

# MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

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“What are the motivations of protest organizers? A case study of  
Ukrainian Protest Organizers in Vienna during the Russian  
Invasion”

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## Personal Declaration

I hereby declare that I have completed this written work independently and that I have cited the literature and sources used correctly and verifiably. I am aware that any violation of these rules may result in consequences.

## Note on the use of AI-supported tools

Parts of this work -particularly the linguistic revision and structural clarity of the wording -were created with the support of the AI-system ChatGPT (OpenAI, version GPT-4). The tool was used exclusively to improve linguistic quality and to reflect on analytical structural issues. Content decisions, data analysis, and the scientific argumentation were made independently by the author.

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# Abstract

english: The motivations underlying participation in political collective action have been extensively examined in social movement research. However, considerably less attention has been paid to the actors who initiate, coordinate, and sustain such action, namely organizers. This study addresses this research gap by investigating the motivations that lead young Ukrainians to assume organizing roles in political collective action following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. To conceptualize and analyse motivation, it applies the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) (van Zomeren 2013) as a general framework and complements it with the concept of motivation through social embeddedness (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013)).

The study adopts a qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews with study case of young Ukrainian organizers engaged in demonstrations, commemorations, political performances, and awareness-raising activities in Vienna, complemented by one interview with an organizer based in Berlin. This serves as a contrasting perspective for analyzing similarities and differences, as well as for assessing the extent to which local context shapes organizational practice. This interview is considered not as a second case study, but as a contextual supplement. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis in accordance with Mayring's (2014) inductive category formation method. This approach was chosen because it allows for the inductive derivation of new information from the research material, building on previously deductively formed categories, which can supplement the theoretical framework.

The findings demonstrate that organizers share the core motivational pathways identified for participants, including efficacy, collective identity, emotional motivation, and moral conviction. At the same time, the study reveals important differences in the structure and intensity of these motivations. The sense of moral duty and sustained responsibility emerge as particularly stable and dominant drivers of organizing, while emotions such as anger tend to lose the intensity over time, where self-directed pressure goes to the first stage. In addition, social embeddedness functions as a distinct motivational dimension by facilitating the transition from participation to organizing and sustaining long-term engagement. By focusing on organizers rather than participants, this master's thesis fills a key gap in collective action research and contributes to modern social movements studies, highlighting the phenomenon of organizers in political collective action in democratic countries.

german: Die Motivationen für die Teilnahme an politischen kollektiven Aktionen wurden in der Sozialbewegungsforschung eingehend untersucht. Den Akteuren, die solche Aktionen initiieren, koordinieren und aufrechterhalten – den Organisatoren –, wurde jedoch deutlich weniger Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Diese Studie schließt diese Forschungslücke, indem sie die Motivationen junger Ukrainer untersucht, die nach dem Einmarsch Russlands in die Ukraine im Jahr 2022 organisatorische Rollen in politischen kollektiven Aktionen übernehmen.

Die Studie analysiert die Motivationen junger Menschen, sich in politischen kollektiven Aktionen zu organisieren und von der Teilnahme zur aktiven Mitwirkung überzugehen. Zur Konzeptualisierung und Analyse von Motivation wird das Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) (van Zomeren 2013) als analytischer Rahmen angewendet und durch das Konzept der Motivation durch soziale Eingebundenheit (van Stekelenburg und Klandermans 2013) ergänzt.

Die Studie verwendet ein qualitatives Forschungsdesign mit halbstrukturierten Interviews. Als Fallbeispiel dienen junge ukrainische Organisatoren, die in Wien an Demonstrationen, Gedenkveranstaltungen, politischen Aktionen und Sensibilisierungsmaßnahmen beteiligt sind. Ergänzt wird die Analyse durch ein Interview mit einem Organisator in Berlin. Dieses dient als kontrastierende Perspektive zur Analyse von Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden sowie zur Beurteilung, inwieweit der lokale Kontext die Organisationspraxis prägt. Das Interview wird nicht als zweite Fallstudie, sondern als Kontextualisierung betrachtet.

Die Daten wurden mittels qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse nach Mayrings (2014) induktiver Kategorienbildung analysiert. Dieser Ansatz wurde gewählt, da er die induktive Ableitung neuer Informationen aus dem Forschungsmaterial ermöglicht, aufbauend auf zuvor deduktiv gebildeten Kategorien, die den theoretischen Rahmen ergänzen können.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Organisatoren dieselben zentralen Motivationsmuster aufweisen wie Teilnehmer, darunter Selbstwirksamkeit, kollektive Identität, emotionale Motivation und moralische Überzeugungen. Gleichzeitig deckt die Studie wichtige Unterschiede in der Struktur und Intensität dieser Motivationen auf. Das Gefühl moralischer Pflicht und anhaltender Verantwortung erweist sich als besonders stabile und dominante Triebkraft der Organisation, während Emotionen wie Wut mit der Zeit an Intensität verlieren und selbstbezogener Druck in den Vordergrund rückt. Darüber hinaus fungiert soziale Eingebundenheit als eigenständige Motivationsdimension, indem sie den Übergang von der Teilnahme zur Organisation erleichtert und langfristiges Engagement fördert.

Durch die Fokussierung auf Organisatoren anstatt auf Teilnehmer schließt diese Masterarbeit eine wichtige Lücke in der Forschung zu kollektivem Handeln und leistet einen Beitrag zur modernen Sozialbewegungsforschung, indem sie das Phänomen der Organisatoren im politischen kollektiven Handeln in demokratischen Kontexten beleuchtet.

# 1. Introduction

When people mobilize in response to shared grievances or injustices (Klandermans 1997, 2004), an essential yet often overlooked role is played by those who make political collective action possible, namely the organizers. These actors provide the structure through which grievances are expressed, networks are mobilized, and political messages are delivered. Without their initiative and sustained efforts, protests would remain fragmented or fail to materialize at all. Yet, despite their crucial role in shaping the dynamics of mobilization, research in political science and related disciplines has largely focused on explaining why people engage in collective action (Klandermans 1997, 2004, van Zomeren 2008, 2013, Nguyen et al., 2021, Walgrave et al., 2013, Zúñiga et al., 2023, Ditrich and Sassenberg 2024), thereby leaving the motivations of organizers largely unaddressed (Boekkooi's 2012).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 provides a compelling case for addressing this gap, because it provoked a strong reaction from the Ukrainian community abroad and created the conditions for the activation of already existing and experienced organizers of political collective action as well as for the emergence of new ones. This can be illustrated by the following example: on the morning when news of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 broke, Ukrainian activists in Vienna initiated the first demonstrations, just hours after the attack. At 8 a.m., protesters gathered outside the Foreign Ministry building and later that day, at Maria-Theresien-Platz (DerStandard 2022). Many participants joined the protest out of fear, anger, but also solidarity, and immediate emotional response, others took on organizational responsibilities: preparing materials, coordinating logistics, mobilizing networks, and ensuring that the collective voice of Ukrainians was heard. Similar demonstrations took place around the world, as Ukrainian communities and their supporters organized protests in major cities such as Berlin, London, and New York (BBC 2022, NYTimes 2022, Berlin.de 2022). Over the following four years, as the devastating war continued, numerous demonstrations, commemorations, and political performances took place in Vienna in support of Ukraine (DiePresse 2023, OTS 2023, Mrija 2026).

The existing literature has found that individuals engage in political collective action through several key motivations: efficacy, identity, morality, emotions, and social embeddedness (van Zomeren 2013, van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). Efficacy refers to the belief that collective action can achieve meaningful social or political change, and numerous studies show that efficacy beliefs strongly predict participation (Hornsey et al. 2006, Mummendey et al. 1999, Corcoran et al. 2011). Identity captures the extent to which individuals see themselves as members of a group and act in accordance with this membership. Social identity has been shown to drive

collective action because it links personal motivation to a sense of shared belonging (Simon et al. 1998, Drury, Reicher and Stott 1999, Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 1999 cf. Klandermans 2014). Emotions, especially anger arising from perceived injustice, motivate individuals for action and predict willingness to protest (Frijda 1986, Lazarus 1991, Walker and Smith cf. van Zomeren 2013). Moral conviction represents motivation rooted in a sense of moral duty (van Zomeren et al. 2011). Social embeddedness highlights how networks, interpersonal relationships, and shared meanings facilitate or constrain participation (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013).

The empirical analysis of the master thesis investigates whether the motivational dimensions usually identified for participants in collective action (efficacy, identity, emotions, morality and social embeddedness) (van Zomeren 2013, van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013) are applicable to organizers. The main goal of this research is to examine whether the motivational dimensions identified in the literature for participants in collective action (efficacy, identity, emotions, morality, and social embeddedness) can also explain the motivation of individuals to take on the more demanding role of organizing collective action. This is important to consider because the motives for protest participation have been extensively studied and form a central explanatory basis for engagement in political collective action. Drawing on these established insights allows the study to use existing theoretical frameworks on collective action motivation as an analytical lens for examining the motivations of organizers. Examining these motives among organizers allows one to identify the factors that motivate participants to take on organizational roles and determine what changes when people assume organizational responsibility: whether existing motivational dimensions remain stable, acquire a different structure or intensity, or whether additional motives emerge. From a theoretical perspective, examining these motivations among organizers helps to assess whether existing participation-based models are sufficient to explain organizing as a distinct form of political engagement. In this way, the study contributes to the literature by exploring whether organizers are motivated by the same mechanisms as participants or whether organizing involves additional or differently structured motivational dynamics.

The empirical analysis of the study applies these established dimensions to the case of young Ukrainian organizers in Vienna who, since the Russian invasion in February 2022, have initiated and sustained demonstrations, protests or commemorations. By focusing on the organizers rather than the participants, the study investigates how these motivations manifest in practices of coordination in political collective action, and whether additional motivations emerge that are specific to organizing work. Moreover, the empirical analysis includes a differentiated case of an organizer of political collective action in Berlin, Germany. While this case does not constitute the

main case of the study, it serves as a complementary perspective that allows us to understand the extent to which organizers' motivations are shaped by the local context and whether there are differences in organizers' motivations.

Possible additional motivations that I believe may influence organizers include a sense of personal responsibility for the organization, an emerging leadership identity, career incentives, pressure from social expectations, and a sense of duty to Ukrainians in the country of political collective action and to Ukrainians in their homeland. These factors extend beyond the motivational aspects typically noted among participants and may be specific to the organizer's role.

The central research question of this thesis is:

### **What are the motivations to become organizers of political collective action?**

This question addresses a gap in political science research. Whereas existing studies have extensively examined why individuals participate in protests, the motivations of those who assume responsibility for organizing remain insufficiently understood. Organizers transform individual discontent into coordinated mobilization, sustain networks, and enable collective claims to be expressed. Understanding their motivations is essential for a more comprehensive account of how collective action emerges and endures.

To operationalize this research question, I formulate three sub-questions linked to the empirical case. These allow me to examine the central motivations of organizers, to assess whether and how their motivations differ from those of participants, and to analyse the role of social embeddedness in shaping motivation, which in the selected case can be traced through membership in non-profit organizations. In more precise terms, the sub-questions allow me to reduce the scope of the research and to present the results of the case study in a structured way. The first subquestion examines whether the identified motivational aspects are relevant to organizers as they were to participants. The second examines how organizers themselves interpret and formulate their motivations, which allows us to identify possible differences between organizing and participating. The third subquestion examines the role of social embeddedness, which the literature suggests can be particularly important for maintaining engagement and enabling people to take on organizational responsibilities. Social embeddedness is not included in the original SIMCA (van Zomeren 2013) model, which focuses on efficacy, identity, morality, and emotions. Therefore, a separate sub-question is formulated to address this additional motivational dimension:

1. How do efficacy, identity, emotions, and morality (as outlined in SIMCA) affect the decision of young Ukrainians in Vienna to take on organizing roles in political collective action?
2. How do young Ukrainian organizers in Vienna conceptualize and differentiate their own motivations from those of participants in protests and demonstrations?
3. How does social embeddedness within diaspora-based NGOs and activist networks contribute to sustaining individual motivation and facilitating the transformation from participation to organizing?

The thesis investigates this general question through the case study of young Ukrainians in Vienna. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, young activists, many of them students, have played a central role in organizing political collective action. Their activism provides a particularly relevant empirical setting for examining organizers' motivations, as it emerged in a context of acute crisis and has been sustained over several years.

## **1.1 Academic Relevance**

First, this study addresses a significant research gap by examining organizers as a distinct group situated between movement leaders and participants in collective action. Although essential to the functioning of mobilization, organizers have rarely been analyzed as a separate category of actors within political science and social movement studies. Second, the thesis advances theoretical innovation by integrating the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) (van Zomeren 2013) with the concept of social embeddedness (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013), thereby proposing a structured analytical framework for studying organizers' motivations. This combined approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of how individual, relational, and contextual factors interact in shaping the decision to assume organizing roles within political collective action.

By linking the micro-level motivations of organizers with the meso- and macro-level dynamics of social movement theory, this thesis contributes to political science by expanding the analytical scope of social movement research through the integration of psychological and motivational dimensions of those who assume organizing roles.

## **1.2 Social Relevance**

An analysis of the motivations of young Ukrainian activists in Vienna provides insight into the dynamics of political collective action in times of crisis. By focusing on motivational factors, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how civil society activism emerges and is sustained in transnational contexts.

This is particularly relevant in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a humanitarian and political crisis. This paper also raises questions of solidarity, integration and democratic participation of the diaspora in European countries. This perspective is especially important for host societies such as Austria. It demonstrates that refugees and migrants are not passive recipients of aid, but active political actors who contribute to resistance. At the same time, the analysis of emotions highlights opportunities and burdens associated with organizing political action in exile. Young people take on responsibility in a moment of crisis, and their experiences provide crucial insights into how sustainable support, integration, and recognition can be fostered.

In this way, this paper contributes to a better understanding of how democratic societies respond to crises, how solidarity is organized in a transnational context and what role young people, diaspora and NGOs can play as agents of social change.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This master's thesis consists of six main chapters. Following an introduction, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework and a literature review. It also explains the key definitions and concepts of the master's thesis, such as political collective action and definitions of organizers and participants in political collective action. It then introduces the concept of motivation and details the five key motivational dimensions guiding this study: efficacy, identity, emotion, morality, and social embeddedness. The chapter also reviews existing research on protest participation and highlights the gap in research on organizers. Finally, I formulate the hypotheses according to and justify the use of SIMCA (van Zomeren 2013) as an analytical framework, expanded by the concept of social embeddedness (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013).

Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach and presents the main case study. It also discusses the research design, including the method, the use of semi-structured interviews, and the sampling procedure. The chapter also discusses the researcher's position, ethical aspects, and qualitative content analysis procedures according to Mayring's (2014) methodology.

Chapter 4 presents the empirical results. Using an inductively developed category system, the motivational dimensions identified in the interview materials are systematically described. The

results are structured according to predefined deductive categories: efficacy, identity, emotion, morality, and social embeddedness, and additional inductively derived elements, such as curiosity-based motivation, are presented.

Chapter 5 discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework. It answers subquestions and interprets the results in relation to SIMCA and the concept of social embeddedness. The chapter also examines the differences between organizers and participants and outlines the theoretical propositions of the study.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusion of the master thesis.

