation forces against vulnerable groups, including women, children, and the elderly. Crucially, feelings of involvement were not aroused by calls to action, as in the case of *Hlas Ukrajiny* in Prague, but by appealing to morality, cognition, and common frames to maximize compassion and solidarity, as well as reaffirm the unambiguous nature of Russia's guilt and responsibility.

Image 6: Installation by Unlimited Democracy depicting the destruction of civilian homes at the anniversary rally



Source: @unlimited.democracy (2023, February 25). *Unlimited Democracy Installation*. Photo by Valerie Maltseva (@malt5eva). Vienna.
Retrieved from: https://www.instagram.com/p/CjnlxSTtCgs/?img_index=1. [Last accessed: 29.09.2023]

Thus, UD's anniversary mobilization was in line with its declared purpose of approximating Austrian public frames and discourse to Ukrainian perceptions. It represented an attempt to give passers-by the real picture of events in Ukraine, unfiltered with neutrality-induced ambiguity diluting Russian responsibility, but blaming Russia fully and decisively for its actions. An activist captured this goal implying a sense of frustration with the ambiguity and lack of information present in Austria: "*so that they can read, in simple language, what the hell is actually going on there*". However, the protest form of activism as a tool to achieve frame alignment presented a somewhat high threshold for participation, as it required contextual knowledge and understanding of existing Austrian frames, and the purpose of influencing public opinion was difficult to communicate to mobilization participants. During preparation for the anniversary actions within my own participant observation, and during later interviews with activists, it became clear that much confusion existed about how to best "trigger" the local public's emotional response, and which aspects to emphasize on. Ultimately, these decisions were taken by the "information task force" team, and activists on the ground were largely disconnected from and had no say in designing

the main content of information posters for their respective topics. Street activists thus felt insecure and, in many cases, did not know how to present the material and information they were given. The insecurity was amplified by perceived disinterest felt from passers-by, limiting the chance for interpersonal exchange.

Meanwhile, MRIJA organized a large rally and march in the evening of the same day which attracted several thousand participants. The action followed a concept adopted from a group of internationally organized Ukrainian activists (*Army of Ukrainian Communities*), who called for jointly commemorating the anniversary using phone lights as symbols of the fallen. The group appealed to Ukrainian nationalist sentiments by singing songs popular with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) of the 1930s, while also displaying the according red-black flag. When marching past the FPÖ-organized Akademikerball, activists called on the mass to boo at it.

Finally, the splinter-group of *Vienna goes Europe, Ukraine goes Europe*, organized a panel discussion thematizing and countering the main Russian propaganda narratives about Ukraine and the Russian invasion, and their influence on Western publics.

To summarize, while initially many different groups and political parties joined pro-Ukraine protests, these ad-hoc coalitions turned out to be short-lived, and no new sustainable networks were formed. Mobilization soon became homogenous, with rallies coming to be organized and attended primarily by Ukrainians. Activists from various groups attributed this development to the overall decrease in interest and war normalization, but also to the lack of centralized information channels in German or English on pro-Ukraine public action, i.e., a single source of information. The perception that such diaspora-centric mobilization carried little informational value for the local public led UD to cede the organization of mass events to MRIJA who readily took the vacant role of diaspora aggregator. Instead, UD focused on its declared purpose of “informing the Austrian public about Russia’s hybrid war and improve Ukraine’s image” through street action in the form of activist “political performances”. The group attempted to strengthen the local public’s Ukraine-support and compassion by approximating emotional and cognitive frames in its activist mobilization and by projecting the universality of Ukraine’s struggle through its support for democratic values.

The result was depoliticization, since activist rallies appealed to humanitarian-based solidarity, but not to concrete demands or calls to action reflective of a desire to

help Ukraine prevail over the aggressor state. The prevention of physical participation of Ukrainians, while serving the goal of making installations visible and interactable for passers-by, further limited claim and demand making. On the other hand, MRIJA chose confrontation and polemics as main elements of its mobilization format, appealing to Austrian co-responsibility for Russia's crimes due to its passivity. The group actively targeted Ukrainians in Vienna for politicized claims in public campaigns, employing Ukrainian physical participation in rallies to increase legitimacy of political claims and demands. The mobilization format of voicing these demands in a confrontational manner through blame and shame, however, enhanced existing sentiments of misalignment of Ukrainian-Austrian positions, inhibiting locals' participation in rallies.

Thus, pro-Ukraine mobilization in Vienna has been marked by factionalism, the competition over protest ownership between two Ukrainian diasporic groups, and the failure to establish a joint communications channel. These factors inhibited horizontal cooperation and pragmatic approaches to public action, especially within Ukrainian organized groups. Because of the lack of SSI, and the feud between the two main organizations representing Ukrainian political voice, sympathizers had no easy way to get information on upcoming public action as each group often mobilized their own events on the same occasion, splitting attendance. At the same time, neither MRIJA nor UD actively engaged with the local public to establish open communication. Instead, protest formats resembled a non-inclusive "Listen, now!" approach, whereby the target audience was made to be a sole recipient of each group's messages. However, UD's activist installations accepted Austrian public's unreceptiveness for demands exceeding perceived boundaries imposed by neutrality, and instead focused on the level of humanitarianism, working to strengthen it with emotional and cognitive frame alignment. MRIJA's mobilization, in turn, represented an irreconcilable opposition to Austria's perceived neutrality-induced passivity and disengagement, converting frustration over it into open anger.

