

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AUGMENTED DISSENT: THE AFFORDANCES OF ICTS FOR CITIZEN PROTEST (A CASE STUDY OF THE UKRAINE EUROMAIDAN PROTEST OF 2013-2014)

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This dissertation research project uses the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine to inform and shape a theory of *augmented dissent* to help explain the complex ways in which protest participants guided by the political, social, and cultural contexts engage in dissent augmented by ICTs in a reality where both the physical and the digital are used in concert. The purpose of this research is to conceptualize the use and perception of ICTs in protest activity using the communicative affordances framework.

Through a mixed-method research approach involving interviews with protest participants, as well as qualitative and thematic analysis of online content from social media pages of several key Euromaidan protest communities, the research project examines the role ICTs played in the information and media landscape during the Euromaidan protest. The findings of the online content analysis were used to inform

the questions for the 59 semi-structured, open-ended interviews with Euromaidan protest participants in Ukraine and abroad.

The research findings provide in-depth insights about how ICTs were used and perceived by protest participants, and their role as vehicles for information and civic media content. The study employs the theoretical framework of *social media affordances* to interpret the data gathered during the interviews and content analysis to better understand how digital media augmented citizens' protest activity through affording them new possibilities for dissent, and how they made meaning of said protest activity as augmented by ICTs. The findings contribute towards shaping a theory of *digitally augmented dissent* that conceptualizes the complex relationship between citizens and ICTs during protest activity as an affordance-driven one, where online and offline tools and activity merge into a unified dissent space and extend or *augment* the possibilities for action in interesting, and sometimes unexpected ways. Such a conceptual model could inform broader theories about civic participation and digital activism in the post-Soviet world and beyond, as ICTs become an inseparable part of civic life.

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PROTEST  
(A CASE STUDY OF THE UKRAINE EUROMAIDAN PROTEST OF 2013-2014)

by

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## Foreword

“...but one person is not just one person. In each of us, there is a world... webbing out, reaching others. Creating reactions. Sometimes equal... sometimes opposite.” – *Daredevil, Season 2, Episode 4 - Penny and Dime*

“‘It's already happening,’ she says. ‘There are all these things you can do, and it's like you're in more than one place at one time, and it's totally normal. I mean, look around.’ I swivel my head, and I see what she wants me to see: dozens of people sitting at tiny tables, all learning into phones showing them places that don't exist and yet are somehow more interesting...” – Robin Sloan, *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*

“Protest is when I say this does not please me. Resistance is when I ensure what does not please me occurs no more.” – Ulrike Meinhof, *Vom Protest zum Widerstand*

“There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it.” – Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

## Dedication

To all those who gave their time, their strength, and their lives for the revolution of dignity in my country because they believed change was possible, and to all those who came before them.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without a great many people.

My mentor, adviser, and friend Sarah Oates has been a source of inspiration, knowledge, wisdom and enthusiasm about academic work and research for many years, and her support and guidance have made me the scholar I am today. In large part it is thanks to her that my academic adventures led me to relocate to the United States and to embark upon doctoral studies, of which this dissertation is the culmination. Sarah continues to inspire me to ask difficult, but interesting questions and to push me to make the most of my abilities. For that, I am always grateful.

I wish to thank also the members of my committee, who have all challenged my thinking about media, technology, people, and dissent in different ways: Linda Steiner and Kalyani Chadha, for offering unwavering support, giving great advice, and being exacting, but kind; Dana Fisher, for teaching me to love fieldwork; Nick Diakopoulos, for great insights and provocative questions; and Sahar Khamis, for sharing her invaluable research experience and expertise.

I would not be where I am in academia today were it not for my Ukrainian alma mater, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. My deepest thanks go to Serhiy Kvit, who was my dean and who first believed in me as a teacher and a scholar. He taught me that anything is possible, and that our dreams are never out of reach.

I want to thank my fellow doctoral students at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, who have been the best of friends, and have offered me love, support, shoulders to cry on, ears to listen, and so much more. Micha, Joanna, Klive, Yacong, Saranaz, Boya, Rob—thank you so much.

I want to thank one of my best friends and co-conspirators, Kevin, who has unfailingly reminded me that I am good at this and that I can get this done. Look, it worked!

My Mom and Dad have given me so much, and to them I am forever grateful. They brought me up to love books and reading, to be passionate about what I do, and to be curious about the world. They have made many sacrifices to give me my education, and yet, have given me complete freedom to choose my own way. They are amazing.

I want to thank my husband and partner in life, Pasha, who has supported me through this wild ride. His constant presence has been an anchor in turbulent times, and his love of life has kept me sane—as has our shared passion for journalism and his excellent taste in music. He always has the right words—or the right song—to make me feel better.

I want to thank all of my research participants and the multitudes of other people in Ukraine who helped me make this research possible. They are all part of an amazing force that is changing civil society and redefining what is possible to achieve with self-organizing, volunteer efforts, and digital technology.

Finally, I want to thank the people of Ukraine, a country I am very, very proud to have been born in. We have gone through so much to get where we are today, and we are going through hard times even now. And yet, despite all odds, we remain resilient and carry on.

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# Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

## 1.1 Introduction and Research Problem

This dissertation topic stems from a growing interest in the role of ICTs in social movements and protest activities, specifically in the post-Soviet space. The last decade or so has seen an increase in mass protest actions in the region, with protests erupting in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and elsewhere. From the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine to the Bolotnaya rallies of 2011-2012 in Moscow to the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, a gradual increase in the use of digital technologies and media platforms by citizens has become evident (Goldstein, 2007; Oates and Lokot 2011; Onuch 2015). Unlike the so-called “Arab Spring” protests in MENA countries, there have been significantly fewer studies about ICT use in protest events in the post-Soviet and Eastern European area, and this dissertation contributes to the area studies as well as the broader field of digital media and protest scholarship.

The Euromaidan protests in Ukraine present a case study that is interesting in many respects: a grassroots movement sparked in the fall of 2013 by a relatively small group of protesters opposing a sudden decision by then- President Viktor Yanukovych to sign the EU association agreement met with police brutality and turned into a much broader and larger mass protest against government corruption and for human rights and dignity. The Euromaidan protests ended in more police violence, a violent reaction from the protesters and resulted in the exile of the president and the removal of the government. Euromaidan initially was sparked by Facebook posts from a well-known journalist and other influential users, documented

in livestreamed videos and Instagram photos in its bloodiest days, and reported on Twitter throughout using hashtags such as #euromaidan. At every stage of the protest, ICTs played an important part in how Euromaidan happened, how it was witnessed and how it was perceived.

A number of pundits, commentators, and researchers have already been examining some of the more general aspects of Euromaidan, such as why people rose up (BBC News, 2014), who the protesters were (Onuch 2014), how the protest grew and transformed, and finally what it has evolved into. However, few have investigated the use of ICTs by Euromaidan participants beyond essentially noting that social media were indeed used in the protest as ‘tools’ for mobilization and information dissemination (Onuch, 2015). This study examines more closely how protesters in Ukraine used ICTs, what possibilities of protest action these platforms afforded to protest participants, and what using these technologies meant to them. The aim of the study is to use the framework of communicative affordances to understand how digital media such as social networks are integrated into protest routines, affecting subsequent patterns of communication, information dissemination, and mediated dissent tactics. This approach to understanding ICT use allows for framing the possibilities of dissent involving the technologies in contextual terms, since cues for affordances are drawn from the environment. An affordances framework advocates a synergy of actor intentions and technology capabilities that provides the potential for certain actions. This allows us to thus postulate that ICT use inscribed within the political and social context of the protest was in some way transformative or somehow augmented the repertoires of dissent, melding the online and the offline

and creating new meanings of what it means to protest using social media. The study seeks to articulate the communicative affordances of social media used in the Euromaidan protest and to formulate a theory of augmented dissent based on those affordances.

Applying the affordances framework to study the Euromaidan allows to capture an important juncture in the development of digitally enabled protest movements, where civic agency and digital technology are closely entwined. Modern Ukraine has a history of protest activity, much of it enabled by technology, but the internet and social media are quickly becoming ubiquitous and are used not just by activists, but also by ordinary citizens in everyday life. Juxtaposing the particular history of Ukraine with ‘digital protest’ and the changing perceptions of Ukrainians about how ICTs can afford them the power to engage in dissent and make change in both routine and extraordinary ways presents a compelling case for using the affordances lens to understand the role of digital technology in making Euromaidan happen the way it did.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation introduces the research problem and the research questions shaping the dissertation and discusses the historical, political, civic, and media transformations of the post-Soviet and Ukrainian contexts leading up to the Euromaidan protests.

Chapter 2 situates the dissertation research in academic literature, reviewing the existing debates on ICTs and political participation and considering evidence in favor of ICTs facilitating protest as well as the scholarly skepticism about the role ICTs might play in protest movements. This chapter also considers some emerging

concepts in the field of digital media and civic activism studies that might help better conceptualize our understanding of ICTs' roles in protest activity.

Chapter 3 further lays out the theoretical foundations of this dissertation research, grounded in the social construction of technology theory and applying the communicative affordances theoretical framework and the hybrid media system theory to conceptualize the complex relationship between ICTs and citizen protest.

Chapter 4 discusses the methods and research strategy used in this dissertation study, including the design and implementation of the interviews with protest participants, as well as the design of the coding tools for the content analysis of the corpus of social media texts in connection with the protest activity. Along with the research process, the chapter also explains the challenges and limitations of the methods and the research strategies chosen for the study. This chapter addresses ethical issues in interviewing those involved in protest, especially by a researcher who herself was a protester and activist.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the findings of the research, focusing on the perceived affordances of ICTs for augmenting protest activity and expressions of dissent in terms of organization and mobilization with regard to physical distance and experiential differences; managing information and framing in protest events; as well as building networked communities and social capital. The study examines the recontextualization of the notions of witnessing and co-presence in a protest context. The research finds that the affordances of ICTs augment protest participation in different ways depending on civic activism experience, distance from the physical center of the protest, and the level of engagement. At the same time, the findings also

reveal that, despite these differences, ICTs afford protesters opportunities for creating new connective tissue to bridge gaps in protest networks, provide possibilities for shortcuts between online and offline network nodes to help make protest activity more efficient, and allow for a large degree of flexibility and ephemerality in how participants organize and engage with the protest. ICTs also emerge as instrumental in shaping new perceptions of co-presence, augmented through digital means, and a more complex notion of witnessing, affording opportunities to citizens to both participate in the events and bear witness to them. The findings chapters conclude with a discussion of how the communicative affordances framework application helps shape the concept of digitally augmented dissent, complicating the notion of protest that meshes together offline and online means, spaces, and tools. The final chapter also discusses the implications the findings might have on further research, calling for a more comprehensive conceptualization of digital media and their role in protest activity and dissent in hybrid media and civic systems.

### 1.2 Research Questions

This dissertation research is rooted in the study of the role of information and communication technologies in protest events and their impact on the online and offline political and civic spheres, as well as their contribution to the growth of democratic and human rights initiatives in post-Soviet countries. The study uses the case of Euromaidan protests in Ukraine for this exploration and analysis. In particular, the research is concerned with the different ways and modes citizens use the Internet to engage in protests through the means of digital media, and the meaning these citizens make of their protest activity and identity, augmented by ICTs. An

enhanced understanding of how digital media extend and expand the repertoires of contention in mass protests allows for a clearer comprehension of the role of information and communication technologies, such as the internet and social media, in changing the nature and meaning of dissent that combines online and offline action. At the same time it aids the assessment of the role of augmented protests and activism in the rapidly changing political situation in Ukraine and the rest of the post-Soviet sphere.

Media coverage of Euromaidan protests, and their civic media angle in particular (Global Voices 2013), suggests several key points of interest for media and society researchers as a case study. The first is the surprising way in which a large mass of people assembled for protest so quickly in a state with a non-free media system (Freedom House 2014) and with flawed political institutions. Preliminary evidence suggests the internet is able to somehow ‘augment’ grassroots forces and civil society to exercise their capabilities for dissent and free expression even in a situation in which traditional political institutions are flawed.

Yet, while Ukrainian society and the larger global community were able to observe the actual protest, little is known about how the protest came to be in its particular form, with its messages, slogans, networks, and tactics. We can speculate that this was in some way due to the affordances of the online tools and platforms, which enabled the protest participants to communicate ideas, organize information exchange, witness, and document events in a fast, reliable, inexpensive, and appealing way among citizens, without relying on corrupt political institutions. However, we know little about the actual details of this underlying phenomenon—what this

dissertation terms ‘augmented dissent’—i.e., protest that is both created and enabled by the mutuality of the intentions of citizens and the capabilities of the information communication technologies (ICTs) they used. This dissertation seeks to make visible these forces and, if possible, to conceptualize them in more detail to help further theorize about ‘augmented dissent.’

While the focus of this project appears to be on the internet or the online part of the equation, it is crucial to keep in mind that online and offline action can rarely be analyzed or made sense of apart from each other, especially in the area of political activism and human rights protests. An important distinction in recent academic discussions has been made about the terms used to describe the new digitally enhanced, always-online reality. Researchers find there is a pressing need for a more coherent picture of what Jurgenson first called ‘augmented dissent’ (that is, understanding the digital and the physical dimensions of protest as one reality) as opposed to the digital dualist approach, which suggests that these two realities are separate and have little or no effect on each other (Jurgenson 2012). Cohen (2012) stresses that what occurs in cyberspace is never separate from what occurs in real space, as digital spaces are produced by users in the course of their lives, and only become deliberately political projects when citizens gain awareness of themselves as augmented political actors. Therefore, the researcher looks closely at both the online and the offline interactions in order to keep them within real and relevant “social and political contexts” (Kendall 1999).

The study posits the following research questions to be examined:

*RQ 1. How did citizens use the internet and social networks in particular to engage in the Euromaidan protest movement?*

Here the research considers what possibilities for action were afforded by the ICTs to citizens intending to participate in the protest. This includes analyzing how citizens used ICTs to join or learn about protests, how they interacted with other protesters, what sort of activities they engaged in, and how ICTs fit into their tactical and strategic protest decisions (especially around issues of information dissemination and sharing; generating messages as well as through witnessing and recording events).

*RQ 2. How do the protesters make meaning of their use of ICTs in a protest movement?*

Here the study is particularly concerned with how the protest participants understand the role that information and communication technologies play in their activity. Also of interest is how the protesters interpret the opportunities for action provided to them by social media platforms, and how they use or subvert the default features of these platforms to create their own affordances in the context of a mass protest in a state with non-free media and unreliable government institutions.

*RQ 3. Do the affordances of social media for protest, as described by the protesters, somehow augment or enhance their protest tactics and activity, and how? What, if any, are the new ways to engage in the protest or new meanings of protest being made?*

The expectation here is that the evolving affordances of digital media technologies (defined as action or use possibilities that emerge at the intersection of designed

features and the contextual environment) can lead to an enmeshed civic reality, melding the offline and online protest practices, tools, and actions into a single, augmented reality of dissent. Such an augmented reality can transcend the constraints of physical protest, allowing citizens, for instance, to engage in long-distance witnessing of physical violence through live-streamed digital video and its affordance of mediated real-time co-presence or to crowdsource the management of physical protest camp supplies through a digital online map run by volunteers. The research illuminates the particular affordances of social media that shape these new, augmented protest tactics, both online and offline. Ultimately, this leads to a better understanding of digitally enabled protests in the post-Soviet context, but also contribute to theorizing about the implications of digital technologies and augmented participation for political activism in general.

### *1.3 The Post-Soviet Context*

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, most republics, including Russia and Ukraine, inherited the highly centralized media systems previously controlled and owned by the state. Most mainstream media were gradually privatized, and new commercial media outlets appeared during the next decades. Russia has been successful at coopting the main broadcasting and print outlets under the umbrella of the state, whether through direct ownership or through oligarchs loyal to the Kremlin (Oates 2013). Ukraine has been somewhat more successful at separating the state and the media, but most national TV channels and papers are still owned (and often subsidized) by powerful businessmen with some political interests, so truly independent media are scarce. The Internet and online media, on the other hand,

emerged in both Ukraine and Russia as alternatives to controlled or co-opted media systems, and have enjoyed significantly less regulation and control (Oates and Lokot 2013, Oates 2013). In the wake of the wave of “colored revolutions” and protests in post-Soviet countries, the Russian government has stepped up its efforts to police and manipulate the online sphere, as civil society attempted to use social media to organize and mobilize. Ukraine’s internet remains mostly free and unregulated, and this has contributed to the speed with which Ukrainian civil society has embraced ICTs for activism, advocacy, and dissent (Freedom House 2014).

In terms of research on political participation online in Ukraine and Russia, one of the most valuable pieces of research is a report by Fossato et al. (2008) on how political entities in Russia are active online. One of the main findings of the report was that the expected players—such as political parties—turned out to be ineffective online, while grassroots groups were much more active in gaining political capital online. This led to a string of further research into political participation in the RuNet, among them papers by Oates (2010), which analyzed grassroots efforts online and political engagement of citizens compared to that of political entities in Russia finding that mainstream political parties did not gain from the political affordances of the online sphere. Outsider groups, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, had far more lively and vibrant presences online, including providing news and information that was not available in the mainstream media. Suggestions put forth in a Berkman Center report by Etling et al. (2010) that the active part of Russian online users, especially the blogosphere, is not in line with the theory of 'echo chambers' (where users with similar interests self-select into small groups of

likeminded individuals, per Cass Sunstein), and that there is thus evidence of more political activity in the RuNet, may have some merit. However, the Etling et al. report used some questionable methodology, focusing too closely on the classical interpretation of “political” and attempts to classify active bloggers into groups with certain political leanings. They do this not based on statements from individuals about their political preferences, but based on a set of questionable indicators, which are too indirect in this researcher's opinion to indicate any clear political preference. Etling et al. further complicate things by trying to draw unnecessary parallels between political relations in Russia and in the US political sphere, which seem unfounded.

Goldstein's study (2007) of how online media were used during the Orange Revolution in 2004 sheds some light on attempts by civil activists and journalists to subvert the controlling regime and find an alternative platform for disseminating elections news and educating voters. Goldstein's conclusion that the revolution would not have happened without the internet, however, seems premature, as the number of internet users in Ukraine in 2004 was significantly lower than it is now (according to InMind, the absolute figure in 2011 was 13.9 million—about 35-40% of the population (Zerkalo Nedeli. Ukraina 2011). With online audiences growing, it is today especially necessary to examine political participation in the Ukrainian internet segment in more detail.

In the wake of new stand-offs between the current Ukrainian authorities and the opposition, political commentators were debating whether there might be another 'maidan' or whether activists and protesters should search for new means and forms of political action. A 'maidan' in Ukrainian is a public square, usually in the city center,

a place where citizens gather to celebrate holidays, hold council, and participate in other public activities. After the 2004 Orange Revolution, which is familiarly dubbed 'Maidan' among many of its participants (as the main events took place on Maidan Nezalezhnosti—Independence Square in the Ukrainian capital city of Kyiv), there has been a steadily rising interest in whether the 'maidan' model of political action is what will work in Ukraine again, should the need arise. Journalist and politician Vladimir Aryev, in a 2011 article in *Zerkalo Nedeli.Ukraina* (Aryev 2011) said the mass gathering approach has lost its effectiveness, because people found no sense in just standing there listening to leaders, while there are no effective suggestions of what exactly should be done. He mentioned that only one mini-'maidan' had been successful since 2004:

There have been more than enough reasons for mass demonstrations during the last year and a half, but it was only the reaction of small and medium businesses to the tax 'reform' which made Yanukovich's regime seriously worried, although not for long. And made them take a step back. Then people went to Maidan to protect their corporate interests only, without political slogans and demands. (Aryev 2011)

Aryev's conclusion was that it might be time to look to new methods of political activism and protest. However, the idea of a uniquely Ukrainian interpretation of the internet as a sort of 'e-maidan' seemed worth considering at the time, given that elements constituting the notion of a 'maidan' could be identified. The Euromaidan protests, which started in the fall of 2013 and were extensively mediated through and supported by ICTs, brought these ideas into a whole new context.

#### 1.4 Early Research on Euromaidan Protests in Ukraine

Onuch (2014) surveyed participants of the Euromaidan protest during the events of fall 2013-winter 2014, and her preliminary results indicate that social media were important not simply as a provider of information about existence of protests, but were also instrumental in bringing people to the streets and were successfully used to frame main protest themes. In a later analysis, Onuch (2015) notes that social media were just one element of the protesters' "tool-kit," but helped create opportunities for mobilization, information exchange, and grassroots self-organization. Kuksenok (2014) underscores the importance of social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter as a helpful "compass" for many Ukrainians that they used to navigate the "information war" between Ukrainian mainstream and civic media and the Russian/pro-Russian media outlets, largely coopted or guided by the Kremlin. At the same time, Onuch found that ICTs as "tools" also had the potential to demobilize the public, since connectivity and information exchange speeds also made it easier to spread misinformation, conflicting claims, and heightened the potential for government repression.

The researcher's own open-ended interviews with Euromaidan activists during the same period of time and case studies of particular Euromaidan protest initiatives (Lokot 2015) underscore the importance of ICTs during these protest events in terms of enabling collaboration on crafting protest claims, messages, records of events, and shared histories; allowing for mediated co-presence through social media platforms and content (e.g., livestreams and crowdmaps); and providing varied entry points for citizens who wanted to engage in protest (physical, digital, or both). These

preliminary findings point to the existence of a complicated, multi-faceted set of action possibilities afforded by ICTs that emerged as the protests unfolded and underscore a need to further examine the intricacies of the Euromaidan protest reality, as well as the various ways citizens guided by the political, social, and cultural contexts engaged in dissent augmented by social media. They also point to the need for a more nuanced articulation of how citizens understand and engage with ICTs in the context of protest rather than simply viewing social media as “tools” or “platforms.”

### 1.5 Some Operational Definitions

Though this dissertation uses both the terms ICT (information and communication technology) and “social media,” the term “social media” is related to, but not synonymous with, the more general notion of ICTs (Gunitsky 2015). Social media usually refers to a number of online tools that facilitate the creation, consumption, and sharing of interactive content, most of it user-generated. These include social networking sites (such as Facebook), bulletin board systems (e.g., 4chan), chat rooms, micro-blogging, and instant message services (such as Twitter, WhatsApp or Telegram), as well as photo and video-sharing sites such as YouTube and Instagram. It even embraces live video streaming social apps such as UStream and Periscope. Onuch (2015) notes that although they serve diverse purposes, what most of the services and platforms designated as social media have in common is that they make the transfer of almost any type of information instantaneous. The information and connections on social media are also described as “user-generated” as they often depend on networks of users to produce and share content on them.

This dissertation research focuses mostly on Facebook as the most popular social media platform in Ukraine, but makes reference of social media tools such as Twitter and live streaming apps, as well as other ICTs, since many interviewees brought them up in their narratives.

### 1.6 Timeliness of Research Problem

Certainly, the emergence of the Euromaidan movement and the ensuing political turmoil in Ukraine drew increased attention to the country's civil society and its activist scene. While it is too early to say what the long-term impact of the protests will be, given that the unrest of last winter has turned into an ongoing geopolitical conflict with Russia, there is significant value in analyzing the impact of digital technologies and social media on how the protests were organized, how they changed over time, and how they were different from similar events in the Middle East, in Russia, and elsewhere. Euromaidan's legacy is also interesting because of the clear grassroots nature of the protest and its infrastructure (Onuch, 2014, Lokot, 2015), and the availability of willing research subjects is key to collecting a wealth of meaningful data that could help better understand the underlying mechanisms of Euromaidan.

The study makes an important contribution to the field of new media and protest studies (Chadwick 2006, Christensen 2011, Bennett and Segerberg 2012, Tufekci and Wilson 2012, Castells 2013), because the internet is becoming more ubiquitous and, as more people gain access to its tools and affordances, more information about how activism and protests are impacted by the use of ICTs needs to be available to the scientific body and the public in order to gain a deeper

understanding of the role of internet and digital technologies in the rapidly changing media and communication environment (Dahlgren 2005, Earl and Kimport 2011).

The literature is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2: Situating the Research in Literature

### 2.1 Existing Debates About ICTs and Dissent

The democratizing potential of information and communication technologies remains a highly debated topic in the social sciences, with special scrutiny given to the potential of ICTs to allow citizens a greater capability for dissent and protest organization. In many cases, such as those of the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the Euromaidan in Ukraine, ICTs (specifically the internet) have allowed for different capacities and constraints in protest and social movement organization. It's worth noting that in many countries, the Internet and ICTs in and of themselves have become highly contested political spaces in which the state and civil society operate. Both MacKinnon (2012) and Howard (2010) note that ICTs and the Internet in particular have become both the site and the means for protest activity and social movement formation. This dualist nature of ICTs has altered the dynamics of political communications in all kinds of states, including authoritarian, democratic and hybrid regimes. In various ways, social movement and protest leaders have been able to use ICTs to organize mass protest activities, mobilize the public, bring their demands to higher levels of the national or global agendas and, in some cases, even challenge regimes (Howard 2010).