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Political collective action**

The concept of collective action has been theorized across political science, sociology, and social psychology, producing a range of complementary perspectives. In this thesis, I draw on these approaches to establish a broad conceptual foundation of collective action before narrowing the focus to its political form.

Collective action constitutes the broadest conceptual foundation, referring to the people acting together in pursuit of common interests or shared objectives (Olson 1965, Tilly 1978). Tilly (1978: 10) considers collective action as resulting from interests, organization, mobilization and opportunity. Interests are expected gains or losses from intergroup interactions; organization is the group structure enabling action; mobilization is securing collective control over necessary resources; opportunity is the external political environment that enables or constrains action. Hence, collective action is shaped by internal group dynamics and external political conditions (ibid.). Classical rational-choice approaches (Olson 1965) take a different view, emphasizing the costs and benefits of participation in collective action. However, this perspective cannot account for motivations such as moral obligation, emotions or group identification, which are central to understanding participation in political collective action. Social psychology offers additional perspectives. Relative deprivation theory explains participation in collective action: when people perceive themselves as relatively disadvantaged, they experience anger and resentment and seek to improve their situation (Walker and Smith 2002 cf. Van Zomeren and Iyer 2009). Smith and Ortiz (2002), comparing individual and collective perceptions of disadvantage, found that when

disadvantage is perceived as group-based and unfair, relative deprivation is a strong predictor of collective action. An additional perspective on the emergence of collective action is provided by social identity theory. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that social behavior lies on a continuum between the interpersonal and the intergroup, and that responses increasingly align with the group level when situations are defined in terms of group membership. They conceptualize social identity as a part of the self-concept derived from group membership and imbued with value and emotional significance.

Within this wider category of collective action, political collective action denotes a socially constructed phenomenon through which ordinary people confront opponents, elites and authorities (Tarrow 1994: 8) and aims at influencing political decision-making or social change (Klandermans 1997). Political collective action refers to forms of action that take place outside conventional institutional politics and emerge when individuals organize around specific aims that are not addressed through established channels (Edmondson 1997). As Edmondson (1997: 1) notes, it concerns action which has evolved outside these channels in response to specific aims or needs, uniting participants who would otherwise be dispersed. .

Political collective action often takes the form of what Tilly and Tarrow (2015) describe as contentious politics, meaning collective efforts that make public claims on power holders and challenge existing arrangements, frequently through protest, demonstrations and mobilization.

In this master thesis, political collective action is understood as group-based efforts directed toward shared political goals, situated outside conventional institutional channels and aimed at influencing political decision-making, shaping public perceptions, or expressing solidarity in political context. However, political collection action does not materialize automatically. It depends on actors who initiate and coordinate them, as well as those who join and participate in political collective action once mobilization is under way. The following chapters will therefore address political collective action by distinguishing conceptually between those who organize it and those who participate in it.

## **2.2 Organizers of political collective action**

My research focuses on the role of protest organizers, paying particular attention to their motivation to take responsibility in the context of mobilization. In this master thesis, I use the term “organizers“ to refer to actors who initiate, coordinate, and sustain collective action by mobilizing

people, resources, and shared interests in pursuit of common political goals without necessarily holding formal leadership positions or becoming public figures.

In the social movement literature, organizers have been described in various ways, such as agents (McAdam 1986), movement entrepreneurs, brokers, or leaders (Diani 2003). Classical literature on social movements relied heavily on the concept of leadership (Klandermans 1989, 1997, McAdam et al. 1996, Melucci 1996, della Porta and Diani 1999, cf. Diani 2003: 105), often depicting movements through the figure of a leader who embodies personality, vision, and the ability to motivate and inspire others toward a shared goal (Hurn and Tomalin 2013, Jaqua and Jaqua 2021, cf. Bhusal et al. 2025). Leadership was typically understood as an asymmetric relationship between leaders and their supporters (Klandermans 1989, 1997, McAdam et al. 1996, Melucci 1996, della Porta and Diani 1999, cf. Diani 2003: 105).

Classic work repeatedly contrasts visionary figures who articulate goals and ignite commitment with task-focused coordinators: labeled enthusiasts versus bureaucrats, ideological versus pragmatic, and symbolic versus decision-making roles (Roche and Sachs 1969, Wilson 1973, Turner and Killian 1987, Smelser 1962 cf. Nepstad and Bob 2006: 3). Therefore, classical studies tended to use the concept of leadership as an umbrella-term, treating it as the sum of both symbolic leaders and practical organizers without systematically distinguishing these roles.

In this master thesis, I focus on those who create an event (e.g., a protest), call for it, raise resources, communicate with the public, and translate the idea into reality. I refer to these actors as organizers. Although leaders encompass various categories of people initiating political collective action, I believe it is necessary to establish clear boundaries and place organizers outside the scope of the concept of leaders. To define what is meant by ‘organizers’, I refer to Boekkooi’s (2012) dissertation on the influence of organizers in protest events. He defines organizers as “those activists who try to convert a movement’s mobilization potential, that is, people who agree with the movement’s goals and ideas but have not yet acted upon them (Klandermans and Oegema 1987) - into participants» (Boekkooi 2012: 2). Boekkooi (2012) argues that individual activists are embedded in the context of mobilization structures and society as a whole and therefore protest organizers and participants can only be understood by examining their context in which they are embedded. People derive meaning, significance, and identity from interactions with their environment (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994, Emirbayer 1997 cf. Boekkooi 2012: 3). He argues that protest “does not appear out of the blue“. Some people have to take the initiative to start organizing and mobilizing for an event and thereby offer the ‘supply’ of collective action» (Boekkooi 2012: 3).

Unlike ‘leaders’, who are often portrayed as symbolic figures embodying vision and authority, organizers may operate behind the scenes, supporting nonprofits in achieving their goals or working within such organizations, sharing strategies, and facilitating their activities. I understand them as those who may volunteer, maintain connections with NGOs, and launch political projects both offline and online without holding formal leadership roles. Although they may not assume public visibility or external communications functions, they remain key figures in facilitating collective action.

For the purposes of this study, I propose viewing organizers as those responsible for at least two of the following aspects: deciding on a venue or obtaining a permit; developing narratives, demands, and calls to action; recruiting and coordinating volunteers; creating a political concept and event design; researching information, and managing resources and logistics. This approach allows the analysis to focus on actors who make collective action possible through their organizational work, without subsuming them under the concept of social movement leadership, which is typically associated with representative and publicly visible roles.

### **2.3 Participants in political collective action**

A participant in political collective action is an individual who, sharing a collective identity and recognizing their membership in a relevant social group, engages in activities aimed at improving the conditions of that group. As Wright (2001: 413) emphasizes, “[...] in order to engage in collective action the individual must recognize his or her membership in the relevant collective». Similarly, Wright, Taylor, and Moghaddam (1990a, cf. Wright 2001: 410) define collective action as occurring when “a group member engages in collective action any time that she or he is acting as a representative of the group and the action is directed at improving the conditions of the entire group». Participation in (political) collective action involves the perception of a “we» (Oakes, Haslam and Turner, 1994, Turner et al., 1987 cf. Wright, 2001: 414). When social identity becomes salient, behavior is consistent with group goals (ibid.).

Klandermans and Oegema (1987, cf. Klandermans and van Stekelenburg 2014: 343) argue that participants must sympathize with the cause, be informed about the upcoming event, be willing to participate, and be able to do so. Sympathy arises when people perceive a situation as unjust toward their group and morally urgent (ibid.). Motivations can also be instrumental: individuals hope to change an unfavorable situation at reasonable cost and seek to express their indignation (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). Van Zomeren (2013) highlights efficacy, identity,

emotion, and morality as key motivational dimensions, which also shape participation in political collective action.

Tarrow (1989) argues that people do not primarily take to the streets because of persistent deprivation, but rather when political opportunities open or when threats raise the costs of inaction and offend shared notions of justice. For example, when institutions are responsive, protest is legally protected, and policing is tolerant, collective efforts are more likely to achieve change (ibid.). According to Tarrow (1998: 76-77), the concept of political opportunity refers to dimensions of the political environment that stimulate collective action.

In my master's thesis, I define participants in political collective action as individuals who respond to the calls of action issued by organizers, joining protests, political rallies, and demonstrations that aim to draw public attention to specific issues or to achieve political change. I also consider as participants those who donate to humanitarian initiatives, disseminate information through social media, contribute to shaping the public image of a problem, or take part in solidarity campaigns. In addition, participants may engage in events that demand political decision-making from institutions and authorities. However, unlike organizers, participants do not assume ongoing responsibilities for developing, coordinating, or making strategic decisions regarding the creation or direction of political collective action.

This working definition of participants in political collective action establishes a necessary distinction between participants and organizers. I assume that organizers share certain motives with participants. However, I also suggest that there may be additional motives, which I will also explore in the empirical part of the master thesis.

**Table 1: Concepts and Working Definitions in This Thesis**

| Definition                    | Key references                                           | Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Political) collective action | Tarrow (1998), Endmonson (1997), Tilly and Tarrow (2015) | Political collective action denotes group based action that takes place outside conventional institutional politics and aims to influence political decision making, social change, or public perceptions through political demonstrations |

|                                             |                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organizers of political collective action   | Boekkooi (2012)                                        | Organizers are actors who initiate, coordinate, and sustain political collective action by mobilizing people, resources, and shared interests. They convert mobilization potential into participation by creating events, calling for action, raising resources, communicating with the public, and managing logistics. Organizers do not necessarily hold formal leadership positions or assume public visibility but are central to making collective action possible. |
| Participants in political collective action | Wright (2001), Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) | Participants are individuals who recognize their membership in a relevant social group and respond to calls for action issued by organizers. Participation includes joining protests, demonstrations, and rallies, as well as donating, disseminating information, and engaging in solidarity campaigns. Unlike organizers, participants do not take responsibility for coordinating, developing, or directing political collective action.                              |

## 2.4 Motivations for Political Collective Action

The term “motive“ derives from the Latin word “motus“ (movement), and motivation is understood as a collective term for various processes and effects (Heckhausen 1989, Hau and Fromm 2011 cf. Klöckner 2015: 146). According to Schmalt and Langens (2009: 223), motives are latent evaluation dispositions that are stimulated or activated by incentives and only then become motivation and visible in behavior. The term “motivation“ is understood as the sum of motives that inspire individuals to make a decision or act, and on the other hand, as a state in which the acting person performs their activity with particular determination or dedication (Bimeshofer 2017: 58).

The motivations underlying protest participation constitute a central theme within two major strands of research: social movement studies in sociology and social psychology (van Zomeren 2008, 2013), as well as political participation studies in political science (Walgrave et al., 2013: 1). Walgrave et al. (2013: 1) argue that the literature on protest motives remains theoretically fragmented. Therefore, protest motivations are dispersed over several research programs and motivational aspects of participation and dealt with using different concepts such as framing, emotions, grievances, networks, without systematic and standardized research methods (ibid.). To

address this, Walgrave et al. (2013) propose a simple, comparative typology of protest motives, distinguishing instrumental vs. expressive and individual vs. collective reasons for participation, and show on the basis of 12 demonstrations in four countries between 2003 and 2007 that instrumental-collective motives (changing something on behalf of a group) are the most frequently reported. Instrumental motives refer to participation intended to achieve an external goal. Expressive motives concern participation that fulfills an intrinsic need for self-expression, emotional release, or moral affirmation. Motives can also be oriented toward individual benefits or collective aims. The combination of these two dimensions produces four types of motives: instrumental-collective (“our interests”), instrumental-individual (“my interests”), expressive-collective (“our grievances”), and expressive-individual (“my grievances”) (Walgrave et al. (2013: 5). Similar distinctions appear in social movement studies. Klandermans and Oegema (1987, cf. Walgrave et al. 2013: 3) describe peace protesters as “acting according to one’s principles,” which reflects expressive motivation. Van Stekelenburg (2006) further differentiates protest motives as instrumental, identity-based, group-based anger, and ideological. This typology reflects Olson’s (1965) distinction between collective and selective benefits, in which instrumental motives pursue outcomes that benefit a group, while expressive motives emphasize personal or moral satisfaction. A secondary dimension separates individual and collective orientations, as participants may act for personal improvement or for the benefit of a group with which they identify. In practice, these motivations frequently overlap (van Stekelenburg 2006).

A comparable framework has been developed in sociology and social psychology. The Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA), introduced by van Zomeren, Spears, and Leach (2008), reflects a similar logic but employs different terminology and greater conceptual precision. SIMCA identifies four key motivations for participation: efficacy, identity, emotion, and morality (Klandermans 1997, Simon et al. 1998, van Zomeren et al. 2008, van Zomeren 2013). These components correspond to the instrumental and expressive dimensions described in political-science (Walgrave et al. 2013): efficacy reflects goal-oriented engagement on behalf of a group, whereas identity, emotion, and morality relate to expressive and value-driven participation. The model has been empirically tested across thematic and national contexts (Hornsey et al. 2006, Nguyen et al., 2021, Verbena et al. 2023, Zúñiga et al. 2023, Ditrich and Sassenberg 2024) and is widely recognized for explaining participation in collective action.

In parallel to SIMCA, van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) propose a complementary framework that highlights the role of social embeddedness in understanding participation in collective action. In this approach, protest participation is explained through five

motivational and contextual dimensions: grievances, efficacy, identification, emotions, and social embeddedness. Social embeddedness refers to the social context in which individuals are situated, encompassing their network ties, relationships, and shared meanings that facilitate or constrain mobilization (ibid.).

Organizers remain an understudied group in collective action research, even though their role is essential for transforming individual discontent into coordinated protest. To explore their motivations, SIMCA offers a useful entry point. Its four pathways help to identify and categorize key motivational dimensions that can be tested empirically. In this thesis, SIMCA is not treated as a complete framework but as a guide for structuring the analysis of motivations, which will be expanded with additional theoretical perspectives that capture aspects of social embeddedness (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013) to organizers.

As van Zomeren (2013) emphasizes, SIMCA is a general explanatory framework for understanding why people engage in collective action, which makes it suitable to identify the motivations in collective action.

In this thesis, SIMCA is not applied as a testable model in itself. Instead, it is used as a tool to structure the analysis of organizers' motivations and to identify which motivational dimensions are most salient in their accounts. This approach allows for a systematic investigation of whether organizers' motivations align with, extend, or diverge from the established pathways of efficacy, identity, emotion, and morality. By using SIMCA in this way, the study addresses the absence of systematic work on organizers' motivations.

### **2.4.1 Efficacy**

Efficacy is an instrumental motive for collective action (Olson 1965). Olson (1965) already framed collective action in terms of a social dilemma, where individuals weigh the costs of participation against the collective benefits. Building on this logic, instrumentally motivated individuals are assumed to weigh the value of the desired outcome of collective action against the probability of achieving it through joint efforts (ibid.).

In the SIMCA framework, efficacy is conceptualized as a central instrumental motivation: individuals participate when they believe their group is capable of achieving common goals through collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2008). However, empirical research by Hornsey et al. (2006) has demonstrated that perceptions of effectiveness are not always central predictors of participation. One reason is that effectiveness has often been narrowly operationalized as the degree to which

collective action can directly influence political elites or shape policy outcomes. This narrow focus underestimates other ways in which participants may perceive action as meaningful, such as influencing broader publics, expressing values, or fostering solidarity.

Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013: 889) notes that “political efficacy is divided into two dimensions: internal efficacy, the extent to which individuals believe they understand politics and are capable of participating, and external efficacy, citizens’ faith in and trust toward government responsiveness».

For the purposes of this thesis, which focuses on political organizers of collective action, these concepts can be adapted. For organizers, internal efficacy refers to their belief that they have the knowledge, skills, and organizational capacity to mobilize others, plan actions, and sustain protest activities over time. External efficacy for organizers goes beyond trust in government responsiveness. It includes their belief that actions will resonate with wider publics, attract media attention, influence international audiences, or mobilize resources such as donations. In this sense, organizers’ efficacy motivation does not only concern the responsiveness of institutions or state, but also the broader response of the audience. In analytical terms, efficacy is coded when respondents frame organizing as necessary and effective in achieving the visibility of the issue, building pressure on decision-making actors, or securing support and solidarity for their cause.

## **2.4.2 Identity**

Social identity theory emphasizes that much of human behavior occurs within the framework of social groups and intergroup relations (Simon and Klandermans, 2001: 320). According to Tajfel and Turner (1979, 2004), individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, and the salience of these group affiliations directs attention toward collective identity. This perspective highlights that belonging to a group provides individuals with a shared understanding of themselves and their social environment, which together constitute their political behavior (ibid.).

Collective identities must politicize to become the drive of collective action (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013: 892). This process begins when individuals recognize shared grievances, attribute blame to an external group or authority, and develop collective demands for change. When these demands remain unfulfilled, a struggle for power emerges, and the group’s collective identity guides its strategies and actions. Politicization deepens as the group seeks legitimacy and support from broader audiences such as governments or the public (ibid.). According

to Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013), the more politicized the collective identity, the higher the likelihood of participation in collective action aimed at political institutions or societal change.

Empirical research supports this relationship between politicized identity and collective action. In Vietnam, research on residents protesting environmental harm and displacement near a waste-disposal complex shows that, the more extent to which an individual identifies with the politicized group, the more likely this individual will take part in collective action (Nguyen et al. 2021: 7). Therefore, identification with a group, especially the politicized, will motivate individuals to protect the group's interests and relative status (ibid.). In a study of first-generation immigrants in Italy, Verbena et al. (2023) showed that ethnic and national identity were associated with participation in collective civic action only through the indirect influence of collective efficacy. These results suggest that identity does not always lead to collective action and may require other motivations for participation.

In this master thesis, the motivation for identity for organizers is understood as a politicized sense of belonging that combines representation and responsibility. Participants may express a collective identity by joining protests, while organizers also construct this identity, transforming belonging into action. Their sense of self includes a responsibility to make the group visible, articulate its grievances, and sustain its public presence. Identity therefore motivates organizing and is continually reinforced through organizational practices. It is encoded when organizers describe their work as acting on behalf of, and as part of, the group they represent.

### **2.4.3 Emotions**

One of the most significant changes in understanding the motivations behind collective action concerns how emotions are conceptualized (Van Zomeren 2013: 381). Emotions are understood as a dynamic psychological mechanism, central for human functioning, and that guides people's efforts to overcome the difficulties they face in the environment (Lazarus 1991 cf. Van Zomeren 2013: 381). According to Jasper (2019) anger and fear are considered, more than any other emotion, the typical political emotions, leading to abrupt, thoughtless behavior that causes destruction and regret. Anger, fear, joy, sadness, disgust, and surprise are “reflex emotions“, what are considered as “primary emotions“ or “programs“ that are universal and are suited to human nature. Reflex emotions are immediate reactions to external events that capture attention and trigger rapid physical and cognitive responses such as anger or disgust. They arise when individuals perceive a threat or change in their environment and often fade quickly once the situation is

reinterpreted (ibid.). Jasper (2019) explains that everyday language often blurs distinctions between different emotional experiences. Reflex emotions such as sadness, fear, or anger represent immediate reactions to unexpected events, yet these emotions can also develop into longer-lasting and more reflective forms like grief or moral indignation (ibid.). Jasper (2019) notes that reflex emotions in political contexts emerge and evolve through sequences of interaction. During demonstrations, participants may amplify anger through chanting or confrontation, experience excitement or disgust in moments of escalation, and find relief or joy through brief moments of humor or solidarity (ibid.). In the context of collective action, emotions are viewed as motivational mechanisms that arise when collective action occurs and in preparation for it, thereby motivating participation (van Zomeren 2013). This approach also applies to organizers, whose decisions to initiate collective action and mobilize others are often driven by emotional motivations such as anger at injustice, empathy and solidarity.

According to van Zomeren (2013), extensive research indicates that anger plays a central role in motivating collective action because it represents an approach-oriented emotion that compels individuals to confront and rectify perceived injustices.

The study of Becker, Tausch, and Wagner (2011) distinguish between emotions directed at the self and emotions directed at the outgroup. They argue that collective action depends on emotions but produces emotions in those who participate. They identify two broad emotional outcomes of protest participation. First, participation can generate positive self-directed emotions, such as satisfaction, pride, and happiness (ibid.). This is partly because activism can fulfill needs for belonging, social connection, and personal significance, and is linked to indicators of psychological well-being (Klar and Kasser 2009, Boehnke and Wong, 2011 cf. Becker, Tausch and Wagner 2011: 1588). Acting on behalf of one's group can make participants feel included and valuable, and can affirm a positive view of the self (Becker, Tausch and Wagner 2011: 1588). Second, participation can intensify negative outgroup-directed emotions, especially anger toward a perceived opponent such as the state or police (ibid.). Extending this literature to the war in Ukraine, related work on bystander mobilization in Germany highlights the role of SIMCA's emotional pathway in the crisis times (Ditrich and Sassenberg 2024). The results indicate that feelings of anger, sympathy, and fear played a key role in motivating people to protest right after the invasion and even a year later, regardless of the narrative the protest followed. Furthermore, a medium to strong positive relationship was found between sympathy for Ukrainians and readiness to engage in political collective action demanding humanitarian aid for Ukrainians (ibid.) In the context of police

repression in Chile, negative emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, anxiety, and contempt were evident in participants' accounts (Zúñiga et al. 2023).

In this thesis, organizers' emotions are conceptualized as dynamic mechanisms that initiate political collective action. Building on Jasper's (2019) understanding of emotions as evolving through interaction and van Zomeren's (2013) view of anger as an approach-oriented emotion directed at confronting injustice, organizers' emotions can be understood as transforming immediate emotional reactions into purposeful action. Rather than experiencing emotions only as individual impulses, organizers transfer anger, grief, and fear into structured forms of political collective action, thereby politicizing affective responses. In line with Becker, Tausch, and Wagner's (2011) distinction between self- and outgroup-directed emotions, organizers experience both simultaneously: they feel pride and belonging within their group of organizers while also expressing anger or moral indignation toward perceived outgroups or authorities. Through this process, organizers create emotional arenas in which collective feelings are amplified, shared, and transformed into public acts of resistance.

#### **2.4.4 Morality**

Morality represents a fourth key motivation for collective action, arising from perceived violations of individuals' moral standards (van Zomeren 2013: 381). Moral convictions consist of evaluation based on perception of right and wrong (Skitka 2010: 268). Therefore, they are experienced as objective and universally valid truths that transcend group boundaries and cultural norms (Turiel, 2002 cf. Skitka 2010: 268). Unlike personal tastes or conventional beliefs, moral convictions function as deeply held moral imperatives that compel individuals to defend what they perceive as just, regardless of situational or social pressures (Skitka 2010: 268). They are inherently more motivating and emotionally charged, shaping how individuals judge others, engage in conflict, and participate in political or collective action (ibid).

Moral convictions are distinct from personal preferences or social conventions because individuals perceive them as universal moral truths that should apply to everyone, regardless of cultural or social context (Skitka 2010: 269). For instance, a person who holds a strong moral conviction that female circumcision is wrong will likely view the practice as unacceptable not only within their own society but also in cultures where it is traditionally accepted (Dorkenoo, 1994 cf. Skitka 2010: 269). Such convictions are experienced as absolute standards of right and wrong, self-evident truths that require no justification and are perceived as objective facts about the world.

Moreover, moral convictions function autonomously, meaning they are not derived from authority, law, or group norms but from deeply internalized principles about how things ought to be (ibid). Van Zomeren (2013) argues that anger is a likely emotional response to the violation of moral standards. Moral standards may emerge collectively when they are shaped by a group's shared ideology, yet they can also arise independently as deeply personal beliefs formed within individuals. This suggests that violations of moral standards can unite individuals who share similar convictions, such as those defending human rights, regardless of their group affiliations. Moral motivation is therefore not only a key driver of collective action but also a force that can unite disadvantaged and advantaged individuals in a shared pursuit of social change (ibid.,: 382). Zúñiga et al. (2023) argue that, in situations of repression, qualitative evidence indicates that it can become a mobilizing factor by intensifying perceptions of injustice, strengthening regional identity, and reinforcing loyalty to social networks, thereby encouraging ordinary citizens to engage in violent and non-violent forms of protest.

I argue that morality is a key motivator driving organizers to act in accordance with their moral convictions and to initiate collective action on behalf of others. When moral principles are violated, organizers perceive engagement organizing of collective action as the “right“ and necessary response to injustice. Their internalized understanding of right and wrong creates a sense of obligation and urgency that compels them to transform moral outrage into organized collective action.

#### **2.4.5 Social embeddedness**

The concept of social embeddedness highlights that individual motivation for collective action does not arise in isolation (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013: 894). Social embeddedness is shaped by the web of social relations in which individuals are situated. Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013: 894) argue that the concept of social capital is essential for understanding social embeddedness. Social capital consists of resources that are anchored in social relationships and the social structure and can be mobilized when an actor wants to increase the probability of success of a goal-oriented action (Bourdieu 1983, 1986, Coleman 1990, Lin 1982, Flap 1988, 1991, Burt 1992 cf. Lin 2001: 24). According to van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013: 895), social capital can be divided into three interrelated components: structural, relational, and cognitive. The structural component relates to the presence or absence of network ties between actors and encourages cooperative behaviour that facilitates mobilization and participation. The

relational component refers to the kinds of personal relationships developed through interaction, such as trust, respect, and friendship. The cognitive component consists of shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning that link social interaction to political awareness. Through this cognitive dimension, grievances, efficacy beliefs, identity, and group-based emotions converge into a motivational constellation for collective action (ibid.).

In this thesis, social embeddedness is understood as the social and relational context through which organizers of political collective action derive motivation, support, and legitimacy. Organizers are situated within networks of activists, NGOs, and colleagues that provide resources, recognition, and a shared sense of purpose. The existing relationships in which organizers are embedded, and the frames and resources contained within these relationships, enable and shape their efforts (Boekkooi 2012: 4). Through ongoing interaction, organizers exchange information, coordinate activities, and reinforce one another's commitment to sustaining mobilization.

Social embeddedness functions on two interconnected levels (Boekkooi 2012: 15). The first relates to organizers' internal connections within activist groups and NGOs, where trust, support, and shared understanding create emotional and motivational reinforcement. The second concerns external ties that link organizers to the broader community and potential participants (ibid.). Boekkooi (2012: 15) explains that even weak ties can play an important role in this process, as they enable organizers to reach new constituencies and disseminate information about collective action. Although weak ties do not always generate deep trust, they remain effective when shared experiences and interpretations align with those of the initiators (ibid.). Through this dual structure of strong and weak ties, organizers sustain engagement within their networks and expand mobilization across the broader community.

I believe that although social embeddedness is not included as a motivational pathway in the SIMCA model for participants (van Zomeren 2013), it represents an important motivational factor for organizers. Organizers operate within networks of activists, NGOs, and communities. These connections sustain their long-term engagement and create a sense of responsibility toward others. Through social embeddedness, organizers derive motivation from collective recognition and solidarity, which reinforces their commitment to initiating and maintaining collective action.

## 2.5 Preliminary Summary and Analytical Expectations

In general, the literature review demonstrates that the four motivational pathways identified by SIMCA (efficacy, identity, emotion, and morality) remain analytically relevant, although their relative significance varies across political and national contexts, and they are often interdependent. In situations of war and acute crisis, moral convictions and emotional responses tend to predominate (Ditrich and Sassenberg 2024), whereas under conditions of political oppression or police repression, anger, injustice and regional collective identity become the primary motivational forces (Zúñiga et al. (2023). Efficacy emerges as a particularly significant factor in democratic settings, where engagement is contingent upon the belief in the effectiveness of collective action. Taken together, these findings confirm the explanatory strength of SIMCA while indicating that its motivational dimensions may operate selectively or under specific contextual conditions that shape the dynamics of collective action.

I assume that organizers and participants share similar motivational dimensions, although the context in which these motivations occur differs. Efficacy is likely to be expressed through a perceived responsibility and involvement in coordinating actions and influencing public or institutional attention, as well as fundraising. Identity is expected to manifest as a politicized form of belonging, combining national and activist identification, motivating organizers to act on behalf of their community. Emotional motivation is expected to take the form of transforming affective experiences such as anger, grief, or solidarity into structured collective action. Moral conviction is expected to manifest as a deeply rooted sense of duty to act in defense of justice or human dignity.

**Table 2: Overview of Key Concepts Used in the Analysis**

| Motivation | Key references                                                                                   | Summary definition (key points)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Efficacy   | Olson (1965), Hornsey et. al. (2006) van Zomeren (2013); Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• instrumental motivation based on the belief that collective action can achieve desired outcomes through joint efforts</li><li>• includes internal efficacy referring to organizers' belief in their own knowledge skills and organizational capacity</li><li>• includes external efficacy referring to their belief that actions will resonate with public media or audiences</li></ul> |

|                     |                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identity            | Tajfel and Turner (1979, 2004), Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• based on a politicized sense of belonging derived from membership in a social group</li> <li>• collective identity becomes a driver of action when shared grievances are recognized and collective demands are formulated</li> <li>• for organizers, identity combines belonging to a social group and their responsibility to represent that group by expressing grievances and maintaining its public presence.</li> </ul>                             |
| Emotions            | Jasper (2019), van Zomeren (2013), Becker et al. (2011)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dynamic motivational mechanisms that arise in response to perceived injustice and develop through interaction</li> <li>• anger plays a central role as an approach oriented emotion motivating confrontation with injustice alongside emotions such as fear, grief, pride and solidarity</li> <li>• for organizers, emotions are reactions to triggers, positive or negative, that lead to the purposeful organization of collective actions.</li> </ul> |
| Morality            | Skitka (2010), van Zomeren (2013)                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refers to action motivated by perceived violations of deeply held moral convictions about right and wrong</li> <li>• moral convictions are experienced as universal and objective truths that create a sense of obligation and urgency to act</li> <li>• For organizers moral motivation drives the perception that organizing collective action is the right and necessary response to injustice</li> </ul>                                             |
| Social embeddedness | Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013)                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlights that motivation for collective action emerges within networks of social relationships</li> <li>• shaped by social capital including structural ties relational bonds such as trust and shared cognitive frames</li> <li>• for organizers embeddedness in activist networks NGOs and communities provides resources recognition solidarity and sustained commitment</li> </ul>                                                                 |

### **3. Hypotheses**

Building on the theoretical discussion above, this master thesis examines the motivations that lead individuals to assume organizing roles in political collective action. The analytical framework draws on the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) developed by van Zomeren (2013), which identifies efficacy, identity, emotion, and morality as key motivational pathways underlying collective action. While SIMCA has proven useful in explaining why individuals participate, the present study investigates whether these motivational dimensions are also applicable to those who organize political collective action.