4. DISCUSSION

In this chapter I present the development and the constituent parts of the final grounded theory explaining the way political pro-Ukraine mobilization happens in the two cases. To provide a base for discussion, I also explicate four concepts I developed during analysis. These are 1) the **purpose** of mobilization in the respective country context, and how this purpose is perceived by activists, 2) the **form** of mobilization, i.e., the way the purpose is realized through concrete collective action, 3) mobilization **outcome** as the combination of the two interrelated components in a specific context, and 4) mobilization **rationale** – activists' normative guiding principles in choosing a desired combination of purpose and form. The grounded theory, then, builds and expands on the constructivist lens to studying diaspora mobilization introduced in Chapters 1.4. and 1.5. I contend that political pro-Ukraine action in public space, as practiced by diaspora activists, relates to a two-way process of identity construction. The first is an inward-oriented **imagination** of diaspora, constituted by sharing collective frames between and across Ukrainian individuals and groups about the diaspora's normative and ontological characteristics. The second component is the outward-oriented **representation** of diaspora, constituted by communicating its political claims to the host state public, and receiving feedback about them. Because the two aspects are part of a larger whole, both must be enabled by favorable conditions in the respective mobilization context to facilitate a complete identity construction of Ukrainian activists as representatives of a political and civic Ukrainian state and nation. If the host state uptake for pro-Ukraine political claims is limited, identity construction will be incomplete and akin to disagreement over a desired imagination and representation of Ukraine, resulting in controversy and ideological divisions.

Analysis has shown that the mobilization purpose for pro-Ukraine street action is connected to the participation of Ukrainians abroad as they are the ones most likely to perpetuate collective action by converting strong emotions of shock into physical participation. The respective host country's opportunity structure influences the dynamics of diasporic imagination and thus the very construction of a collective identity of Ukrainians abroad, and especially Ukrainian activists. A widely known postulate is that identity is two-faced, re-constituting itself both by its construction within, but also by its representation without. Indeed, empirical results suggests that the conversion of

collective imagination as Ukrainian activists abroad into concrete action is a multi-faceted process open to variation leading to distinct outcomes. The analysis has particularly shed light on how the inward and outward-oriented aspects of identity construction relate to each other in the context of living Ukrainian identity collectively in public space. Host-country openness for uptake of Ukraine-related issues on both emotional and cognitive levels is a crucial condition, as well as institutional and political opportunity structures that enable or constrain claim making.

Ultimately, however, much depends on Ukrainian activists' internal efficacy of their actions in the host state. In contexts where their vision of a Ukrainian military victory is largely shared in public and political spheres, mobilization purpose is clear and internal efficacy high. By contrast, if discursive frames and lived political practices do not espouse proximity to the Ukrainian point of view on the war's resolution, the space for the projection and representation of Ukrainian identity in the form of pro-Ukraine action is highly constrained. As activists and mobilized Ukrainians alike do not feel internal efficacy to participate in street action but nonetheless strive to live out collective emotions, the related mobilization outcome will be that of de-politicized, diaspora-centric rallies. This helps keep Ukrainians' morale high in phases of mobilization, but largely excludes non-Ukrainians due to a high participation threshold. This outcome leads to a weakening of identity construction, as its inward-oriented component suffers a frustration of its outward counterpart, i.e., its ontological base.

Related to the two-way process of identity construction as Ukrainian activists abroad engaged in both inward-oriented collective imagination, and outward-oriented representation, two interrelated motivations inform mobilization purpose: a) to contribute to constructing an active and highly networked platform of Ukrainian diasporic associations and groups, and b) project a firm and unambiguous pro-Ukraine stance to the host state public and positively influence its Ukraine-support. The key difference between the two analyzed mobilization contexts is political empowerment and voice. The next section reflects on the vastly different mobilization outcomes in Prague and Vienna along the two axes of inward and outward-oriented identity construction, namely the inner-Ukrainian processes of mobilization, and the outer representation thereof to the host state public.

4.1. Prague: United for a Common Purpose

Ukrainian diaspora activists generally engage in both strands of activities mentioned above, but only in Prague are they able to productively merge them under one overarching purpose – the projection of politicized and empowered Ukrainian voice. The mobilization outcome in Prague therefore has many characteristics of a “genuine” bottom-up participation-based social movement with transnational elements, based on representing Ukrainian and pro-Ukraine voices in Czech public space while implementing politicized claims, demands, and calls to action, i.e. – contention.

The openness of the Czech public sphere for uptake of related claims makes it possible to unite Ukrainian groups and individuals under one agreed-upon and understood purpose, which enables the merge of the inward and outward-oriented components of diasporic identity construction. In short, only the certainty that pro-Ukraine claims are not just accepted, but also shared within the larger public and political spheres of the host state, enabled continued mobilization with elements of a participation-based transnational social movement. It made possible to put forward a united front of Ukrainian diasporic mobilization centered on the idea of building on and expanding already-existing discursive frames relating to Ukraine’s victory in the war.

In Prague, mobilization purpose was not only stronger felt by movement participants, but also lived by them through practice and civic action which are a main constituent element of mobilization there. The idea that anyone can join and become active in the pro-Ukraine movement is a salient idea, and rally formats employed by *Hlas Ukrajiny* centered on inclusivity to support and guide individual engagement leading to collective action and thus the continuation of mobilization. The following quote from an activist captures this dynamic: *“People themselves form the movement, and the need for leadership.”* *Hlas* leaders accordingly realized that a horizontal structure was necessary to perpetuate mobilization. Including every team member’s voice and opinion in decision-making processes, as well as sharing ultimate decision-making power, further facilitated an environment in which individual commitment could arise. Activists thus feel a strong identification with the purpose of mobilization, which reduces the usual “toll” stemming from volunteerism, such as over-personalization due to a lack of delegation, and the lack of commitment by activists, especially when their engagement is not guided in a sustainable way. In short, internal efficacy stemming from a clear perception of the mobilization purpose as representing Ukrainian political

voice in an environment receptive for it facilitated conditions for the sustainable reproduction of individual engagement within the movement.

The Czech context features a vastly different opportunity structure for staging Ukrainian political voice. Whereas much of the mobilization in Vienna centers on creating a base for Ukraine-support through frame alignment, the declared purpose of *Hlas Ukrajiny* in Prague is “to **be** the voice of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Czechia” [emphasis added], as explained by a founding member. The horizon of possibilities is wider in Czechia, as Ukrainian and pro-Ukraine voices are already in the majority. This also partly explains why mobilization in Prague contains more politicized demands and claims represented in long term topical campaigns, while also calling on its audience to act upon these campaigns, e.g., through brand boycotting and petition signing. Thus, mobilization opens the space for the involvement of the Czech public in a joint endeavor to contribute to Ukraine’s victory through individual civic action.