Certainly, the fact that the internet has changed the way people interact with other citizens and the government, as well as the way they engage in politics, is what many researchers have noted. The reasons for these transformations, however, have been hotly debated. The debate has largely revolved around the nature of the internet as a medium itself and around how it is interpreted by citizens, governments, media,

corporations and, of course, academics. One of the most interesting findings here by several researchers is that in many post-Soviet countries (namely Ukraine and Russia) the internet is perceived as a liberator of sorts, an alternative platform to traditional media co-opted by the elites, although this perception is weighed against the repressive capabilities of many post-Soviet regimes (Fossato et al. 2008; Oates 2010). Goldstein (2007) looks at the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and also notes that during its events the internet was an independent, uncensored medium where dissenting opinions could be disseminated freely along with information to help citizens enforce their rights as voters in order to protest being cheated by rigged elections. This stood in stark contrast to the traditional mass media, particularly television, which mostly mouthed the government line and refused to give voice to any counter-narratives.

Protest as an expression of political activity can arguably be interpreted as a sign of developing civic-mindedness and greater desire for political freedom. Protest activities and events, such as marches, vigils, sit-ins, demonstrations, Twitter storms, online petitions and manifestos, and even hacking, are aimed at drawing dramatic attention to causes, giving the activists opportunities to vent and publicly express emotional concerns (Bennett and Tuft 2010). But any expression of “civic outrage” (Castells 2013) still relies on strategy, planning, and usually ties into existing media frameworks and narratives, as well as social and political structures, in order to produce an effect—something Chadwick describes in his discussion of hybrid media (2013) as combining elements and tactics of old and new media to reach desired outcomes.

In light of the recent uprisings and protests in many Middle Eastern and Arab countries, there is now a lively debate about the role of online media and social media in particular in these socio-political phenomena. Many news pundits and media researchers have dubbed them “Twitter revolutions” or “Facebook revolutions” (Andrew Sullivan in a 2009 article in *The Atlantic* wrote that “The revolution [in Tunisia] will be Twittered”), proclaiming that were it not for the social media and internet access, these revolutions would not have occurred or would not have been so successful. There has been a significant backlash from critics and skeptics, who have asked for more empirical evidence against the background of unfounded assertions that social media and the internet had a decisive role in these events. Gladwell (2010), Morozov (2009a, 2009b, 2011a) caution that internet and social media are not by default built to be a platform for protests and revolutions, and that there exist many conditions which heavily influence a protest organized online (such as ease of performing required action, popularity of given platform in country and around the world, etc.). Goldstein, in his report “The Role of Digital Networked Technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution” (2007) for the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard stresses the importance of avoiding 'cyberutopianism'—the notion that internet and digital technology will always lead to a more inclusive political climate and a more democratic state.

While most of the attention has been centered on the geographical region currently in turmoil, the same area in post-Soviet block countries has been much less researched. This is likely due to the prominent nature and the scale of the MENA protests, where governments have been toppled and dictators removed from power.

Before Euromaidan drew the world's attention, there were only a handful of recent studies looking at countries such as Georgia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics where "revolutions" of sorts have occurred (Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, etc.), as well as Russia. This scarcity emerges as an additional reason to study the Ukrainian activism and protest sphere in depth, hoping that research findings might contribute to the wider debate and possibly shed light on what is happening in other countries, such as Belarus, with its very recent "silent protests", which purportedly also originated online, according to numerous media reports<sup>1</sup>.

It's worth noting that the possibility of protest itself, whether enabled by ICTs or not, does not guarantee democratic change or regime destruction. According to Bohman (2004), "the internet promotes a vibrant civil society; it extends the public sphere of civil society but does not necessarily transform it." Recent cases such as Egypt, Russia, and Hong Kong demonstrate that even when large-scale protests happen and civil society is mobilized, the state may react or respond to them strongly, attempt to downplay them, or simply ignore them or allow them to simmer, thus neglecting the protesters' claims and using the unrest as an excuse to preserve or even strengthen the status quo. Whether ICTs play a role in the outcomes of a protest movement is necessarily complicated by other issues, such as what outcomes are expected of a protest, as well as other contextual factors in a given country or society—political, social, cultural, or economic. However, there is compelling evidence that online protest is a game-changer and that is difficult to perceive a more

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<sup>1</sup> The "silent protests" in Belarus in 2011 were peaceful anti-government protests where protesters had no slogans or chants, but simply clapped or stood silently in the streets.

effective way to at least attempt serious political protest. Howard notes that “having an online civil society is a key ingredient of the causal recipe for democratization” (2010, p. 156). Civic engagement, including engagement in everyday social life and political discourse through ICTs, emerges as a precursor of sorts to ICT-enabled, ICT-mediated, and ICT-augmented protest action. Pre-existing conditions and context prior to a particular protest thus become all the more important in terms of understanding how ICTs can be used and are used by citizens to augment their dissent. In the case of many MENA states, there was a gap between a non-free traditional media and a relatively free online sphere, which led to ICTs being used to supplant mainstream media channels. In Russia (strong state and weak civil society) and Ukraine (weak state and strengthening civil society) the internet and social media were used in different ways by activists, and particularly in Ukraine, there was also a history of protest, much of it enabled by technology. It is also this particular history of Ukraine with ‘digital protest’ that makes it both relatively unique among post-Soviet states as well as a very useful case study for augmented dissent.

### 2.2 Evidence in Favor of ICTs Facilitating Protest

There are several factors that in one way or the other make information and communication technologies, namely the internet, conducive to supporting activism and protest activity. Some of these factors stem from the nature and legacy of the technologies themselves, while others emerge from how humans have developed and adapted the technologies (and adapted to them). Yet other elements are based on evidence from how ICTs have been used in the political and social context, with arguments drawn from specific cases and, where possible, generalized.

### 2.2.1 The Internet as a Digital Commons

Both the internet and the World Wide Web were initially created as independent, decentralized systems, designed to interoperate between nodes in a network and give users equal opportunity to add to the web in many creative ways. MacKinnon (2012) notes that this inherent open and decentralized quality of the internet has evolved into the modern-day culture of open-source software and open-access platforms, both of which are key resources for users building communities and sharing information online.

MacKinnon gives the example of Global Voices as a far-reaching platform on which bloggers from all over the world can share insights and news not often reported in mainstream media. These open hubs can and do become platforms for advocacy for issues that are trans-border or multilingual, due to their open standards and community efforts to make these platforms accessible. Many activists in Egypt and Tunisia before and during the Arab Spring heavily used and contributed to open-source software and platforms such as WordPress, which were instrumental in the exchange of tactical knowledge among groups of protesters. Indeed, in many Middle Eastern countries, the digital commons proved to be the foundation for an infrastructure that made possible a civic and democratic discourse in a vacuum of opportunities, notes Howard (2010), with spaces for such discourse only available online in some countries. The openness and decentralization of many web protocols and platforms are often key for the unimpeded diffusion and distribution of protest frames and related content.

### 2.2.2 The Networked Nature of ICTs

The networked nature of internet communications, as Castells notes, means protest movements can be networked in more than one way (2013), allowing for connections and spaces for deliberation on many levels, both offline and online, and crucially, connecting both. Networks can and do emerge within protest movements, between movements, between platforms and media, and reach out into random corners of society. People can start a protest on the street and take it to Twitter—or vice versa. Participation can occur simultaneously in the city square and on live streams, with technological affordances augmenting protest capabilities and carrying the voices of dissent farther into the world.

In a political crisis, such as the one Iran found itself in in 2009, networked communities and online infrastructure turned out to be harder to disrupt for the authorities than traditional media channels, according to Howard (2010). Information flowed to other nodes in the network if several nodes were shut down or blocked, and as a result, information was distributed more evenly. Both Howard and MacKinnon (2012) stress that shutting down the internet altogether as a means of control tends to have broader consequences for economy, so governments, even authoritarian ones, are unlikely to resort to such measures.

Rainie and Wellman (2012) go further along the networked path and advocate for a ‘networked individualism,’ an idea that they present as a social operating system in which networks are built around individuals (instead of hierarchical systems or closely knit communities) and are personal, but allow for interactions with multiple others as well as multitasking. Rainie and Wellman predicate networked

individualism on what they call the ‘Triple Revolution’—a combination of the social network revolution (with human connections now reaching beyond the world of tight groups), the internet revolution (signified by new communication power and information gathering capacities, including new ways to publish and broadcast), and the mobile revolution (where ICTs become extensions of the body, allowing access to others and information at will, providing for continued presence and awareness). The overused term ‘revolution(s)’ does little to reflect the more complicated reality, however, as much of this change did not happen overnight, and did not change all of our lives completely. Rather, change is more evolutionary, as many individuals are at various stages of adopting digital technologies, depending on access to ICTs, the generation of the user, user wealth, a country’s political regime, etc. While people might reach beyond their immediate communities and use weak ties in their social networks, Oates (2010, 2013) found that closely knit groups continue to exist online, mobilizing in this way when their needs are very specific, e.g. connected to disabilities, rare illness, or specialized childcare. The internet has changed the balance of power in communication to an extent, but cooptation by governments and traditional media crossing online go some way to negate the ‘revolutionary’ changes, as Stanyer (2010) points out large media chains still exercise power in the online media environment over the diversity of views and information flows. Finally, the mobile revolution might be better understood as augmentation of protest affordances through ICTs—and this area is the most likely to be revolutionary, as ICTs directly augment previously existing protest tactics, many of which are space or place-based, so critical protest elements such as documentation, organizing, and witnessing

become significantly easier. Castells (2013) gives the example of Occupy Wall Street, a protest in which the primary tactic was to occupy an important space, but whose participants used Twitter and internet on their phones to share information, photos, videos, and comments to build a real-time network of communication overlaid on, but not constrained by, the occupied space.

The individualism promoted by the likes of Rainie and Wellman is part of the new ICT-shaped reality, but it's more realistic to situate a new ICT-shaped reality within the existing legal, technical, and institutional networks that shape the flows of information. Cohen (2012) suggests these forces inevitably affect the kind of subjectivity people can attain, the kinds of innovation communities and movements can generate, as well as the opportunities for creation of political and ethical meaning that can be afforded to protest participants.

### 2.2.3 ICTs and Mobilization

Rainie and Wellman note that in the case of the Arab Spring protests, the activity of individuals itself was an example of how online content creation and community building, coupled with offline gatherings, organizing, and planning behind the scenes can aid mass mobilization in a protest (2012). Of note, of course, is that other factors besides ICTs were instrumental to “successful” mobilizing, such as established networks of friends and political groups, as well as the lack of military intervention from the state and army.

The internet augments civil resistance in many ways, including changes to its mobilization mechanisms. The networked nature of social media platforms means protest movements don't always rely on pre-existing organizational or membership

structures and are often able to mobilize grassroots volunteers among people with little or no connection to the cause. When the blend of politics and online culture is right, appeals for participation and engagement often go viral and extend far beyond the traditional membership reach. Chadwick (2006), discussing what he calls “the internet differences” for social movements, underscores greater organizational flexibility, reduced collective action problems, and the emergence of new, fluid types of participation which allow “groups to mobilize individuals as actors in key online information networks” (ibid., p. 143).

In his more recent work, Chadwick (2013) discusses examples of new, hybridized norms of mobilization, wherein a movement such as 38 Degrees<sup>2</sup> employs both old and new media logics to rally citizens around its causes. What emerges is a kind of internet-enabled experimentalism (observed during many of the Arab Spring protests, Occupy protests, and Euromaidan in particular) that embraces both strategic planning and actions aimed at creating and sustaining the identity and collective meaning of a movement or protest. The protesters’ actions as tech enablers, combining online and offline behaviors and impacts, are opportunistic within a strategic framework. Additionally, ICT use enables real-time reactions and speed, which is also crucial in spreading the mobilization message. Hybridized mobilization, Chadwick suggests, works as a blend of viral messaging across online networks, organizational capacity through connecting with loyal participants, but also awareness of traditional news cycles and some degree of connectedness to the values and norms of old media (2013). Chadwick argues that the new affordances of ICTs ignite

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<sup>2</sup> 38 Degrees is an independent political activism organization in the UK that campaigns on a broad range of issues, including fairness, human rights, peace, environmental issues and democratic change.

particular aspects of the traditional media and political systems, giving more points of entry into traditional politics but not replacing a traditional political and media landscape. This is a useful theory, in that it allows us to gauge the relative power and opportunity of ICT-based protest by showing how ICTs are working to move hearts and minds within the existing political communication ecology.

#### 2.2.4 ICTs and Tactics of Civic Action

Certainly, radical media platforms and content have always been part of society, but the pervasive use of ICTs has made them accessible to a greater range of political actors than ever before (Stanyer 2010). Ward and Gibson (2010) note that more innovative modern uses of ICTs are likely to emerge from protest networks and grass-roots movements (rather than from traditional political institutions) since they arguably have the greatest incentives to explore ICTs in the first place. Even in the pre-internet era, they have tended to be the ones most striving to extend the repertoires of contention.

ICTs necessarily bring with them some inherently new protest tactics. Chadwick (2006) lists hacking as an example of political action enabled by the technical properties of the internet. Meier (2012) describes the crowdmapping platform Ushahidi as a distinctly new way of using media platform to not just document unfolding events, but to create a live map of the situation, with changes in real time. However, the internet also enhances the classic mechanisms and functions of protest movements: finding and sharing relevant information, mobilization of participants, organization, coordination, as well as decision-making (Kavada 2010). ICTs allow these functions to be performed in a wider variety of ways – making some

easier, some faster, some cheaper, granting others more reach, but also introducing more flexibility, instability, and uncertainty into the frame. This means the protesters have more choices to make and must think on their feet when they make tactical decisions about what to use and how. During the Arab Spring in Egypt, for instance, Egyptian activists boasted that they used Facebook to schedule their protest actions, coordinated their actions on Twitter, as well as posted the evidence of protests on YouTube to raise awareness (Howard 2010).

Governments and traditional political institutions such as parties generally lack the creativity and flexibility to perform these tasks so nimbly and visibly. Cyberactivism has emerged as a useful concept for using ICTs to advance a political cause that would be otherwise difficult to advance offline. Citizens may use the internet to promote their points of view, but also as a tool to resist state control and battle opposing opinions or authoritarian pressure. However, the term “cyberactivism” is often used in vague, descriptive, and uncritical ways, with few scholars providing a clear definition of the concept or discussing its limitations (Khamis and Vaughn 2012).

#### 2.2.5 ICT Use by Journalists and Citizens

Chadwick’s hybrid media concept (2013) suggests that ICTs might change and challenge the traditional sphere of journalism and its practices in relation to civic action, but do not replace journalists and their work entirely. Journalists find themselves having to redefine their role in society given the new capabilities ICTs offer to citizens, who can now perform many of the functions of the media, including witnessing, recording, and disseminating news. However, mainstream media still play

an important part in the information system surrounding a protest as they engage in framing, dissemination, verification, and filtering of the claims and messages generated by the protesters with the help of ICTs. The mainstream media still command a broad audience and attention that is generally lacking in the more fragmented information system of the online sphere. Because journalists often depend on protesters for key insights and exclusive content, the relationship between journalists and civic activists shifts from that of a press/newsmaker or press/audience to a more egalitarian one in which reporters and protesters often have access to the same tools and channels of communication, but might have different capabilities afforded to them by these tools due to credentials, professional advantages, and other contextual factors.

Bruns and Deuze (2007) have defined network journalism as a convergence between the core competences and functions of journalists and the civic potential of online interactive communication, and in the same way networked protest can be construed as a convergence of the old, “traditional” competencies of protest activists and the affordances granted to them by ICTs and the connected, networked reality they underpin. This convergence can be conceived of as the old and the new, the traditional and the digital elements of dissent coming together and augmenting the previously existing opportunities for organizing, sharing information, building protest capital, and other protest needs.

#### 2.2.6 ICTs, Space and Presence

The new forms of co-presence and co-location enabled by ICTs—not on a physical plane, but on an intangible page online—do not necessarily devalue physical bodies

and physical protest forms such as sit-ins or street marches, but rather add a new dimension to participation, as they allow more people to be co-present in various ways. This is a powerful reflection of everyday ICT use in the protest context. For instance, the 2013-2014 Euromaidan protest in Ukraine has emerged as the most significant expression of dissent since the country's independence. One of the defining features of the Euromaidan events was the extensive use of internet and digital media, especially social networks, which were adopted by activists and citizens for information needs, organizing purposes, and spreading awareness. Of course, not everyone who protested came to the streets because of Facebook, and not everyone went on Twitter to rant on the #euromaidan hashtag (Onuch, 2014). However, a vast number of protest participants, including people outside of Ukraine, experienced the protests in a meaningful (or augmented) way because they were able to be co-present through live streams and Twitter feeds, absorbing, sharing, and making sense of the protest-related information (both factual and emotional). Even in Ukraine itself, protest actions occurred on the European and Independence Squares in Kyiv, but at the same time happened through DDoS<sup>3</sup> attacks on government websites, coordinating humanitarian efforts on Ushahidi-based crowdmaps, and creating and sharing art on Facebook and Instagram. Howard (2010) notes a similar dynamic in opposition movements based outside many Arab states, where ICTs enable activists to participate in the political communication inside the country, even in the most authoritarian of states, such as Iran or Cuba prior to 2015.

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<sup>3</sup> A DDoS, or “distributed denial of service” attack occurs when multiple systems flood the bandwidth or resources of a targeted website with requests, resulting in overloading the web server and shutting down access to the website.

### 2.3 ICTs, Protest, and the Skeptics

There has been some pushback from critics and skeptics, who do not agree that social media and the internet have played such a decisive role in protest events attributed to them by ICT enthusiasts.

#### 2.3.1 ICTs and Movement Sustainability

Howard (2010) argues that while ICTs may provide a foundation and a structure for independent journalists and civic activists, they are ultimately a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for regime change in most modern states. The internet certainly provides rhetorical space for protest narratives, but offers no guarantees of solid democratic outcomes, especially when the online public sphere mirrors the existing political structures and flaws of a given state. The key concerns of ‘cyber-pessimists’ in the discussion of ICTs’ ability to facilitate protest revolve around issues of sustainability as well as structures of power and opportunity in societies.

The issue of longevity and stability of ICT-enabled protest remains at the forefront of academic discussion. In Iran, Howard found, ICTs sustained the 2009 protests beyond initial expectations and activated many weak ties, but had more of a symbolic effect on government infrastructure, as authorities reasoned that letting the opposition engage in online dissent was safer than other forms of political action (2010).

Kavada (2010) points to evidence from studies of existing protest movements that the new affordances provided to activists by ICTs sometimes lead to less durable and stable protest networks. However, while not always robust and long lasting, these mobilized networks serve the short-term purpose of resource accumulation and

information management and can act as “first responders” when cataclysmic events occur in a protest. Castells (2013) calls such networks “instant insurgent communities,” showing how mobile and wireless communication can quickly lead to mass engagement. Castells also observes that the loose and flexible structures formed during such insurgent moments tend to dissolve after the protest ends. This fleeting nature of “insurgent communities” holds little promise for sustained pressure on authoritarian regimes and may not provide an adequate foundation for solid democratic change, but may be the indicator of the new kind of ephemeral participatory dissent that both Tufekci (2014) and Earl and Kimport (2011) cite as the future of protest movements.

### 2.3.2 Control and Cooptation of ICTs

A discussion of ICTs and their affordances for protest necessarily incorporates the other actors in the social system who affect the context and may impose constraints on ICT use by protesters or be interested in what ICTs can afford them and how the tools and platforms can serve their own interests. These actors include governments, both democratic and authoritarian, and private entities such as corporations and ICT platform owners. As protest participants seek to use digital technologies for their own ends, these actors also seek to regulate access and control how the ICTs are used. In addition, corporate models for profit making in the internet and digital technology sphere may also be at odds with the best design and facilitation of use of ICTs for dissent.

Christensen, in his discussion of connections between social media and dissent in Arab countries, quotes an earlier work to ruminate upon the changing

power balance with respect to information dissemination: “Social media have made possible the presentation of alternative discourses to local and global audiences, challenging the orthodoxies of those in power” (Christensen 2011). The power balance in question, however, is often precarious and can be abused by authoritarian governments, corporations, and other entities seeking to impose their interests upon civil society.

The potential for abuse of ICTs by various actors is predicated upon the fact that ICTs as technological creations are more omniscient and efficient than human informants and, sadly, lack consciences (MacKinnon 2012). Just as protesters can harness their potential to engage in new forms of dissent or enhance their existing repertoires, so government, elites and law enforcement can utilize the same technology to engage in surveillance or manipulate access to information (Morozov 2011).

McNair (2010) argues that political actors now face a global media environment characterized by loss of control and the onset of communication chaos, seemingly putting protesters and governments on equally uneasy footing. However hard for the elites in might be to control the political agenda, many, especially in more pronounced dictatorships, are learning how to coopt and control the internet and the freedom it provides. Although online communities even in non-free states can be independent of the state, they can still be surveilled and manipulated by the authorities.

As Heydemann and Leenders (2011) found in their study of the Arab protests, the same diffusion of ideas and tactics that protesters benefit from also works for the

regimes, resulting in authoritarian learning and regimes adapting to new, ICT-enabled protest practices. Howard (2010) observed the Iranian government exploiting the same digital technology used during the election protests to crush dissent, by choking internet bandwidth and inspecting traffic to identify protest leaders.

An important remark that Papacharissi makes in respect to new kinds of civic engagement online is that the platforms people use are in many cases commercial or private, so we are faced with a new hybrid model of public spaces for deliberation and protest, where civic and consumer interests intermingle (2010). This underscores the importance of fluid networks for successful mobilization and the value of cultural literacy as protest narratives are crafted and disseminated. Deibert (2012) also posits the digital space as a tangled web of rival public and private authorities, vying for power and control. At the same time, corporations and governments that operate and govern cyberspace are not held accountable enough for the power they wield, and this, MacKinnon suggests, creates the potential for abuse and manipulation of ICTs that citizens use for protest, as corporate terms of service can be manipulated or abused to delete content and shut down accounts (2012).

#### 2.4 Emerging Concepts of ICTs' Role in Protest Activity

A theory of dissent augmented by the communicative affordances of ICTs used by citizens in protests necessitates understanding ICTs as complicated and evolving manifestations of social and political forces that, according to Deibert (2012), shape and limit the prospects for human communication and interaction in a constantly iterative manner. Howard (2010) goes further to ascribe ICTs a symbolic role in

modern political reality, as they become an inseparable part of political identities for individuals, movements and states.

Oates (2013) notes that while ICTs may offer the same opportunities when regarded in isolation, national media and political systems play a key role in shaping and constraining the internet's affordances for protesters within country borders. This importance of context is underscored by Howard (2010), who argues that certain national political conditions stimulate vibrant online civic discourse. When the state is so authoritarian that formal political parties are banned (e.g., many Middle Eastern states), or when they exist but are coopted into a single-party governance system (largely the case in Russia), no traditional organizational structures exist for advancing an alternative political agenda. When conventional political systems of opportunities are not functioning in the interests of democracy, as was the case in pre-Euromaidan Ukraine, the ICT-enabled spaces for dissent and protest communities step up to take their place, augmenting not only the protest, but the political checks and balances mechanism as well. In this way, 'affordances' for protest are very much part of the general political environment as opposed to a feature of the online sphere.

#### 2.4.1 Contextualizing ICT Use

A comprehensive understanding of the synergy between online and offline activities is best gained when there are certain events that act as catalysts for online communities to engage in protest (Oates 2013). In her study of the winter of discontent protests in Russia, Oates lists several factors—from failure of 'soft' state control to a rise in internet use and emerging online political networks—that, catalyzed by the election fraud, resulted in an ICT-enabled protest movement. The

Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, likewise, were the result of a range of catalyzing factors, including the shift in political course away from Europe and towards Russia, the skyrocketing levels of corruption in government institutions, the failing economy, the unregulated online space, as well as the burgeoning civil society that had enjoyed a fair amount of freedom.

The general consensus seems to be that contemporary protest movements would have significantly less cohesion and impact without ICTs, so it is especially important to take into account the complexity, iterative nature, and contextual connections of the internet and digital technologies as both the site and the means of political activity and protest.

The current conditions for social movement and protest organizing are certainly very different from those in the pre-internet era (Howard 2010). Oates (2013), discussing the case of winter of discontent in Russia, notes the growing popularity of ICTs has enabled a fundamental shift in the way information is created, consumed, and disseminated in the country. Although technology has in many instances liberated civil society from media production systems run exclusively by the state, ICTs alone do not cause political change, but instead provide new opportunities and impose new constraints on political and social actors (Howard 2010, Deibert 2012). ICTs today matter inasmuch as they reinforce or renegotiate local or national variations in political practices, so their role is necessarily complex and grounded in contextual nuances.

Another avenue of gaining a more nuanced understanding of role of ICTs is to observe partial successes of protest enabled by technology, attuned to the particular

political, social, and economic situation, as well as infrastructural conditions in a given country. In his study of dissent in the Middle East, Howard (2010) found that some regimes, such as Egypt, experienced democratic improvements, but only became slightly less authoritarian even while exhibiting a more vibrant public sphere online. Howard argues ICTs have increased the hybrid nature of the regimes, allowing for different degrees of freedom to coexist in adjacent spheres of society. Chadwick (2013) also advances the idea of a hybrid media system, predicated upon interactions of older and newer media logics (technology, norms, behaviors, organizational forms) in the connected fields of media and politics. Protesters using ICTs also employ a combination of old and new logic to reduce uncertainty, establish new channels for mediating political discourse, as well as structure information flows in new ways.