At the same time, I assume that additional factors may be required to understand the transition from participation to organizing. Drawing on the concepts of social embeddedness (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013), this master thesis argues that the decision to take on organizing responsibilities is shaped by individual motives and by networks, organizations, and interactions that facilitate political collective action. In this sense, the study conceptualizes organizing as a socially situated process that is motivated by interpersonal and institutional relations.

These hypotheses derive from existing research on protest participation and extend it to the understudied group of organizers:

H1: Organizers of political collective action share the same core motivations (identity, emotions, morality, and efficacy ) as participants which drive engagement in political collective action.

H2: Social embeddedness constitutes an additional motivational dimension for organizers, as relationships within communities, activist groups, and institutional environments such as NGOs motivate them to assume organizing roles and sustain engagement in collective action.

Accordingly, the following chapter outlines the methodological framework, the case selection, and the procedures applied for data collection and analysis.

### **4. Methodology**

My research interests lie in exploring the motivations that drive people to become organizers of political collective action. The primary goal is to explore the motivations of

organizers, as exemplified by the case of young Ukrainians in Vienna. Therefore, I use an exploratory qualitative research design based on data collected from semi-structured interviews with young Ukrainians involved in organizing political collective action, such as marches, rallies, vigils and commemorations, political performances and political awareness-raising events in Vienna. Part of the repertoire corresponds to what social movement researchers call a “repertoire of confrontation“ (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, Tarrow 2022) a set of forms of action that movements typically perform. Political performances are not part of the classical repertoire, but are widely represented in Vienna. This type of performance is usually static, and its concept and execution are intended to evoke an emotional reaction from the general public present. One such performance in Vienna was the protest-performance against sexual assault, rape and torture in the Russian-Ukrainian war, which featured women in bloody sheets and bloody flowers, holding various signs portraying the rape and murder of women, men, and children by Russian soldiers in 2022, standing in front of the central church at Stephansplatz in Vienna (ZackZack 2022).

#### **4.1 Contextual Background: Russia’s War against Ukraine**

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has triggered one of the largest armed conflicts in Europe since the Second World War. Beyond its military and humanitarian consequences, the war has produced massive waves of volunteer and political mobilization domestically as well as transnationally. The invasion represented a dramatic escalation of Russia’s war against Ukraine, which had begun with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the armed conflict in Donbas (Sasse 2023: 70, 82).

Several key events have defined the trajectory of the war. In the first months, Russian forces attempted to seize Kyiv but were repelled by Ukrainian defenders (Sasse 2023: 102-103).

The battles of Mariupol and the siege of the Azovstal steel plant became emblematic of Ukrainian resistance (NYTimes 2022, The Guardian 2022). The atrocities uncovered in Bucha (BBC 2022) and other liberated areas shocked international audiences and intensified global solidarity with Ukraine. Each of these traumatic events generated emotional and moral responses that translated into political collective action, motivating Ukrainians at home and abroad to organize solidarity demonstrations and protest against Russia. During 2022 and 2023, Ukrainian counteroffensives regained parts of the Kharkiv and Kherson regions (The Guardian 2022), while Russia escalated missile attacks on Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure (CSIS 2026). These

developments underscored the resilience of Ukrainian society and the protracted character of the conflict.

Due to the hostilities, large numbers of Ukrainians were displaced from their homes. As the conflict entered its fourth year, it continued to generate large-scale population displacement. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, as of September 2025, 5.75 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded globally, including 5.2 million residing in European countries, while 3.75 million people remained internally displaced within Ukraine (UNHCR 2025). Austria has been among the key host states: according to Statistik Austria (2025: 5), nearly 88,000 Ukrainians were registered in the country as of January 2025. This mass displacement has generated humanitarian challenges and, at the same time, reshaped political mobilization within Ukrainian communities abroad, including in Austria.

The framework of this study is further contextualized by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Fihel et al. 2025: 2). The invasion had military and humanitarian consequences, and consequently, fundamentally reshaped the political engagement of Ukrainians within and outside the country. Already in the first days of the large-scale invasion, Ukrainian diaspora NGOs, uniting young activists around the world, began mobilizing their resources in support of Ukraine. Their participation included organizing protests and demonstrations to draw global attention to the events (ibid.). These processes gave rise to a distinct form of activism in which experiences of war, loss, and displacement interact with existing social and institutional environments in host countries.

## **4.2 Case Selection: Young Ukrainian Organizers (in Vienna)**

This thesis investigates the motivations of organizers of political collective action. Research on motivations is central for understanding how and why individuals initiate collective action, as motivation creates the capacity to mobilize human resources, provide the targeting agenda, influence the political decisions or fight against propaganda and falsifications by using the political opportunities in the country of event (Tilly and Tarrow 2015). In situations of conflict and displacement, political organizing emerges as an immediate response to crisis and becomes the foundation for longer-term political focus or policy developments (Tilly and Tarrow 2015).

The case selected for empirical investigation is young Ukrainian organizers of political collective action in Vienna. Following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Austria received nearly 88,000 Ukrainians, with Vienna hosting the largest share (Statistik Austria 2025). Since then, the city has become a prominent site of demonstrations, protests, humanitarian initiatives, and cultural projects in support of Ukraine. NGOs such as “Mrija” and “Unlimited

Democracy - Verein zur Förderung der Demokratisierung“ regularly organize various types of demonstrations around key moments of the war, such as anniversaries of invasions or specific atrocities, and express outrage and aim to mobilize the public (Mrija 2026, Unlimited Democracy - Verein zur Förderung der Demokratisierung 2026).

In this thesis, particular attention is directed to young Ukrainians between the ages of 18 and 35. This age cohort is analytically significant for three reasons. First, it represents a distinct political generation shaped by formative experiences of Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing full-scale war with Russia (Nikolayenko 2024). As such, their political practices are informed by direct exposure to war, displacement, and transnational activism. Second, youth are widely recognized in the literature on political participation as a group that engages through personalized, issue-based, and self-actualizing forms of action rather than through “dutiful” forms such as party membership or electoral participation (Vromen et al. 2015: 2-3). This suggests that young Ukrainian activists bring distinctive and innovative repertoires of mobilization and organizational practices into antiwar activism.

From a methodological perspective, this group is also particularly suitable for analysis. They are strongly represented on social media platforms, where their activities and repertoires of contention are publicly visible. My knowledge of the Ukrainian language facilitates access to this field and allows for a more nuanced understanding of their political narratives. Documenting their experiences contributes to an empirically grounded account of what drives young activists to initiate and coordinate political collective action under conditions of war-related displacement. At the same time, it offers insights into how a young political generation envisions and enacts politics that may shape the post-war trajectory of Ukraine and its relationship to Europe.

Finally, Vienna represents an empirically and methodologically strategic case. Vienna functions as a primary destination for displaced Ukrainians and as a central hub of international diplomacy, hosting organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). This institutional environment creates a highly visible arena where activists can address national and international audiences.

## **4.3 Qualitative Research Method**

The research is grounded in the assumption that organizers may share some of the motivational mechanisms described in the Social Identity Model of Social Action (SIMSA) (van Zomeren 2018, van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013), yet may also appear additional,

organizer-specific motivations. Because the research aims to understand the subjective meaning of motivation, a qualitative research design was chosen. Accordingly, I work with qualitative research methods in order to explore social realities from the perspectives of the organizers of political collective actions. According to Flick (2010: 14) qualitative research aims to describe the lifeworld from the perspective of the people involved. It thus seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social reality(s) and draw attention to processes, interpretive frameworks, and structural features (ibid.). The qualitative research method is useful for my main research question, because it is important to analyse the reality of organizers in their own context and their subjective explanation of their own motivation. Qualitative research allows the investigation in more open and therefore “closer to the subject“ strategy (Wilson 1973 cf. Flick 2010: 17).

#### **4.4 Semi structure interview**

As a data collecting method, the semi structured interview was used. This method was chosen because it combines flexibility but allows focus on the topic, which is necessary to address the research question. The study aims to collect data from individual experiences and interpretations of motivations related to organizing political collective actions, which cannot be adequately captured through standardized or fully structured interviews. Simultaneously, the research requires a certain level of consistency across interviews in order to allow systematic comparison of responses (Misoch 2019: 13).

Semi structured interviews offer a balance between openness and guidance. They are conducted on the basis of an interview guide that defines key topics and questions without predefined response options, allowing respondents to answer freely and in detail (Misoch 2019: 13). At the same time, the guide ensures that all interviews follow a comparable thematic structure, which supports systematic analysis and comparison of the collected data (ibid.). This makes the semi structured interview particularly suitable for research questions that are exploratory in nature but oriented toward specific analytical interests.

The interview guide was developed in accordance with Misoch (2019: 68) and includes four phases. The information phase explains the study and ensures informed consent. The introductory phase establishes trust and encourages open narration. The main phase addresses the core research topics through an interactive exchange between interviewer and interviewee. The concluding phase allows reflection, offers space for additional comments, and supports the interviewee in transitioning out of the interview situation. The interview guide is included in the appendix of this master’s thesis.

## 4.5 Sampling and Data Collection

The selection of interview partners followed a combined purposive and snowball sampling strategy (Gierczyk, Marcin, et al 2024). The primary criteria for inclusion were: being between the ages of 18 and 35, and having been actively involved in organising political collective actions, including demonstrations, protests, political performances, marches, vigils, or similar forms of public mobilisation. These criteria ensured that the study focused specifically on young Ukrainians who directly contribute to the organisation and shaping of political activism in Austria. The sample consisted of eight interviews (n = 8)<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 3: Overview of Interviewed Organizers**

| Date       | Location                   | Interview ID | Respondent ID | Demographics  | Organizing involvement within an NGO and across activist groups                               |
|------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09.12.2025 | Vienna, private residence  | IN4          | P4            | Female, 25-29 | “Unlimited Democracy”, “Ukrainian-Austrian Society”, “Association of Ukrainian Organisations” |
| 10.12.2025 | Vienna , private residence | IN1          | P1            | Male, 18-25   | Unlimited Democracy, helped “Defendervoices”                                                  |
| 10.12.2025 | Online (Vienna)            | IN6          | P6            | Male, 18-25   | “Youkraine”                                                                                   |
| 15.12.2025 | Vienna (Cafè)              | IN2          | P2            | Female, 25-29 | “Unlimited Democracy”                                                                         |
| 15.12.2025 | Vienna (Cafè)              | IN3          | P3            | Female, 18-25 | “Unlimited Democracy”, helped “Nezaleshanie“                                                  |
| 30.12.2025 | Vienna, private residence  | IN5          | P5            | Male, 18-25   | “Unlimited Democracy”, helped “Nezaleshanie”                                                  |
| 17.01.2026 | Vienna (UD HQ)             | IN7          | P7            | Male, 30-35   | “Mrija”                                                                                       |
| 26.01.2026 | Online (Berlin)            | IN8          | P8            | Female, 18-25 | “Vitsche”                                                                                     |

Source: Author, based on own interview data

<sup>1</sup> Ethical considerations: all participants provided informed consent for participation and the use of interview data in the research. To protect privacy, respondents are anonymized due to the potentially sensitive nature of their political activism, and identifying or potentially harmful statements were removed from transcripts.

To capture a range of organisational perspectives and to justify the research through multiple cases, I deliberately approached three independent Ukrainian initiatives in Vienna (Unlimited Democracy, Youkraine, and Mrija). These organisations differ in structure, aims, and modes of engagement, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the diverse forms of youth political activism in the diaspora.

Recruitment began with my existing connection to the CEO of Unlimited Democracy, who provided initial access to the organisation's own organisers involved in planning political collective actions in Vienna. Through this contact, I was introduced to the team of Unlimited Democracy. In addition, I was connected to an individual who had worked with Youkraine, further expanding the pool of activists engaged in demonstrations, protests, marches and other forms of political mobilisation. Furthermore, through my own prior involvement in voluntary work, I reached an organiser from Mriya, which allowed me to include perspectives from initiatives active during 2022-2025. Finally, through Instagram, I tried to find an organizer who doesn't live in Vienna and has other political and social environments. I submitted numerous inquiries to various organizations, but only Vitsche from Berlin responded. This turned out to be my final interview for this study.

All interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, allowing participants to reflect more deeply and articulate their experiences with greater nuance in their mother tongue. This linguistic decision enhanced the authenticity and richness of the data, particularly given the personal, political, and identity-related nature of the topic.

For the purposes of analysis, the interview material was subsequently translated from Ukrainian into Russian. The translation was carried out by me, who is fluent in Ukrainian and English. This procedure ensured linguistic precision and conceptual clarity across the dataset while preserving the integrity of participants' original expressions and meanings.

## **4.6 My Role as a Researcher in the Field**

As a volunteer and someone involved in establishing the crisis headquarters at Postgasse 8 in early 2022, I had the opportunity to observe activists and their work directly during the initial phase of the full-scale invasion. I participated in mass anti-war protests and marches organized by the organizations "Unlimited Democracy" and "Mriya". My prior acquaintance with the activists allowed me to establish contact with interview participants relatively quickly through organizational networks. However, this could also have influenced the collection and interpretation of the data, as I am not a neutral observer, for example, due to existing connections and my own normative position on the research topic.

## 4.7 Data Analysis

The qualitative interview material was analyzed using Mayring's (2014) qualitative content analysis. This approach was chosen because it is particularly suitable for analyzing large volumes of textual data, such as semi-structured interviews, as it allows for systematic processing of the material without losing the context that is crucial for identifying motivations. A key strength of this approach lies in its grounding in communication studies (Mayring 2014: 39), as the material is consistently interpreted within its communicative context, meaning that the text is interpreted in relation to its broader context (ibid.). This allows for greater freedom of expression for research participants and, in my research, allows for the identification of new motivations or the reinterpretation of existing ones, identifying their intensity and interrelationships. This provides greater analytical flexibility and creates the conditions for an in-depth study of participants' narratives.

This study employs inductive categorical formation according to Mayring (2014: 79). This approach is appropriate because the research question is exploratory and aims to identify the motivations for becoming an organizer of political collective action. Inductive categorical formation allows categories to emerge directly from the material, without the imposition of a predetermined theoretical framework.

Mayring (2014: 79) points out that inductive category formation is a process within the Grounded theory approach, which in this context is called "open coding." I used the more structured and systematic approach described by Mayring (ibid.).

Within the logic of content analysis, I define predetermined categories to be developed. The selection criterion is the SIMCA model (van Zomeren 2013) with the concept of social embeddedness (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013):

- Efficacy
- Identity
- Emotion
- Morality
- Social Embeddedness

According to Mayring (2014: 81), this is a deductive step, established within the framework of theoretical considerations about the research subject and the goals of the analysis.

Interview transcripts were first segmented into meaning units. The interviews were originally conducted in the Ukrainian language and were translated into English prior to analysis, with repetitions and non-essential elements removed. A meaning unit was defined as a coherent segment of text expressing one central idea, experience, evaluation, or reflection relevant to the research question. Segments varied in length from single sentences to short narrative passages, depending on semantic coherence. The material was coded line by line (sentence by sentence). Each sentence or meaning unit was checked for relevance to the selection criterion. Irrelevant material was ignored.