Thanks to the favorable conditions in the Czech Republic, *Hlas Ukrajiny* has also been able to build on existing frames and utilize them in mobilization. A vivid example was the holding of public events together with the leaders of the *Weapons for Ukraine* group on the Defenders of Ukraine Day, which framed Czech volunteers as defenders of Ukraine and projected appreciation, gratitude, and a sentiment of co-involvement in a struggle for shared values. During its large-scale anniversary rally, *Hlas Ukrajiny* perpetuated this sentiment by communicating to attendees that Ukraine and Czechia keep working together towards a Ukrainian victory, appealing to individual action as a centerpiece to this process. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the anniversary rally was to show to Ukrainians and locals that members of the Czech public keep supporting Ukraine, while including migrants and refugees in a transnational imaginary of collective pro-Ukraine action. The goal was thus to ensure the perpetuation of pro-Ukraine engagement by creating a space for Czech-Ukrainian public exchange, thus constructing, and building on, shared imaginations. The connective tissue of this transnational political solidarity was to build on existing pro-Ukraine action and frame it as an expression of the solution that most Ukrainians and sympathizers shared, i.e., to liberate the country from Russian occupation, employing individual participation in collective action to facilitate this process.

The group achieved to claim to represent the modern political and civic Ukrainian nation in Prague, enabling it to monopolize on both protest ownership and

create a single source of information for the main political pro-Ukraine rallies. This aspect also extended to its declared goal of working with diasporic engagement and multiplying it, thus empowering Ukrainians living in Prague to engage in activism for Ukraine themselves and project an image of Ukraine as a modern democratic state. It is interesting to note that this desired representation was formed in opposition to existing diasporic engagement in Prague, which was perceived by *Hlas* members as de-politicized and framing Ukrainian culture in near-atavistic ways. The group explicitly set out to counter a process typical of long-term diasporas, namely the exoticization of the homeland. At the same time, this political representation of modern and democratic Ukraine through Ukrainians' personal agency allowed to productively influence Ukrainian outward-oriented identity construction by firmly embedding itself in Czech public space and debate. A clearly agreed-upon and transparently communicated mobilization purpose lowered the threshold for participation and alliance building of sympathizers and existing pro-Ukraine activists with the newly formed *Hlas Ukrajiny*, as the basis for common struggle was political. It also allowed for transnational alliances in political space aiming at defending democratic values, since the purpose of mobilization coincided with a future-oriented Ukraine, and a shared European future. To sum up, the inward and outward-oriented components of the construction of a Ukrainian identity were combined in *Hlas Ukrajiny's* mobilization with the help of politicization of Ukrainian voice, as well as the projection of a credible solution to Ukraine's suffering through civic action by all members of the Czech public.

4.2. Vienna: Contested Rationale, Divided Engagement

Almost all the characteristics constituting Prague mobilization as a social movement with elements of transnationality and contention are turned on their head in Vienna's pro-Ukraine mobilization. Activists' perception that their rationale for acting as contributing to Ukraine's victory in the war was not shared by the local public in Vienna took away from diasporic identity construction at large. It also inhibited internal efficacy of activists relating to the perceived ideal format of pro-Ukraine mobilization in such a context, introducing grounds for controversy and disagreement between various approaches. This has had far-reaching effects for the overall mobilization outcome, which is marked by the difficulty to find a rationale for pro-Ukraine action in a context largely unreceptive for a political Ukrainian wartime identity. The mobilization outcome here is defined by two diaspora organizations' attempts to mobilize in a

politically unfriendly environment, stemming from a lack of shared frames between Ukrainian and local imaginations, and internal disagreements over mobilization format. Much of the collective action in Vienna during the FSI was informed by activists' perception that public debates in Austria were laden with neutrality-induced attempts to assign legitimacy to the claims of both sides of the conflict. The purpose of mobilization of the two main groups organizing collective action seems to be in line with the same goal of changing the hearts and minds of the local public relating to perceptions of Ukraine and Russia. Both endeavors represented a common purpose especially because they aimed to "prepare the ground", i.e., to facilitate the full representation of Ukrainian political claims in the Austrian public. However, the formats chosen by UD and MRIJA were vastly different. UD's protest strategy aimed at achieving the alignment of cognitive and emotional frames of non-Ukrainians, increasing feelings of compassion with Ukraine, and condemnation of Russia. On the other hand, MRIJA preferred to operate with confrontational rhetoric towards non-Ukrainians, assigning blame and shame for Austria's economic affinity to Russia, and its neutrality, to citizens. None of the groups productively implemented calls to civic action or employed Ukrainian political agency as a representation of civic Ukrainian identity. As a result, the opportunities for creating instances of transnational exchange based on shared frames and interpretations have been limited.

Furthermore, the two elements of Ukrainian diasporic mobilization as a two-way identity construction (to rally own spirits through imagination, and to project a united pro-Ukraine stance to the public of the host state through representation) have been divided between these two mobilization actors, placing corresponding forms of mobilization into different hands. This division partly explains the lack of a genuine pro-Ukraine social movement with transnational elements serving as a common space for action while projecting unity of thought and Ukraine-solidarity. However, the division itself is only part of the story, as this outcome is also a result of multiple political opportunity structures which are more favorable in Prague, but not in Vienna. Thus, it is influenced by already-existing gaps between Austrian and Ukrainian shared frames, associations, imaginations, and knowledge on the background of the Russo-Ukrainian war since 2014, which activists often perceive to be at the heart of the unreceptiveness for pro-Ukraine claims in Austria. The lackluster base of sympathizers, and the divisions within pro-Ukraine mobilization actors further diminish the potential for information work. UD activists engaged in collecting and presenting information on

Russian and pro-Russia activities both in Austria and internationally, but due to the lack of resources such as time and manpower, it remained limited to English-language Instagram posts which did not reach a large public.