ICTs are best understood as a part of everyday life and play an integral role in modern identity construction, influencing people's perception of themselves and others in complicated ways. The Euromaidan protests have been dubbed the "Revolution of Dignity" (Onuch 2014) and have hinged on the idea of personal identity as much as that of the protest community (Lokot 2015). Oates (2013) talks about the important aspect of ICT use for mobilization and political protest as a measure of "change for the individual," which connects our daily management of identities online to our understanding of our role as individuals in more complex political systems, and of how that role is mediated by digital technologies. Castells (2013) conceptualizes networked social movements as new forms of democratic engagement that are reconstructing the public sphere in the space of relative

autonomy built around the interaction among individuals, places, and internet networks. Echoing Chadwick's suggestion (2013) to situate power and agency in the context of integrated, but very much conflict-ridden systems of people and ICTs, situating ICT-enabled protests in the new context of complex, hybrid, and augmented social and political structures will undoubtedly facilitate productive study of media, technology, and politics of protest in the new, always-on reality of the modern world.

## Chapter 3: Building the Theoretical Foundation

### 3.1 Epistemological Roots: Social Construction of Technology

Because the questions addressed in this research project deal with how humans interact with technology, it is important to address the foundational thinking underlying these relationships, as it influences how the researcher might apply theoretical concepts, interpret collected data, and make conclusions about what they find.

#### 3.1.1 The Emergence of the SCOT Theory

The theoretical foundations of the conceptual path suggested in this dissertation stem from the social construction of technology, a theory within the field of Science and Technology Studies. Advocates of this theory (also known as SCOT), often called social constructivists, argue that technology alone does not determine human action, but that rather, human action and technology are shaped by each other in social environments. The theory of the social construction of technology was introduced by Pinch and Bijker in a paper published in 1984, wherein the authors identified the theoretical foundations of the intertwined histories and ideas of the sociology of technology and sociology of science and presented arguments for the social and technical interacting and shaping each other (Pinch and Bijker 1984).

The social construction of technology school of thinking grew out of the social constructivist school of sociology of scientific knowledge. Berger and Luckmann coined the term “social constructivism” in their book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). Based on a combination of Schutz' sociology of

knowledge idea (Schutz 1967) and Durkheim's concept of institution in sociology (Durkheim 2014), Berger and Luckmann developed a theory that they believe could answer the question of how subjective meaning becomes a social fact. Social constructivism, thus, provided a new, relativist epistemology as an alternative to the objectivist, positivist way of thinking about the world, society and knowledge, introducing social forces and human agency into a primarily static, deterministic understanding of existence, science, and technology.

### 3.1.2 Key Ideas of the SCOT Theory

Social construction of technology can be defined as an interactive sociotechnical process that shapes all forms of technology (Bijker et al. 2012), entwining their development with human behavior and social environments. At the heart of this process is an ongoing discourse among those who create technology (designers, technologists, engineers and, increasingly, ordinary citizens) and relevant or interested social groups. Technologies, SCOT argues, are not born and do not exist in a vacuum, nor do they determine the path their development will go down in isolation; instead, their design and development are embedded in society, shaped, and influenced by the social structures and human interactions around them. In this, social construction of technology directly opposes the concept of technological determinism, a reductionist doctrine holding that a society's technology determines its cultural values, social structure, or history, underpinned by a belief that technology is "a key governing force in society" (Smith and Marx 1994) and that "technological development determines social change," making social progress, in a sense, inevitable (Bimber 1990). Bijker (2009) notes that proponents of the SCOT school of thinking

also considered technological determinism to be politically debilitating, as it suggested that social and political interventions into technological development were futile and that it was impossible to politicize technology.

SCOT theorists argue that the ways a technology is used cannot be understood without understanding how that technology is embedded in its social context and that those who seek to understand the reasons for acceptance or rejection of a particular technology should look to the social world and the meanings and interpretations people attach to this technology. It is not enough, according to SCOT, to explain a technology's success by saying that it is objectively "the best"—one must look at how the criteria of being "the best" are defined and what groups and stakeholders participate in defining those criteria. In this examination of agency, technology, and society scholars must ask who defines the technical criteria that success is measured by, why the technical criteria are defined this way, and who is included or excluded from participating in the definition. While technology may be designed in ways that shape and organize our world, it is individuals and groups in society who decide which technologies or parts of technology are useful, meaningful, and have potential. And it is in this discourse among groups such as engineers, designers, civic activists, educators, and politicians that technological development and progress is shaped and finds direction, the technical both shaped by the social and shaping the social.

Bijker (2009) notes that in addition to social construction of technology emerging as a theory about the development of technology and its relation to society, SCOT can also serve as an approach to doing research when studying technological

change in society and can be employed both in historical studies of technology as well as in modern or contemporaneous research.

Present-day research on the social construction of technology combines ongoing empirical case studies with more general issues such as modernization of society, politicization of technological culture, and management of innovation. This offers a more comprehensive approach to examining the relationships between the rapid pace of technological change and the social, political, cultural, business, and other forces that shape such change and find themselves having to undergo transformations and in turn be shaped by technological progress.

### 3.1.3 Central Constructs of the SCOT Research Approach

One of the central tenets of the social constructivist approach to the study of technology is the claim that technological artifacts are open to sociological analysis, not just in their usage but especially with respect to their design and technical "content." As a heuristic for approaching research projects on studying technology in society, SCOT offers several important concepts with which to operate. First, any artifact or technology is described through the eyes of "relevant social groups" (Bijker et al. 2012)—those who explicitly mention the artifact or technology and attribute meaning to them in some way. These groups can include both users of a particular technology and non-users of it, as the latter can also form and voice an opinion about it, thus ascribing some meaning to it.

As the description of a technology through the eyes of different relevant social groups produces different descriptions—and thus different incarnations of the technology in question—this allows researchers to demonstrate the "interpretive

flexibility” of the given technology (Bijker 2009). Interpretive flexibility relates to the different meanings, opinions, and perceptions of technology by the various relevant social groups and describes the multiplicity of simultaneously coexisting interpretations of a given technology (be it artifact, device, or platform) as evidence of the technology being socially constructed.

Once the artifact or technology have been deconstructed to expose their interpretive flexibility, scholars operating under the SCOT research approach might observe how some artifacts gain dominance over the others and how meanings converge. Bijker et al. (2012) conceptualize the results of these processes of social construction through which a single artifact or technology might emerge as “closure” or “stabilization.” Whereas stabilization refers to the nature of the process of social construction, during which the degree of overlap in meaning of a technology increases and the unified meaning stabilizes, closure highlights the inevitable end point of this process of several “technologies” as interpreted by various relevant social groups coalescing into a dominant one.

A related way of thinking about social construction of technology, stemming from the history of technology field, treats technology in terms of a "systems" metaphor. This conceptualization of technology being socially constructed stresses the importance of taking into account all the different but interlocking elements of material technologies, institutions, and their environment, and thereby offers an integrated, comprehensive understanding of technical, social, economic, and political aspects of how technology is constructed by social groups and individuals.

Such systemic and “flexible” approaches to interpreting the relationship between technological change and society are, again, more productive in academic terms than the reductionist and stilted premises of technological determinism. The latter offers a one-sided perspective of technology as a driving force for social development and change (Smith and Marx 1994), but fails to account for the individual and collaborative human agency embedded in every technology and every innovation. The inevitability of social progress as shaped by technological change in the doctrine of technological determinism (Bimber 1990) is also of questionable use to those who wish to examine the complexity of technology’s place and role in developing societies. Technologies are developed and disrupted not by autonomous entities or isolated automatons, but by humans embedded in societies, histories, cultures, and politics, so while technological development can be said to shape social change in some way, it is also very much shaped by the same social and political forces as well as influenced by the historical and cultural capital societies accumulate.

#### 3.1.4 Applying SCOT to Research on ICTs and Civic Activity

Technology (and media/communications technology in particular) permeates modern culture: the processes at play in human society cannot be fully understood without taking into account the role of technology, enabling knowledge and information sharing, as well as communication. SCOT offers a conceptual framework for politicizing this modern technological culture, suggesting that all technologies have politics and providing us tools to examine these politics. Importantly, Bijker (2009) suggests that within the social construction of technology paradigm, all relevant social groups have some form of expertise and that none of them has any special

superiority over the others—an approach especially useful for understanding the modern society’s ubiquitous use of digital media and digital technology, as well as civic media and civic technology proliferation as an expression of individuals’ and groups’ increasing engagement in political and civic activity.

Examining the affordances of digital information and communication technologies that emerge through the users' perception, construction, and appropriation of the meaning of said technological platforms and tools emerges as a meaningful way to both study the flexible array of potentialities for action perceived and interpreted by users from technology and to account for how these technologies in themselves are socially constructed and imbued with meaning by relevant social groups.

### 3.2 Communicative Affordances Framework for Understanding ICTs and Protest

#### 3.2.1 Concept of Affordances in Social Science and Communication

A communicative affordances approach may provide a useful high-level framework for researching how technology alters communicative practices and to understand how digital media such as social networks are integrated into protest routines, affecting subsequent patterns of communication, information dissemination, and dissent tactics.

In social science, an affordance in a broader sense refers to the “mutuality of actor intentions and technology capabilities that provide the potential for a particular action” (Majchrzak et al. 2013, p. 39). Because affordances are derived from the negotiation of an individual’s subjective perception of utility and the objective qualities of an object or a technology (Gibson 1986), this means using an object or a

technology can result in multiple action possibilities for different actors in different environments. This approach to understanding technology allows for framing the possibilities of action involving it in contextual terms, since cues for affordances are drawn from the environment around the individual, often at or right before the moment of action.

The psychological roots of affordances as a concept are important to retain when dealing with how affordances have been repurposed in technology studies, where the term mostly deals with the design and features of technologies. But Gibson's writing stresses the fact that affordances are not merely material qualities or features of objects (or technologies) but that they also depend on the interaction between perceivers and their environments. They present different choices and action possibilities based on the context and the actor, as well as the technology being used.

The communicative affordances framework emerges from recent work that has applied affordances theory to explain how social media platforms (Majchrzak et al. 2013, Earl and Kimport 2011) and social networks in particular (boyd 2010) alter individual and group communications. More recent work adds mobile media affordances into the mix (Schrock 2015), providing more focused theoretical models for communicative affordances in the field of ICTs, as applied to particular technologies or platforms. A communicative affordances approach to understanding ICT use in the context of the Euromaidan protest could provide a useful foundation for modeling the affordances of social media and digital technology for dissent and potentially serve as a starting point for a broader theory of how these affordances augment dissent in post-Soviet states.

Tufekci (2011) argues that the tool/sphere debate around the internet is a false one: It is not useful to ask whether social media or the people or labor movements or mobile phones brought about change. The better question to ask is how and through what combination of factors the change occurred, and what configurations of citizens, communities, or movements, coupled with certain affordances of emerging media technologies (be they perceived as tools or as spaces for public discourse) made the change possible. These demands complicate the process of theorizing about the role of ICTs in political transformations, but they allow us to reevaluate the existing notions of civil society and political change in the context of a new political reality, augmented by digital technology and online social networks.

As the lines among information, communication, and action blur (for example, a tweet or hashtag is a message, but also the medium, and an act of defiance as well), it is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of any potential affordances of the networked reality of the internet. boyd (2010) suggests a more useful concept of networked publics that, restructured by networked technologies, constitute both the space and the collective in that space, made up of people, technology, and practice. Networks in this case help configure the environment and shape the activists' or protesters' engagement, affording them new possibilities for interaction. The key new affordances of networked publics—persistence, replicability, scalability, searchability (boyd 2010)—are important for facilitating protest, especially in terms of enabling tactical diffusion and continuity. boyd, it seems, accepts the certain degree of messiness and unpredictability (not necessarily conducive to a neat, structured set of concepts) in how ICTs complicate and extend (augment) the notion of publics, in

exchange for a more nuanced understanding of the role of digital networks in enabling civic participation.

### 3.2.2 Perceived Affordances as a Means to Understanding the ‘In-Between’

Emerging interdisciplinary research on technology, communication, and political and social change highlights the need for a richer, more nuanced definition of the concept of affordances, as the literature and theoretical background of technology and information studies intersect with political science and media studies.

The existing attempts to define affordances in communication and technology studies usually refer to qualities, features, or cues within a technology, dealing with how a medium or tool affords uses to individuals. Such definitions toe the middle ground between technological determinism and social construction of technology, and many academics see suggesting a technology affords social action as a less deterministic option. But this “middle ground” position fails to capture the complexity of increasingly interactive production of communication and the hybrid nature of the systems—both technological and human—mediating this communication.

Nagy and Neff (2015) suggest the term “imagined affordances” to describe those opportunities for action that flow out of design, features, and context in the space between users’ perceptions, attitudes, and expectations; between the materiality and functionality of technologies; and between the intentions and perceptions of designers. Imagined affordances refer to expectations of technology that may not fully structurally or rationally realized, but are nonetheless present in socio-technical systems, emerging in specific contexts and under specific circumstances. Such

affordances are never static and are dependent on both human action and the actions of algorithms and devices (Nagy and Neff 2015), all part of a hybrid system, all elements which augment each other to create complex sets of imagined opportunities for action.

Because the scope of this research deals mostly with the user side of the affordances equation (and not the designer side) and considers the expectations, perceptions, and decisions of those citizens who use ICTs in protest situations, I propose to use a variation of the idea of imagined affordances—“perceived affordances”—that narrows the scope somewhat but still retains the comprehensive nature of the concept that Nagy and Neff suggest, drawing on the functional features of information and communication technologies and the more ephemeral affective, emotional, and perceptive imaginations of its users to paint a dynamic picture of afforded opportunities for action and decisions that is simultaneously material and perceptual.

### 3.2.3 Applying the Affordances Framework to Social Media and Activism

A study by Earl and Kimport usefully offers several key affordances of the internet and new technologies for activism: reduced costs for participation and organizing, reduced need for physical co-presence in order to participate in collective action, and reduced need for both collectivity and physical togetherness in organizing (2011). Earl and Kimport conclude that whether or not ICTs will bring about model or theory-level changes will depend on how activists are able to leverage these new affordances. The suggested examples of affordances can serve as a useful theoretical starting point in this research and a foundation for a research design that could

illuminate more specific perceived affordances of ICTs for the Euromaidan protest participants (e.g., in areas of organizing; information dissemination and sharing; creating protest messages; witnessing and recording events) and how those affordances augment protest tactics, messages, goals, and outcomes.

Hacıyakupoglu and Zhang (2015) find that during the Gezi protests in Turkey, for instance, social media platforms afforded the protesters the opportunity to build and maintain trust in each other and in the system of dissent, but also note that the material and technological constraints of observed technological affordances themselves allowed for different levels of trust. Pearce (2015) ties the affordances discussion back to the “equal opportunity” nature of ICTs, demonstrating that in authoritarian states, digital media and social networks may also afford governments the potentiality of harassment, repression and oppression of government critics and activists, thus increasing the opportunities for social control.

Poster (1997) suggests that in many ways, emerging media technologies act as a modern means of efficiency, extending pre-existing identities and institutions. In contrast to the theory of modernity, the internet emerges as a new space of difference from and resistance to modern society, where individuals construct their identities in relation to ongoing dialogues between multiple publics and decentralized discourse is possible. The new counter publics, augmented by the internet and digital technologies, perform their identities and discourse in new ways, afforded by the digitized, machine-mediated context in a space seemingly without bodies, which is certainly new for political, social and media theory—but in reality, the bodies are very much present and continue to influence the discourse and the political

transformations, albeit augmented and extended by new technology. The Euromaidan protest, which was about identity transformation as much as about civic action and human dignity (Onuch 2014) emerges as exactly this kind of dissent space, where bodies and technologies augment each other.

Varnelis and Friedberg (2008) find that more and more citizens navigate both the physical and the digital spaces simultaneously and see their devices and networks as extensions of their selves. Various alternative counter publics coexist in this augmented space, and the level of augmentation is different for everyone, depending on their social status, age, gender or other attributes.

According to Tufekci (2011), the newly created augmented counter publics contributed to an oppositional information/action cascade in the case of the Middle East protests, allowing everyone who held an individual opinion to use the affordances of ICTs to gain multi-level awareness of other people's views leading to a spiral of action and protest. Tufekci and Wilson's empirical data from their 2012 study of protest and social media in Egypt illustrate a complex intertwining of multiple online and offline spheres, where social media as well as E-mail, were superimposed on existing social ties between friends, families, and neighbors. Khamis and Vaughn (2012), in the study of the use of social media during the Egyptian uprising, also find that these platforms were used in various ways to mobilize protest activity in Tahrir Square as well as to reach out to networks of international supporters, melding online and offline ties and connections. This is consistent with the proposed theoretical direction of an enmeshed social reality that is both digital and physical.

Tufekci (2014) points to a long-term cultural trend toward horizontal, non-institutional movements that predate the internet, as a key influence on new, participatory civic movements. These movements may wish to express themselves and establish themselves as a constituency, but fail to make structural or policy demands in the form of political parties or formal organizations. Tufekci believes that distrust of institutionalized powers, coupled with new affordances for less formal organization provided by ICTs allows protesters to organize spectacular, ‘statement’ movements more easily. The resulting mode of organization necessarily structures movements into a form that can express identities, grievances, and concerns, and assert claims to standing, but apparently has little or no interface to so-called traditional politics. One of the key challenges of research on augmented dissent is to show that these movements do relate to politics in measurable and meaningful ways; to either dismiss or perceive them as merely political ‘flash mobs’ both undervalues how they are embedded in political systems as well as underestimates their power to transform ‘traditional’ politics.

The Euromaidan protest emerged as such a ‘statement’ movement in order to draw attention to the claims of the grassroots participant without necessarily involving existing political structures, which the civil society largely discounted as corrupt and flawed. The convergence of technological affordances and this new participatory culture provides an opportunity for a deeper examination of how civic protest is changing when ICTs become its integral part, and may have significant impact on future movement trajectories. Ultimately, ‘statement’ movements are related to—and influential on—‘traditional’ political systems, and ICTs have the

potential augment the power of the statement into more tangible, institutionalized political power. As a possible structural and even theoretical implication of these changes, Earl and Kimport (2011) argue that the notion of ephemeral protest as afforded by digital media and their underlying qualities will become more central to the study of contentious politics, and traditional (enduring) social movements and social movement organizations will have to share academic attention with this new conceptual model of how political activity and dissent can occur, however difficult it might be to formalize or grasp the new notion due to its fleeting, unstable nature.

Conceptual understanding of ICTs as technologies that afford certain potentialities for action is not complete without examining how deeply they become embedded into the organizational and cultural structure of these movements. Tufekci (2014) claims that communication can be understood as a form of organization and the form of communication (including new forms provided by digital media) strongly interacts with the form of organization, so it's impractical to view the tools in separation or as an afterthought to the movement they exist within. Tufekci's solution is to conceptualize social movements as actors possessing certain capabilities and digital technologies as tools with certain affordances. We can then stipulate that affordances of digital media allow movements to develop certain capabilities, be it greater engagement, greater visibility, or better logistics and coordination.

Finally, Earl and Kimport (2011) stress that it is crucial to identify the affordances of a particular technology for a given social movement or protest community as well as to understand how those affordances can be leveraged meaningfully by participants. It is equally important to understand how technology

features, participant identities, and the environment of the social movement or protest in question merge to translate into affordances for protest action, tactics, and strategy perceived by the protesters. As the internet and digital media enmesh with our daily lives, internet studies scholars should take interest in how mundane uses of technology for everyday actions such as news consumption, information sharing, and maintaining personal relationships can flow into more extraordinary or revolutionary uses of ICTs such as defending human rights, creating alternative civic action platforms, or organizing protests, embedding their research in existing theory.

This dissertation focuses on the use of ICTs by protesters during the Euromaidan events and seeks to discern the particular context circumscribing the use of social media and other internet platforms as well as to understand how the combination of contextual factors such as political change, media freedom, civic activity, existing protest history, and technological proficiency led the participants of the protest to perceive the afforded potential to act in certain ways or make certain choices about their communicative practices. The study will apply Earl and Kimport's (2011) concepts of ICT affordances for activism (namely, reduced need for physical co-presence in order to participate in collective action as well as reduced need for both collectivity and physical togetherness in organizing) to the context of protest events. In addition, this study also will examine the collected data for other affordances that may emerge, focusing on the intersection among technological features, the protest environment, and the participants' expectations and perceptions. Of particular interest is how protesters use ICTs in a non-free or partly free media environment such as Ukraine (where mainstream media are co-opted by powerful

business owners with political interests and independent journalism is struggling) to compensate for some of the functions that independent media would usually perform, such as recording and disseminating information, witnessing key events, and framing protest discourse. Articulating these distinctive, perceived communicative affordances may provide a clearer picture of the meaning and role of ICTs in the Euromaidan protest and beyond and help further articulate a model of social media affordances for post-Soviet protest movements.

### 3.3 Applying the Hybrid Media Theory to ICTs and Citizen Protest

In his work on the hybrid media system, Chadwick (2013; Chadwick et al. 2016) discusses the need to integrate the study of “older” and “newer” media to make sense of the rapidly changing areas of journalism, election campaigning, and engagement and mobilization. While advancing the idea of a hybrid media system, predicated upon interactions of older and newer media logics (technology, norms, behaviors, organizational forms) in media and politics, Chadwick argues for a holistic approach that does a better job of mapping the differences between older and newer logics but also of showing where these logics may become enmeshed and intertwined, augmenting each other in new ways.

Chadwick’s hybrid media concept (2013) in some ways echoes the comprehensive “systems” approach of the social construction of technology theorists and suggests a systemic view of the various relationships between actors in the fields of media and politics, based upon adaptation and interdependence. Studying these hybrid systems in flow, as they are dynamically changing, presents an opportunity to grasp the interconnections and the ways in which the various actors and fields adapt

to each other and augment each other. The study of information and communication flows between activists, mainstream media, and other citizens during moments or periods of protest is one such opportunity to catch these relationships “in flow.”

The idea of hybridity has been advocated in communication, social science and technology research for some time: a prominent example of this are the hybrid networks of human and technological agents or “actants” as Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory (2005) describes them. Hybridity rejects simple dichotomies and creates a space for thinking about older and newer media and technologies not as replacing one another but as evolving and interacting logics, interdependent and constantly in transition. The hybrid ontology, Chadwick et al. argue, “draws attention to boundaries, to flux, to in-betweenness, and it concerns how practices intermesh and coevolve” (2016). In this way, the idea of augmentation proposed in this dissertation closely aligns with the hybrid way of thinking, as older and newer logics, offline and online activities, forms and tactics of dissent exist simultaneously and extend into each other in complicated ways instead of simply replacing one another. In a similar attempt to find a comprehensive approach to examining the interconnections between old and new, mainstream and citizen media, Hoskins and O’Loughlin suggest the concept of a ‘new media ecology’ to explain how existing traditional and new digital media technologies can be understood and studied as existing “in a complex set of interrelationships” within a specific context (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010).

The theoretical scholarly work proposing concepts of media hybridity and ecology focuses on media logics and systems of power more generally, but proposes some applications to the study of activism and dissent. In the 2013 book *The Hybrid*

*Media System: Politics and Power*, Chadwick discusses hybridized mobilization and draws on examples of movements that employ both old and new media logics to rally citizens around their causes. He also discusses how ICTs might change and challenge the traditional sphere of journalism and its practices in relation to civic action as well as how mainstream media redefine their role in society given the new capabilities ICTs offer to citizens who can now perform many of their functions, including witnessing, recording, and disseminating news. In a hybrid media system functioning around a protest, traditional media find themselves using new technological platforms and enmeshing with ICT-enabled citizen initiatives to perform framing, dissemination, verification, and filtering of the claims and messages generated by the protesters with the help of ICTs.

Chadwick argues that the new affordances of ICTs ignite particular aspects of the traditional media and political systems, giving civic actors more points of entry into traditional politics, but not replacing a traditional political and media landscape. Other scholarship indicates the emergence of new hybrid-mediated forms of political engagement that could not have existed before the integration of digital and mainstream (broadcast) media (Dennis, 2014). This approach usefully allows us to gauge the relative power and opportunity of ICT-based protest by showing how ICTs are enmeshing with the existing political communication ecology and how the two may augment each other.

In line with Chadwick's call (2013) to situate power and agency in the context of integrated, but conflicted systems of people and ICTs, situating ICT-enabled protests in the new context of polycentric, hybrid, and augmented social, political,

and media structures emerges as a productive way to study protest. It allows us to show how protesters perceive and explain their use of digital media, which become forms of both communication and organization in situations of dissent.

## Chapter 4: Research Methods and Design

### *4.1 The Considerations of Field Research Around Protests*

Planning and executing field qualitative research around a political movement or event is necessarily fraught with questions of ethics, which color everything from the choice of methods to constructing research questions and conducting communication with respondents to interpreting the results of the research. Below I address some key issues, namely the selection of appropriate methods for data gathering and data analysis, as well as the important ethical dilemmas and ways of addressing them, both in the field and while evaluating the gathered data.

All social science research is in some way political, but research on political movements and events is even more so. Because research is situated in a particular socio-historical moment and thus, within an existing politics (hegemonic or contested), fieldwork has been and will continue to be conducted in a politically charged atmosphere (Warren & Karner 2010). It is important for researchers to become aware of the political reality in which they operate and to embed their research in this context instead of resorting to a positivist standpoint and attempting to study the “single objective reality” in which all societies, political actors, and protesters are alleged to operate. Such a unilateral, static view of societies runs counter to the very notion of political and social transformations that are by their own nature dynamic and constantly shifting. Conducting research with a view of a particular socially constructed reality, emerging from a particular combination of history, politics, culture, social change, and personal choices of citizens seems more

productive. It means the researcher should take into account the issues of power, control, and agency in a given context to attempt to operate in an ethical and inclusive manner within such a reality. Such a sensitive research standpoint is especially important when doing research in societies where citizens have traditionally felt less empowered due to the rule of an authoritarian or repressive regime, as it makes it crucial for the researcher to capture how power and agency are situated to provide a faithful description and analysis of the personal as well as the political context their subjects exist in.