When a relevant meaning unit appeared for the first time, a new inductive category was created. The category labels were formulated as short descriptive phrases that remained close to the participants' own wording and avoided theoretical terminology or interpretative elements, in accordance with Mayring's (2014: 81) principle of staying as close as possible to the material. As subsequent passages were founded, each was checked against the emerging category system. If a passage corresponded to an already existing category, it was subsumed under that category. If it did not fit any existing category, a new one was formulated. This procedure was applied continuously throughout the material, ensuring that each meaning unit was either integrated into an existing category or resulted in the construction of a new one.

After approximately a third of the material had been coded, the category system was validated. In accordance with Mayring's (2014: 81) recommendations, this refinement included checking emerging categories for possible overlaps and merging overly narrowly defined categories. At this stage, the initial level of abstraction was revised to ensure consistency with the research question.

After completing this refinement, the entire dataset was coded again from beginning to end using the stabilized category system.

## **Coding examples**

To illustrate the process of inductive formation to ensure research transparency, an example will be shown of how categories were created during the first cycle and during the second cycle till the final coding and formation of Inductive categories the initial line-by-line analysis of the material. Following Mayring's inductive procedure, each meaning unit was considered as a potential source for a new category. Whenever a statement did not fit an existing category, a new one was formulated. If a meaning unit did fit a previously created category, it was included within it.

The examples below demonstrate how the initial categories emerged directly from the interview material, without the use of theoretical terminology.

**Table 4: Transcript IN3 - Cycle 1&2 Coding (Example 1)**

| Meaning Unit                                                                                                                                                    | 1.Cycle Code               | 2.Cycle Code                                   | Final Code                                 | Inductive Category                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| “I don’t experience what people there live through every day.”                                                                                                  | guilt                      | guilt as a reason for acting                   | guilt as a reason for acting               | Self-directed emotional pressure                |
| “I feel guilty if it just doesn’t get realized.”                                                                                                                | guilt                      | guilt as a reason for acting                   | guilt as a reason for acting               | Self-directed emotional pressure                |
| “For example, when there are scandals about corruption... I would try very hard to frame it in a way that doesn’t harm us, doesn’t harm Ukraine or Ukrainians.” | protecting Ukraine’s image | feeling responsible for Ukraine’s image abroad | protecting image of Ukraine and Ukrainians | Representation of Ukraine and Ukrainians abroad |

Source: Author, based on own interview data

These meaning units illustrate how emotional and responsibility-related categories emerged directly from the material. The first two passages were coded under the same category, as they expressed a similar form of guilt related to not experiencing the suffering of the war that people in Ukraine endure. The third passage introduced a new meaning

concerning responsibility for how the image of Ukraine is publicly represented, which led to the creation of a separate category.

**Table 5: Transcript IN1 - Cycle 1 & 2 Coding (Example 2)**

| Meaning Unit                                                                                                           | 1.Cycle Code          | 2.Cycle Code                                   | Final Coding                                   | Inductive Category                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| “Because an action needed to be organized and no one else was willing to take responsibility, so I did.”               | taking responsibility | taking responsibility because no one else will | taking responsibility because no one else will | Responsibility taken because other do not act |
| “Because who else is going to do it if not me? [...]There is a lack of people who are willing to take responsibility.” | taking responsibility | taking responsibility because no one else will | taking responsibility because no one else will | Responsibility taken because other do not act |
| “Because it allows us to collect donations - that’s one reason.”                                                       | collecting donations  | collecting donations                           | collecting donations through actions           | Achieving Instrumental and Political Impact   |

Source: Author, based on own interview data

These examples show how repeated meanings were subsumed under existing categories, while new practical motivations led to the creation of additional categories during the first cycle and second cycle coding.

Ultimately, the codes were standardized into final codes and assigned to inductive categories. Inductive categories represent a combination of codes with similar semantic loads (e.g., emotional pressure directed at oneself, perceptions of Ukraine and Ukrainians abroad). A logical level of attraction between inductive categories was also chosen. These categories serve to enable analysis of the material using qualitative methods.

All transcripts were imported into the qualitative data analysis software Delve<sup>2</sup>, which was used to organize the material and to carry out the coding. The software supported an efficient implementation of the inductive coding procedure.

## 5. Overview of the Category System and Results

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative interview analysis. The inductive qualitative analysis resulted in a differentiated category system capturing the motivations underlying organizing political collective action. The categories were developed through inductive coding instructions and formation of the inductive categories (Mayring 2014) bottom-up from the interview material.

Table 6 provides an overview of the inductively developed categories and selected codes, with the numbers in parentheses indicating the frequency of the respective codes across interview data. In the following sections, each category is presented in turn. The categories are described and explained with interview material in order to show how they are grounded in the empirical material.

**Table 6: Inductive Categories and Codes of Organizers' Motivations**

|          | Inductive Categories                            | Codes                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Efficacy |                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|          | A1. Achieving Instrumental and Political Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impact on political decision-making (30)</li> <li>• acting for a long-term belief in peace in Europe (6)</li> <li>• collecting donations (18)</li> </ul> |

<sup>2</sup> Delve is qualitative data analysis software to code, categorize, and organize the interview transcripts.

|          |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          | A2. Achieving Awareness-Raising Impact                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● raise people's awareness about Ukraine (11)</li> <li>● communicating with international public (8)</li> <li>● communicate with Ukrainians (2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|          | A3. Confidence in organisational competence                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● belief in personal capacity to organize (12)</li> <li>● developing organizing skills (7)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|          | A4. Self-realization through organizing                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● self-expression through public communication (5)</li> <li>● have ability to influence people (2)</li> <li>● feeling personal recognition from organizing work (1)</li> <li>● self-realization through the organizing work (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|          | A5. Limited expectation of broader impact                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● still acting despite less response (2)</li> <li>● shift from hope to disappointment to change the situation (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Identity |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|          | B1. Representation of Ukraine and Ukrainians abroad                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● responsibility for making Ukraine visible (10)</li> <li>● demonstrate international solidarity with Ukraine (1)</li> <li>● strengthening Ukraine and its people internationally (2)</li> <li>● identification as Ukrainian (6)</li> <li>● acting on behalf of own community (8)</li> <li>● placing Ukrainian issues on the public agenda (15)</li> <li>● showing Ukraine's independence culture (1)</li> <li>● achieving Ukraine's subjectivity in the international discourse (2)</li> <li>● protecting image of Ukraine and Ukrainians (7)</li> <li>● action on the basis of national identity (6)</li> </ul> |
|          | B2. Acting because of belonging to the Ukrainian community                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● feeling responsibility for own community (1)</li> <li>● acting because of belonging to the Ukrainian community (7)</li> <li>● organizing as necessary for belonging to Ukrainian identity (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Emotions |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|          | C1. Negative emotional responses toward responsible actors and institutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● negative emotional response toward responsible actors (1)</li> <li>● feeling confusion toward responsible groups (1)</li> <li>● feeling blame toward responsible groups (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

|          |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          |                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● feeling disappointment according international institution (1)</li> <li>● feeling despair toward responsible groups (1)</li> <li>● anger toward Russia and Russians (12)</li> <li>● anger toward responsible institutions and decision-makers (4)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|          | C2. Events as emotional trigger to act            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● action triggered by violent events (4)</li> <li>● feeling despair before action (1)</li> <li>● feeling anticipation and fear before early events (1)</li> <li>● feeling determination before action (2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|          | C3. Positive emotional feedback from action       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● feeling anticipation before action (1)</li> <li>● feeling uplift due to results after action (5)</li> <li>● feeling fulfilled by doing it (1)</li> <li>● being moved by speeches (1)</li> <li>● feeling pride when communicating a message (2)</li> <li>● community based motivation (2)</li> <li>● feeling uplift before action (1)</li> <li>● emotion related to results (3)</li> <li>● pride for people who protests (2)</li> <li>● satisfaction pride after successful action (2)</li> <li>● feeling good about small results (1)</li> <li>● feeling pride when people share stories through the action (2)</li> </ul> |
|          | C4. Expressing empathy with people in Ukraine     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● emotional sensitivity (3)</li> <li>● empathy to vulnerable group of Ukrainians (25)</li> <li>● personal war experience (3)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|          | C5. Self-directed emotional pressure              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● guilt as a reason for acting (13)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Morality |                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|          | D1. Responsibility taken because other do not act | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● taken responsibility because no one else will (12)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|          | D2. Self-directed moral pressure                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● feeling uncomfortable with oneself if not acting (2)</li> <li>● self accountability (6)</li> <li>● feeling morally obliged because not at the front</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|          | D3. Desire to help people                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● desire to help people affected by the war (15)</li> <li>● do something meaningful for people (1)</li> <li>● create the safe space for people (1)</li> <li>● seeing even small donations as meaningful help (1)</li> <li>● doing something useful for society (2)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

|                     |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     |                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• desire to help Ukraine as state (1)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                     | D4. Sense of duty to act                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sense of duty to act (48)</li> <li>• moral obligation to remember (1)</li> <li>• resistance instead of giving up (1)</li> <li>• developing a stronger moral orientation through engagement (1)</li> <li>• not being able to stay passive in critical moments (1)</li> </ul> |
|                     | D6. Justice-based motivation                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional response to perceived inequality (2)</li> <li>• feeling frustrated by lack of justice (5)</li> <li>• justice as a reason for acting (2)</li> <li>• fighting with the enemy (2)</li> <li>• justice as reason for acting (4)</li> </ul>                             |
| Social Embeddedness |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                     | E1. Seeing own membership as motivating the organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• membership in organization</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                     | E2. Team-based relational motivation                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being pushed by others to participate (1)</li> <li>• becoming part of the team (4)</li> <li>• supportive team environment (6)</li> <li>• team as a key source of motivation (9)</li> </ul>                                                                                  |
|                     | E3. Seeking the place to contribute                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seeking the place to contribute</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                     |                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                     | F1. Curiosity-driven participation                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interest in beginning to organize</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## 5.1 Empirical Evaluation of the Hypotheses

The next chapter will present empirical results that will simultaneously test the study's main hypotheses. It examines the role of motivations, efficacy, identity, emotions, morality (H1) and the additional social embeddedness (H2) for organizers of political collective action.

### Efficacy- and Outcome-Oriented Motivational Dimension

This section will present the results related to efficiency. According to the interview data, categories A1 - A5 relate to efficacy and outcome-oriented aspects of organizing political collective action. A1, A2, and A5 related to external efficacy, including collecting

donations and resources to support vulnerable groups, raising people's awareness about Ukraine abroad and influencing political decision-making. A3 and A4 related to belief in internal efficacy and own perception about perspectives of self-realization. All participants (from P1 till P8) referred to at least some of these categories, albeit with varying emphases.

- A1. Achieving instrumental and political impact
- A2. Achieving awareness-raising impact
- A3. Confidence in organisational competence
- A4. Self-realisation through organising
- A5. Limited expectations of broader impact

In the interview data, the category A1 appears primarily in relation to two aspects: perceived impact on political decision-making and the mobilisation of material resources through collective donation.

The impact on political decision-making was referred to by several interviewees, including P3, P6, P7, and P8, and represents one of the most frequently occurring codes within this dimension (30 times). Therefore, influencing political actors or institutional political decisions are highly motivating for the Interviewees:

**P7:** “But on the one hand it is sad, and on the other - it is good that such messages reach the Minister of Foreign Affairs directly from a street action.”

**P8:** “Likewise - when the Holodomor was recognized as genocide. At that time, we went out to protests very often. One of our goals was the official recognition of the Holodomor as genocide, and this happened in 2023, if I am not mistaken. It was a great achievement. Not only our merit, but you know that you were involved in this, and you feel it.”

Moreover, the interview data shows that organizers are motivated by the perspective of achieving impact on political actors and institutions, which is related to providing sanctions against the aggressors or political decisions concerning political diplomacy and international law.

Achieving political results was described in terms of broader, long-term orientation toward peace and stability in Europe. Interviewees speak about engagement as contribution to supporting democratic values in Europe:

**P5:** “Okay... it is right because it helps ensure stable peace in Europe, or at least contributes to achieving it.”

**P7:** “Because if such situations are silenced, and the international community does not know about them, then there is every chance that the state will move toward dictatorship.”

Another highly important theme in the interview material concerns collecting donations as a form of achieving concrete results. This category occurred frequently across the interviews (18 times), appearing in the IN1, IN2, IN3, IN4, IN5, and IN8, and represents one of the most recurrent aspects of organizing political collective action. For several interviewees, collecting donations constituted one of the strongest motivations to continue organizing, as it enabled direct and tangible forms of support.

**P4:** “And, of course, one of our main goals is also to raise donations.”

**P5:** “Well, the short-term goal is to collect as many donations as possible so that they can be transferred to those who need them most right now.”

In addition to material support through donations and aim to achieve political results from action, interviewees also referred to outcomes that were oriented toward communication with international public and Ukrainians to raise their awareness, what is marked as A2 category (Table 6).

Raising people’s awareness was mentioned in IN2, IN3, IN4, IN5, IN7, and IN8 (occurred 11 times across interviews). Interviewees refer to informing international publics about critical events in Ukraine, the threat to Europe, and democratic values that need to be protected as important to continue to organize:

**P2:** “Maybe it made Austrians and tourists feel, just a little, that this is closer than they think, much closer than it seems.”

**P8:** “We saw the changes that were taking place, and that is exactly why we organized rallies about a month before the full-scale invasion - to draw the attention of the international community to what was happening in Ukraine.”

The motivation to organize political collective actions related to raising awareness was linked to the success of the information campaign, which allowed people to empathize with the events in Ukraine and to perceive them as personally significant through people’s feedback. Reflecting on the action surrounding the MH17 tragedy, one interviewee explained:

**P5:** “Or, for example, when it was an action like MH17, about a more international, multinational tragedy, you see people for whom this is somehow close, and you see that

they also develop an understanding, they remember this conflict, it matters to them, they appreciate that someone is highlighting it.“

Moreover, some participants referred to communication with Ukrainians abroad as part of their awareness-raising efforts and described organizing as a way to engage Ukrainians living outside the country, strengthen their sense of belonging to the Ukrainian community and identity, increase their interest in Ukrainian culture, and change their mindset:

**P4:** “When we organise vechornytsi<sup>3</sup>, the goal is also to change the mindset of Ukrainians -for instance, by awakening nostalgia, strengthening their sense of belonging, and reinforcing their resistance to normalisation, even within themselves.“

Therefore, raising awareness was not limited to international audiences but also involved engaging Ukrainian communities abroad for political and cultural involvement.

However, some interviewees (P1, P2, P4, and P5) referred to limited expectations regarding the broader impact of the actions they organize (A5 in Table 6). In these accounts, they continue organising to collect donations or to change the opinion of a couple of people in the international community; they do not anticipate immediate or large-scale political change as a result of individual actions:

**P1:** “But I never expect anything concrete from my own actions. I don’t think that I organize Free Azov and they’ll be released tomorrow - that would be naïve.“

**P2:** “Maybe it made Austrians and tourists feel, just a little, that this is closer than they think , much closer than it seems. But we’ve been doing this for three years now, and somehow nothing really changes. On the contrary, it feels like people care less and less. Globally speaking, the goal is to wake people up, but I don’t know...”

The categories A3 and A4 show the motivation related to participants’ perceptions of their own effectiveness in organising and self-realisation through organising activities.