Because of the perceived lack of support from the host state in terms of a contribution to Ukraine's victory, Ukrainian activists felt isolated and misunderstood. The resulting mobilization form of UD resembles an attempt to constantly "knock on the doors" of Austrian public perceptions of Ukraine and reminding of Ukrainian pain. A reason to the feeling of isolation is the frequent show in Austrian political and public space of moral and political ambiguity towards Russia and Ukraine. Examples include the absence of SPÖ and FPÖ parties from the Austrian Parliament during Zelensky's address, the presence of the largest Austrian bank Raiffeisen International in the Russian market, and statements by politicians, media, and public intellectuals suggesting the legitimacy of a desired diplomatic approach towards Russia. These factors informed much of UD's understanding of the purpose of their mobilization: to reduce the influence of pro-Russia narratives and disinformation in Austria and increase support and solidarity with Ukraine. MRIJA shares largely the same purpose, but instead of knocking on doors to inform and remind of Ukrainian pain, the chosen mobilization format was akin to declaring Austrian neutrality-induced passivity as complicity in Russian aggression.

UD's chosen format of activist installations served to approximate the onlookers' cognitive and emotional perceptions of the war to the Ukrainian point of view, in line with the organization's declared purpose. However, the social element of UD's mobilization, including the involvement of volunteers, helpers, and sympathizers, suffered from the difficulty of aligning internal efficacy with the purpose of creating conditions for representing Ukrainian political identity and voice in a context largely unreceptive of it⁵. One effect of this is that processes like individual engagement as mobilization potential, the feeling of involvedness, and the inclusion of new activists suffered under the weight of lacking internal efficacy of pro-Ukraine action, and the difficulty of communicating the purpose and format of street mobilization for the purpose of frame alignment. This rationale (combination of purpose and form of mobilization) presented a high threshold for participation even for Ukrainian activists. It required a high level of knowledge and context-sensitivity, for example for interacting

⁵ This is because, naturally, people attempt to find ways to live out identity, not strategically implement it within a public lobbying strategy.

with passers-by at street rallies. It also required the allocation of political voice to Ukrainians to set examples, and the possibility to express political views clearly to the Austrian public, which is given in Vienna to a much lesser extent than in Prague. In a way, activist installations served as an expression of the already-existing condition of the confinement of Ukrainian political voice to a very limited stage at the fringes of public attention in Austria. Relying on a sender-receiver arrangement whereby the creation of dialogue and collective action were sacrificed in favor of the arousal of moral shock and compassion, this format spoke to and enhanced the perception of Ukraine's victimhood in the war, appealing to the humanitarian-based solidarity which Austrian public and state-level Ukraine-support is based on.

The remainder of this chapter introduces further aspects of both mobilization outcomes comparatively to substantiate the grounded theory.

4.3. Mobilization Outcomes and Volunteerism

All individual involvement in pro-Ukraine mobilization considered in this thesis is voluntary-based, and thus subject to related difficulties like limitations of resources and engagement. The question becomes how movement participation, and thus mobilization at large, is perpetuated despite difficulties posed by volunteerism. I argue that in the case of diasporic pro-Ukraine activism, this aspect is closely related to the construction of Ukrainian identity at large. The different mobilization purposes and formats in Prague and Vienna, and the different ways in which Ukrainian identity is constructed, play out on the dynamics of volunteer engagement in significant ways. In Prague, mobilization purpose is based on individual civic action in line with the idea of acting upon a shared Czech-Ukrainian imagination related to assisting Ukraine towards victory. Thus, the sense of collective purpose is perceived as credible since it is related to individual movement participants' personal agency and action capacity and finds itself in a favorable political environment. Therefore, the negative effects of volunteerism, such as reduced engagement, are (somewhat) mitigated by a stronger sense of individual contribution to the overarching cause, and thus higher internal efficacy. This also decreases the effects of personalization in the movement at large, as the collective purpose is generally weighed higher than the personal flaws of individuals, especially in leadership positions.

The incomplete diasporic identity construction in Vienna, on the other hand, leads to a decreased sense of individual internal efficacy in collective action, and thus

stronger-felt negative effects of volunteerism: limited delegation of tasks, over-personalization, including the concentration of mobilization potential around single individuals, lack of engagement of volunteers and the limited recruitment of new movement participants. This outcome aligns itself with the overall finding of the inhibited outward-oriented representation of Ukrainian political identity in Vienna, leading to the disagreement and competition over protest formats, and most importantly the inability to project a common purpose strong enough to mobilize by activating volunteers' agency. Another expression of lacking identity construction and a sense of collective purpose in Vienna is volunteers' common sentiment of not receiving gratitude for their work. The sentiment of missing gratitude is stronger in contexts where the association with the purpose is lower. Self-purpose thus depends more on single movement leaders and their communication strategy, which is connected to the higher level of personalization and hierarchization of SMOs in Vienna. The negative effect for mobilization as diasporic imagination of this outcome is that Ukrainian volunteers involved in such hierarchical top-down mobilization feel like they are executing someone else's ideas, rather than living out self-purpose by implementing creativity and action. This is partly due to the lack of overall common understanding of a collective purpose and corresponding format of pro-Ukraine political action in Vienna.

A lack of an understanding of a common purpose capable of overcoming the personalization of leadership, combined with the lack of host-state support and prior diasporic mobilization in Vienna also influenced another dynamic – the sentiment that individual engagement for Ukraine is an object of prestige and social capital worth competing over. During data analysis, I assigned the expression “volunteerism as morality currency” to this phenomenon to refer to its transactional value in gaining respect and leadership legitimacy. The most vivid empirical correspondence is found in Vienna's “chance leaders”, i.e., individuals who, out of the necessity of the moment, took upon themselves the role of leaders by committing considerably more effort than others into volunteer work. Such leaders then projected their individual sacrifice onto others, expecting them to do the same. By forming small and tightly-knit teams around such single leaders, self-worth became subject to weighing and comparing each other's personal involvement in mobilization for the homeland. Thus, a sense of competition clouded values relating to creating an inclusive organizational environment and team spirit. Volunteerism as morality currency constitutes a breeding ground for

the feeling of competition around a sentiment that can be expressed in the question "who has done more for Ukraine?".