Traditional codes of ethics in social sciences stem from early human subjects research and the positivist tradition, suggesting a value-free set of norms such as informed consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy. An example of key ethical code-making by the US National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research was the Belmont report, released in 1978, which pointed to such moral standards for research involving human subjects as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The positivist view, however, insists on neutrality of the definition of good, a view that has been discredited as more and more researchers subscribe to the idea that little, if any, scientific inquiry is value-free. Instead, many now advocate for a feminist approach to ethics in research, concerned with power, oppression, privilege, human suffering, equity, social justice, and radical democracy.

Canella and Lincoln (2011) advocate for a reflexive ethics, infused throughout the process of inquiry and requiring a ceaseless moral dialogue. Such a research ethics is necessarily involved with the contemporary life and is based on a complex

view of moral judgments integrated into the everyday experience. As we ask ourselves constantly whose actions are worthy of debate and how we as researchers can bring those debates to light, we are in need of an ethics model that is critical and empowering. Christians (2011) suggests such an ethical-political framework could also be multicultural, gender inclusive, pluralistic, and international in scope. Additionally, this research ethics is not autonomous from politics or power, as Steiner (2009) outlines:

Fully feminist ethics, far more than their feminine and maternal counterparts, are distinctively political... A feminist approach to ethics asks questions about power even before it asks questions about good and evil, care and justice, or maternal and paternal thinking. (2009, p. 377)

In terms of operationalizing the ethical philosophy, Letherby (2003) distinguishes a feminist research practice by the questions researchers ask, the location of the researcher within the process of research and within theorizing, and the intended purpose of the outcomes of the inquiry. She notes that a feminist practice is concerned not only with the place and role of women, but, in a broader sense, with power relationships and imbalances in society or community. These considerations should inform the choice and application of research methods, the analysis of the data resulting from the fieldwork, and the resolution of any ethical dilemmas that may arise during the research process.

## 4.2 Methods and Research Strategy

### 4.2.1 Choosing Methods

Field research and qualitative inquiry in situations of political upheaval are inevitably chaotic, as researchers find themselves witnessing and being party to substantial social and political transformations, with multiple forces pulling the narratives of power and justice in different directions. As one seeks to understand the meanings people make of the political situation and their participation in the moment, the choice of research methods is certainly informed by what we *want* to find. Methods essentially impose certain perspectives on reality, revealing different facets of it. Kozinets (2010) suggests the researcher choose the methodological approach best for the level of analysis, constructs, and type of data the researcher hopes to obtain. Although Olesen (2011) points out that institutional review practices are less than sympathetic to qualitative research, steeped in the enduring positivist “politics of evidence,” qualitative methods lend themselves to feminist research strategies when situated within an interpretative research strategy (Van Zoonen 1994).

Several authors advocate the mixed methods approach to research, suggesting researchers can enhance understanding of a social phenomenon or moment by adding layers of information and by using a certain type of data to validate or refine another (Letherby 2003). Importantly, availing ourselves of what Teddlie & Tashakkori (2011) call mixed methods eclecticism not only means that academics are free to combine methods, but that they do so by choosing what they find to be the best tools for answering their research questions. Berg and Lune (2012) advocate the triangulation as a parallel concept to mixed methods, as it can imply the use of

multiple data collection technologies, multiple theories, multiple methodologies, as well as multiple researchers to obtain a clearer, more substantive picture of reality, and provide for a richer array of concepts and interpretations.

In view of the need for in-depth understanding of the modern practices of political movements and the particular realities of modern political practices, I employ qualitative interviews and collecting qualitative data online as methods for obtaining data. I then use qualitative coding, content analysis and thematic analysis to evaluate the data obtained and triangulate my research findings.

#### 4.2.2 Method of Data Collection

##### *4.2.2.1 Qualitative Interviews*

The method of qualitative interviews, also called in-depth or intensive interviews, seeks to elicit the meanings that life experiences hold for individuals interviewed. It concerns itself with accounts of events and the lived experience of research participants (Warren & Karner 2010). Weiss (1994) notes that qualitative interviews are useful because they provide dense, coherent, rich information as well as help us to understand respondents' experience, often serving to preserve accounts of events that would otherwise be lost. As we conduct qualitative interviews, we are able to integrate multiple perspectives, obtain descriptions of process (especially salient in studying political movements and protests), learn how events are interpreted by various constituents, and even grasp the situation from the inside, as we hear testimonies from participants. In-depth interviews couple well with other methods, allowing us, for instance, to broaden understanding of user-generated web content and user actions observed online (Kozinets 2010).

Feminist researchers, concerned with inclusivity and with showing how personal politics and ethics translate into affordances for agency or disempowerment in a broader social context, also find qualitative, in-depth interviews useful, as they help uncover lived experiences that are often hidden, and reveal pertinent issues of social change and social justice for women and other disempowered groups. Hesse-Biber (2007) argues that a researcher conducting the interviews must remain cognizant of power and authority, and be reflexive about the roles in the inquiry process, which all influence the choice of questions for the interview.

#### *4.2.2.2 Collecting Qualitative Data Online*

As the internet has quickly become embedded in daily realities, it has also emerged as an excellent research site for social scientists. Gatson (2011) cautions that any study of internet is complicated by the simultaneous dense interconnectedness of the online sphere and the pre-existing boundaries between networks and communities, so both online and offline must be studied in concert to construct a multilayered narrative that develops larger social context of a community under study. Certainly, the chosen site of online research, whether ethnography or otherwise, necessarily pushes definitional boundaries of generally accepted concepts such as self, community, privacy, and text, as the internet is bounded differently by qualities other than physical restrictions of offline field sites.

At the same time, there is no question that internet research can be problematic. Warren & Karner (2010) note that as the internet in some ways amplifies the social world, it can reveal extreme identities and deviant behaviors more readily. From the feminist perspective, the internet remains fraught with inequalities. According to Van Zoonen (2010), the new political economy of the internet still tends

to reconstruct the common gendered distinction between consumption and production and between entertainment and information, so noting the inequalities and divides based on gender, age, and income is important.

The ethical boundaries of online research may not be inherently different from offline ethnography, but Berry (2004) claims the overt intertextuality of the internet and its constantly changing nature require a flexible approach to research and research ethics. Uncritically advocating ethics drawn from human subjects research, Berry believes, is unproductive, while flexible and decentralized decision-making in online research ethics is advisable as a more adaptive approach.

Both Kozinets (2010) and Rogers (2013) argue for moving beyond the simple study of the internet and connecting online research to the broader social context. Kozinets notes “netnography,” or participant-observation research based in online fieldwork, often works best when combined with other techniques, such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups, as they complement and extend each other (2010). Research incorporating online components should attempt to acknowledge the importance of the internet in the lives of individuals, while data strategies should include triangulation between online and offline sources. Rogers echoes this sentiment as he invites researchers to think about how internet objects (tweets, hashtags, posts) speak to us about social and cultural research questions and direct our research. It is no longer useful to think about “the virtual sphere”: instead, Rogers advocates a research practice that follows the medium, captures its dynamics, and makes claims about social, cultural, political change in web data (2013), grounded in online and offline findings. As the internet becomes both the object of study and a

source, researchers find themselves not researching the internet and its users per se, but rather studying society and culture with and through the means of the internet.

#### 4.2.3 Methods of Data Analysis

##### *4.2.3.1 Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis*

Berg and Lune (2012) define content analysis as a “careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings” (p.349). It is an interpretative approach that allows researchers to uncover layers of meaning in social action and human activity and facilitates generation of theories or explanations of meanings. As a method, content analysis is useful because it’s unobtrusive. While we can perform content analysis on interview data, it can also be used to work with texts available to researchers already, such as media texts or online content. Hesse-Biber (2007) notes that content analysis can be beneficial to feminist researchers, as the level of authenticity and the origin of production of pre-existing artifacts is important for validity of findings, especially as feminist academics, who are concerned with the relationships among power, agency and political freedoms situated in personal contexts, work in a larger scientific community, which can be skeptical of self-insertion during field research.

The interview transcripts subjected to content analysis emerge as respondents’ own interpretative accounts of what happened to them or of their participation in the events they describe. Warren & Karner (2010) caution researchers to remember that these transcripts are not just one-way text, but that knowledge gained from interview data is based on questioning and answering, talking, and listening in a dialogue,

placed in a particular context. Berg and Lune (2012) also note that not all content is manifest or visible on the surface of the message or text, and that researchers should also look for latent content. Latent content can be embedded in frames or discourse or the deep structural meaning conveyed by the text. These can be discovered through the application of coding schemes to sort the themes, opinions, discourses, and phenomena mentioned in the texts and categorize them into explicit or implicit coding categories. Such interpretation of texts through coding and categorization can highlight both recurring themes and discourses and outliers. The analysis can help shed light on individuals' experiences, perceptions and memories as they engage in historic events and make their own meanings of political change.

#### 4.3 Ethical Dilemmas and Considerations

When we as researchers prepare to conduct field research in a politically fraught environment and engage with individuals involved in the political and social activity, we face two overlapping ethical issues: determining the ethically appropriate behavior according to our professional standards and codes as well as dealing with our personal standards of ethics. The tension here, as Lofland et al. (2006) point out, is understanding to whom our obligation is and to what extent we hold these obligations.

As we attempt to plan our research, we must reflect on whether there are consequences of the study for us and for our participants in order to inform our decisions and planning. Assessing the ethical consequences and risks of a research project in a politically tense context is important as research on oppressed and less powerful groups can potentially be used by more powerful to advance their interests.

Ideally, feminist research practices advocate for an equal and collaborative process in service of the objectives and needs of the research participants and their community. This is not always wholly possible, but should nonetheless be attempted. Warren and Karner (2010) also argue for respect and the imperative to treat research participants not as a means to an end, but as ends in themselves.

Ethical dilemmas emerge both at the stage of data collection and the state of interpreting results. At both points, these dilemmas must be addressed so as to not invalidate the results of the research inquiry. For this dissertation, I propose four distinct ethical quandaries and a set of possible solutions to them, as well as a final note about the ethical issues of incorporating qualitative research results of a study of political movements and unrest into a dissertation.

#### 4.3.1 Sampling for Qualitative Interviews

Unlike large statistical surveys dealing with sizable populations, where the sampling is random, sampling associated with qualitative fieldwork is usually purposeful. This seems appropriate when the population parameters are not known, as well as when the researcher seeks to learn about select cases or variation across cases in a particular context. But this does raise the ethical dilemma of representativeness, generalizability, and of whether our sample is somehow biased and thus disqualifies the results of the inquiry.

As Weiss (1994) notes, probability or random sampling, while having the advantage of being more representative and allowing for generalizations, is difficult unless you have a large population upon which to draw. As such, in qualitative fieldwork, researchers often fall back on convenience sampling as the method used,

especially in research on political movements and protests. In seeking to understand the inner workings of a particular community or event, random sampling is less valuable when assembling a pool of interviewees, as the goal of the researcher is not generalization as much as in-depth understanding of the particular context, especially when qualitative interviews are employed. Often, snowball sampling is used to find interview subjects from within interlocking social networks, beginning with an initial contact, giving the researcher the advantage of a strategy for finding new respondents and potentially providing more contextually relevant data. With this method, the researcher might find that the topic of the interviews can be of mutual interest to her and her subjects, so respondents are often found through existing connections. The issue with selective, purposive sampling and encountering non-strangers is that shifting to a purely research agenda may have consequences for researcher's relationships as well as for the data gathered (Warren & Karner 2010).

Strategic selection of informants can be done ethically, however, if the researcher is transparent and open about the reasons for a particular selection mechanism. Lofland et al. (2006) suggest making efforts to select participants who are positioned differently within the particular group or setting and who might provide access to different kind of information, meanings, and interpretations (for instance, different sides of the political debate or people with different levels of particular knowledge or skills).

Researchers also should be transparent about their expectations of the effect the sampling strategy might have on the data collected, but purposeful sampling in itself does not preclude valuable insights and findings. Weiss (1994) argues that results of a

purposeful sample of interviewed individuals can still be validated through the participants' own assessment of generalizability, similarity of dynamics and constraints in each person's case, as well as through corroboration from other studies with similar contexts. While it may not be possible to develop a general theory from one set of interviews, combining this approach with other methods may yield more substantive results that allow for extrapolation. In any case, the researcher must make every effort to interview as many voices as possible, within the limits and constraints of a given research project.

#### 4.3.2 Interviewing Respondents During or After Dramatic Events

Another ethical dilemma that presents itself to the researcher is connected to the risks and dangers of interviewing individuals in times of crisis. Respondents interviewed during or after dramatic political events, or those taking part in political resistance, may be physically or emotionally vulnerable, and the researcher would have to mitigate these circumstances during the data gathering phase, as well as later, when incorporating the results into the study.

Here, the researcher is faced with a tension between the "do no harm" tenet of ethics and the desire to present the fullest possible exploration of the phenomenon under study. Because this tension between logic and ethics exists, it is important to carefully consider the ethical issues in order to be successful in any qualitative research with human subjects (Berg and Lune 2012). Lee-Treweek & Linkogle (2000) identify various kinds of danger to both participants and the researcher in the field, including physical, emotional, or ethical risks. These are often concealed aspects of social research. For instance, research on communities under threat or

during unrest and political repression may carry both physical and emotional danger. Lofland et al. (2006) also note that some settings or circumstances may carry the risk of emotional distress, including feelings of anxiety and doubt in participants or feelings of guilt and fear of failure in the researcher.

First and foremost, researchers have ethical responsibility to assess risks that participants, communities, and society may face as result of their work. The specific ethical danger may often be difficult to predict, as other social institutions impose their interpretations of ethics and social sciences upon the researcher. Assessing the risks and being aware of them, as well as informing participants of them, is crucial to establishing a climate of trust and mitigating danger or harm. In some cases, creating a safer environment may be as easy as choosing the right location, which provides more physical safety (Weiss 1994). In other cases, the researcher must weigh the risks of putting a respondent in danger against the value of possible insight from the interview. Preserving confidentiality and anonymity also is crucial in situations where knowledge of participation in the research project may bring respondents potential harm.

In situations of emotional distress, establishing a reliable research relationship is important and the researcher should be able to explain why she is asking particular questions and why it's important to know the answers. Being a good listener is also important: interviewing provides respondents with a chance to talk about matters of emotional importance while preserving some middle distance. It is useful if the respondents are situated close enough to emotions to relive them, but are distant enough to maintain some self-control (Weiss 1994).

Warren & Karner (2010) propose leaving difficult questions until the end of the interview, by which point some rapport typically already has been established. When asking difficult questions and discussing emotional situations, the researcher must be prepared for emotional reactions, acknowledge the respondent's pain, and give them the choice to stop or continue. We do have a right to ask about painful things, if that is what the study is about and the respondent has consented to the interview on this topic. A researcher can mitigate the ethical tensions of obtaining data in high-risk situations by being aware of the emotional context and the risks; showing responsibility for using the information granted and incorporating it mindfully into a research report; as well as knowing the context of the situation and being sensitive and responsive to the participants' needs.

#### 4.3.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality: Interview Results and Online Content

The issues of confidentiality and anonymity come up not only during qualitative interviews, but also when gathering data online. Should we address these issues in the same way on the internet or is it governed by distinctive ethical norms? Because the internet is an inseparable component of social activity and individual identity, we should grant the issues of identity protection the same attention as we would with other kinds of qualitative research.

People use the internet to communicate on a range of subjects: some trivial, some controversial, many private. Warren & Karner (2010) note that regardless of the topic, users often have some expectation, or even illusion, of privacy. This means the broad ethical boundaries in online ethnography are not inherently different or special. The ethical boundaries of online ethnography are often based on the same ideas found

in offline ethnographic methods, since they deal with the same human subjects, but in a different setting (Gatson 2011).

Is internet-based data automatically in the public domain or is informed consent required? It is unhelpful to only think of the internet as a tool for conducting mediated interviews or focus groups, as Berg and Lune (2012) suggest, while neglecting to address the other facets of data collection online, which precludes the discussion of inherent ethical differences. The imagined “cyberspace” is not a separate place with unique laws: It might offer different technologies and affordances, but it has the same ethical considerations grounded in the fact that it is used by humans.

Kozinets (2010) proposes a solution for the dilemma of obtaining informed consent when engaging with online data. Netnography, where the researcher actively participates online and engages with community, is obviously human subjects research, so participants have a reasonable expectation of individual privacy and must be afforded anonymity or confidentiality. But the use of spontaneous conversations (posts, tweets) gathered in a publicly accessible venue is exempt, as it emerges as a form of archival or observational research, where no engagement or direct communication with those who generated the content is required. If the researcher does not record the identity of the communicators and if the researcher can legally and easily gain access to these communications or archives, then foregoing informed consent is not an unreasonable expectation. Of course, beyond the legality and technical “public” nature of the posts and texts, the researcher must also consider the context in which users publish their content and their perception of how visible it

might become. This tension between perception and actual visibility of “public” texts online requires careful consideration on the researcher’s part when they approach social media and online user-generated content. Essentially, the researcher must let themselves be guided by the circumstances in which the data was generated as much as by its public availability per se.

There are certain markers as well that indicate whether there is an expectation of privacy in an online context: closed groups, locked accounts, the use of passwords or membership requirements on websites are usually strong indicators that permission or consent is needed to use the data or to record participant conversations.

Given the technical affordances of the internet and its search engines, confidentiality online does not amount to not using real names, but also means not giving too much detail and sometimes refraining from using direct quotes (which can be googled easily), and instead rephrasing the key parts of the data. Online pseudonyms function like real names on the web and should be treated as such (Kozinets 2010). Some users might like credit in your study, while others would prefer to be anonymous. The overall goal is to fairly balance the rights of internet users with the value of your research contribution.

Understanding the differences and similarities between online and offline contexts as well as between public and private conditions is key to sensitive, ethical qualitative research online. Because some categories of users are less protected (women, minorities, and disabled individuals often face the same pressure and hardships online as offline), the researcher needs to be responsible when using the wealth of data available online (Weiss 1994). Especially in the context of non-free

states or countries with a history of surveillance and repressions such as Russia and, to some extent, Ukraine, anonymity is an important condition of free expression and personal freedom. In Russia, for instance, internet users have faced prison sentences for retweeting or reposting content critical of the state on social media (Lokot 2015b). Ukrainian authorities (under Yanukovych) took a step towards authoritarian rule during Euromaidan when the government passed a set of anti-protest laws (Bohdanova 2014b) limiting dissent and free expression (later repealed under pressure from protesters). Researchers working in such circumstances, when support for free expression is non-existent or swings wildly, must assume responsibility for protecting their study participants while telling their stories and be prepared to disguise people, places and institutions, without changing the essential human elements of the story).

#### 4.3.4 The Researcher's Persona and Its Influence on Data Collection and Analysis

The dilemma of the researcher's own persona, with all his or her political or personal views and connections to events under investigation must also be addressed in an ethical, but productive way, in order for the research to progress. The process of qualitative data collection, whether through interviews or through online means, involve an embodied researcher of a particular appearance, gender, sexuality, race, class, and age, and these attributes inevitably enter into the research interaction and may influence the process (Warren & Karner 2010; Olesen 2011). Lofland et al. (2006) describe a constant tension the researcher experiences between involvement and withdrawal and participation and detachment, but suggest it's possible to find

constructive ways to balance and manage tensions, which may ultimately become a springboard for compelling analytic insights.

Weiss (1994) suggests that the researcher should do only as much self-reporting during interviews and data collection as consistent with the interview situation, with the aim of emotionally understanding someone's account without allowing attention to be captured by one's own feelings and thoughts. Weiss believes the interviewer has no mandate to help respondents understand themselves or provide advice. On the other hand, Letherby (2003) argues that in the feminist perspective, it is not possible for researchers to be completely detached from their work, as the emotional involvement cannot be controlled by mere effort of will. Instead, the subjective element in research should be acknowledged, even welcomed, although one must keep in mind that emotional involvement is not necessarily a prerequisite for good research results.

As a rule, researchers are often far more aware of participants' emotions than their own and so feminist research finds it important to consider risks to all participants and those affected by research, including the researcher themselves (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle 2000). In her description of autobiographic research, Letherby (2000) notes that emotional and political involvement in research can put one's sense of self and professional identity at risk, but there is still inherent value to such research. While the emotional danger can be acute when the area under study relates to researcher's biography (e.g., if the researcher is involved or sympathizes with the political movement they study) and it can destabilize personal identity, it is also liable

to provide greater insight into the participants' meaning-making in a particular context.

The research relationship constructed by the researcher is fluid and changing and is always jointly constructed with the participants. Gatson (2011) believes it's crucial for the researcher to understand their place in the larger community and the circles that demarcate memberships in groups and networks. This will illuminate an individual's multiple positions, identities, and power/resources, and will assist the researcher in deciding how to ethically employ them. Linkogle (2000) also suggests it is useful to have keen awareness of when a researcher is more protected or more vulnerable in a particular setting (such as during political turmoil in a given country), due to professional status, privilege, gender, or a particular knowledge of context.

When compiling a report of the investigation into a dissertation or a research presentation, the researcher faces choices of what attitude to display in the report (Weiss 1994). Should they appear sympathetic, critical, or neutral towards their research participants and their context? Van Zoonen (1994), writing about the feminist research ethics, bases her decisions in the spirit of equity and rectifying the imbalance of power, suggesting a "conscious partisanship" approach. The researcher should make every effort to make the respondents' own perspective understandable while also being committed to telling the story of an event or phenomenon in its entirety through the participants' accounts.

While analyzing and putting together reports, researchers often face feelings of anxiety and distress about conflicting goals and loyalties in their research (e.g. a researcher who is also a political activist may feel at odds). Lofland et al. (2006)

suggest the researcher anticipate emotional risks and prepare for them in order to maintain a physical and emotional balance, but also remember that any result of their research has some value towards understanding the meaning behind events. Lee-Treweek (2000) goes further to argue that emotional accounts of research in the field should also be treated as data, as they provide a greater degree of understanding of how others experienced an event or a setting.

In addressing her own persona embedded into the research, an investigator must recognize herself as present, and be transparent about her own biases and views, as well as her personal involvement. Ultimately, however, the researcher needs to let the voices of the participants be heard. The researcher also must acknowledge the risks and dangers to themselves, and enter any research negotiations armed with connections, prepared to tell their story, show some knowledge of the context, and exhibit courtesy to those who agree to speak about their experiences. In this particular research study, the researcher enters a protest (or later, post-protest) setting in a society of which she is herself a citizen of, and one where she has a history of civic activity, so it is crucial that she present a compassionate, yet transparent story of her academic and civic interest in the development of Ukrainian civil society and the personal stories of protest participants. For this reason the study employs in-depth, semi-structured interviews with protest participants, as they afford the researcher and the participants a common conversational ground, letting the researcher set the parameters and explain her connection to and interest in the protest events, as well as letting the participants tell their stories to a person who they can situate within the context of Ukrainian social developments and civic activity. This is useful as it allows

the narratives told by the participants to potentially have more cohesion and challenge the assumptions the researcher might have made visible or lead to surprising discoveries that the researcher has opened herself to during the interviews.

#### 4.3.5 Framing Research Results from Political Movement Study

Armed with the knowledge and awareness of what data gathering and analysis methods can offer us, and how to address the ethical dilemmas we may face in the field or later when composing our research report, how do we analyze and frame research results in a risky, changing situation? At the same time, how do we keep in mind how these results may influence our research participants or the broader community?

First, we should remember that respondents emerge in our study as constructors of knowledge, working in collaboration with interviewers. We should never present our findings as the ultimate truth about the human condition, for that defies the purpose of interpretative qualitative research. Instead, data from interviews and online communities should be presented as accounts of social life, illuminating the ways in which individuals explain themselves (Warren & Karner 2010). These accounts tell us how people talk about their decisions and actions, values, and opinions, as well as how they make meaning of social and political change that occurs with their participation. Individuals construct their narratives with the help of the researcher and their questions. They do so within a specific time and place, so any summary or generalization must be grounded in a clear context.

Formulating potential propositions from data is an inherently inductive activity that relies on persistent and methodical interaction with data. It is advisable to

start querying the data and analyzing it early, and to go from data and questions to answers and propositions through intensive immersion in data and iterative interaction with the investigator's own research intuition and knowledge. What should emerge in the end is an open-ended attempt to understand the social setting (Lofland et al. 2006), guided by research questions and the knowledge gleaned from interactions and data. When selecting quotes to illustrate their findings, the researcher should be mindful of confidentiality issues, but also select quotes which are strong, but representative of the wider trend (Weiss 1994). It is worth preserve conversational spaces and false stops if they help get across emotional meaning, which as we have seen is becoming increasingly important to critical, feminist social and cultural qualitative research.