Interviewees (P1, P3, P4, P7, and P8) referred to their belief that they were able to take on leading roles and assume responsibility for organizing political collective action, based on their already gained skills, experience, and determination, even in the absence of prior certainty about specific procedures:

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<sup>3</sup> “Vechornytsi“ is a cultural event that brings together Ukrainians in a place where they can socialize, listen to Ukrainian music, and celebrate Ukrainian holidays together (author's note)

**P1:** “I knew I could manage it, even if I didn’t yet know how. In the end, it worked out reasonably well. [...] And I think I’m good at coordinating people. That’s it.”

**P4:** “I believe I have very strong resources for this. These include my knowledge of German, my experience of integration, and my overall activist work. They also include my organisational experience and my cognitive way of thinking. I see these qualities...these skills or talents...as something I was given for a purpose, and this is the best way to put them into practice.”

Self-realization also emerged as a motivational factor for organizing political collective action. In the interview data, self-realization was articulated through several related aspects, including self-expression through public communication, the perceived ability to influence others, experiences of personal recognition, and internal perception of self-realization through the organizing work itself:

**P1:** “Of course, my ego is slightly boosted by this, but more importantly, I understand that my work has produced tangible results, because these ideas have become part of what is now considered politically relevant.”

**P8:** “I want to use my voice to strengthen other people, to motivate them to use their voice.”

The ability to influence people was articulated more directly as a motivating factor for organizing as well:

**P8:** “I want to have the ability to influence people.”

However, it is important to note the lack of career-related motivation related to the understanding that organising political collective action can contribute to career advancement or the development of skills that will be in demand in future professional activities. None of the respondents mentioned organising as a means of improving career prospects or acquiring career-relevant competencies. Instead, self-realisation was described in terms of self-expression, particularly the ability to express one’s opinions and use one’s voice in social and political contexts to advance issues that are relevant to the participant.

### **Identity-Based Motivational Dimension**

The results of identity-related motivations will be presented below. Based on the interview data, the following categories were formed:

- B1. Representation and visibility of Ukraine abroad
- B2. Acting because of belonging to the Ukrainian community.

Within the motivational dimension of representation and visibility of Ukraine abroad, two closely related topics emerged: placing Ukrainian issues on the public agenda and responsibility for making Ukraine and Ukrainians visible. Regarding placing Ukrainian issues on the public agenda appeared frequently across the interviews (15 occurrences), while responsibility for making Ukraine visible was also repeatedly mentioned (10 occurrences).

Regarding the inclusion of Ukrainian issues on the public agenda, participants expressed a strong desire to publicly discuss Ukraine, what is happening in Ukraine during the war, and to emphasize that what is happening is a threat to Europe too. Thus, organizing political collective actions was described as an instrument for ensuring that Ukrainian issues are on the international agenda, contextualized, and not ignored in international public discourse:

**P6:** “The main, and in most cases the only goal is to draw attention to and inform people about an urgent issue: to state that such a problem exists, explain why it exists, and establish a basic and clear mindset of what is right and what is wrong.”

In a similar way, P5 referred to the role of organizing in countering disinformation and addressing gaps in public knowledge in Europe:

**P5:** “Also, in times when disinformation is widespread, especially from the Russian side, heavily sponsored, and present in large amounts in Europe, I think it is important and right that full information is delivered - that the truth is delivered.”

While this category is primarily based on identity-related motives, it also contains a secondary aspect related to effectiveness. According to interviewees, the inclusion of Ukrainian issues on the public agenda was aimed at informing, shaping understanding, and influencing public attention. However, these effects were not always seen as leading to direct policy changes, but rather as fulfilling a duty to ensure visibility.

Furthermore, interviewees emphasised the importance of protecting the image of Ukraine and Ukrainians abroad. P2-P8 very strongly identified themselves as Ukrainians and

described feeling a responsibility for how Ukraine and Ukrainians are perceived in international contexts.

**P7:** “Maybe this is connected with my appearance, but I clearly identify myself as Ukrainian in any situation. [...] Because this creates a certain reputational model for other Ukrainians, which later helps Ukrainians not to be perceived as ‘second-class’ or ‘third-class’ people in any country.”

In contrast, P1 positioned their identification with Ukraine at a moderate level (“somewhat”) rather than as strong. Correspondingly, this participant did not explicitly articulate a responsibility to represent Ukraine or Ukrainians in international contexts. This variation suggests that the degree of identification may relate to how strongly representational responsibility is expressed.

In this account, individual self-identification, representation of Ukrainians and collective image are closely linked. Acting publicly as a Ukrainian was described as carrying responsibility not only for oneself but also for other members of the community:

**P2:** “Because I want to believe that we can at least present ourselves well. If we can present Ukraine as normal, reasonable people, then it’s better to do that.”

This interpretation is further supported by interviewees’ responses to questions related to acting on behalf of one’s community. P2, P4, P6 directly mentioned the feeling responsible for representing others through their organizing activities. One interviewee stated:

**P4:** “For example, when we address occupation, I feel that I am acting on behalf of people who are currently under occupation, as well as those whose relatives are under occupation, or who were under occupation but have since left.”

Firstly, the data indicate that although participants of interview did not explicitly articulate protecting Ukraine’s image as a direct motivation for organizing political collective action, it forms part of a broader orientation toward representing the Ukrainian community in international contexts, which interviewees describe as important. Secondly, identification with national identity is linked to responsibility for representing one’s own community and acting on behalf of this community.

Additional interview material further supports a connection between belonging to the Ukrainian community (B2) and responsibility to represent it through organizing political collective action.

A particularly strong connection between acting and belonging to the Ukrainian community was articulated by P2. In this account, political engagement is directly linked to identification with the Ukrainian community and to the impossibility of remaining indifferent as a member of that community. The interviewee explicitly framed organizing as a consequence of belonging:

**P2:** “[...] If I belong to the Ukrainian community, then I cannot be indifferent to Ukraine or to Ukrainians. Because I care, I go and do something. If I didn’t care about being Ukrainian and belonging to this state, I wouldn’t do anything. And if I’m not at the front, then I have to do at least something for this country. Otherwise, there will be neither a country nor people in Ukraine. [...] Yes. I needed my own community here during the war. I was deliberately looking for a place where I could belong, help, and be part of the Ukrainian diaspora.”

Other interviewees similarly referred to belonging to the Ukrainian community as a motivating factor for organizing, albeit in less extensive terms:

**P4:** “My sense of belonging is probably one component of my motivation.”

**P6:** “In this sense, a feeling of belonging to the Ukrainian community does motivate me.”

In addition, P6 described organizing as becoming a central and meaningful part of life, closely tied to maintaining membership in a value-based Ukrainian community:

**P6:** “Today, however, this activity has become a kind of meaningful purpose for me... something without which I can no longer imagine my life. I feel that if I were not engaged in this work, I would not be worthy of belonging to the value-based community of people with whom I associate my Ukrainian national identity.”

### **Emotional motivational dimension**

The interview materials show that interviewees experienced and described emotions in highly individual ways, using a variety of expressions and nuances. Emotional experiences varied among participants, but they can be grouped into established categories:

- C1. Negative emotional responses toward responsible actors and institutions
- C2. Events as emotional triggers to act
- C3. Positive emotional feedback from action
- C4. Expressing empathy with people in Ukraine
- C5. Self-directed emotional pressure

Participants expressed their emotions in connection with organizing political collective action, but they were not always described as directly motivating or demotivating. In several interviews, emotions were depicted as changing over time and varying in intensity.

Participants often differentiated between the emotions experienced at different stages of the war. As a result, they described emotions not as stable, but rather as dynamic and constantly changing experiences that could motivate, maintain engagement, or lose relevance over time and be unrelated to motivation.

With regard to anger toward Russia and Russian actions, interviewees expressed varying degrees of emotional motivation. Three out of eight participants of the interview reported that anger strongly or moderately motivated their organizing activities, while others described anger as playing only a minor role or not functioning as a motivating factor at all.

Some interviewees explicitly stated that anger motivated them to engage in organizing work, particularly at the beginning of the war:

**P2:** “Anger does motivate me, but it was much stronger at the beginning [...] At the beginning, it was endless hatred and endless anger. Now it’s still there, but more contained, because I understand that my anger won’t change anything. I hate the OSCE, the Red Cross, everyone and Russians as well.”

The next interviewee described anger as persisting but becoming less emotionally charged due to exhaustion and burnout. One interviewee explained:

**P4:** “Sometimes anger. But overall, considering the number of events we organise, due to professional fatigue and burnout, I have very few emotions left. If there are any emotions, it is usually anger.”

One interviewee explicitly stated that anger was directed at Russia as a political entity rather than at individuals:

**P8:** “Yes, I have anger at Russia - as Russia.”

In contrast, some interviewees reported that they no longer experienced anger toward Russian society, describing a form of emotional disengagement. Therefore, the absence of anger was framed as a consequence of emotional distancing and emotional burnout over time.

The anger toward international institutions such as the United Nations, the OSCE, or institutions of the European Union appeared less frequently in the interview material. Explicit and strong anger toward such institutions was expressed primarily by one participant P8:

**P8:** “Instead, I have very strong anger, but different. It is anger not at Russians, but at the European political establishment. Europe's maximum dependence on America, on Russia, on Russian gas. I have enormous anger at where and by what path our democracy is going now, and where the political structure of the world is moving in general.”

Several respondents spoke of critical events in Ukraine (e.g., the shelling of the Ohmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv), after which inaction became impossible for them:

**P1:** “When something like this happens, you can't just sit calmly.”

**P6:** Every time I see that Ukraine is being shelled or that people are dying, it is a pain for me.

On the other hand, a feeling of determination preceding action was also noted, suggesting that emotionally difficult moments can develop into determination, which helps to transform emotion into action.

**P1:** “Sometimes it's after a shelling we go out to protest immediately. Even if you're tired and don't want to, you understand that you have to.”

Therefore, violence evokes a sense of urgency that exceeds fatigue or reluctance.

**P8:** “[...] we turned our emotion into action”.

The above data indicate that anger toward the aggressor or institutions can act as a motivating factor for organizing collective political action, especially in the early stages of events. However, the motivating role of anger appears to diminish over time under the influence of emotional exhaustion, burnout, or emotional distancing. Furthermore, anger may not be the primary motivating emotion, it could also be emotional pain or a sense of determination to change something.

Nevertheless, the emotional burnout was noted throughout the interviews; when participants were asked whether any emotions motivated them to organize political collective action, they responded:

**P8:** “And because of this it is very difficult, and you burn out emotionally a lot.”

**P4:** “But overall, considering the number of events we organise, due to professional fatigue and burnout, I have very few emotions left.”

**P1:** “Maybe at the very beginning<sup>4</sup>. Now I’m experiencing severe emotional burnout, that doesn’t motivate me anymore.”

Emotional burnout is a consequence of constantly ongoing activity, constant responsibility, deadlines and is a dynamic process when constant emotional stress results in a lack of emotional reactions.

The results, however, show that interviewees also experience positive emotions before, during, or especially after the organized event. These included feelings of anticipation, emotional uplift, and a sense of fulfilment derived from engagement. Most positive emotional responses were associated with observable outcomes and interpersonal interactions:

**P6:** “If, after an action, a foreigner, for example, an elderly man approaches me, says thank you, and shares his experience, then of course I feel a bit of joy and a bit of hope.”

**P1:** “It’s more a sense of satisfaction that we did something well - like successfully realizing a project.”

**P6:** “They are momentary emotions -brief reactions like, ‘Wow, that’s impressive, this is a large-scale result.’”

In sum, the results show that positive emotions are associated with the observed results of organizing political collective action. Satisfaction, pride, joy, and hope were most often associated with tangible achievements, such as successful fundraising, project implementation, or visible public engagement.

According to the study's results, the highest degree of emotion-related motivation is associated with emotional empathy. Interview data show that empathy for people in Ukraine is the most consistently and strongly expressed emotional motivation for organizing political

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<sup>4</sup> Beginning full scale invasion (author’s note)

collective action (29 occurrences). All interviewees (P1-P8) reported varying degrees of empathy for people, particularly those affected by the war.

Unlike momentary emotional reactions to specific events or results, empathy was described as a foundational and enduring emotional orientation. One interviewee explicitly framed empathy as one of the core motivations for engagement:

**P1:** “Second, it is because I empathize with people there. I feel solidarity with them. I want to help them. These are the two main foundations.”

Similarly, another participant emphasised the centrality of empathy to their engagement:

**P7:** “If I did not have empathy, I probably would not do anything at all.”

Empathy was frequently directed toward specific groups, such as civilians and soldiers affected by the war:

**P5:** “Empathy for Ukrainians, for the soldiers, for example, who are standing there.”

**P2:** “Very strongly. I’m a very empathetic person. I feel empathy toward Ukrainians who cannot stand up for themselves, who cannot protect themselves. So I think that this empathy plays a very big role in this, and it very strongly, that is, precisely empathy toward people motivates me, and not only me.”

Another strong motivational emotion was the sense of guilt articulated by the majority of interviewees (P2, P3, P5, P7, and P8). Unlike anger, which is directed outward, guilt was described as an internally, constantly emotional response connected to one’s own actions or perceived inaction:

**P2:** “A sense of duty. Very often also a feeling of guilt, although I question myself about that, because it’s quite toxic. Solidarity. Empathy. The conviction that if I did nothing, I would be ashamed to look at myself in the mirror.”

**P3:** “I feel guilty if it just doesn’t get realized.”

**P8:** “They are the most important to me, because they are living in these conditions now, and not us. [...] At such moments, I feel guilty as if I did not do enough, as if I did not send enough emails, did not explain it interestingly enough, did not present it in a different way.”

According to received results, guilt appears as a persistent and self-directed emotional driver. Unlike short-lived emotional reactions, it is described as a recurring internal pressure that motivates continued engagement and organizing political collective action.

The results in this chapter show that the emotional motivations for organizing political collective action are dynamic and multifaceted. While anger or emotional pain may initially stimulate organizing, their motivating role often diminishes over time due to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Positive emotions such as pride, satisfaction, joy, and hope were primarily associated with tangible outcomes, functioning not as a motivation but rather as a consequence. Conversely, empathy for those affected by war proved to be the most consistent and fundamental emotional factor for all participants, while guilt acted as a strong emotional pressure directed at oneself, supporting continued participation. In sum, it appears that empathy and guilt are the most motivating feelings in emotional dimension for organizers of political collective action.

### **Morality-oriented motivation**

This section presents findings related to moral motivation. According to interview data, categories D1-D4 reflect motivation based on a sense of moral responsibility for ensuring actions take place, a desire to help people who have suffered in the war or soldiers who fight for their country, a sense of moral duty to these people and one's country, and internal moral pressure associated with self-images of good people with values.

- D1. Responsibility taken because others do not act
- D2. Self-directed moral pressure
- D3. Desire to help people
- D4. Sense of duty to act

Interviewees (P1, P2, P3, P6, and P8) demonstrated an acceptance of responsibility for organizing because they perceived passivity or insufficient action on the part of others (occurs 12 times). In interviews, organizing collective political action was viewed as necessary because “someone had to do it.”:

**P1:** “Because who else is going to do it if not me? It’s very simple. There is a lack of people who are willing to take responsibility.”