Mobilization in Prague was able to perpetuate itself by emulating the very construction of a pro-Ukraine political identity by lowering the threshold for participation in the movement, and thus creating a space for the individual experience of this identity construction in a collectivity. The stronger-felt sense of shared Czech-Ukrainian imaginations based on individual action in support of Ukraine in particular, and democracy in general, reduced movement leaders' role in mobilizing individuals. In *Hlas Ukrajiny's* collective action, volunteers' engagement based on internal efficacy became a stronger predictor of mobilization than single leaders' mobilization potential. This aspect manifested itself in the more horizontal structure of the group, more open communication with all its target audiences, and the frequent inclusivity of volunteers' contribution and input to mobilization.

4.4. Uniting Purpose and Form through Action

Indeed, protest formats in both cities vary greatly, which reflects the presence of a stage for politicized Ukrainian voice in Prague, and its absence in Vienna. However, the staging of politicized voice alone is not enough to perpetuate action within a transnational social movement, as the Czech case has shown. Looking at the mobilization format there reveals that action constitutes a way to collectively live and practice shared Czech-Ukrainian frames. Activists formalized this aspect by productively utilizing the idea that individuals can contribute to Ukraine's victory through civic action. For this reason, *Hlas Ukrajiny's* rallies routinely featured calls for concrete individual action in the form of brand-boycotting or petition-signing. A related declared goal of activists in Prague was to routinely display and project a concrete political demand, which found its expression in the targeting of institutions demanding responsibility, further Ukraine-support, and the condemnation of Russia. Because Ukrainian politicized voice found a corresponding stage in Prague's public space, *Hlas Ukrajiny's* mobilization was broad and based on participation. Crucially, personal agency played a significant role, and rally participants contributed not only to manpower, but also by speaking in the open microphone or getting involved in helping to organize the next street action. The politicization of Ukrainian rally participants prepared grounds for their participation in rallies going beyond calling for Ukraine-support or Russia-condemnation. This was expressed in *Hlas Ukrajiny's* protest

coalition with *Kaputin* around the organization of pro-democracy counter protests. Ukrainian and Czech imaginations were linked in *Hlas'* social media communication when calling to participate in these rallies, highlighting the idea of a joint struggle for the preservation of democratic values in general, and Czechia's future Ukraine-support in particular.

The difficulty of finding a stage for politicized Ukrainian voice in Vienna, leading to incomplete diasporic imagination and identity-construction necessary for mobilization, contributed to a split between mobilization leaders across mobilization purpose and the related format. This division expressed itself in the competition for protest ownership between the two political SMOs *Unlimited Democracy* and MRIJA. Relatedly, protest formats that in Prague were concentrated in one organization were here divided, creating a sense of controversy among both movement participants and sympathizers. With no shared SSI, would-be participants, both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian, had no straightforward way of getting news on upcoming rallies other than following both organizations' social media pages. The fact that only in the first weeks was a genuine pro-Ukraine mobilization in the style of a transnational social movement possible frustrated further action and set the stage for the controversy around a sentiment that can be summarized in the following question: *What to do when the host state public does not support us the way we would want it to?*

UD and MRIJA found their own distinct answers relating to mobilization formats incompatible with each other. This outcome partly stems from the closed or highly constrained space for political representation of pro-Ukraine claims. Thus, the only way to project an unambiguous and clear-cut pro-Ukraine stance in public space in UD's mobilization was reduced to an appeal to humanitarianism and compassion, made possible by the sheer brutality of Russian atrocities. Action was guided by the rationale of approximating Austrian public perception to the Ukrainian point of view by countering frames that dilute Russian guilt by implying the West's co-responsibility, an idea that may arise in Austria due to interpretations of neutrality as the need to establish balance between two sides. UD activists believed that by documenting and displaying Russian atrocities committed in Ukraine in Vienna's public spaces, this perception could be swayed in favor of a more clear-cut pro-Ukraine stance. MRIJA, in turn, utilized confrontation to call out and assign blame to the Austrian public at large for aspects it deemed incompatible with unambiguous Ukraine-support, such as Austrian persisting economic ties with Russia. Both mobilization rationales followed from a perceived lack

of a kind of support from the Austrian public and political spheres which would reflect a desire to help Ukraine not only withstand, but prevail over Russia, creating a sentiment that Ukrainian voice was not being heard or understood. For this reason, activists felt the necessity to constantly challenge existing frames and interpretations to remind the Austrian public of Ukrainian pain. Thus, although MRIJA employed calls to action to the Austrian public and its Ukrainian audience, for example in the form of the Volksbegehren campaign, it was realized through a rationale of confrontation and controversy, rather than the idea that civic action may contribute to Ukraine's victory.

To sum up, in Prague it was possible and salient to become active for Ukraine, having in mind the same vision of Ukraine's victory as Ukrainians. In Austria, the feeling of political inefficacy predominated, and self-purpose suffered from inaction, leading to the sentiment that action was futile. This found its expression in the protest forms of *Hlas* and UD – the presence of call-to-action points in the former, and the lack thereof in the latter.

4.5. Emotionality and Contention

Strong emotionality and moral shock were aroused in mobilization outcomes in both cities, but, unlike UD's rendering of Ukrainian emotionality to induce compassion in its target audience, Prague activists could credibly channel emotionality into a proposed solution: to alleviate the suffering and injustice by acting through mechanisms of civic action, and thus appealing to a shared frame of a Ukrainian military, but also economic and ideational victory in the war. During the anniversary action in Prague, the living of Ukrainian collective emotionality played a major role in rally design. Through the showcase of examples of diverse instances of pro-Ukraine engagement, an alternative way of coping with pain than succumbing to apathy and depression was offered – to follow others' example and become active for Ukraine. Thus, *Hlas Ukrajiny* projected the importance of acting within a common fight for Ukraine's victory while offering concrete steps in the form of call-to-action points to achieve change, and motivating others to act upon the moral shock.