While we should let the data speak for itself and let our participants' voices tell their stories, guided by our questions, selections and curation, we must always be aware of the potential implications of the publication and dissemination of our research findings for participants, their communities, and their causes. In a tumultuous political environment, a poorly framed opinion or a poorly disguised identity can lead to real dangers and risks for our research collaborators. It is therefore important to address all the ethical dilemmas and possible risks the research results may present well before dissemination. One must be considerate of the trust the research participants put in the researcher as they trust the researcher to tell their story, even if this does not necessarily help them advance their cause.

#### 4.4 Research Design and Data Collection

Through a mixed-method research design involving interviews with protest participants, as well as qualitative and quantitative analysis of online social media content, the research project examines the nature of ICT use during the Euromaidan protests and the role ICTs play in the information and media landscape of a post-Soviet protest movement.

During the content analysis phase, posts and status updates from the social media pages of three key Euromaidan protest communities were collected, coded, and analyzed to reveal the main categories or types of ICT uses during the protest. The preliminary findings of the coded online content were then combined with over 50 semi-structured, open-ended interviews with a group of Euromaidan protest participants in Ukraine and abroad.

During the interviews, participants were asked to explain how they used ICTs, including social media, during the protest period; to discuss how ICTs fit into their tactical and strategic protest decisions (especially around information and media issues); and to describe what having recourse to these technologies and media platforms meant to them in terms of how they engaged in dissent. The results of the interviews, triangulated with the data from the content analysis, provide in-depth insights into how ICTs were used and perceived by protest participants, and what the role of ICTs as vehicles for information and civic media content was for protest organizing, information sharing, and participant identity construction. Analyzing the online activities in connection with reported offline events allows the researcher to

see possible links and influences between online and offline environments, as well as to theorize about the way in which they augments each other.

The study employs the theoretical framework of social media affordances to interpret the data gathered during the interviews and content analysis to better understand how digital media augmented citizens' protest activity through affording them new possibilities for dissent, and how they made meaning of this protest activity as augmented by ICTs. The research applies Earl and Kimport's (2011) concepts of ICT affordances for activism (namely, reduced need for physical co-presence in order to participate in collective action, and reduced need for both collectivity and physical togetherness in organizing) to the context of protest events, and examines the collected data for other perceived affordances that may emerge. The use of ICT by protesters in a constrained media environment—with affordances that compensate some of the functions that independent media would typically perform, such as recording and disseminating information, witnessing key events, and framing protest discourse—is also taken into account. The combination of empirical findings and theoretical framework application contributes towards creating a theory of digitally augmented dissent in post-Soviet states.

#### 4.4.1 Online Content Analysis

The primary purpose of collecting and analyzing online content from Euromaidan-related social media communities was to observe how participants were using these platforms, what kind of materials and media they were publishing and sharing, as well as what perceptions and opinions of ICTs and their role in protest activity, if any, were being expressed.

#### *4.4.1.1 Sampling*

I chose to sample content from several Facebook communities that were created shortly after the Euromaidan protest began in November 2013 (Appendix 1). Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms in Ukraine (Freedom House 2014a), and was a key online space for Euromaidan participants, as evidenced by the creation of multiple communities, pages and groups related to the protest events. I selected one macro-community devoted to general coverage and discussion of the protest, EuroMaydan, with more than 300,000 followers; one meso-community intended to coordinate all sorts of protest assistance, Euromaidan SOS, with more than 120,000 followers; and one micro-community devoted to improving protest logistics and resource coordination, Galas, with more than 7,000 followers.

The Euromaidan protests lasted from November 2013 till February 2014, with periods of active unrest and even violence interspersed with periods of relative inactivity. To capture social media content reflecting both kinds of protest activity (the ‘firestorms’ around key peak events and the day-to-day protest activity), I sampled content from the three communities during three periods: a week around the end of November-start of December 2013 (November 25-December 2, 2013, beginning of the protests); a week around mid-January 2014 (January 6-13, 2014); and a week around the end of February 2014 (February 17-24, 2014, close the end of the protests). A simplified timeline of the main phases of the Euromaidan protest, adapted from a EuromaidanPress infographic (EuromaidanPress 2016), is presented in Figure 1.

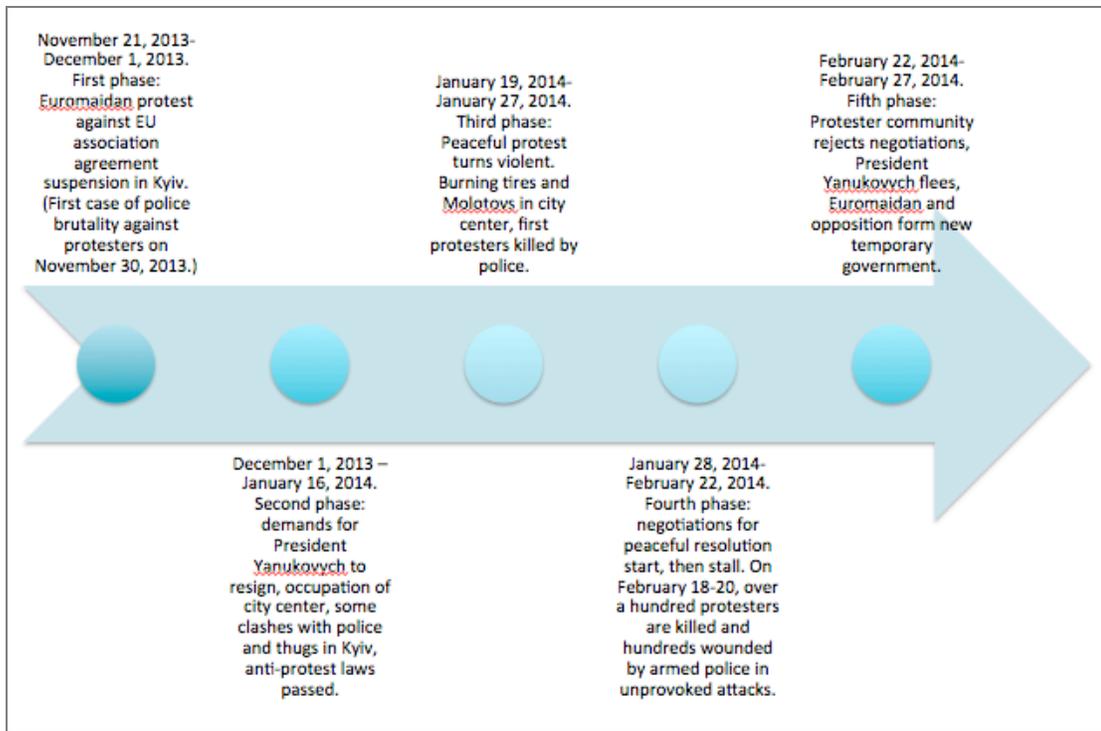


Figure 1: A timeline of the Euromaidan protest.

#### 4.4.1.2 Data Collection Process

The posts from each community from each one-week period were collected using the DiscoverText in-browser software for scraping data from Facebook. The textual content and metadata from each post were compiled into a database, along with any visual content, if available through the Facebook Graph API. The total number of collected posts for each source is reflected in Appendix 1.

#### 4.4.1.3 Coding and Analysis

The coding scheme for analyzing online content from the three communities was built with a mind to perform elements of content analysis and thematic analysis of the collected texts and the discourse behind them. The main goals of this comprehensive analysis were to 1) classify how participants were using these platforms; 2) categorize the kinds of materials and media they were publishing and sharing; and 3) determine

what perceptions and opinions of ICTs and their role in protest activity were being conveyed. The themes emerging from the results of the analysis of online content were then triangulated with the analysis of the interview texts.

The structure of the coding scheme (Appendix 2) reflects the research strategy and includes basic information about the units of content analysis, such as the post's source, the period during which it was collected, post date and time, and the post URL. The coding scheme also provides a place to describe multimedia such as images or video, if the post contains them. The next group of codes suggests a few typical categories for online and social media posts deriving from related research studies on civic activity online (Fossato et al. 2008, Oates 2013). The Post Function category includes functions of posts such as providing information, promoting an event, reporting on activity or event, aggregating or curating news, asking for information, asking for help, and an open-ended category for other functions that may emerge from the data. Another group of coding categories notes the actors mentioned in the post, including activists or protesters, non-profit organizations, political figures or officials, law enforcement, media/journalists, Ukrainian citizens (referenced specifically), and an open-ended code for other types of actors.

The thematic analysis part of the coding scheme that considers the themes, frames, and discourses emerging from the text corpus, is partially based on related earlier case studies (Oates 2013), but adds new elements with regard to the present interest in the role of ICTs in protest activity and participants' perception of these new technologies. This part contains a set of codes to account for the presence of such discursive frames as direct discussion of the Euromaidan protest events, discussion of

Ukrainian or international politics, discussion of Ukrainian or international media coverage, discussion of civil society or activism (including volunteering, fundraising, and other grassroots activity), and discussion or attribution of power or agency to certain groups or actors. The next set of codes in this part of the scheme considers how the discussion of ICTs, including the internet, social media, and grassroots platforms, is framed in the posts. This set contains codes for discussion of the role of ICTs in the protests (negative, positive, or otherwise); discussion of ICTs versus mainstream media; comments on use of specific technologies or platforms, comments on Ukrainians using ICT versus users in other countries; and possible mentions of ICT use in the context of witnessing events and ICTs as a tool for co-presence (these last two codes are informed by preliminary findings from the pilot round of interviews as well as existing literature on ICTs and activism). The coding scheme also provides an additional free text box for any other relevant frames or discourse observed in the posts and comments.

#### 4.4.2 Interviews

The semi-structured, open-ended interview scheme (Appendix 3) was designed to glean an immersive, in-depth understanding of the perceptions of protest participants of the role of information and communication technologies in protest activity and to relate these perceptions with their overall ideas about civic and political participation and their understanding of ICT's place in everyday life. The interview questionnaire contains 12 questions, ranging from general inquiries about how citizens understand political participation to narrower questions about how and why they used various communication technologies during the protests. The questions were deliberately

constructed to be open-ended in order to obtain a richer set of narratives, recollections, observations, and self-perceptions from respondents.

#### *4.4.2.1 Sampling*

The initial pilot interviews (12) took place in Kyiv during the Euromaidan protests in December 2013 and January 2014, with participants purposively sampled from various active Euromaidan groups and initiatives to represent a spectrum of ages, civic activism experience, and digital literacy.

A second wave of interviews (10) was conducted in the spring of 2014 in the Washington, DC area with individuals who identified as Ukrainians living in the US and as having participated in Euromaidan. Participants were recruited from several key Ukrainian communities and groups in the DC area, using their public Facebook pages to place recruitment ads and then sampled randomly from the pool of those who agreed to participate in the study.

Finally, a third wave of interviews (37) was conducted in the summer and fall of 2015 in Ukraine, with participants initially recruited from several key Euromaidan communities and groups, using their Facebook community pages to place recruitment ads as well as through snowball sampling stemming from the pilot interview series participants and their networks.

#### *4.4.2.2 Interview Process*

All the interviews were held in public spaces, such as cafes, squares, office lobbies or parks, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The interviews range in length from 29 minutes to over an hour. All of the Ukraine-based interviews were conducted in Ukrainian or Russian. All the Washington DC area-based interviews were conducted in English, although pre-interview conversations sometimes occurred

in Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the interviewee's preferences (this helped establish rapport with the respondents and gain their trust.) The researcher is fluent in all three languages, so was able to conduct interviews in either of the three or switch at the participants' discretion without difficulty. All the respondents received information sheets about the research project in their language of choice, and all provided oral consent on the record, as required by the IRB approval conditions.

#### *4.4.2.3 Coding and Analysis*

All the interviews were transcribed and coded manually for the first time using thematic content analysis and elements of framing analysis to discover broad themes and discourses in the interview text corpus. The second round of coding using NVivo software identified narrower subthemes within each of the broad themes, which allowed for a triangulation of the interview findings with the content analysis data. This allowed the researcher to examine the results through the prism of the perceived communicative affordances framework, and to draw conclusions about participants' perceptions of the role of ICTs in protest activity as well as the complex intertwining of their online and offline activity. The findings and conclusions are discussed in depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

#### *4.5 Challenges and Limitations*

One of the challenges of doing research on protests in Ukraine is that the researcher herself is Ukrainian, and is therefore inextricably embedded into the events, processes, and transformations happening in the country, including during the time of the Euromaidan protests. As with citizens of most post-Soviet states, including Ukrainians, her identity is complex and reflective of the historic, national, and social

transformations Ukraine and its people have undergone. She grew up in eastern Ukraine during the last decade of the Soviet Union in a largely Russian-speaking environment, but learned Ukrainian as her second language in her early years. Her family has mixed Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Polish roots. Such multifaceted histories and nuanced identities are indicative of the multiplicity and complexity of how most Ukrainians identify themselves within the post-Soviet and the global context. While the researcher's professional (as a journalist/former activist/current observer) and emotional (as a citizen of Ukraine and someone whose family and friends are directly involved in the events) involvement certainly impact her choices for research design and the process of said research, there is also an opportunity for greater reflexivity and deeper understanding of the situation exactly because the researcher is so intimately concerned about and embedded in much of what was happening during Euromaidan. She had also both experienced being at the center of the protest in Kyiv and has used social media to follow the news and to engage with other participants of the events from a distance.

The pilot round of interviews with Euromaidan protesters during the protest period also revealed a greater readiness on behalf of the interviewees to engage with a researcher who speaks their native language(s) and understands many of the contextual cues easily, leaving more room for in-depth discussions of meaning and perceptions. Greater rapport with the research subjects and potential for a more reflexive approach to the data gathered during the research project could be useful for a more nuanced understanding and interpretation of the research outcomes.

A limitation of the research project is that it only looks at one protest (albeit a massive one) in one country, so making broader conclusions based on the results might be difficult. However, should the research questions and methodology prove sound, and the results informative and thought-provoking, this approach could undoubtedly be triangulated with existing research on protests and technology elsewhere and applied to cases of dissent in other post-Soviet states such as Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and others.

## Chapter 5: The Euromaidan Context

This research project is interested, in broad terms, in the role of digital media and communication in civic and political transformations. It focuses on how these changes might be reflected in the growing and changing use of Internet and communication technology in protest activity in Ukraine during the last decade, in both routine and extraordinary ways. How do citizens navigate these shifts in mode of use, from posting about everyday occurrences and commenting on news to expressing their political position, witnessing crises, and directly engaging in protest activity?

While many citizens recognize the potential of ICTs for civic and political action generally, it is important to understand the distinction between how users experience ICT use for communication in the everyday context as opposed to extraordinary circumstances as well as how ICTs afford them the opportunity to engage in dissent or constrain their ability to do so. While online social network analysis and content mining of social media can tell us a lot about how people use digital technology, they do not tell the whole story. If scholars want to understand the nature of the relationship between protest activity and ICT use, it is crucial to conduct in-depth conversations with individual ICT users about how they use technology

A key theme that emerged from the interviews as respondents discussed their protest participation was the comparative role of digital technology in mediating the networks, underpinning the organizing efforts, directing the information flows and message production as well as facilitating participation and engagement in the action in the two major Ukrainian protests in 2004 (Orange Revolution) and 2014 (Euromaidan). The interview participants had a lot to say about particular

technologies or gave examples of specific use cases, but there were several major types of observations that reappeared throughout the conversations. These were:

- the relationship between technology and distance from the physical epicenter of the protest as a factor in protest participation;
- the potential affordances of ICT use for information sharing and media framing of the action during Euromaidan;
- the perceived and communicative affordances of ICTs in the eyes of those engaged in the protest for organizing individuals, networks, and communities and setting up lines of communication between key protest hubs;
- whether the internet and social media were central to and afforded opportunities for building trust, establishing relationships, and verifying information or whether they contributed to spreading misinformation;
- how digital media reflected on the shifting meanings of presence, co-presence, and witnessing during the protest and what affordances emerged for protest participants in this regard;
- and finally, what affordances the Internet and social media platforms provided in regards to establishing citizen identity (both as protesters and as Ukrainians) and forming the notions of ‘community’ and ‘civil society,’ as well as shaping the protester’s expectations, disappointments, and their understanding of what ‘success’ and ‘sustainability’ meant for those who took part in Euromaidan.

This chapter provides a brief historic context of Ukrainian political and civic activity, as well as an account of the other major protest in post-independence Ukraine, the so-

called Orange Revolution of 2004. This is followed by a more detailed analysis of the major themes that emerged from interview participants' discussion of their protest activity and the role of the internet and social media in it.

### 5.1 Recent History of Civic and Political Activity in Ukraine

Any history of the events leading up to the Euromaidan protest, however brief, must necessarily take account of the political and national identity shifts that Ukraine experienced post-independence. Those should, of course, be coupled with the state of the media industry and the state of freedom of speech and independent journalism in the country. The overview of those changes can then be placed in the context of developments in digital information and communication technology and the growing pace of internet access in Ukraine. Such a comprehensive discussion highlights the interplay between the Ukrainian culture and the affordances of digital technology, showing how the factors of each merged to create a synergistic type of protest informed as much by the country's historic and social context as by the adoption of new media and communication technologies.

Throughout the interviews with Euromaidan participants conducted during and after the protest, respondents repeatedly brought up the other Ukrainian "revolution"—the 2004 protests against electoral fraud that brought a change of power in Ukraine and came to be known as the Orange Revolution. Therefore, it is critical not only to trace the transformations of politics, civil society, ICTs, and identity in Ukraine between 2004 and 2014, but also to look further back to the earlier years of Ukrainian independence so that the narrative of current events and

manifestations of dissent gains more meaning in the context of the country's democratic developments and challenges.

#### 5.1.1 From Independence to the Orange Revolution (1991-2004)

Ukraine gained its independence in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As Wilson (2015) notes, in 1991 “there was no real revolution,” and those who came to power at the helm of a newly independent country were the same Communist and nomenclature officials who ran the republic before. It took the Ukrainian political elites and civil society years more to begin rebuilding towards a more democratic model of governance, so Wilson astutely calls the protests of 2004 and 2014 the “two catch-up revolutions” that came fairly late in the process.

Kiryukhin (2015) observes that after the country gained independence, identity problems turned out to be more important for Ukraine than the problem of establishing democratic institutions—yet another factor in its comparatively unhurried democratic development. This focus on rebuilding a national identity has also meant that the discourse prevalent among political and intellectual elites in Ukraine has mostly focused on debates about the nation's self-determination between the West and the East, national memory, history, religion and culture—but not human rights or democratic values.

Because most of the power structures in newly independent Ukraine were inherited from the Soviet hierarchy, they also reshaped the “new” elites and networks in their own interests. In mid-2000s, Ukraine was a state with a weak rule of law, no independent judiciary, and little room for the chaos of the early 1990s, having organized it into a neatly autocratic system with only the token signs of democracy,

among them elected institutions such as a president and an ineffective parliament. By this point, most the important economic assets had been corruptly privatized under President Leonid Kuchma (who ran Ukraine in 1994-2005), and the country was, in practical terms, run by “a cabal of oligarchs and regional bosses,” (Wilson 2015) all reporting to the chief “manager”—the president.

Because the political opposition at the time was weak, independent journalists in early to mid-2000s found themselves central to the effort of challenging Kuchma’s regime and battling the non-free mainstream media environment where most media companies and newsrooms were either managed from above or resorted to self-censorship to avoid additional pressure. A pivotal moment that put the Ukrainian society on a new track towards political and civic change was the 2000 murder of opposition journalist Georgiy Gongadze, who founded one of the first independent news websites in Ukraine.

Gongadze, who was a radio and television journalist unwilling to cave to government pressure, found an outlet online when he gathered a small team of like-minded reporters and founded *Ukrainska Pravda* (*The Ukrainian Truth*) in April 2000. The website was created specifically “to circumvent the authorities’ repressive crackdown on free speech” (Goldstein 2007), published anti-corruption investigations, and quickly became popular among the independent elites, opposition supporters and intellectuals. Then, in September 2000, Gongadze mysteriously disappeared. Two months later, a headless body alleged to be his was found in a forest outside of Kyiv. Opposition politicians accused President Kuchma of orchestrating the murder of the journalist, who had previously been investigating an

arms sale Ukraine had approved. The murder investigation is still ongoing, though several persons have been charged with performing the murder and jailed. Gongadze's body was finally buried in Ukraine in March 2016.

The Gongadze case marked not only the emergence of the Ukraine Without Kuchma protest movement (Karatnycky 2005), but also a broader awareness of the Internet as an alternative platform for news, investigative journalism, and uncensored public discourse (Goldstein 2007). This recognition was still quite modest, since the majority of Ukrainians, especially outside of the capital, had little to no Internet access (the level of Internet penetration at the time is estimated to have been between two and four percent of the 48 million-strong population (Åslund & McFaul 2006), but the resonance around the Gongadze affair certainly created some momentum around overall interest in online media platforms and related technology as spaces where dissent could occur. Kyj found that *Ukrainska Pravda's* popularity inspired opposition groups to develop their own political action websites during the 2004 presidential elections, and contributed to the burgeoning online presence of political and civic activist collectives such as Pora and Maidan.org.ua (Kyj 2006) that went on to play important roles in the Orange Revolution and subsequent political developments.

Although pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko emerged as the likely opposition candidate in the 2004 elections, Kuchma's regime was also challenged by eastern Ukraine powerhouse Viktor Yanukovich's candidacy. Because the electoral support for the incumbent political forces was divided, Yanukovich ended up with fewer votes than expected. Yanukovich's crude attempts to fix the vote and deny

Yushchenko the presidency led to the mass protests dubbed the ‘Orange Revolution’ in 2004 (Orange was the main color of Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine party logo and branding).

While some researchers, such as Goldstein (2007), claim that citizen journalism and the Internet played a decisive role in the Orange Revolution, it was probably less decisive than claimed, due to low Internet penetration (Ukrainska Pravda 2012) and the way protest mobilization was initially organized from the top down by opposition parties (Karatnycky 2005) cooperating with an emerging civic sector nurtured by international donor support (McFaul 2007). Rather, the Internet and other digital technologies served as useful collaborative and deliberative tools for the small cluster of activists and organizers who represented the political opposition and budding civil society in Ukraine. But each of those influencers also relied on personal connections, face-to-face meetings and conversations to maintain their far-reaching networks and recruit new people into the movement—people who weren’t necessarily connected or online or active Internet users. As one of the Orange Revolution’s key activists, Andriy Ignatov, told Goldstein in an interview:

We strived to reach investigative journalists, human rights lawyers, entrepreneurs, and students. In short, we wanted to reach the most networked people in Ukraine. (Goldstein 2007, p. 5)

Michael McFaul, former US ambassador to Russia, has observed that “The Orange Revolution may have been the first in history to be organized largely online” (McFaul 2005), but this claim might be going a bit too far, given what we know about how the 2004 protests were organized (Karatnycky 2005) and the technology available to

protesters at the time (Åslund & McFaul 2006, Kyj 2006). However, Goldstein (2007) also notes that the Orange Revolution marked an important moment for the convergence of rapid political change and the availability and emergence of information and communication networks that were largely open and independent. In his overview of digital technology use in the 2004 protest, Goldstein underscores the important roles of the emerging Ukrainian online media outlets in providing faithful reporting on election fraud and the ensuing protest activity, the growing ubiquity of mobile communications and text messaging and their use for coordination of activist efforts, and the growing Ukrainian segment of the online blogosphere which played host to many discussions and sharing of practices among civil society groups, though fell short of reaching the public in broader ways.

For the Orange Revolution, which was very much a political protest orchestrated by a small cluster of political activists and civic organizers allied with the opposition parties, the internet was instrumental in allowing for a creation of a space for dissenting opinions and independent reporting in an otherwise controlled and self-censored media environment. The activists at the heart of the protest also used emerging online platforms such as blogs (mostly LiveJournal) and mobile connectivity to coordinate their discourse and mobilization efforts, as well as elections monitoring and protest activity. But for the average protest participant in 2004, the internet mattered very little, and with the internet penetration at a level between two and four percent of the adult population (Åslund & McFaul 2006), average Ukrainians still largely relied on traditional media and word of mouth for their news and crisis updates (Kyj 2006). Since social media as we know it today was

mostly non-existent and the available digital platforms were mostly the tool of political elites and select civil society organizations (Goldstein 2007), those using them simply could not afford to have very much public influence. Physically being in the central square of Kyiv and spending the night in a tent to symbolically occupy the downtown or getting opposition messages across on mainstream media was much more central to the essence of the protest.

#### 5.1.2 From the Orange Revolution to Euromaidan (2004-2013)

The increasingly rapid growth of cellular connectivity and internet penetration in Ukraine—from 3-4% of internet users among the adult population in 2004-2005 to 29% in 2010 and almost 40% in 2013 (Ukrainska Pravda 2012)—coincided between 2004 and 2014 with a series of changes in the country’s political climate.

Although the participants expressed a range of frustrations and demands within the framework of the protest, the Orange Revolution, however momentous, was largely only about electing Yushchenko and righting the wrong of a fixed election (Karatnycky 2005). He duly took office after a repeat vote and the protesters went home. What followed in the wake of the protest was not a true democratic breakthrough: without real unity in the former opposition camp and its various factions vying for positions of power, Yushchenko proved to be an ineffective president, embarking on a presidency largely filled with drawn-out speeches and cultural diplomacy. In particular, he failed to manage the new political coalition and to address entrenched corruption and weak respect for the rule of law (Kubicek 2009).