**P6:** “Accordingly, if there was no one available who could organise an action or a picket, then someone had to take responsibility for it, and that person would be me. The goal was to prevent the overall volunteer framework from weakening.”

And from the responsibility that arises from the perceived inaction of others as an external manifestation, comes the internal moral pressure of one's own perception. Participants of interviews (P1, P2, P4 described internal discomfort, guilt, or self-criticism when imagining inaction. Thus, it becomes necessary to organize one's work to remain consistent with one's own moral standards:

**P1:** “The desire to choose the right side in difficult times. The desire to be able to look myself in the eye years later and say that I didn’t just sit with my arms crossed.”

**P2:** “The conviction that if I did nothing, I would be ashamed to look at myself in the mirror.”

In the following, the desire to help people also emerged as a visible motivation. This included the wish to support vulnerable groups, such as children, which is closely connected to the previously identified emotional dimension of empathy toward people in Ukraine:

**P6:** “And also to help people who are in Ukraine, because I was in their situation, and they helped me a lot.”

**P3:** “So that means I have to do something here, in order to help in some way.”

**P7:** “I am motivated by a sense of justice, a sense that I can do something for those people and for the country that I love”

Some interviewees also mentioned wanting to do something useful for society or to do something meaningful for people, to create safe spaces for those affected, and to contribute to helping their own state.

A further significant finding is that the strongest moral motivation identified in the interviews was a sense of duty to act. This category was found in all participants (P1-P8) and was the most frequently encountered code (49 instances). Throughout the interviews, a sense of duty consistently intersected with other motivational categories, including empathy, guilt, responsibility for results, the desire to help, and representing the interests of Ukrainians and Ukraine. Participants perceived their actions as a moral duty, and this was evident throughout the interviews.

Interviewees framed organizing not as optional engagement but as something that “has to be done.” Duty was frequently connected to perceptions of not being at the front, not being directly exposed to violence, or living outside Ukraine, which created a perceived moral struggle requiring compensatory action.

P2 expressed this particularly explicitly:

**P2:** “If I’m not at the front, then I have to do at least something here. And if you’re no longer in Ukraine, then all the more you have to do something. If I don’t do anything, then nothing will be done, and things will only get worse. If I’m not at the front, then I have to do at least something. For me, this is right, because if people are dying in terrible suffering for me, including for me personally, and I do nothing, then that’s simply disrespectful. Disrespect and devaluation.”

For P4, duty appears as a broader and enduring moral principle:

**P4:** “Everything I do is grounded in my moral responsibility to act.”

In the following, P3 described duty to continue to act:

**P3:** “Time keeps passing and nothing really changes, and inside I have this feeling that I have to continue acting... And it’s something that has to be done.”

P2 referred to critical events as moments of clear moral obligation to act:

**P2:** “If we’re talking about very clear moments, then it was when Sumy<sup>5</sup> happened, when Okhmatdyt<sup>6</sup> happened, when Kakhovka<sup>7</sup> happened... definitely those moments.”

Similarly, **P8** described duty as emerging in moments of crisis:

**P8:** “And also, when there was the shelling of Okhmatdyt, it was very morally difficult [...] It was... I felt a moral obligation.”

Thus, the data indicate that moral motivation is very strong and stable, even over the long duration of the war. Unlike emotions, whose intensity fluctuates, duty appears as a fixed orientation that does not change over time. Participants interpret their role in the context of the war through a sense of moral duty. Linking this to the previous results focused on outcomes,

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<sup>5</sup> 2025 Sumy airstrike (author’s note)

<sup>6</sup> Shelling of children’s hospital in Kyiv (author’s note)

<sup>7</sup> 2023 Destruction of Kakhovka Dam (author’s note)

some participants stated that even if an action does not bring significant results, they still feel that they have to do it. The findings clearly indicate that morally oriented motivation is essential for the long-term maintenance of engagement in organizing political collective action.

## **Social embedness**

The last dimension concerns social embeddedness and the motivations that arise through it. All participants in the interviews were members of non-governmental organizations, which can be described as social movement organizations. Some participants held membership in more than one organization. For example, P5 is a member of the NGO Unlimited Democracy as well as the humanitarian, media-oriented NGO Youkraine.

This dimension includes the following categories:

- E1. Seeing own membership as motivating the organization
- E2. Team-based relational motivation
- E3. Seeking the place to contribute

Throughout the interviews, it became evident that team involvement and organizational membership themselves functioned as motivational factors for organizing political collective action.

For example, P4 and P8 referred to their belonging to an organization as a factor that encouraged them to organize:

**P8:** “But yes, one hundred percent. I do not know whether I would organize rallies if I were not in this organization. If the organization were not such a big part of my life, I would most likely just come to actions and take part in them. But I do not think that I would organize them.”

**P4:** “ For me, Unlimited has always been a space for self-realisation, where there are no boundaries other than the limits of your imagination. In that sense, it is a platform that removes constraints and enables you to do what you want, and to implement your ideas fully.

Other participants make an accent on relationship in the team, and the team motivates them to act:

**P3:** “I simply like the people. We have a really great team in the sense that you’re always supported. If you take something on, people help you. That motivates me.”

**P8:** “The team plays a huge role in the fact that I am still here and can do this already for four years without pauses and breaks.”

**P5:** “Of course, when you’re in a community of people who are in this context, then even simple conversations and supporting each other make it much easier to do.”

The final category within the social engagement dimension refers to participants actively seeking spaces in which they can participate and contribute. This category appears in two of the eight interviews (P2 and P3) and reflects a proactive orientation toward joining social collective structures.

Participants described a purposeful search for belonging and meaningful participation after arriving in Vienna, where they could help others and feel a sense of belonging to the Ukrainian community. This isn't exactly about the motivation to organize actions, but it is an important part of shaping that motivation later on.

P2 described this search explicitly:

**P2:** “I was deliberately looking for a place where I could belong, help, and be part of the Ukrainian diaspora. [...] I needed my own community here during the war. [...] It was my proactive desire to join some kind of collective activity, to feel that I was doing at least something here.”

Similarly, P3 referred to an active wish to join and contribute:

**P3:** “As soon as I moved to Vienna, I wanted to find a place where I could contribute somehow. [...] And when I first came across Unlimited Democracy, I really wanted to join and help with this kind of work.”

It is also important to note that the thematic focus of the activities and the objectives participants aim to achieve influence their organizational affiliation. All participants associated with Unlimited Democracy emphasized fundraising as a key motivation. In contrast, P7 from

Mrija reported that organizing actions is not driven by the goal of collecting donations but by the intention to communicate with the international community and achieve political impact to support Ukraine. Likewise, P8 from Vitsche identified voice, communication, and political influence as the primary components of their motivation.

### **Curiosity -Based Motivation**

In addition to the theoretically derived motivational dimensions, I found the data, which was confusing to transfer to existing predefined deductive categories due to complexity, namely interest to try to organize. Curiosity can be partly related to emotions, but more complex ones, which turn more into feelings and to internal efficiency, when a person finds a benefit for himself, here it is the satisfaction of curiosity. Therefore, I made an additional category (F1), namely curiosity-based motivation, what emerged from personal interest, initiative, and the desire to try something new.

Several interviewees described their initial involvement in organizing political collective action, additionally driven by curiosity or situational interest. For example, P8 expresses interest in learning something new:

**P8:** “So I will say this: it is not that I consciously took on the role of organizer. But it... I sort of showed initiative myself. I was interested in learning how it is done“

Similarly, P1 and P3 explicitly framed their engagement as motivated by a wish to try something new:

**P1:** “I wanted to try it , I like new things.“

**P1:** “And of course, I also wanted to try it; it was interesting.“

**P3:** “I had wanted to try this for a long time.“

These statements indicate that organizing was, at least initially, perceived as an opportunity for experimentation and self-discovery.

A particularly distinct form of curiosity-driven engagement appears in the interview with P6, who repeatedly feeling boredom with out engagement in activities:

**P6:** “As I mentioned earlier, I initially started volunteering primarily out of boredom.”

However, for all interviewees who expressed interest in trying to participate, this motivation wasn't the sole driver, but merely an additional one. For example, this is clearly evident in P2's response:

**P2:** “Either I’m personally interested in joining something, or I simply feel that it’s my duty.”

Here it is difficult for P2 to distinguish between these motivations, since apparently they are both present: each to its own degree.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter presented the empirical findings and assessed the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework. The results largely support Hypothesis 1, showing that the motivations of organizers are structured around the core dimensions of the SIMSA, however differ in their intensity and context. In addition, Hypothesis 2 is confirmed as well, as social embeddedness in social movement organizations and activist networks emerges as an additional and distinct motivational dimension that facilitates and sustains organizing practices. These findings provide the empirical basis for the further discussion chapter, in which the results are interpreted in relation to the research questions and theoretical foundation.

## **6. Discussion**

This chapter answers the central research question, “What are the motivations to become organizers of political collective action?”, by answering formulated subquestions above. In the following I will interpret the main findings according to the theoretical foundation of the master thesis and its literature review.

The first subquestion of the research asks how efficacy, identity, emotions, and morality affect the decision of young Ukrainians in Vienna to take on organizing roles in political collective action. The empirical data obtained largely answer this question and reveal important differences in the intensity of each motivation among young organizers.

The received data shows that efficacy constitutes a significant motivational dimension for organizers, as it does for participants in collective action research. Organizers referred to external efficacy (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013) (e.g., influencing political decision-making, raising donations, increasing people's awareness) and internal efficacy (belief in their own ability to coordinate, lead, and implement actions) (ibid.). And both are strongly presented across interviewed participants conducted with organizers based in Vienna as well as with the organizer based in Berlin. Therefore, internal and external efficacy are confirmed in different local contexts.

However, the efficacy motivation for organizers is more individualistic. Van Zomeren (2013) draws efficacy as a belief that participants believe that their group is capable of achieving common goals through collective action. Organizers demonstrate a strong belief in their own effectiveness and emphasize the achievement of tangible outcomes. Their motivation is reinforced by the opportunity to validate their own capacities and to confirm to themselves that they are capable of attaining the results they seek. According to Hornsey et al. (2006), the efficacy is not always the main predictor for motivation of participants of collective action, however for young Ukrainian organizers it is mostly present, even if they don't expect broader impact or results. All interview participants who were not expecting broader results, claimed that collecting donations is one of the main reasons why they organize, because with these resources they can help vulnerable groups of Ukrainians.

Identity emerged as another central motivational dimension. Organizers described their engagement as rooted in their identification as Ukrainians and belonging to the national community, wishing to represent their own community and talk on behalf of its community under threat. Political collective action was seen as an expression of a desire to be the voice of their country on the international arena.

Tajfel and Turner (1979, 2004) argued that individuals partially construct their self-concept on the basis of their membership in social groups, and that the salience of these group affiliations directs attention toward collective identity, which in turn shapes their political behavior. Several interview participants reported that national consciousness and rebellion, particularly in the context of the Orange Revolution 2004 (LpB n.d) or the Revolution of Dignity 2014 (Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute n.d) had already developed during their childhood or adolescence, or the democratic values had been shaped within their families. Thus, the formation of a national identity in early or

adolescence preceded the interviewees' motivation to begin organizing and taking responsibility for their national community, despite the fact that five organizers moved to Austria voluntarily, as did the organizer from Germany, and not as a result of the war.

The empirical findings also show a correlation between national identification and the desire to take responsibility for representing one's national group. The stronger the identification with Ukraine, the greater the perceived responsibility for representing the group. In this sense, those organizers who strongly identified with Ukraine and Ukrainians demonstrated a motivation to act on behalf of their national community.

Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) argue that collective identity becomes a driver of collective action when it is politicized, meaning that shared grievances are recognized, blame is attributed to an external actor, and collective demands are formulated. The findings of this study reflect precisely this dynamic. Ukrainian organizers clearly identify Russia as the aggressor, which strengthens the boundary between “us” and “them” and reinforces collective identity. Moreover, it is rooted in the desire to protect one's people and help those affected by war. This constellation also includes the moral aspect of an inner sense of being on the right side and fighting against injustice.

Thus, Ukrainian national identity in this case is strongly politicized. It combines resistance against an external enemy with a moral commitment to defend and support the group. In line with the theoretical argument, this politicized identity increases the likelihood not only of participation but also of assuming responsibility for organizing political collective action.

The third aspect of motivation, based on emotions, also resonates with the model SIMSA (van Zomenren 2013). However, it is precisely in emotions that differences can be observed between protest organizers and participants. The data show that interviewees articulate anger related to the outgroup (Russia, Russians, in some cases, international institutions), but the motivating component of anger was only observed at the beginning of their organizing activity or after critical moments, such as missile strikes or military crimes of Russia. Therefore, the distinction proposed by Becker, Tausch, and Wagner (2011) between self-directed and outgroup-directed emotions is consequently partially confirmed. Organizers did experience negative outgroup-directed emotions (anger, disappointment, despair). At the same time, participation in organizing generated positive self-directed emotions such as pride and satisfaction, particularly when actions produced visible results. On the other hand, these positive emotions were described as situational and

outcome-dependent rather than as primary motivations. Therefore, here I observe a visible connection between positive emotions and a successful outcome, which is a parameter of effectiveness.

For protest participants, anger is a fundamental emotion (van Zomeren 2013, Jasper 2019), but for organizers who have been engaged in political collective action for a long time, anger cannot be present as a constant reactive emotion. Anger is more often transformed into sadness. As interviewees noted, over time, emotional burnout reduced the intensity of anger as a motivating factor. Instead, empathy and guilt became more stable emotional forces. Guilt acted as a self-directed emotional pressure, reinforcing continued participation even when fatigue set in.

Therefore, anger in the early stages of war functions as an emotion stimulating immediate mobilization, but not in long-term perspective.

Thus, emotions clearly motivate organizers, but their structure and intensity changes over time. Reflexive emotions such as anger can initiate action, while empathy and guilt sustain it.

Another significant motivational dimension in political collective action is morality. The obtained results convincingly support the theoretical understanding of morality as a central motivational pathway (van Zomeren, 2013; Skitka, 2010). Moral duty to act is a very strong predictor of organizers' motivation. Motivation is articulated as something that “must be done.” Although the outcomes of collective action were also important, moral duty prevails over this, as some actions are carried out from a more symbolic position, such as actions in memory of victims. This reflects the internalized and universal nature of moral beliefs described by Skitka (2010), which function as deeply held standards of right and wrong.

Consistent with van Zomeren's (2013) argument that violations of moral standards can generate intense engagement, Ukrainian organizers interpreted the war as a profound moral injustice that required action. Importantly, moral obligation remained stable over time, even as anger diminished or burnout increased. This indicates that, in the context of a protracted war, morality serves as a solid foundation for facilitating the process of becoming an organizer. In principle, based on research findings, moral motivation is the strongest and prevails over other motivations. Even if instrumental results are important, these results are synchronic with the organizations' moral values of desire to help others and fighting against war.

The next sub-question addresses how social embeddedness within diaspora-based NGOs and activist networks contributes to sustaining individual motivation and facilitating the transformation from participation to organizing.