UD's activist rallies offered no such solution. Following the declared mobilization rationale of approximating Austrian public perceptions to the Ukrainian ones through visually strong installations, activists employed emotions connected to Russia-induced suffering in a defensive way oriented at perpetuating Ukrainian victimhood. Doing so, it treated the horrors of war, and the resulting moral shock, as axioms that are

impossible to overcome, because no solution was offered apart from showing interest and compassion. Because collective emotionality was not channeled into calls to concrete action, it remained at a de-politicized level, affecting motivation for further individual participation in mobilization by increasing sentiments of victimhood, and exacerbating the already low internal efficacy of activists. In Prague, negative effects of victimization for movement participation were reduced through collective action which served to symbolically unite individual efforts under the ideational framework of contributing to Ukraine's victory. Thus, contentious collective action contributed to mitigating negative mobilization outcomes due to emotional frustration by increasing individual and collective feelings of self-worth and internal efficacy.

A further considerable reason for the chosen activist representation of Ukraine's suffering may have to do with how UD activists perceived and made sense of the rise and fall of pro-Ukraine sentiments and physical participation of non-Ukrainians in Vienna. Indeed, as a respondent stated: *"Interestingly, after Ukraine started gaining back territory in Kyiv region [in late March and early April 2022; RR], participation declined."* In other words, mobilization declined in part because Ukraine's "pure" victimhood was upheaved by its defiance and show of strength. Combined with the fact that the dominant discursive frames and the foreign policy arrangement of neutrality do not allow the public and political sphere of Austria to contribute to tipping the balance in the war in Ukraine's favor, political claims in support of Ukraine have been confined to the realm of humanitarianism. From this perspective, UD's emotionalized representation of Ukrainian suffering may be an attempt to bring victimhood back in the center of attention, as it is perceived to be the most salient rationale for Austrian public and political support of Ukraine. The inability to demand weapons for Ukraine's defense during "traditional" non-activist rallies contributed to keeping them largely emotional and reactionary only, rather than setting an agenda as in Prague mobilization. On the individual level, this was reflected in activists' low feeling of political efficacy of joining street rallies. Because demands were limited, and many seemed unfeasible, the personal motivation for participation was reduced to its function of releasing emotional pain while building a sense of collectivity and community (in the spirit of initial rallies upon the start of FSI).

This relates to the element of contention, in this case the targeting of specific national or international institutions with demands. UD's chosen methods of approximating emotions and cognition to increase personal compassion and solidarity

did not depend on the use of contention. By attempting to figuratively touch the hearts (emotional response to suffering in Ukraine) and minds (information and shared frames) of non-Ukrainians in Austria, the projected expression of pro-Ukraine sentiment came to be grounded in a personalized response based on humanitarian values. By contrast, *Hlas Ukrajiny* in Prague was able to combine these frames with the expression of a political desire to affect the situation through collective civic action. Thus, contention in the form of a public instantiation of politicized Ukrainian voice, and the targeting of concrete institutions, became the central element to mobilizing support. From this view, contention in Prague mobilization was employed in essentialist terms, as it constituted the very purpose of mobilization. In Vienna, contention as a rationale was perceived as non-credible to a significant part of movement participants, i.e., not all activists agreed that targeting Austrian or international institutions with demands was a salient protest strategy. This divided view of contention is partly responsible for the split in mobilization formats represented by the different approaches of UD and MRIJA. Whereas the first group abandoned attempts to use contention, reducing protest demands to general slogans such as “Stand with Ukraine” and “Russia is a terrorist state”, MRIJA instrumentalized contention for its confrontational protest format. The question of whose agency is activated in demand making also plays a role, whereby a comparison can be drawn between brand boycotting campaigns in Prague and Vienna. *Hlas Ukrajiny* targeted international companies operating in Russia by appealing to civic action from all members of the Czech public, both migrants and non-migrants, whereas MRIJA targeted specifically RBI, but appealed only to Ukrainians living in Vienna for their protest actions and communication.

This outcome is impacted by the fact that in Prague it was possible to “fully” mobilize knowing that the Ukrainian position was not only largely shared by the Czech public, but also that Ukrainian political voice was sought-after and actively given a stage in public space. The unfavorable conditions for this strategy in Vienna resulted in the non-contentious projection of victimhood in UD mobilization, and a radicalization of negative emotionality into blame and shame in MRIJA’s diaspora-centric collective action that was non-inclusive of the local public.

4.6. Social Movement Theory and Future Research

Although this thesis is based on an inductive research design and theory-testing was not an objective, some aspects introduced in the theoretical discussion in Chapter

1.3. are salient for a brief uptake within a reflective discussion. Klandermans' (2015) concept of two types of mobilization based on either consensus-building or action is useful in describing the two mobilization outcomes. In Vienna, sympathizers were mobilized based on the arousal of grievance and strong emotions, whereas in Prague, calls to concrete action constituted the base of mobilization. I have used the term "frame alignment" throughout the discussion section with reference to Snow et al. (1986) exclusively for UD's mobilization effort of influencing Austrian public opinion by aligning it with Ukrainian cognitive and emotional frames. *Hlas Ukrajiny* in Prague likewise engaged in frame alignment, but primarily within the third stage identified by Snow and Benford (1988) which is conducive to action, i.e., motivational framing, whereas UD's protest strategy remained on the stage of diagnostic framing. This may be conditioned by larger gaps between Ukrainian and existing Austrian visions and frames, as stressed by Jasper and Poulson (1995).

The aspect of the relationship between resource shortages in voluntary mobilization arrangements and activists' motivation has likewise been addressed. For example, Alimi states that: "... in cases of depletion of resources and decreased willingness on the part of activists to bear the cost of participation, we would observe ... infighting between organizations..." (2015: 412). Indeed, such a development could be observed more clearly in Vienna as not only resources, but also activists' motivation and self-purpose were quickly challenged by the difficulty of projecting politicized Ukrainian claims in Austrian public space. At the same time, networks of prior diasporic NGOs and groups were weak, leading most activists to become active in humanitarian aid work as well, rather than political pro-Ukraine activism alone. In Prague, the mere existence of Ukrainian and local NGOs mobilizing for both humanitarian relief and political representation of pro-Ukraine claims took away from a feeling of urgency to engage in multiple spheres simultaneously.