Between 2005 and 2010, the “orange” party camp lost their political dividends gained during the protest, and subsequently, Yushchenko lost the 2010 presidential

election to his nemesis Viktor Yanukovich. Despite Yanukovich's loss of face in 2004, he had continued to be politically active, gathering support among the predominantly industrial, Russian-speaking population in the south-east of Ukraine (Kuzio 2010). After becoming president, Yanukovich overturned Yushchenko's constitutional reforms (that in 2005 gave more power to parliament and less to the presidential office) and rapidly restored a traditional presidential monopoly of power. Initially Yanukovich had all the hallmarks of a "strong leader," and proclaimed a pragmatic approach to the country's economic and political development. In practice, though, this meant a hyper-centralization of power (Motyl 2010), the tightening of the reins on the state apparatus, installing people close to him in all key positions throughout the government and at any points where graft or enrichment could be possible within the state (Åslund 2014), such as the state procurement system and the energy sector.

The turn to nepotism and pervasive corruption also meant a shrinking of the space for media freedom and dissent. Among other things, Yanukovich's state machine and the power-friendly oligarchs, most of whom hold media assets in their business portfolios (Ryabinska 2011), were intent on controlling the mainstream media. At the time, the majority of national TV channels were owned by media holdings either belonging to or tied to Yanukovich-friendly business owners. This meant that news coverage of key government figures was plentiful, but sanitized. Any investigative or expository reporting mostly had to move to the handful of opposition-leaning mainstream media, including TV, print, and online outlets.

Given the general repressive and co-opted climate of the media sphere in Ukraine, it might come as a surprise that the online media managed to blossom under the circumstances. This is mainly due to the fact that the Ukrainian legal system considers the Internet to be a personal communication tool rather than a mass media platform (Internet in Ukraine 2011). This meant that while online journalists did not enjoy many of the privileges of their mainstream colleagues (such as being accredited to attend government meetings), they also were free from the threat of defamation or libel charges and viewed the internet as a platform for uncensored and objective information (Semetko and Krasnoboka 2003). Exactly because the status of online journalists and bloggers was amorphous, the state couldn't decide how to deal with them or how to silence them, beyond direct action and brute force (as happened in Gongadze's case). The government's lack of sophistication in the area of digital technology and Internet also served to explain why the Internet remained a relatively free space for journalism, political debate, and public discourse despite an otherwise repressive atmosphere in society (Dyczok 2009).

Kiryukhin (2015) posits that it was around this time that a new national identity narrative for Ukraine took shape: one of solidarity over fighting against a common enemy. This shift was primarily related to the general disillusionment of a large part of the Ukrainian citizenry with the political elite, and the mood became especially dominant within the civic and cultural intelligentsia circles. This new identity narrative reflected the social problems and struggles, and emphasized the fight for the political and social rights of Ukrainians against the corrupted government and the oligarchs. Despite ethnic, regional, and economic divisions, this new kind of

national identity accepted an underlying pluralism, allowing different grievances and claims to be aired in the same discursive space.

There were, of course, many smaller factors that influenced the development of civil society and political activism between 2004 and 2014, many of them tied to the availability of a free and open Internet and a growing number of easy-to-use tools and platforms for public deliberation, discussions and organizing. By 2007-2008, urban activism was blossoming in Ukraine, with activists blogging about their efforts to oppose illegal construction and destruction of historic buildings in Ukrainian cities. The “Save Old Kyiv” movement, for one, actively used LiveJournal to generate support for their civic activity and protest events (Bohdanova 2011), and later built their own website to catalog illegal construction attempts around the capital. The web was also used by anti-corruption activists who started posting their investigative reports online, sustained by media development grants. For example, the Nashi Groshi website tracked corruption in the state procurement system (Nashi Groshi (2010) and Slidstvo Info (2014) focused on political corruption and high-profile financial crimes. Election monitoring was another kind of activity that availed itself of the affordances of digital technology (Lysenko and Desouza 2014), using a combination of crowdsourced reporting by observers, journalists and volunteers (through text messages, emails and submissions through the web form) and an interactive online map that publicized and tracked election violations in 2010 and 2012 (Lokot 2015). All of these instances, coupled with a failing trust in the government (Interfax-Ukraine 2011), were evidence of a growing understanding among civil society actors that they simply couldn’t rely on the political elites to

conduct reforms necessary for democratic development. Moreover, their job as citizens was to use any means possible, including digital media and technology, to hold the authorities accountable for their actions and to shine a light on the increasingly corrupt system of personal favors and connections that had permeated the Ukrainian government and parliament (Åslund 2014).

When the Euromaidan protest began in late November 2013, it was initially triggered by Yanukovich succumbing to pressure from Russia and refusing to sign the EU Association Agreement on the eve of a crucial EU summit in Vilnius. But the real underlying fear among politically conscious Ukrainians and some Western players was that Yanukovich would now have a free hand to consolidate his regime and undermine all remaining vestiges of democracy. The existing “developing democracy” that was Ukraine in late 2013 was looking more and more like a failed state, despite seemingly democratic institutions and procedures in place. Wilson (2015) posits that the Euromaidan protest, once it grew and developed, became an attempt to reinvent opposition politics in Ukraine after the early pro-democracy movements in the 1990s and the “orange” Our Ukraine in the early 2000s, but this time with a stronger base in civil society. In a way, though, the Euromaidan protest also was against the traditional opposition, which was a part of the very same corrupt political system and had failed to exert any real pressure on the ruling authorities, contributing to the general disenchantment of Ukrainian citizens in the power of traditional politics to achieve reforms and meaningful change.

### 5.1.3 Personal Political Histories

Absolutely all respondents mentioned the events of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (end of 2004-2005) as an important moment in the recent history of Ukraine, and some admitted they were a catalyst for more political participation for them, with many participating in 2004-2005 protests against election fraud in person in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. Some recalled going on strike with fellow students and marching from their university campuses to downtown Kyiv: one respondent in DC told of her time being a student in Kyiv and joining fellow students in dissent:

My university was the first one to go on strike, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy<sup>4</sup>, so yeah, I was on Maidan for probably two weeks, maybe three weeks, yeah, definitely. I didn't stay overnight there, but everyday we were... the whole dormitory was there.

Some came to the Maidan Square every night after work, with one Kyiv-based interviewee reminiscing about how he “took turns guarding the tent camp.” A number of others participated in similar ways in other cities in Ukraine, where smaller protests were also held.

Five of the respondents reported that they did coordination work for various Orange Revolution activist teams or worked on communications during the protests. One interviewee in Kyiv, an HR manager, said she lived in the Western Ukrainian city of Ternopil at the time of the 2004 protests, and helped run the local protest chapter, citing it as her “first experience of organizing a mass political action event.” The data journalist I also interviewed in Kyiv described his 2004 involvement as

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<sup>4</sup> Disclaimer: The author of this dissertation was a graduate student and later, an instructor at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy at the time described above (2004-2005).

“fairly active” and said he “ran the website” for one political activism group that had been active during the 2004 protest.

Another respondent in Kharkiv, a graduate student who lived in Kyiv at the time of the “orange” protests, said she hadn’t spent many nights on the Maidan, but had worked as a fixer and translator with a crew of international journalists who were reporting on the protest, so she was able to see some of the organization behind the protests first-hand. She recalled:

Obviously, we tried to talk to regular people in the tents as well as those running the protest movement behind the scenes, but it was quite clear that the decisions about messages, slogans, actions [...] were made by a much smaller selection of activists and politicians... [...] The tent camp and the people in it were not part of the decision-making mechanism.

A few of the Ukrainians interviewed in the DC area said they had already relocated to the US at the point when the Orange Revolution took place, but said they were following the events closely from afar, mostly through mainstream media and word of mouth from people on the ground. Most of those who followed the protest said mainstream media, especially those outside Ukraine, definitely didn’t provide enough information to have a complete picture of what was happening. One respondent living in DC quipped that having Facebook as a mainstream platform in 2004 would have been “hugely helpful” in dispelling some of the rumors that regularly swirled around the protest camp and the speculations of whether Kuchma’s government was going to crack down on the protesters.

Quite a few of the respondents, regardless of their location, said that since the events of 2004 they have been generally more interested in Ukrainian politics, with many indicating that they expected a more democratic political environment to be born of the “orange” protests, since they were “against fake elections and fake democracy,” as one interviewee put it. However, that interest did not translate into direct action or further political engagement immediately for many of the respondents, reflecting the general disillusionment of Ukrainian citizens with the Orange Revolution and the Yushchenko government as it lost its credibility over the years due to lack of reforms and transparency. Apart from occasional community or charity work (which hardly anyone framed as political), most respondents remained politically passive up until the upheaval and the following protests in Ukraine in the fall of 2013–winter of 2014.

Inevitably, when discussing their involvement in the Euromaidan protests, respondents often framed it in terms of comparisons or contrasts with the 2004 Orange Revolution. A few main themes emerged in this context, one of them being the comparison of how much self-organization and grassroots engagement were at the heart of both protests as opposed to the role political elites had played in the dissent. Especially those respondents who said they had played a more active role in the Orange Revolution said it felt to them like the 2004 protests were “more managed,” had more “centralized organization,” and were largely run by “a coordinated group of political consultants and civic activists” whose goal was to mobilize the citizens and to get them to join the protest activity, but who didn’t necessarily strive to “delegate decision-making or message production” to the broader protest community formed

around the idea of opposing the fixed elections and elevating Yushchenko to the status of a “worthy leader.”

An interviewee from Kyiv, who was active in one of the non-profits who participated in the information and coordinator activity in the 2004 protests, had this to say about his experience when interviewed in the midst of the Euromaidan action in December 2013:

How is this different than 2004? Organized from below, it's grassroots. Now the [political] parties are just part of the process, equal with everyone else. There is a smaller chance of disappointment this way, you can only be disappointed in yourself. If you want to do something, you do it. All the best activity happens this way in Maidan—someone gets an idea, they share it with others, people join or don't, 500 or 1000, and it happens or it doesn't. It all depends on your initiative and talent. People are ready to support anything, since otherwise they're mostly standing around. Their political views have been completely reformed over the last month by the protest, these are important internal changes, [...] there's now a civic outlook. And once a person tries it, it's like a drug, this self-organizing and initiative.

The accessibility of Euromaidan as a space for dissent to a broad spectrum of citizens was something respondents pointed out repeatedly. One respondent, a developer at a software company, said what attracted him to the protest activity first and foremost was its “networked nature” and lack of evident, centralized leadership.

Unlike 2004, when personalities mattered and everything was building around them, this protest for me is an example of self-organization of a large number

of people without evident leaders, and this was exactly the thing which draws me in and attracts me to it. Not specific personalities, but the process or the phenomenon itself. And the fact that among all these people, there are a lot of people I like. There are a lot of my friends, people I know, both virtually and in physical space. This to me is most important, this sort of networked nature of the protest movement.

Because of its predominantly grassroots nature and decentralized structure with many points of entry, the Euromaidan protest also allowed for a variety of claims and grievances to be brought up. Even though it began with the smaller matter of the EU Association agreement, over the months the protest movement grew to encompass other motivations and issues, and became what Wilson calls a “multiple revolution” (2015). The awareness of the shifting and broad nature of Euromaidan was also more readily signaled and broadcasted to the public because of the pervasive use of social media by the protest participants to discuss the goals of the protest and how to go about incorporating various vectors such as anti-corruption, human rights and fair and free elections alongside the initial ideas of a closer relationship with the European Union, economic reform and a general pro-Western sentiment.

As Yanukovych and his government veered between a mixture of repression and concessions that only swelled protesters’ ranks, the Euromaidan protests in 2013-14 slowly grew more radical and incorporated different strands of civil society, from far-right groups to leftist collectives and LGBT activists. Although this meant that the overall structure of the protest movement was amorphous, and its goals vague, it also meant the protest activity was also beyond the control of traditional politicians, and

that opposition party members had to accept a participant role in the process instead of an orchestrating one.

Another pervasive theme was the role of ongoing civic activism initiatives and experienced activists in the 2014 protests and how much the Orange Revolution had contributed to this continuity of civic development. Those respondents who did have a history of civic activity, activism or organizing, agreed that a certain segment of primary organization during Euromaidan did indeed stem from existing activist initiatives, especially those that had been steadily working since 2004. The data journalist from Kyiv who worked as part of one such initiative during the Orange Revolution, recalled his initial assessment of the composition of the crowd that gathered in downtown Kyiv on the night following the first brutal government forces' response to the budding protest occupying the central Maidan square, then comparatively small in size.

In Mykhailivska square on November 30 [after the riot police brutally beat up student protesters in downtown Kyiv], I saw maybe five people, who we had kept in touch with and worked with to this day, who have been activists for ages, and we kept working with them. Many of them have participated in the protests in 2004, monitored elections in 2010.

Another long-time civic activist, who had taken part in the 2004 protests and later helped launch one of the online election monitoring projects, also admitted that at least the initial efforts to set up some kind of protest infrastructure were greatly aided by experienced activists:

As one of my friends said when we came across each other in one of the Maidan meeting spots, ‘Well, your muscle memory since 2004 didn’t go anywhere.’ We did know a thing or two about how to get people organized. However, the very same respondent stressed that while at the initial stage the “old” activists (as he called them) were helpful, the open and unstructured nature of the protest activity, fueled by the speed of information being shared on social media and the general public sentiment, meant that less experienced citizens and people with no activism history at all joined the action at a rapid pace.

We’d have people bring food or tea down to the Maidan because they got a call from someone they knew asking for help. We’d have people just show up and say they saw a post on Facebook—God knows who posted it or when—and saying they could set up the Wi-Fi or train perimeter guards, or make posters. It was impossible to take in the sheer magnitude of action happening, online, offline—folks really were self-organizing and figuring out what needed to get done to keep the protest running, and doing it.

Since the protest wasn’t led by any single political force and wasn’t even launched initially by any specific NGO, movement or political party, it created a fertile ground for experimentation and spontaneous networks of people working on things they thought they could take a pass at, mixing “old” activists with “new” ones. One of the respondents in Kharkiv, who helped found a Euromaidan-connected initiative that provided IT support for the local protest chapter through running social media accounts, doing live streams from the protest location, and publishing photo and video reports of protest activity, said it felt like the very atmosphere of the protest

made people excited and drove them to try their hand at activism. Himself a new activist with no previous experience or any political engagement beyond perfunctory visits to polling stations to vote in the elections, the interviewee said:

[Euro]Maidan is unique as it is a kind of a quickener, like a chemical ingredient that speeds up positive reactions and changes in society. It seemed to enable growing trust, optimization of activity, bringing people together.

What usually takes decades here was happening in a very short time span, and that's fantastic.

As the Euromaidan action brought together experience and enthusiasm, the historically active citizens and those inspired by messages on social media or opinions from friends and family, the protests revealed how much stronger Ukrainian civil society as a whole had become in 2014 compared to 2004. The strength wasn't just in numbers (though every week more and more people were joining the occupying tent city in Kyiv, and smaller tent towns were popping up in other places around Ukraine); the civil society was more inclusive, more proactive and much more modern than the political class, which in 2014 was clearly lagging behind in terms of rhetoric, organization skills and the talent for using media and technology to augment activity on the ground.

Citizen journalists contributed to those areas of protest coverage where mainstream media (including online outlets) were slow to react, populating social media feeds with smartphone photos, tweets and later, live video streams of clashes and burning tires. IT-managers and ad agency designers took up the mantle of coordinating protest logistics and designing signs and posters for the protest tent city.

Medical professionals offered their free time in shifts to treat flu and foot blisters, to train volunteer medics, and later, the wounded and the injured. Those who spoke more than one language pitched in on translating tweets, blog posts and press releases, to spread word about the protest activity beyond Ukraine. There was “at times total chaos,” as one participant put it, but also “a sense of unity and of belonging.” This was only exacerbated by the government’s misguided attempts at cutting off oxygen to the dissenting citizens: the notorious ‘repression laws’, rammed through parliament on 16 January 2014 (Freedom House 2014), only created a stronger sense of urgency and a sort of “now-or-never” aura for those involved in the protest.

### 5.2 Who were the Euromaidan protesters?

This section provides an overview of the pool of Euromaidan protest participants interviewed for this dissertation research. First, it offers some general demographic information and other relevant characteristics of the individuals interviewed. Second, it provides a description of their media consumption habits and ICT use patterns. Finally, the section delineates a key distinction between experienced protest participants and those for whom protest participation is novel, outlining how this characteristic impacts the participants’ thoughts on civic activism and protest activity, and their perception of ICT use during protest events.

#### 5.2.1 General Information About Interview Subjects

A total of 59 semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted during the fieldwork stage of the dissertation research. The interviews were held in three waves

throughout the period of winter of 2013 - fall of 2015. Table 1 presents a summary of information about the three waves of interviews.

| <b>Interview wave</b> | <b>Time conducted</b>      | <b>Location</b>               | <b>Number of interviews</b> | <b>Breakdown by gender (f=women/m=men)</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Pilot Ukraine      | December 2013-January 2014 | Kyiv, Ukraine                 | 12                          | 4 f, 8 m                                   |
| 2. DC                 | March 2014-May 2014        | Washington, DC, USA           | 10                          | 6 f, 4 m                                   |
| 3. Ukraine            | August 2015-December 2015  | Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Ukraine | 37                          | 16 f, 21 m                                 |

**Table 1. Summary of information about interview participants**

The 12 initial pilot interviews were conducted during the time of Euromaidan protests in December 2013 and January 2014, and participants were purposively sampled from various active Euromaidan groups and initiatives to represent a spectrum of ages, civic activism experience, and digital literacy. Of these, four interviewees were women and eight were men.

A second wave of ten interviews was conducted in the period from March 2014 to May 2014, shortly after the end of the Euromaidan protest and the beginning of the Russian-orchestrated conflict in Ukraine. The interviews were held in the Washington, DC, area in the United States with individuals who identified as Ukrainians living in the US and perceived themselves as having participated in the Euromaidan protests in some way. Participants were recruited from several key Ukrainian communities and groups in the DC area, using their public Facebook pages to place recruitment ads and then sampled randomly from the pool of those who agreed to participate in the study. Of these interviewees, six were women and four were men.

Finally, a third wave of 37 interviews was conducted in the summer and fall of 2015 (between the months of August and December) in Ukraine, with participants

initially recruited from several key Euromaidan communities and groups, using their Facebook community pages to place recruitment ads, and then through snowball sampling stemming from the pilot interview wave participants, the third wave interviewees, and their networks. These interviews were conducted in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine (and the epicenter of the Euromaidan protests); in Kharkiv, a large city in eastern Ukraine which saw some fairly active Euromaidan action during the protest; and in Odesa, a port city in the south of Ukraine that was also one of the key sites of Euromaidan action, though to a lesser extent than Kyiv and Kharkiv (see Figure 2 for a map of Ukraine). Of the 37 respondents interviewed, 16 were women and 21 were men.



**Figure 2. Map of modern Ukraine. (Source: CIA Factbook, public domain.)**

Of the 59 participants overall, 49 were located in Ukraine and 10 were residing outside Ukraine. Of the 49 residing in Ukraine, 28 were located in Kyiv (12 pilot wave interview participants and 16 third-wave interview participants), 12 were located in Kharkiv, and nine in Odesa.

The interview participants' ages ranged from 23 to 49 years; the median age was 34 years and the mode for age was 31 years. 90% of participants said they resided in or near urban areas. Almost 95% of the respondents held a bachelor's, master's or a higher postgraduate degree, with the remaining 5% in the process of completing their higher education. All participants were either employed, self-employed, freelance workers, or students, and a number of those who self-reported as students also said they worked part-time.

The initial decision to conduct a pilot round of interviews in Kyiv was motivated by the fact that the city was the center of the initial protest movement and the center of the most activity. Additionally, a large number of protesters from other cities were also in Kyiv at the time (December 2013-January 2014), the fieldwork trip was constrained by time limitations, and the funding for travel to other cities in Ukraine was unavailable.

The DC metro area was chosen partly for convenience reasons, because the researcher is based in the area and knows it well, but also because it is an interesting part of the US, with a high concentration of government offices, state agencies and international organizations as well as a diverse international population. Indeed, most of the respondents work for international organizations (in the area of finance, law, or governance), and most have also completed or are completing a graduate or postgraduate degree in the US.

For the third wave of interviews, in addition to Kyiv, two other cities, Kharkiv and Odesa, were selected as locations for interview, due to a critical mass of protest participants from the two locations who volunteered to be interviewed and funding

limitations for conducting the research. Both cities also emerged as active sites of protest action during Euromaidan and subsequent hubs of volunteer activity after the protests.

All of the Ukraine-based interviews were conducted in Ukrainian or Russian, and interviewees were given the choice of which language to conduct the interview in, as the interviewer was bilingual. In all of these cases, the interviewees said they would be equally amenable to either Russian or Ukrainian, and none had a particular preference for one of the languages, despite geographic location<sup>5</sup>. This served to provide additional evidence for the inclusivity of the Euromaidan community and non-discrimination on the basis of language or place of birth. This runs contrary to popular simplistic assumptions about lingual divisions across Ukrainian regions (“Russian-speaking” East, “Ukrainian-only” West) that proved to be unfounded in this dissertation research. All the Washington DC area-based interviews with Ukrainians were conducted in English, although pre-interview conversations sometimes occurred in Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the interviewee’s preferences (this helped establish additional rapport with the respondents and gain their trust.)

Some 85% of the respondents (including 100% of the Ukrainians living in the US) said they spoke one or more foreign languages fluently or almost fluently besides Russian and Ukrainian, English being the most widespread, followed by Polish, French, German, and Spanish.

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<sup>5</sup> Historically, both the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine have predominantly been Russian-speaking during and after the Soviet period, and some political players have attempted to use this imagined division between language-bearers to create political division (Shulman 2004, Kuzio 1996).

### 5.2.2 Media and ICT Use

In terms of media consumption and engagement, respondents named television and the online media as their most frequent sources of information and news, with print and radio lagging far behind (although it's worth noting that many of the online websites named were those of print publications). A number of interviewees who said they watched television news, current affairs programs and talk shows, shared a habit of "channel browsing," or switching between news bulletins to compare how certain events were being reported on. As one participant from Kyiv remarked, "the actual truth is usually somewhere in the middle, so it's useful to see what everyone is saying—and not saying."

While residents of Ukraine were dependent more heavily on a mix of Ukrainian (both Ukrainian- and Russian-language) and Russian news media outlets, those living in DC consumed a more varied diet of Ukrainian, Russian, and Western media content, citing the need for more nuanced news about their homeland. As one respondent, a marketing manager at an international company, put it:

If you only watch American channels or read *New York Times*, *The Post* or BuzzFeed, there's just not enough coverage of Ukraine or the region in general. And if there is it's mostly geopolitics and Putin. So I almost have to also find local (Ukrainian) content to supplement that.

A participant from Kharkov unknowingly echoed this sentiment when talking about how Ukraine was portrayed in the international media:

It's often annoying how Ukraine is either mentioned [in international media] when something bad happens, or in repetitive, stale, predictable contexts:

Chernobyl, Orange Revolution, Russia’s little neighbor...[...] It’s like they’re not even trying.

A number of respondents said they relied on their social network friends for latest news and interesting feature stories and opinions. A graduate student interviewed in DC said she mostly read what news crossed her Facebook feed and attributed this habit to convenience as well as a lack of time:

I follow enough people that there’s regularly something to read, some link to follow or a video to watch that’s relevant. With all of my academic work, I honestly don’t have the time to explore news websites. Maybe that’s narrow-minded, but the Facebook links are right there, and I can see which ones come recommended.

In terms of information and communication technology use, 100% of respondents reported owning a personal computer, whether laptop, desktop or both. Eighty-eight percent reported owning a smartphone, and the remaining 12% said they used a simple cell phone, mostly for calls and text messages. A little over 30% reported owning a tablet (Apple iPad, an Android-based model, or a Windows Surface). In addition, 40% said they owned and regularly used a photo or video camera (these figures are summarized in Table 2 below).

| Type of device or connection                  | Percentage of interview participants using (N=59) |
|---|---|
| Personal computer (laptop/desktop)            | 100%  |
| Smartphone                                    | 88%   |
| Other (non-smartphone) cell phone             | 12%   |
| Tablet  | 32%   |
| Photo or video camera                         | 40%   |
| Internet access at home (broadband or mobile) | 90%   |

**Table 2. Device use and internet access among interview participants.**

Ninety percent of respondents said they had Internet access at home, and the remaining ones said they accessed the web at work or at school. Almost 80% said they accessed the Internet daily, with the rest accessing it a few times a week. One of the more active participants, a student in Kyiv, said she had a hard time thinking of her Internet use as “going” online, since her smartphone was always connected and she checked messages and feeds throughout the day. When talking about their internet use, practically all participants said they had used social networks prior to Euromaidan, as well as visiting news sites, photo, and video platforms as well as using the internet for banking, travel, and health information search needs, among other use scenarios.

The majority of respondents in either group (whether daily or weekly use) stressed that their Internet use became more frequent and more prolonged during the Euromaidan protests. A respondent in Kyiv recalled “constantly following the news” online during Euromaidan and being “hyperaware” of the different goings on. An interviewee in Odesa, a law student, said she started following the events “through posts from Kyiv-based protest participants on Facebook” and simultaneously scanning mainstream media reports, but quickly gave up on traditional media sources as it became clear that they were “not keeping up with the mad pace at which things were developing.” Several of the DC-based participants said they monitored the Euromaidan news on Twitter and Facebook, as well as on Ukrainian mainstream media platforms, and often ended up going to bed at odd hours because of the time difference (7 hours between Kyiv and Washington, DC).