According to van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013), motivation for collective action does not emerge in isolation but is embedded within networks of social relationships. The empirical findings reflect this relational dimension in two important ways. First, several organizers assumed responsibility for organizing shortly after engaging in smaller supportive roles, gradually moving from assisting within a team to coordinating political collective action. This progression illustrates that embeddedness within activist structures facilitates the transition from participation to organizing by normalizing responsibility and building practical competence. Second, organizers emphasized that teamwork and a supportive collective environment function as additional sources of motivation. The presence of trust, shared purpose, and mutual encouragement within activist networks strengthens the willingness to continue organizing.

The findings can be further interpreted through the concept of social capital, understood as resources embedded in social relationships and social structures that can be mobilized to increase the likelihood of achieving goal-oriented action (Lin 2001). The empirical material demonstrates that organizers draw on such resources in concrete ways. Membership in NGOs provides access to networks, communication channels, logistical infrastructure, public visibility, thereby enhancing the perceived feasibility and effectiveness of organizing.

Following van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013), social capital operates on structural, relational, and cognitive levels. First, social embeddedness facilitated the transition from participation to organizing through its structural level. For some respondents, initial involvement began with small support roles in NGO, which gradually evolved into responsibility for coordinating political collective action (e.g. protest). This occurs because organizing political action requires experience and support. Ultimately, even if the desire to organize, rather than just participate, was primary, organizers only came to coordinate over time and through gradual engagement in a structured activist environment. Second, the dynamics of relationships within activist teams influence organizers' motivation. Organizers emphasized the importance of trust, collaborative efforts, and support, especially during periods of emotional exhaustion, time constraints, or diminished public attention. Interpersonal relationships within a team influence the continuation of activist activities. Some

organizers, according to the data, assumed greater responsibility when they knew their team would support them and rescue them in a critical moment.

At the cognitive level, future organizers may choose a social research organization to participate in based on already established values, or they may develop them internally through collective deliberations and strategic guidelines. Belonging to a specific organization implies alignment with its interpretive framework and collective goals. Thus, the study found that participants' motivations are closely linked to the dominant goals and orientations of their respective organizations. For example, all members of 'Unlimited Democracy' emphasize fundraising as a central motivation for organizing, particularly to support vulnerable groups in Ukraine. In contrast, organizers affiliated with 'Mrija,' 'Youkraine,' and 'Vitsche' placed more emphasis on communication with the international community and political influence than on fundraising. Political influence was described as a particularly important motivation of a 'Mrija' member.

The remaining question concerns how organizers themselves conceptualize and differentiate their motivations from those of participants in protests and demonstrations. The empirical material shows that organizers do not perceive their motivations as fundamentally different in substance from those of participants. However, differences become visible at the level of interpretation and role perception.

First of all, the organizer's motivations are based on mechanisms that ensure long-term sustainability. Participants in political collective action may join in response to specific events and experience reactive emotions. Organizers described their participation as ongoing, even though they might not achieve the desired results from the action or have emotional burnout. This activity extends beyond ad hoc protests. Even in situations of diminished public attention or limited political influence, they perceived organizing as a responsibility that persisted over time.

Secondly, an additional inductively derived element concerns curiosity and initiative. Some organizers described their initial engagement as driven by a desire to try organizing or to test themselves in this role. Statements such as volunteering "out of boredom" or having "wanted to try this for a long time" suggest that personal initiative and exploratory motivation can also contribute to the transition from participation to organizing. This dimension is not explicitly captured in SIMCA. However, it is reflected in the instrumental-individual ('my interests') dimension of Walgrave et al. (2013), related to protest participation. Thus, if we

reconcile curiosity-based motivation with the theoretical approach, then motivation can be classified as instrumental-individual, including the sense of benefit for oneself.

According to the above, the difference between participants and organizers lies in their motivation to take on greater responsibility, show initiative, encourage themselves, and use the activist networks they have as a source of motivation.

## **8. Conclusion**

This thesis set out to answer the central research question: What are the motivations to become organizers of political collective action? Focusing on young Ukrainian activists in Vienna, it examined how individual motivations are shaped by the core dimensions of the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) and whether additional motivational factors emerge in the context of organizing. By combining a theory-guided perspective with inductive category formation, the study provides new insights into the motivational foundations of organizing political collective action during a protracted war. In addition to the Vienna-based interviews, one interview with an organizer in Berlin was included as a contrastive locality-based perspective in order to assess the transferability of the identified mechanisms beyond the study case.

The results from qualitative interviews of master thesis demonstrate that the motivations of organizers are multidimensional and largely structured around the five core pathways efficacy, identity, emotions, morality and social embeddedness. Efficacy is strongly individualized and closely linked to the achievement of tangible outcomes and the validation of one's own capacities to coordinate and implement collective action. Identity operates in a politicized form, combining national belonging with a perceived responsibility to represent and defend a threatened community.

Emotional dynamics are characterized by a temporal transformation:, where anger plays an important role in the initial phase of mobilization, long-term engagement is sustained primarily by empathy and guilt as self-directed emotions. Moral obligation emerges as the most stable and enduring motivational force, structuring engagement even in situations of emotional exhaustion and limited political impact. Embeddedness in diaspora-based NGOs and activist networks facilitates the transition from participation to organizing by providing access to resources and experience, providing trust and a supportive environment. It also

motivates long-term engagement by creating collective environments in which responsibility and emotional burden could be shared.

### **Critical Reflection and Limitations**

The first limitation concerns the conceptualization of the term “organizer.” While the distinction between participants, more involved activists, and leaders is implicit in the collective action literature, a systematic conceptualization of organizers as a specific category of actors remains underdeveloped. In this paper, this category is adopted and empirically substantiated in the context of Ukrainian activism during a full-scale war. While this analytical distinction has proven productive for understanding motivations, it requires further theoretical refinement and testing in other empirical settings.

Second, the empirical material is based primarily on the case of Vienna, supplemented by one interview conducted in Berlin, as an analytical comparative category that takes into account local specificities. Both cities are located in democratic European Union member states and offer relatively similar political opportunity structures. Thus, the identified motivations are shaped by a democratic socio-political environment. It cannot be assumed that the same dynamics would arise in non-democratic contexts, in countries with different migration regimes, or under conditions of repression.

Thirdly, the study focuses on actively involved activists who have already taken organizational roles, which does not account for motivation, individuals who have disengaged over the past four years, or those who were unable to integrate into organizational structures. Finally, the data are based on retrospective self-descriptions of motivation collected during the ongoing war. These narratives are shaped by the interviewees' changing emotional states, political events, or triggering moments. Descriptions of motivation will in any case be linked to the interviewee's psychological state, so identifying patterns of organizer motivation requires a large sample size, where individual processes are neutralized by the quantity of data.

Firth, an additional limitation is the fact that the interviews were conducted by a researcher also involved in the field being studied. My previous experience working in Ukrainian diaspora activism facilitated access to participants and enabled me to establish trust, which was crucial for discussing personal motivations. At the same time, this position could have influenced the process of data collection and interpretation. Existing social connections

can influence how respondents formulate their answers, for example, by their desire to present their activities in a particular way. Furthermore, my own experience could have influenced the interpretation of the data. Although I considered and addressed these risks, the dual role of researcher and participant remains a methodological limitation.

## **Future Research**

Future research could further expand the understanding of organizers within political collective action by using more diverse study cases. Studies with greater resources could combine qualitative and quantitative methods and include larger samples across different countries rather than focusing on a single national context. Comparative research would make it possible to examine whether the motivational patterns identified in this study are specific to Ukrainian activism or reflect broader dynamics present in other social movements. It would also be important to examine activism in countries with different political regimes and opportunity structures, including non-democratic contexts, in order to understand whether similar organizing roles and motivations emerge under conditions of repression or restricted political participation.

Expanding the empirical scope in this way would contribute to the further theoretical development of organizers as a distinct category of actors within collective action research. Greater analytical attention to this group would help illuminate the often-overlooked processes that occur behind the scenes of protest mobilization. By conceptualizing and systematically studying these organizing practices, scholars can deepen our theoretical understanding of how collective action emerges.

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# Appendix

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### 1. How old are you?

(Please select one option.)

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30 or older

### 2. What is your gender?

(Please select one option.)

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

### 3. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

(Please select one option.)

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. When did you move to Vienna?

(Please select one option.)

- ☐ Before 24 February 2022
- ☐ After 24 February 2022

### 5. Why did you move to Vienna?

(Open-ended)

### 6. How much do you identify as Ukrainian?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Strongly
- ☐ Very strongly

### 7. Since February 2022, have you participated in any protests (such as demonstrations, marches, rallies, vigils, or political performances) where you were not an organizer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### 8. If yes, how many protests did you attend as a participant only in the past 12 months?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-3
- ☐ 4-5
- ☐ More than 5

### 9. How many protests or actions have you organized or helped organize in the past 12 months?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-3
- ☐ 4-5
- ☐ More than 5

### 10. When did you first begin organizing protests in Vienna?

- ☐ Before 2022
- ☐ In 2022 or later

### 11. What types of protests or actions have you organized or helped organize in Vienna?

(Please select all that apply.)

- ☐ Marches
- ☐ Rallies

- ☐ Vigils / commemorations
- ☐ Political performances / symbolic actions
- ☐ Cultural or awareness-raising events
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Are you currently affiliated with any non-governmental organizations (NGOs)?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**12a. If yes, how many NGOs are you affiliated with?**

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ More than 2

**13. If applicable, please specify the names of the NGO(s):**

(Open-ended)

**14. Do you remember the moment when you decided to take on an organizing role?**

(Open-ended)

**15. What are the main tasks you take on when you organize protests?**

(Open-ended)

**16. What motivated you to take on the organizing role in political protests?**

(Open-ended)

**17. Did anyone influence or encourage you to become an organizer of protests?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**17a. If yes, please describe how.**

(Open-ended)

**18. How does membership in an organization motivate you to organize political action?**

(Open-ended)

**19. Does your sense of belonging to the Ukrainian community influence your decision to organize?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**19a. If yes, please explain.**

(Open-ended)

**20. Do you feel a sense of responsibility to make your group (Ukrainians) visible or heard?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**20a. If yes, please describe.**

(Open-ended)

**21. Do you feel you are acting on behalf of your community when you organize?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**21a. If yes, please describe.**

(Open-ended)

**22. What do you aim to achieve by organizing political events?**

(Open-ended)

**23. What impact do you think your actions (such as protests or public events) can or could realistically have?**

(Open-ended)

**24. Have there been moments when you felt your actions made a difference?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**24a. If yes, please describe.**

(Open-ended)

**25. How would you describe the emotions you feel before or when deciding to organize a political event?**

(Open-ended)

**26. Do you feel emotions toward the groups or institutions you see as responsible for the war or the political situation?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**26a. If yes, what emotions do you feel?**

(Open-ended)

**27. How much does anger at Russia's actions or international political decisions motivate your organizing work?**

☐ Not at all

☐ A little

☐ Somewhat

☐ Strongly

☐ Very strongly

**28. Are there emotional moments during organizing or after the political event that make you feel proud, hopeful, or encouraged?**

(Open-ended)

**29. In what ways do feelings of empathy or solidarity motivate you to organize?**

(Open-ended)

**30. What personal values or moral beliefs motivate your involvement in organizing protests for Ukraine in Austria?**

(Open-ended)

**31. Was there a moment when you felt a moral obligation to act?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**32a. If yes, please describe.**

(Open-ended)

**33. Do you see your organizing work as connected to deeper ideas about right and wrong?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**33a. If yes, please describe.**

(Open-ended)

## **Description of Interview Participant**

### **Participant 1**

The respondent is a young man (18-25) with completed secondary education. He moved to Vienna before February 2022 to pursue future opportunities. Since 2024, he has been actively involved in Ukrainian political activism abroad as a participant and an organizer. Over the past twelve months, he has participated in and co-organized multiple (more than 5) protests, primarily in a supportive organizational role. He has experience in organizing rallies, commemorative events, political performances and symbolic actions, as well as cultural and informational events and panel discussions. He is affiliated with 'Unlimited Democracy' activist organizations.

### **Participant 2**

The respondent is a woman (25-29) with a bachelor's degree who moved to Vienna after February 2022. Since her arrival, she has been actively engaged in organizing political collective action and has co-organized several events in the past twelve months. Her involvement began in 2023 and focuses primarily on organizational work rather than participation as an attendee. She has experience in organizing rallies, commemorative events, political performances and symbolic actions, as well as cultural and informational events. She is a member of 'Unlimited Democracy' a non-governmental organization and emphasizes the importance of community abroad and a strong identification with Ukraine.

### **Participant 3**

The respondent is a young woman (18-25) with completed secondary education who moved to Vienna after February 2022 and has direct wartime experience in occupied Buscha that represents a major biographical turning point. Since her arrival, she has been actively involved in Ukrainian political activism in Vienna. Over the past twelve months, she has regularly participated in protests and co-organized multiple political events (over 5). Her organizing began 2 years after the full-scale invasion. She has experience in organizing rallies, commemorative events, political performances and symbolic actions, as well as cultural and informational events and is involved in 'Unlimited Democracy' organization and 'Nezaleschani' activists group.

### **Participant 4**

The respondent is a woman (25-29) who recently completed a master's degree. She moved to Vienna prior to 2022 for educational reasons. Her political engagement predates the full-scale invasion and began with volunteer activities supporting war-affected Ukrainians in 2014. She strongly identifies

with Ukraine and is actively involved in shaping the Ukrainian community abroad. She is an active member of multiple NGOs, mainly in 'Unlimited Democracy'.

#### **Participant 5**

The respondent is a young man (18-25) with completed secondary education who moved to Vienna after February 2022 for educational purposes. His migration was planned prior to the full-scale invasion. Over the past twelve months, he has both participated in and co-organized multiple political actions (over 5). His political engagement began before 2022. He has experience organizing marches, rallies, commemorative events, political performances and symbolic actions, as well as cultural and educational activities, and is affiliated with several non-governmental organizations, such as 'Youkraine' and 'Unlimited Democracy'.

#### **Participant 6**

The respondent is a young man (18-25) with completed secondary education who moved to Vienna after February 2022 in the context of the war and has direct wartime experience. Since his arrival, he has primarily focused on organizing political performances and has co-organized multiple actions in the past twelve months (more than 5), while his participation as a regular attendee remains limited (just 1). His organizing activities began in 2024. He has experience in organizing rallies, commemorative events, political performances and symbolic actions, as well as cultural and educational events and is involved in activist initiatives. He is a member of 'Unlimited Democracy'.

#### **Participant 7**

The respondent is a man (30-35) with a master's degree who moved to Vienna before February 2022. He has a long-standing background in political activism and has been intensively involved in political activism within the Ukrainian diaspora. Over the past twelve months, he has participated in and organized a large number of political events (over 100). He has experience organizing marches, rallies, commemorative events, political performances, cultural and educational events, and panel discussions and is a member of NGO 'Mrija'.

#### **Participant 8**

The respondent is a young female activist (18-25) in her early twenties who is currently completing a bachelor's degree. She began engaging in political activism at a young age and was 18 years old when the full-scale invasion began in February 2022. Before the full-scale invasion, her activities were limited to protests and social movements, including feminist and climate activism. She reports that before 2022, she had never organized protests and only participated as a participant. Since 2022, she has taken on organizational responsibilities within a Ukrainian activist organization, including coordination, public speaking, communication with authorities, and protest registration. She has

experience organizing marches, rallies, commemorative events, political performances, and cultural and educational events and describes this role as highly time- and emotionally intensive. She is a member of NGO 'Vitsche'.