Finally, the aspect of transnational coalitions according to Tarrow's gradation of the intensity and duration of cooperation presents a stark distinction in the two mobilization outcomes. Only in Prague was transnational collective action possible and long-lasting as Ukrainian and Czech activists engaged in a campaign coalition (cf. Tarrow 2005: 167ff) based on calling movement participants, pooled from an imagined transnational public of both Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians, to individual civic action. In Vienna, transnationality played a role in street mobilization only in the first weeks after the FSI, and later entered a stage akin to Tarrow's instrumental coalitions (ibid),

which were short-lived and did not yield sustainable new protest networks. The failure to appeal to common Austrian-Ukrainian grievances and frames contributed to this and found its expression in the more pronounced division of target audiences into Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians, and thus the homogenization of street action.

The results and analytical import of the comparative insights gained from this thesis lend themselves to possible future research projects in several directions. First and most obviously, a broader case selection could be considered, especially comparing cases which do not differ as much as neutral Austria and NATO member Czechia. This could open the space for more in-detail and focused comparisons of single aspects of protest strategies and mobilization outcomes. Second, the singularity of the studied subject is debited to the fact of a full-scale war ravaging the diaspora's homeland at the time of research, rendering reproducibility, as well as comparisons with other diasporas, difficult. However, the analytic aspects developed in the grounded theory of this thesis lend themselves to testing in various contexts, especially the two-way identity construction of diasporic imagination and representation. Exploring how these two elements interrelate and affect not only street mobilization, but also other diasporic activities like involvement in homeland development, or sending of remittances, may present a salient avenue for future research.

CONCLUSION

The two analyzed mobilization contexts present vastly different outcomes regarding formats in which pro-Ukraine collective action in public space is undertaken. In Prague, *Hlas Ukrajiny* was able to perpetuate mobilization by productively appealing to existing Czech-Ukrainian frames, calling on members of the Czech public to act upon the desired outcome of the war. By contrast, as Austrian public frames of the vision for the war's end are generally different from the Ukrainian point of view, activists perceived Austria as a hostile (MRIJA) or at best deluded environment that needed to be educated (*Unlimited Democracy*). Thus, the mobilization format in Prague was based on civic action and movement participants' agency. In Vienna, it followed the purpose of approximating the host public's imaginations to the Ukrainian ones, through frame alignment based on existing Austrian humanitarian support in the case of UD, and through confrontation by calling out Austrian neutrality and passivity as complicity in the case of MRIJA. *Hlas Ukrajiny* activists in Prague were able to claim to solely represent the political voice of Ukrainians, monopolizing both the establishment of a single source of information (SSI) for pro-Ukraine street action and protest ownership. In Vienna, the lack of consensus on the ideal protest rationale, that is, the alignment of protest purpose with an agreed-upon format, conditioned a rift, with two similar political groups competing for protest ownership and SSI.

Several structural factors influence this outcome. In Austria, the expression of pro-Ukraine claims according to the idea of assisting the homeland win the war is limited, and thus UD's mobilization itself came to be not so much about voicing concrete political demands, but about the right to have voice in the first place. This was done through the approximation of emotional and cognitive frames to create grounds for compassion, for example by highlighting Russian atrocities in Ukraine as an attempt to not only reach public attention and awareness, but to figuratively touch people's hearts and minds. Thus, being given the space to express Ukrainian political voice enabled politicization of rallies in Prague, while the absence of a stage inhibited the same process in Vienna. Ukrainian political voice and agency is not actively sought after by the Austrian political and public spheres. The frame of Ukraine as a brave warrior fighting to defend its freedom and independence while relying on others' support, an idea shared within Ukrainian society, state authorities, and Ukraine's close allies, is difficult to reproduce, let alone act upon, in Austria. This has shown itself on

the inconclusive and ambiguous nature of political pro-Ukraine mobilization as activists have failed to agree on a common rationale for action, causing controversy and a split in engagement. As a result of this fragmentation, elements of protest formats that in Prague are contained within one organization are in different hands in Vienna, resulting in unclear messaging and divisions of target audiences, reducing potential for collective action, and increasing the participation threshold for individual involvement in mobilization.

Prague presents a more favorable environment for pro-Ukraine street action, as Ukrainian political voice and agency were actively magnified by existing local activists, and pro-Ukraine street action benefited from a continuation since 2014. In a way, engagement, shared frames, understandings, as well as demands and claims, were already present in Prague, but not formalized within political representation of Ukrainian agency. *Hlas Ukrajiny* was able to fill this role, creating a transparent and widely understood rationale for individual participation in its mobilization. This helped overcome organizational barriers posed by volunteerism that would otherwise result from the lack of identification of individuals with the movement, such as over-personalization, disengagement, and lack of trust. Another structural factor is the existence of a precedent for large-scale pro-democracy contestation in public space by an organization that conceptually linked this endeavor with Czech Ukraine-support. Indeed, the idea of Czech co-involvement in Ukraine's struggle was routinely evoked as a mobilization purpose by pro-Ukraine activists, activating frames linking Ukraine's fate of fighting for freedom and independence to Czech historical experience. Ukrainians in Prague, represented by *Hlas Ukrajiny*, were given the space to take the leadership in their own political representation, thus expanding on existing pro-Ukraine mobilization while ensuring its continuation by creating a pool of politically active Ukrainians, as well as non-Ukrainian sympathizers. The most salient enabling factor was the openness of the Czech public to pro-Ukraine claims, and the readiness to not only listen to, but actively provide a stage for Ukrainians' political voice. Mobilization by *Hlas Ukrajiny* served to empower Ukrainians living in Prague to also participate in Czech public contestation for democracy by participating in protests countering waves of populist mobilization.

The psychological toll of the full-scale war left its mark on the expression of emotionality in pro-Ukraine protests in both contexts but resulted in different formats of mobilization in public space. Analysis has revealed a firm link between emotionality

and contention, and especially the openness of the political system and receptiveness of the public space to pro-Ukraine demands according to Ukrainians' interpretation of a desired outcome of the war. As the Czech Republic actively supports Ukraine's effort of not only withstanding, but prevailing over the aggressor, activists could appeal to a wider range of claims, countering looming feelings of apathy caused by emotional shock of the war by calling to action and targeting concrete institutions. In Vienna, the role of emotionality as an element to mobilization took two distinct turns. With institutional channels being relatively closed to a pro-Ukraine stance corresponding to the effort of helping Ukraine win the war, activists' internal efficacy suffered a frustration, confining emotionality to a de-politicized mobilization format in the case of *Unlimited Democracy*, and a confrontational one in the case of MRIJA. In the first format, emotions were employed defensively, building on, and expanding frames of Ukraine's victimhood to appeal to humanitarian-based Austrian support, while the other format relied on an aggressive emotional response condemning perceived Austrian passivity.