### 5.3.3 Protest Experience: The ‘Old’ and the ‘New’

In terms of describing their civic engagement and experience with social or political activism, volunteering or other related activity, participants seemed to fall into two broad groups, which could be designated as being “old” and “new” to civic activism in the context of the Euromaidan protests. Saunders et al. (2012) similarly suggest distinguishing protest participants between ‘novices’ (those with little or no past protest or activism experience) and ‘returners’ (those with some protest or activism experience). The words “old” and “new” were actually used in their interviews by quite a number of the more experienced participants, who used them to differentiate between those who had been involved with civic movements, non-profit organizations or similar institutions before Euromaidan, and those for whom Euromaidan was the first such experience, or at least the first large-scale civic uprising and protest they were involved in. Those who fell into the “new” group usually didn’t call themselves that, but insisted their interest in civic life and political activism had been minimal prior to Euromaidan, and even if they had done some volunteer or charity work, it was never framed in terms of “activism” or “political activity.” The “old”/“new” distinction provides a useful frame for understanding how prior protest experience shaped how participants talked about their Euromaidan involvement overall, as well as for their perceptions of what kinds of possibilities for action the internet and social media afforded them within the protest context.

The distribution of participants between the two extremes was uneven, with roughly one third of the respondents falling into the “old,” experienced civic activist camp, and about two thirds falling into the group that was “new” to civic activism and

mass protests. Each of the groups certainly had a spectrum of experience in terms of their history of civic activity or lack thereof, but their self-assessment as belonging to one or the other group, reflected in how they described themselves, their histories, and their actions in the interviews, was fairly clear.

A data journalist from Kyiv was the first person I interviewed during the pilot phase of the interviews, and he immediately used the “old” and “new” references, reluctantly putting himself in with the “old guard.” He also remarked that a number of those who were involved in civic activism during the 2004 protests and earlier were no longer active as civil society members.

Right now, there are both old and new people in Euromaidan networks, but there are lots of new people. Some of the old people are there, but most have gone away from activism. I have some experience, but I haven’t been too involved in these older networks. I’m much more interested in what’s happening right now.

Another interviewee from Kyiv, involved with one of the groups coordinating anything from information exchange to housing options within Euromaidan, said he also considered himself part of the “experienced” civic activists camp, but stressed that he and other people he knew from those times weren’t necessarily in leading roles during the Orange Revolution, since the leadership at that point was fairly small and insular.

In 2004 people were much more interested in just street protests, and no one wanted to do organizing or planning. I liked working in the field, I can also

help connect people, solve some problems, but I wasn't in the coordinating councils.

The same respondent noted that the grassroots organizing during Euromaidan did not necessarily rely exclusively on the "old" individuals, communities and networks, and said he was pleasantly surprised at how well some of the "new" groups and communities within Euromaidan were able to self-organize with little to no civic activity experience.

There is very little hierarchy in all these communities, maybe in some of the older ones, the veterans, but it's still very flat, though. But the organization where I'm involved, has a very flat structure, with a handful of coordinators, three times that number of permanent volunteers, and ten times more people who join for one-time actions or campaigns.

Those within the interview pool who were "new" to civic activity often relied on their other experience, such as their professional skills or academic service and charitable work to inform their Euromaidan engagement and decision-making. One respondent in Kyiv, an IT manager, recalled how he first realized he was eager to do something and found a niche within Euromaidan to work:

The Saturday after the riot police beat and dispersed the students, I came to the Mykhaylovskya square and saw how much stuff people were bringing, and how there was plenty of some things, but others were still lacking. I got the idea that it would be good to coordinate these resources. And since I'm an IT guy, the idea of using the internet for this was kind of self-evident.

The manager then described how he used his experience in managing IT projects and worked with other people such as designers and programmers to find a solution, but also relied on personal connections to do so.

While I was mulling over this idea with colleagues, I remembered that a friend of ours, when there were freak snowfalls in spring of 2013, he launched an Ushahidi-based website for something similar... And we just came to the office, sat down and spent the evening working into the night to put the website together. So it's not like we even had time to come up with something or decide on the best options, it just happened.

A respondent in Odesa, who spent several months in Kyiv at the time of Euromaidan, said her human resource management skills also came in handy when she joined one of the heterogeneous groups attempting to organize within the larger protest movement. Her collective monitored the injured, wounded and later, those killed during the protests, as well as keeping track of the people who disappeared or went missing. She referred to her work during the protest as “managing an amorphous structure in a stressful situation under time constraints” and said quite a lot of the effort went into managing small crises and networking with other groups and communities, all with varying levels of organization or chaos.

Since I work in management, as a skill I think I've improved it, I've tried this different kind, a kind of crisis management, and it has enriched my experience—both as a professional and as a citizen.

Describing her engagement with Euromaidan from DC, an interviewee working for a marketing agency said she had to adapt her copywriting and analytical skills to

producing “regular reports on what was going right and what was going wrong” in Kyiv and other protest locations in Ukraine, and then work together with other local protesters to disseminate reports to influential individuals and the local Ukrainian diaspora community in DC, as well as the ones in other US cities.

This was basically two-three hours per day of monitoring, checking, verifying, contextualizing and explaining. Then we compiled the report into a neat little PDF file and off it went: to our email list, to Facebook, to be printed and taken to cultural clubs, churches, and anywhere it was wanted.

Two of the participants in Ukraine were involved as volunteers in producing a similar online digest of Euromaidan news and events for the English-speaking audience, and said it was a grueling job that required them to use their skills (as journalist and academic writer, respectively) daily, but also learn on the job. One of them, a former journalist for a web portal, said they often had “heated arguments” with some of the more experienced activists in their project team about what worked and what didn’t for their product.

They had civil society work and experience on their side, of course. They maybe knew how to frame unrest, injustice, human rights.[...] But I had my own years of experience, and my gut, and my intuition about what would draw the reader in and how to cover certain claims or actions. Honestly, we were all on a very short fuse, so I learned that civic activism and producing a citizen media product is as much about patience and working while stressed as it is about evocative writing.

The distinction between participants who were either “old” or “new” to civic action and organizing proved to be one of the key dimensions in the interview pool that continuously appeared throughout discussions of the various aspects of participating in the Euromaidan protest and informed the respondent’s narratives of their own engagement, perception and ICT use. Further subsections of the findings chapters will see more references to this distinction.

### 5.3 Everyday and Extraordinary ICT Use

One of the key themes that emerged from the interviews was how Ukrainian Euromaidan participants recognize, process, and come to terms with the subtle transformations in how their perception of ICTs and their modes of use shift or transform in situations of crisis, namely a mass protest. These distinctions between routine and ‘extraordinary’ uses and perceptions of digital technology as articulated by the interviewees are illuminating in that they can point to certain affordances of ICTs specific to protest activity as a different mode of technology use.

#### 5.3.1 Everyday ICT Use and Civic Life

Certainly, there isn’t a clear line that can be drawn between routine and crisis uses of ICTs by citizens. It is rather a continuum or a scale along which behavior and perception might shift. The norm might be different for different individuals, depending on factors such as their ease of access to the Internet in general, their media consumption habits, their interest in political or civic life, and their preferred mode of political engagement. Since, as Kendall (1999) notes, interactions and activity online “cannot be divorced from the offline social and political contexts

within which participants live their daily lives,” there is a close correlation between the national, local, and individual social and political contexts and what ICT users see as the norm for routine ICT use.

Everyday use of Internet and social media tools can include consuming news and information online, engaging with the information by commenting on posts and sharing links, personal communication with friends and family, and using various utilitarian online services such as navigation, banking and weather reports. In general, consuming news online, whether through social media or other channels, can serve as a precursor to or an indicator of political and civic engagement. Boulianne’s recent longitudinal study found that the use of social networking sites and other online news sources correlates with civic awareness and has an indirect and significant effect on engagement (Boulianne 2015). Most importantly, going online to seek out news and information can contribute toward building the knowledge required to engage in civic and political life.

Couldry et al. (2007) note the important role of communication technologies in mediating everyday thoughts, conversation and activities that may, under certain conditions, help bridge the mundane and the extraordinary. Dahlgren (2003) ties regular new media use with his notion of civic culture as the key concept underlying the daily experience of citizenship. Dahlgren’s ‘circuit’ model of civic culture involves a series of intertwining processes, all of them mediated by ICTs to some extent. The complexity of Dahlgren’s model suggests these mediated relations between the perception and understanding of civic and political culture and actual practice are multiple and often uncertain, meshing together values, affinity,

knowledge, practices, identities, and discussion. The increasingly overlapping understanding of the personal, the civic and the political, underpinned by the tension between public and private activity enabled by the social media tools, certainly require a more precise, contextualized understanding of what is mundane and what is extraordinary in civic terms for Internet users in a particular environment.

An increasing number of studies find that in countries where traditional systems of economic and social welfare are corrupt or dysfunctional, and the independent media is weak or co-opted by the state for its own ends, citizens turn to the Internet and ICT tools to manage their “everyday rights.” The term is used broadly to include not only more fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech or expression or gender equality, but also more mundane things like healthcare, childcare, social security, access to justice and legal assistance, among others (Oates 2013). This shift can occur not only in failed states or authoritarian regimes, but also in developing and even stable democracies, where citizens “have not necessarily lost trust in democratic values but rather in the traditional means by which they are delivered” (Norris 1999).

As citizens discover new spaces and venues for achieving their rights and freedoms, however mundane, they are reinterpreting and complicating the meaning of political activism and political issues, as well as the very answer to the question “what is political?” Political action leaves behind the constraints of political party websites and moves elsewhere—to blogs, forums, non-profit websites, social networks, and messenger chats (Lokot 2011). Political activity is now able to emerge

from the grassroots level, as citizens gain a new understanding of political issues, as interpreted through the lens of everyday rights.

The networked individualism of social media in more recent years has intensified the trends Norris has pointed to as early as 1999, including “increasing individualism, freedom of choice and the rise of so-called consumer society” (Norris 1999). This affinity for more individualistic, rights-oriented politics and the availability of alternative media and communication spaces has meant that citizens have become more demanding and less willing to allow others to make decisions on their behalf. Anduiza et al. (2009) also note that the changing role of ICTs has meant a decrease in electoral and conventional political participation, and has brought about an increase in non-traditional, unconventional forms of participation: political consumerism, anti-globalization, political activism, with the Internet’s flexibility and adaptability augmenting the individualist turn and allowing for things such as everyday rights campaigns and single-issue mobilizations.

In post-Soviet states such as Russia and Ukraine, the new understanding of political action enabled by the new media tools is augmented by the understanding of the Internet as a liberator, a platform alternative to traditional media co-opted by political or business elites promoting their own agenda and interests (Fossato et al. 2008). With the dearth of independent traditional media able to hold the government accountable, citizens increasingly shift to various online platforms, from blogging websites like LiveJournal to the later-in-the-game social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. They use these online platforms for debates, deliberation, complaining, expressing their civic and political position as well as seeking out like-minded

individuals to engage in these discussions and, potentially, to create ephemeral “instant insurgent communities” targeted at achieving specific social and political goals, however small or large.

While ICTs seem to imbue the ordinary citizens with greater agency, Gunitsky (2015) notes that active citizen participation in social media does not inherently signal regime weakness, and may actually “enhance regime strength and adaptability,” as state actors learn to use the tools for their own ends. Still, the affordances of online media for providing alternative outlets for citizen claims and calls to action and for enabling organization for such action create a qualitatively new civic and political context, made especially visible in societies where independent media and free speech are restricted or put under pressure.

In her 2013 study of the role of the Internet and ICTs in the Russian political and social life, Oates found compelling evidence that the web and possibilities for everyday action that it offers can change the fundamental nature of politics in the country, affording citizens the power to articulate their grievances and successfully demand change (Oates 2013). These findings relate first and foremost to the everyday rights context, describing cases of chronically ill patients and parents with sick children organizing and fighting for their rights to health care and medication online, as well as environmental activists raising awareness of illegal construction endangering a forest in Russia. None of these cases were revolutionary, nor did these citizens seek to overthrow the government or change the regime. Instead, these activities reflect how their everyday discussions and seeking advice or help online can shift into crisis mode and gain more urgency when the situation calls for it, providing

opportunities for acts such as open letters to officials, online petitions, collecting testimonies and complaints, organizing pickets, challenging the mainstream media, and such. Moreover, these case studies of successful use of the Internet to defend everyday rights push us to question whether citizens will be empowered and inspired by such “everyday” victories and small-scale change to attempt to use the same tools to organize, communicate, and act in a crisis, including demands for large-scale political and social change.

### 5.3.2 Shifts in Mode of Use

The theme of differences in internet and social media use during ordinary moments and during the Euromaidan protest was a continuous thread throughout the interviews conducted at various times during and after the protest activity took place. Although participants’ definitions of what constitutes “normal” or “ordinary” ICT use differed, virtually everyone noted that how they used the Internet and social media changed during the protest period. The changes reported dealt with intensity of use, the number and choice of sources of information online, certain habits and behavior on social media, and kinds of activity, purpose of activity, or reasons for activity that citizens found themselves engaging in online. These are described in more detail below.

Almost 95% of respondents reported some level of mundane internet activity prior to the protest events in the form of occasional social media use to consume and share information and keep in touch with close friends and family, as well as visiting media websites and other sources of information, entertainment or useful online services. The intensity of online activity varied, with the most active users joking

about “checking Facebook messenger every five minutes,” and the least active describing social media such as Facebook as Twitter as “useless” and “mostly distracting.”

Those who used social media specifically for interpersonal communication more often cited “staying in touch” with family members and close friends, as well as “networking with industry colleagues,” “job searching,” “keeping up with the office gossip” and “arranging outings or weekend plans” as their main reasons. Most of these were done through Facebook (with a lean towards more international, as well as local connections) or VKontakte, the Russian-language Internet’s Facebook clone, popular in most post-Soviet countries, including Ukraine.

On the contrary, casual use of the micro-blogging service Twitter seemed to be less popular: most of the respondents who used it professed being more tech-savvy or even “internet addicts,” and the majority used it on their smartphones. The main uses of Twitter amounted to “following news in Ukraine and abroad,” “peeking at celebrity feeds (on Twitter as well as Instagram)”, and tweeting and retweeting “cool or useful links.” Several of those who said they had Twitter accounts admitted they had started them as part of the overall fad around 2009-2010, and were mostly rebroadcasting what they posted on Facebook, using an automated function. The position of those who said they did not use Twitter is best summed up by one respondent, a magazine designer from Odesa:

I’ve never understood what the use of it (Twitter) was. It just didn’t make sense to me. Why limit yourself to 140 characters, when you can write as much as your heart desires on Facebook or VK [VKontakte]? Plus, all my pals

are already there [on Facebook and V Kontakte], so yet another reason to stick to it.

### 5.3.3 From Daily ICT Use to Political Engagement

Quite a few respondents observed that social media had become their starting point when they consumed or searched for latest news, and said they were forgoing visiting the main pages of actual news websites in favor of reading their stories or articles via their social media feeds, whether by following the official pages of their preferred media outlets or by seeing news shared by their friends and connections network. There were some discrepancies in terms of what such news consumption choices meant, with part of the respondent pool admitting they felt like they were limiting their exposure to different viewpoints due to curating their information stream online. One respondent, a museum curator based in Kyiv, said she often felt like “seeing the same names, locations and viewpoints” rolling across her Facebook page daily.

Yet others noted that they were actually discovering new stories and sources of information because of the breadth of the selection in what their friends were choosing to share on their own feeds. This aligns with earlier findings by scholars that point to a positive relationship between consuming information and being active on social media and political engagement (Boulianne 2015a, Skoric et al. 2015). A protest participant from Kharkiv, a computer science student, confessed he “relied upon his Twitter feed to bring stuff” he “wouldn’t normally see on his RSS feeds reader,” which he had set up to aggregate mostly tech and IT news.

In terms of other online activities, the perceptions of what amounts to everyday civic or political activity were closely tied to participants’ overall

understanding of what “political” or “civic activism” means. When first questioned, most identified only traditional kinds of political activity, such as voting, as explicitly political, but when asked about their civic engagement, human rights interests, or community involvement, practically all respondents admitted they had convictions, wanted to change things in Ukrainian society, and felt their involvement in some kind of activism or charity work could result in such a change. Several respondents suggested being politically active also meant, in the words of one interviewee, “to voice my opinion, to be active in convincing others of a certain course of action.” Another respondent said political participation generally meant “taking part in things that you think are important and relevant to you, and to your country.” Examples of civic and community activities which could be construed as political included protests, pickets, talking to the media, social network activity, signing petitions. A few interviewees said they had volunteered in charity work or organized community initiatives, like English-language clubs, environmental initiatives, or animal rescue.

When probed further, respondents described quite a few different kinds of activity they casually engaged in online, including sharing and signing online petitions, retweeting or reposting calls for help (such as fundraising to help sick friends or acquaintances) or posts raising awareness of third-party activist efforts, and changing their Facebook avatars to support a cause or charity campaign. A significant number of participants recalled joining a Facebook or VKontakte group of an initiative or a cause they supported offline, to show their affiliation or solidarity: examples of these included a feminist group, a campaign to get Ukraine’s capital Kyiv to build more and better bike lanes, a student-run documentary film festival, and

a page to support an animal shelter in the southern city of Odesa<sup>6</sup> that was being evicted from their current building.

Though they rarely described these acts as political, most of those who did engage in them agreed that these represented some expression of their agency as citizens and allowed them to enact change in small, but meaningful ways. As one woman in Kyiv, who said she used social networks mostly to keep up with friends and family, admitted:

For me, it's just pressing 'like' or 'share' on a post about a cute cat up for adoption, I don't even think about this as a significant act, since things like this pop up in my feed all the time. But what if it's not a cat, but a sick child who needs a blood donor? I guess, if enough of us do it, it can really change someone's life.

Admittedly, several of the interviewees said they were skeptical of the potential of "likes" and "shares" to enable meaningful change. One respondent, a financial analyst who moved to the US from Ukraine in 2008 for a graduate degree and stayed to work, said he was predisposed "to actually go do something, like give blood" or donate funds if the situation called for it and if he knew who he was helping, and added that he thought "it was easy to add a +1" to someone's request for help, but that "the statistical likelihood" of that +1 actually making a difference "was next to nothing."

On the other hand, many of the respondents who did acknowledge using the Internet to engage in some form of civic activity, volunteer initiatives, charity projects and other kinds of activism, pointed out that online platforms and their affordances

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<sup>6</sup> The Russian spelling would usually transliterate as 'Odessa', which is still the more common English spelling. Here it is transliterated from the Ukrainian. The same applies to Kharkiv (the Ukrainian spelling used in this dissertation) vs. Kharkov (the more common Russian spelling used in English).

for easily aggregating attention and making things go viral were helpful in boosting awareness of a cause or campaign, even if they did so temporarily. An IT manager from Kyiv described how an initiative set up online by one of his friends during a freak snowstorm in the spring of 2013, when the adverse weather led to traffic jams and car accidents in the capital, had easily found its target audience.

By the time K. (the friend) thought to set up some kind of centralized crowdsourcing effort on a dedicated website, there was already a Twitter and Facebook hashtag, #kyivsnow, which people started using to post calls for help or useful information. [...] Click the hashtag—and there you have a stream of drivers stuck in snowdrifts and Kyivites offering hot tea and food to those caught on the road. K. just set up a map and shared it with the (same) hashtag.

A number of more seasoned Euromaidan participants, who had some experience in civic organizing and activism, noted the potential of blogs and social media to stimulate public debate around a contested issue and to gain proponents to join a cause that was deemed “publicly important” or “worthy,” though not necessarily political. One Kyiv resident described her experience of helping to campaign against illegal construction projects in Kyiv’s historic Podil district and using LiveJournal as the platform to generate discussion around the issue.

We knew that not everyone (on LiveJournal) was interested in the corruption allegations behind the construction, so we tried to find alternative motivations. One of these was pushing the fact that the (old) building was a historical landmark and had sentimental value. To many in Kyiv, it was unimaginable

that it would be torn down or rebuilt into a shopping mall. So we stressed that, found some archival pictures [...] to win more people to our side. And, as always on LJ, people came armed with opinions.

#### 5.3.4 ICT Use in ‘Extraordinary’ Contexts: the Euromaidan Protest

All respondents found out about the dropping of the EU association agreement by President Yanukovych through Ukrainian news media, when discussing their engagement with the Euromaidan protest, over two thirds of respondents, regardless of their location or other factors, reported first hearing about protest activity on social media. Facebook was overwhelmingly the source where they learned about the start of the protests in November 2013, with a number of people citing influential Afghani-Ukrainian journalist Mustafa Nayyem and his call to protest on Facebook as their key source. One interviewee from Kyiv recalled:

I was following the association agreement prep quite closely, so I knew people were unhappy, and then somewhere I saw reports that Mustafa (Nayyem) called to gather on Facebook...

##### *5.3.4.1 Changing Intensity and Temporality*

Once they started following the Euromaidan protest or engaging with it in some way, most users reported a shift in the intensity of their social media use and the time they spent online. Regardless of their previous level of social media engagement or news consumption online, every respondent noted that they started spending more time online and engaging with the various information and communication tools differently. One Kharkiv respondent called his new Internet use pattern “almost neurotic” when he described constantly checking his social media feeds and

monitoring news headlines on his smartphone. Another respondent, an activist in Kyiv who was coordinating publicity and media relations for one of Euromaidan's grassroots groups, said she was "regularly overwhelmed" by the amount of information appearing online, and added that making sense of what was important required "enormous effort and patience." An IT manager, also in Kyiv, said his emotional state was impacted by the constant barrage of news and information generated by protest participants and observers online.

The information field, background influenced me very heavily, I constantly followed the news, and that really hypes you up.

Though during ordinary times most social media using respondents said they could afford to make their communication and information consumption online asynchronous, the protest atmosphere created a temporal shift for them. Especially those who were actively involved in a logistical, monitoring or media-related role in Euromaidan, said they felt it necessary to attempt to keep up with protest events in real time, which also led to an increase in the intensity of internet use.

However, even for those who were physically far from the events on the ground in Kyiv (and later in other large Ukrainian cities), the pressure to follow news as it happened was great: while the difference in time (7 hours with the EST time zone, where DC is located, for instance) made it difficult to always keep up, multiple respondents among the group of Ukrainians living in the US said they were still keyed into the protest news and updates stream. Some attributed it to the "24-hour news cycle" that the protesters occupying the center of the Ukrainian capital and their online support circle created, while others said the kinds of media available online,

like video live streams and quickly established protest hashtags (the main one being #euromaidan and used in English, Russian, and Ukrainian) made it easy for them to fall into “the vicious circle of constantly consuming information” and to join scores of other internet users in liking, retweeting and sharing links, video streams, photos, and updates. One respondent, a graduate student in DC, said that being online and following the Euromaidan news was “like a drug” and added that “the fear of missing something crucial, like another attack by riot police” had made her keep her phone by her person at all times, even when going to bed at night.

#### *5.3.4.2 Changing Online Sources and Connections*

Another notable shift in how some respondents used social media and the internet differently during the protest period was the change in the number of sources of information or opinions that people followed online or the criteria for selection of such sources to include in their daily information streams. Several people suggested that in order to broaden their knowledge and awareness they started following new users and new groups on social media. For some participants, this was a rather serendipitous process: they saw a post that resonated with them that a friend of theirs has shared and followed the post’s author, or were directed to a community page for a protest initiative that they found aligned with their interests and followed or liked it.

For several respondents, however, these choices were more rational and based on digging deeper into who a person was and where they came from before they chose to add them to their friends list. One respondent, a journalist from Kyiv, said that she was more inclined to start following someone new during Euromaidan if “someone I knew commented on their post” or recommended it while resharing.”

Overall, almost every respondent reported a growth in the number of accounts, whether personal or community-based, that they were following on social media.

Curiously, there were several mentions during interviews of protest participants deciding to unfollow someone who was previously part of their Facebook feed or Twitter stream. Most of these cases had to do with a difference of opinion regarding the protests, their essence and the forces behind them. A respondent from Odesa, who works at a public library there, shared this story of unfollowing one of her colleagues on Facebook and the fallout from their disagreement, both online and offline:

She was dismissive of the Euromaidan movement and the protesters' motivations from the start, but towards the New Year (mid-protest period) her posts got really scathing. The worst thing was, she absolutely refused to discuss anything rationally. Once her opinions got really vitriolic, and I got tired of trying to reason with her, I had to unfollow her on Facebook. Let's just say that working together and even being in the same office was very awkward after that.

#### *5.3.4.3 Changing Regular ICT Use Habits*

Respondents also noted that their "protest use mode" for social media sites led to changes in their usual habits and behavior on the platforms. Those protest participants who dealt with organizing things such as medical help or fundraising for other needs, as well as those who coordinated logistics and resources, said social media was a key ingredient in assessing people's trustworthiness and reputation. This meant that they spent more time exploring the online networks and content posted by people who were in responsible positions in the protest community or wanted to occupy such

positions. Suddenly, weak ties became important, and finding someone you knew and trusted on the list of “mutual friends” with a person who was suggested as useful was an indication of “good standing,” as one respondent put it. Another participant, a Ukrainian PR manager residing in DC, said that the professional social network LinkedIn, usually despised by most casual users for incessant reminders and notifications, became unexpectedly useful for assessing professionals in a particular area (such as lobbying, management, or medicine) and determining how reliable they were. “If you had connections in common, you could go to those people and ask them: is X really a decent person with good networks? Can we trust them?,” the PR manager explained.