Finally, even though the finding of a more sustained and politicized mobilization in Prague rather than Vienna is little surprising, the main contribution of the analysis reveals important aspects of the construction of diasporic identity and the expression of a pro-Ukraine stance in public space in different contexts. The outcome is an expression of the more complete diasporic identity construction in Prague, and the impediment thereof in Vienna. Thus, only in Prague it was possible to combine the two sides of diasporic identity construction – the inward-oriented imagination around a common purpose, and the outward-directed representation thereof to the host state public. The complete identity construction opened the space for the formation of long-lasting transnational Czech-Ukrainian linkages in protest organization, and the universalization of claims based on the idea of defending shared democratic values on the streets of Prague. In Vienna, transnational links in mobilization were possible almost exclusively in the context of activating frames related to Ukraine's future membership in the European Union, but not on the grounds of imaginations linking Ukraine's fate to Austrian political realities. This outcome relates to the fact that diasporic activists did not find common formats for representing Ukrainian political voice in a public space largely unreceptive for it. With the outward-directed component of identity construction inhibited, its counterpart of inward-oriented imagination remained incomplete, contributing to a split in mobilization.

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ANNEX

Abstract (English)

Diasporic activism for the homeland is enabled or constrained by host state factors, but the inner workings of this postulate are little understood. I argue that the specific format of street mobilization relates to a two-way process of identity construction of the diaspora itself, whereby conditions for both the inward-oriented imagination, and the outward-oriented representation must be given. The possibility to voice a political pro Ukraine position in a public space which is open to it enabled the formation of transnational activist networks and a bottom-up participation-based social movement in Prague, centering on the idea that members of the Czech public can become active to contribute to Ukraine's victory. In Vienna, the perceived meagre host country support and unreceptiveness to contentious pro-Ukraine claims resulted in low internal efficacy of activists and contributed to turning the very purpose of mobilization into a cleavage. With this division line extending itself through the two main groups initiating pro Ukraine street rallies, activists were not able to put up a concerted effort to represent Ukrainians' political voice and unite target publics around a shared interpretation of Ukraine-support. While emotions such as frustration and outrage over atrocities committed by Russia in Ukraine were a main contributing factor to mobilization in both contexts, they featured differently in the respective mobilization format. The idea that residents of Czechia can contribute to Ukraine's victory provided grounds for channeling emotional outrage into call-to-action points and politicized demands in Prague activism. In Vienna, the lack of this possibility led to two distinct strategies: the attempt to approximate Austrian cognitive and emotional frames to the Ukrainian point of view based on the arousal of compassion on the one hand, and the assigning of blame onto the Austrian political and public spheres for ignorance and inaction in the more radical mobilization format.

Abstract (German)

Diaspora-Aktivismus für das Heimatland wird durch Faktoren im Aufnahmestaat ermöglicht oder eingeschränkt, doch die innere Funktionsweise dieses Postulats ist wenig erforscht. Ich argumentiere, dass das spezifische Format der Mobilisierung mit einem zweiseitigen Prozess der Identitätskonstruktion der Diaspora zusammenhängt.

Für eine kontinuierliche Mobilisierung müssen sowohl die Bedingungen für die nach innen gerichtete Imagination, als auch die nach außen gerichtete Repräsentation gegeben sein. Die Möglichkeit, eine politische Pro-Ukraine-Position in einem dafür offenen öffentlichen Raum zu vertreten, ermöglichte die Formierung von transnationalen Netzwerken und einer auf Partizipation basierenden bottom-up sozialen Bewegung in Prag. In deren Mittelpunkt stand die Idee, dass Mitglieder der tschechischen Öffentlichkeit selbst aktiv werden können, um zum Sieg der Ukraine beizutragen. In Wien führte die als mangelhaft wahrgenommene Unterstützung durch das Aufnahmeland und die Unempfänglichkeit für Pro-Ukraine-Forderungen zu einer geringen internen Motivation von Aktivist*innen und trug dazu bei, dass sich eine Kluft hinsichtlich des Mobilisierungszwecks bildete. Da sich diese Spaltungslinie durch die beiden Hauptgruppen, die Pro-Ukraine-Kundgebungen initiierten, durchzog, waren Aktivist*innen nicht in der Lage, eine einheitliche Mobilisierungsstrategie zu verfolgen. So gelang es nicht, die politische Stimme von Ukrainer*innen einheitlich zu vertreten und die nicht-ukrainische Zielgruppe durch eine gemeinsame Interpretation der Ukraine-Unterstützung einzubinden. Während Emotionen wie Frustration und Empörung über die von Russland in der Ukraine begangenen Gräueltaten in beiden Kontexten ein wichtiger Mobilisierungsanlass waren, wurden sie im jeweiligen Mobilisierungsformat unterschiedlich eingesetzt. Die Vorstellung, dass Einwohner Tschechiens zum Sieg der Ukraine beitragen können, war der Grund dafür, dass emotionale Schocks im Prager Aktivismus in Handlungsaufforderungen und politisierte Aufrufe umgewandelt werden konnten. In Wien führte das Ausbleiben dieser Möglichkeit zu zwei unterschiedlichen Strategien: einerseits den Versuch, österreichische kognitive und emotionale Frames an den ukrainischen Standpunkt anzunähern, basierend auf der Erregung von Mitgefühl, und andererseits die Zuschreibung von Schuld an die österreichische Politik und Öffentlichkeit für Ignoranz und Untätigkeit im radikaleren Mobilisierungsformat.

Keywords: Ukraine, Social Movements, Mobilization, Diaspora, Activism

Stichwörter: Ukraine, Soziale Bewegungen, Mobilisierung, Diaspora, Aktivismus