Other ICT-related habits that were remade by the protest reality included constantly keeping all communication devices charged and carrying chargers or power banks everywhere. This was especially important for Euromaidan participants on the ground in Kyiv or elsewhere in Ukraine, who relied on mobile internet and smartphones for coordinating their work and staying abreast of the latest happenings. One respondent interviewed in Kyiv during the Euromaidan protests in December 2013, laughingly showed me his backpack, which contained two phones (a smartphone “for Internet and social media” and a simple cell phone “for emergency calls”, multiple cables and chargers, a laptop, and an external hard drive “for backups in case the laptop gets smashed.”

Despite these extra measures taken to stay in contact with people and get the latest news, none of the activists on the ground reported taking any precautions in terms of digital security. No one reported starting to use two-step authentication on

their emails or social media accounts or using VPN for anonymous browsing. Though these were not specifically discussed during the interviews, the lack of change in these cybersecurity habits was likely due to the general lax climate in regards to how unafraid activists in Ukraine generally were in 2013-2014 of government or law enforcement surveillance. Throughout the protest, there was barely any indication of surveillance, and most of it had to do with tracking mobile phones of certain activists, several of whom were ambushed and kidnapped by government-sponsored thugs during the later stages of Euromaidan. A key moment that made some activists think about the government's potential for technical threats was a day in January 2014 when those present in the Maidan vicinity in downtown Kyiv received an unsolicited mass text message on their phones saying "You have been registered as a participant of a mass protest." One interviewee, a landscape architect in Kyiv, recalled:

It really jolted me, when that text popped up, and I thought, could they be watching us? But the overall mood was so upbeat at the time, that people immediately started laughing about it, saying 'they can't arrest us all.' At that point, there were thousands in the square, so they probably couldn't.

A key change in mode of use during protest time that many participants noted related to using certain apps, tools and features as means of documenting, recording or witnessing the events that occurred. While witnessing as a key affordance of social media and the internet during moments of crisis in protest will be discussed in more detail further on in this dissertation, it is important to note that quite a few respondents indicated this particular shift in their use of new media specifically. The instances of shifting use included using existing apps, such as Facebook or Twitter, to

record verbal and visual reports of daily life as well as critical moments in protest locations, or to record participants' own reactions to what had occurred. One interviewee in Kharkiv, a student who had gone to Kyiv to participate in the protest there, and later returned to his own city to manage the protest camp there, said that on some days, especially if something significant had happened, like an attack by riot police or an especially poignant speech, "you could see dozens of people posting descriptions of the same moment, sharing the same photo." He said "it created a feeling of solidarity, of belonging to the same group in this one moment."

Another shift in feature selection was that some of the respondents, whose activity on social media was previously primarily private or protected, made their accounts public during the protest, for the sake of better coordination and visibility. An activist in Kyiv, an international NGO employee who served as a volunteer medic during the protest, summed it up thusly:

It was uncomfortable at first, opening my Facebook up, and making my thoughts available to so many new people, but I think, ultimately, it was productive, and not just because of better coordination (for the volunteer medics). I like to think that my posts may, along the way, have turned around a few users who were doubtful about the protest's goals and its participants' credibility.

Activists working on the ground in Ukraine reported an increased use of specific apps by certain communities: the drivers who were active in helping transport people and resources started using a walkie-talkie app called Zello to coordinate their locations and warn about threats, while citizen journalists installed and made use of smartphone

and tablet live streaming apps such as UStream, to broadcast what was happening in different locations to thousands of viewers. Many of the Euromaidan participants who were located abroad actually said the live streams were a key element of their daily social media diet. The live streamed videos were then archived, some of them capturing key clashes and loss of civilian life, later emerging as important historical documents and even going on to become evidence in criminal investigations, many of them still ongoing.

#### *5.4 Distance from the Center of Protest*

##### 5.4.1 Place, Space, and Distance

One of the key elements in understanding the affordances of ICTs for protest movements and civic activism more broadly evident in the relevant literature is the idea of a networked society, in which the dynamics of domination and resistance rely on forming networks and network strategies of offense and defense (Castells 2009). As social movements today often depend on the digital networks for diffusion of information, communication and coordination, the transition towards networked culture becomes not merely technological, but deeply tied into societal changes, as networks become ways to be rather than ways to do. This networked perception of distance from the protest center emerged in participants' interview responses through the different ways they mitigated the various distances from the action on the ground. A key theme here was that physical distance did not preclude them from engaging with the protest activity or community, with the internet and social media offering them multiple opportunities for action and allowing interviewees to conceive of

themselves as participants of the protest regardless of how far they were from the main square in Kyiv.

Because the Internet is a global network that connects people across borders and jurisdictions, it is important to consider the transnational nature of many recent protest movements and what that might mean for their outcome and for the role distance and space play in these cross-border activities. In many cases, organizing transnationally is becoming more necessary for protest movements: as political and economic decisions are shifting to an international level (Walgrave et al. 2012), movements increasingly need to target international or transnational bodies with their claims and actions. Due to rapid developments in digital and mobile technology, transnational protests are also becoming easier to organize than they previously were (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005). At the same time, the online platforms themselves are often global in nature (van Dijck and Poell 2015), and that forces all societal actors—state agencies, the mass media, and civil society organizations—to reconsider and recalibrate their position in this global public, political, economic and cultural space.

The Euromaidan protest certainly embraced transborder networks and connections, comprising individuals and groups from within and beyond Ukraine, and its claims and messages were translated to and broadcast in many languages and to many eyes and ears globally. However, the internal motivation of the protest movement was as much about internal Ukrainian affairs (human rights issues, corruption, abuse of power) as it was about transborder diplomacy and international politics (the EU association agreement). This two-fold agenda created a complicated set of meanings and messages that Euromaidan protesters at various locations in

relation to the protest epicenter had to negotiate in their activity. But such a broad manifesto for dissent also meant individuals and communities could come into the action on their own terms, with their own motivations and ideas for tactics and strategy. The dual local/global nature of Euromaidan also meant that engaging participants not just inside, but also outside Ukraine was important.

Within analyses of the role of internet platforms and social media websites in sustaining global networks, a consistent theme is the potential for these tools to enable cross-border flows of information that could empower pro-democracy movements. However, in some cases (though not always), meaningful discourse and political debate on social media tend to be associated with inside-country networks. Though transnational services like Facebook and Twitter are important outlets for political expression, Gunitsky (2015) notes the less well-studied, country-specific social media outlets, such as China's WeChat or Russia's VKontakte, are also becoming both a source of some citizen participation and a tool for repressions by non-democratic governments that co-opt control of the internal communication and digital infrastructure.

In Ukraine, however, there is a unique case in which there are no native country-specific social media platforms: instead, the largest shares of social media activity online are on Russian VKontakte and on Facebook. While on both platforms the networks are deeply embedded into the local context, there is no evidence that they are insular: VKontakte networks most of the former USSR, while on Facebook the Ukrainian community has strong international ties due to strong Ukrainian diasporas abroad and a history of educational exchanges. Additionally, the Ukrainian

Facebook contingent exhibits far more political activity and discourse, since VKontakte has effectively been co-opted by the Russian state (Toor 2014) and its audience is overall younger and less mature than that of Facebook.

Distance-wise, the interview participants within this research project fell into three distinct groups: those closest to the physical central hub of the protest located in the capital Kyiv; those in other Ukrainian cities where coordinated protest activity also took place; and Ukrainians living abroad who consider themselves to be Euromaidan participants. Each group discussed their perception of space, place and distance within the framework of the protest, and commented on the interplay between using digital media and technology and their relative distance or proximity to the protest camp on the ground as the epicenter of action.

#### 5.4.2 Kyiv: the Maidan and Nearby Locations

Although the initial calls to react to Yanukovich's decision not to sign the EU association agreement appeared online around November 21-22, 2013, the mobilization and physical occupation of the center of Kyiv by Euromaidan protesters didn't really take off until at least a week later. Onuch (2015) found that several different variables, including structural opportunities of historic anniversaries (namely the Holodomor famine<sup>7</sup>), the illegitimate use of extreme violence by the regime against the peaceful protesters (starting with the first instance of riot police brutality on November 30, 2013), and the protesters' ability to disseminate and access

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<sup>7</sup> The Holodomor was a man-made famine orchestrated by the Soviet authorities in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1932 and 1933 that killed an estimated 2.5–7.5 million Ukrainians. For more details, see Riabchuk (2008).

information on the internet, helped solidify the initial protest community and lay the foundations for its rapid expansion and entrenchment.

The central Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) and surrounding areas became the de-facto center of the protest for several reasons: first, it had historically been the space where similar protests, including the Orange Revolution, had taken place; second, the location was in close proximity to government buildings, including the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Parliament, and the Kyiv city hall; and third, both the Independence Square and the nearby European Square, where the action also spread, had symbolic value as iconic representations of Ukraine and Kyiv, but were also intersections of key transport lines and routes in the city, so blocking and occupying them had a disruptive effect on “normal life” as a whole.

Varnelis and Friedberg (2008) note that the new, networked society changes our understanding of the concept of place, transforming our sense of proximity and distance, turning place and space into deeply contested processes of transformation. In these circumstances, Castells (2011) claims that networks facilitate a culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction, but also a multilateral discourse field for activists and protest participants, enabled by the networked communications structure. This flexibility allows citizens to engage in dissent in various forms and to various degrees, as technology augments perceptions of protest spaces and the boundaries of places where protest events occur, and mitigates the varying distances at which participants are located from each other and from any physical epicenters of dissent. While the Internet and the tools it offers are often said to “close” or “bridge”

the distance between individuals and groups, being physically close to or remote from the protest activity that is occurring in a particular location is still a factor that impacts the affordances which ICTs grant to different activists and activist communities that engage in the protest.

The protest participants among the interviewees who were in Kyiv during the Euromaidan protest mentioned that their proximity to the gathering civic “firestorm” was as much of a driver to join the protest as the posts and discussions by their connections and friends that were available to them on social networks. A respondent in Kyiv who joined the protest fairly early on summarized his motivations in the following list:

There were several motivating factors for me: first, the very fact of the change of course [by Yanukovych] made me very mad; and just general anger at what was going on in the country, the ignorance, incompetence, unethical behavior of the authorities—this was gathering over time, and I guess this was the last drop which made me want to take some action. Then there were several ‘speeches’ (posts online) by people I know and respect, personally or in general, apolitical people, intellectuals, who called to action, to do something, and I wanted to support them. That was the second impulse. And then, just the fact that this [the protest] was so close by, and wasn’t that much of an effort to get there.

Several Kyiv-based activists said they were greatly influenced by the growing size of the crowd in Maidan and the adjoining areas. Curiously, the volume of people in the physical protest space was an influence both on those who saw it with their own eyes

when they came to downtown Kyiv and on those who saw its mediated representations through images, videos and textual reports posted on social networks. One protester, a graduate student, recalled her amazement at seeing the gathering grow so quickly.

[The first time] when I actually did go out to the square and protest properly was the weekend when the largest Maidan came together [at the start of December]. Before that, I came a few times shortly to the smaller protests, out of curiosity mostly, but the weekend when they [officials] didn't sign [the agreement] and the first big group came together, I was out of Kyiv, and I was sorry I had left when I saw the photos of the huge crowd posted online. And the week after that I came and became an active participant.

For many of the Kyiv-based participants, their online activity and presence was as much a part of their protest activity as actually being in the physical center of the dissent. Koliska and Roberts (2015), for instance, theorize self-photography or “selfies” as visual interaction between the person and the space they are in that helps produce meaning and perform a particular identity that is informed by both the space and the self. Several interviewees reported regularly posting selfies and photos of their surroundings on Instagram, and updates of daily activities on Facebook and other platforms, “not just as proof that I was there, but because that was what everyone was doing it,” as one respondent put it. Another participant, an advertising executive, pointed out that documenting their presence at the protest in Maidan was “a normal part of everyday life”:

...because we're so used to snapping shots of whatever we do, but this time, there was actually something exciting to share, something extraordinary that we're doing and that we are present for. How could you not want to share that?

Some Kyivites actually saw the location-enabled social media platforms like Foursquare, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which allow users to mark their geographic location when posting, as affording them the possibility to create a feeling of “strength in numbers.” Not everyone was able to spend whole days (or nights) in the protest camp, so a fairly large amount of people reported there after their day jobs or did shifts when they could, including over the weekend, bringing supplies, water, food, chargers or simply coming to take over some chore as needed. The ability to mark themselves as present at the center of the action created what one respondent referred to as “a certain sense of solidarity, especially when you looked at all the other people marked as being in the same location.” An IT manager who spent most of the first half of the Euromaidan period working from his office, recalls the feeling of almost sport-like desire to “bridge the distance” between the protest epicenter and his location, an office building five blocks away.

Of course, I was able to do helpful stuff even sitting in my office, like putting people in touch with each other via Facebook Messenger and making phone calls. But we would still run down to Khreshchatyk [Kyiv's main street that brackets the central square] after work just to add another check-in on Foursquare to the protest event there, to boost the numbers.

Some of the more experienced activists interviewed in Kyiv reported a certain lack of organization during the first several weeks of Euromaidan protests, but said it looked like that didn't diminish the enthusiasm of those who came to the physical protest site. The HR manager who had civic organizing experience recalled her initial impression of seeing the growing crowd on Independence Square:

Since I've been a civic activist for a while, I was actually pretty skeptical about Euromaidan at first, and my skepticism wasn't wholly unfounded, because things were kind of chaotic. Despite the fact that there were all these people gathering there [in Maidan], very few really knew what to do beyond Facebook posts asking more people to make [protest] signs and to come join.

While many of the Kyiv-based interviewees agreed that the physical occupation of the center of the city was important in symbolic terms as a statement of intent and a visual reminder of disagreement with the authorities and their decision, they stressed that doing things beyond simply being in the square (whether physically or via location statuses on social media) was also important, pointing to a reconfiguration of the notion of public and protest space (van Dijck and Poell 2015) and of the very sense of proximity to protest events (Varnelis and Friedberg 2008) within the new context of networked communication. Another experienced activist, the data journalist I interviewed in Kyiv during Euromaidan, was similarly critical of the protesters' initial approach to organizing, and said he had used both direct contact and conversations with people in the physical epicenter of the action and outreach through his networks of social media connections to attempt to determine what it was the protesters were trying to achieve, was necessary in terms of organization, human

resources and other support, and then to communicate all this to the people present in the downtown protest location and to those who were not there yet but were considering joining.

Physically I came out, and talked to people, and said you can stand here or you can also go and do something. And then we figured out collectively—online, offline—what needed to get done.

As Euromaidan grew in size and awareness of the protest spread through word of mouth, social media and, gradually, mainstream media, the attention directed at the protest and the engagement of people with it increased simultaneously offline and online. More people accumulated in the center of the Ukrainian capital, and even more citizens were following the protest activity via mediated means: Facebook posts, Twitter hashtags, and live video streams. This meant that people at varying distances from the center of the protest engaged in its significant digital and physical components, working together to produce what Wanenchak (2013) refers to as a “single movement reality.” In this reality of protest, the physical and digital sometimes augmented each other in unexpected ways. One of the activists who ended up coordinating logistics and human resources as part of one of the newly formed civic communities within Euromaidan told me that she found it quite ironic that, with such a large concentration of people in one place, it was actually quite difficult to manage information and activity on the ground.

One of Maidan’s peculiarities in terms of information reach was that, despite the huge stage and constant flow of speakers there, and broadcasting of stuff from there, there were tons of people who had no idea what was happening

and would come up to tents or booths and ask ‘What’s happening? What’s going on?’ So despite them physically being in the square, there was this desperate need to coordinate information.

Many of the activists interviewed, who had spent large amounts of time in the protest camp, also recognized that it was often difficult to know what was happening beyond the immediate visual perimeter: though the camp was concentrated in just one part of town, it also quickly became sprawling. As one respondent, who at one point worked as a protest camp guard, put it,

It really was like a small city in itself, and often it was easier to just call or message someone on the other end of the camp than troop all the way there to find out if they needed tea or gasoline. And once the attacks by [government] thugs and riot police started happening, one end of the camp often had no idea anything was amiss until they saw it on Facebook or someone managed to call and tell us to find our shields and take positions.

In that regard, those who were in charge of coordinating information posit that a combination of face-to-face meetings, phone calls and texts, email and social media platforms were the most efficient way of getting across news, distributing tasks and managing people and resources. Because the participant make up was so varied and because some people were always at the protest camp, others only came occasionally, and still others worked elsewhere in the city, coordination often required multiple means of communication and keeping records in several places. An interviewee who helped out at a medical supplies point described their practices to me this way:

You've got protesters in the camp who are sick, so we need a physical list of medicines they need, and it's hanging right by our table in the [Trade Union] building, but we also have to give it to someone to put online, as there are people on Facebook who are asking what they should buy and bring to us. At the same time, we already have a huge overflowing bin of various drugs and supplies, and someone has to sort through that to figure out what we have plenty of, and what we are lacking severely. So that's another list, and it also has to go on our wall, and then we make copies to give to other hubs in the Maidan, and to put that on Facebook as well.

Once the protest movement spread to other cities in Ukraine, local activists in Kyiv found themselves making new connections with protesters in the regions to share advice, to coordinate protest frames, messages, and tactics, and also to learn from local experience in some of the other cities. This is in line with Earl and Kimport's suggested affordance of ICTs for tactical diffusion that requires less physical co-presence to share activism-related knowledge and replicate organization and action patterns (Earl and Kimport 2011). A Kyiv-based activist who coordinated information outreach for one of the groups that grew out of Euromaidan said digital media played a big part in establishing and maintaining the regional networks, and stressed that regional outposts helped build a broader informal, horizontal structure for their particular protest community.

Communicating with regions and regional coordinators was a big part of the work, because at first we were so overloaded that we couldn't get around to it, and it is so important. There is less structure there, people have less

information, and they're less protected, so we need to help. We didn't want them to rely on random stuff they see coming out from Euromaidan on social media, because there are rumors, scaremongering, speculations—so we had to find time to set up regular communications, share what we were doing, what mistakes we'd made, how we'd managed to be productive. Group Skype calls were particularly helpful as they saved time. And it was also helpful just to share verified information about what was happening in Kyiv, which was hard to come by in this chaos even for us, even though we were right there.

#### 5.4.3 Outside Kyiv: Kharkiv and Odesa

Because Kyiv and the Maidan square were the center of claims-making and the most visible protest activity during the Euromaidan protests, and also saw the most government-directed violent repressions, they became synonymous with the protest itself in international media frames (Zelinska 2015) and in the overall perception of those who experienced the events in mediated ways. But the protest activity spread far beyond Kyiv and virtually every regional seat (with 26 regions in Ukraine overall) and many smaller towns saw protesters setting up tents, occupying government buildings, and building protest communities on the ground. Those researchers who have so far studied the Euromaidan protest movement rarely mention locations of the protests that took place outside of Kyiv (Ogryzko and Pishchikova 2014). Onuch (2014) for instance, names just a few, including Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Lviv, Odesa, and parts of Crimea. Local opinion polls contend that about 20 percent of Ukrainians participated in the Euromaidan protest in some way, with five percent of those in Kyiv, six percent protesting in other cities and villages, and nine

percent being those who said they supported the protesters with money, food, or other resources (Richnytsya Maydanu 2014).

Regional Euromaidan participants interviewed for this research study reported varying motivations for engaging in protest activity in their local context. Among the motivations were disappointment with Yanukovych's decision not to sign the EU association agreement; general disillusionment with the state of political, economic and civic freedoms in the country; pervasive corruption, abuse of power, and lack of access to justice. Along with these more abstract grievances, 70% of the regional respondents noted that they had specific issues to raise with their local authorities, including mismanagement of local funds, nepotism in municipal appointments, abuse of power by local law enforcement, and other problems. As a Kharkiv-based programmer told me:

We wanted to join the big protest that was for European values and human rights and dignity, but we also wanted to stick it to The Man locally, because so many of the problems came from the politicians here, who stuffed their pockets and held on to their seats, often with the blessing of the central authorities.

19 out of 21 interviewees in this group said they followed the Kyiv protests on the mainstream news and social media and relied on their personal networks mediated by digital technology to get reliable information about what was happening. Several interviewees noted that without proper context, it was often hard to make sense of the flood of information coming out about Euromaidan: one respondent in Odesa said she had to spend some time “sorting through sources on Facebook, VKontakte, and

Twitter” to figure out “who was the most informed.” Another interviewee, a journalism student in Kharkiv, said she felt overwhelmed by the amount of information and live reports:

I expected there to be media coverage, but what we got was ordinary people with phones and tablets going into the fray and streaming video of stones being thrown at riot police, activists beaten. It was hard to believe this was happening in Kyiv, it seemed at once very close—the phone camera was right up in people’s faces—and very far. And it was non-stop.

Of the 21 participants interviewed in Kharkiv and Odesa (12 in Kharkiv and nine in Odesa), six people reported that they had travelled to Kyiv during the initial stage of the Euromaidan protest and participated in some protest activity there for a period of time, before returning home. Others said they connected with people they knew who were involved in organizing in Kyiv or found useful contacts they didn’t have before through seeing who was publicly organizing on Facebook. The public protest communities such as the mega-populous “Euromaidan” that accumulated hundreds of thousands of followers and the smaller more targeted communities such as Euromaidan SOS proved to be useful as hubs of information, connecting regional participants to those in Kyiv and, importantly, to each other. A Kharkiv respondent who was part of a group that worked on covering protest events and news in the city online said it was both inspiring and useful to see what people were doing in other cities.

...[it was] good for morale because our activists could see that other cities were doing the same high-risk things like blocking entrances to local

government buildings and putting up stages and tents in downtown. But also, it was a handy way to learn from each city, to see how they organized, how they reacted to law enforcement, what they planned to protect their protesters and how they promoted their agenda [...] to others who weren't involved yet.

Regional protest communities also set up their own online communities and hashtags, such as “Euromaidan Kharkiv” or “Euromaidan Donetsk,” to mobilize other citizens locally and provide targeted information on local protest activity. Each of these groups essentially reflected many of the same structural issues that the Kyiv epicenter experienced (the need to manage needs and available resources, distribute individual and group tasks, fundraise), but as these protests were smaller in scope, there was comparatively less communication chaos, according to one Odesa respondent, a local handmade store owner who joined the local protest activity.

By the time we started to actively use our Facebook group and our WhatsApp messenger chats and put together lists of useful people on the ground, we'd already seen how it went down in Kyiv, so we were able to replicate some of what worked, and not step on the rake that they'd already stepped on [a Russian-language expression meaning not repeating someone else's mistakes].

A Kharkiv activist who had gone to Kyiv for a time to experience the Euromaidan action there firsthand also said that the comparatively smaller local protests made it easier to set up communications, including mobile connections and online chats.

When I was in Kyiv it was shocking how many people were out of sync and often the same thing that needed to get done would be done by three different groups, and some other need, like firewood, would be unfulfilled. Or we'd

have firewood, but nothing to light it with. Here [in Kharkiv], it was much easier to divvy up work and know who is in charge of what, as there's just not as many people.

Another protester in Odesa noted that it seemed to him like local communities on social networks were more tightly-knit and that allowed for more expedient construction of trustworthy hubs of activity, where people spent less time verifying if they could put their faith in someone.

Facebook was convenient not only because so many people use it, but also because you really do know most of these people in everyday life as well, so it's not too much of a headache to find someone who has a specific skill or can drive a generator to the city center for you. And also, because the guy is someone's cousin or school buddy, you don't feel ashamed asking them to do it. It's almost like they're family.

In her examination of the 57 local “maidans<sup>8</sup>” across 20 Ukrainian regions through the framework of contentious politics, Zelinska (2015) notes that, among other kinds of activity, the local communities expressed their political protest by issuing a number of resolutions containing demands addressed to national and local authorities, as well as the protesters' plans for future action. These documents were harder to cross-reference than protest tactics and organizational structure, and though the overall tone of them was similar, they often differed significantly in their content between each other and when compared to Kyiv's claims. Zelinska found that, especially when it came to identifying their actions, regional protesters chose a

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<sup>8</sup> “Maidan,” the Ukrainian word for “square,” became the generic designated term for “protest” in Ukraine after the 2004 Orange Revolution, which centered on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv.

variety of explanations (from simply “engaging in protests” to “implementing direct governance” and fulfilling “a historical mission”).

Interview respondents in Kharkiv and Odesa confirmed that distance from the epicenter of the protest, both geographical and ideological, made it harder to coordinate the programmatic component of the protests and to build long-term strategy into the everyday life of the protest community on the ground. While some groups managed to find ways to strategize with Kyiv-based counterparts (such as the group mentioned in the Kyiv section above who held semi-regular Skype calls with regional coordinators), other groups had difficulty following the ideological and programmatic debates in the capital. One Kharkiv respondent, a physicist at a local research institute, lamented the lack of a coherent countrywide narrative:

I’m no political scientist, but I found it exasperating that there were so many different messages flying out of Kyiv: on stage, on live streams, on Facebook pages, blogs...[...] I know this protest is praised for being self-organized, and that was great, but the discordant notes from Kyiv were very confusing as we tried to make sense of what we were doing on the ground.

Several of the respondents in both Kharkiv and Odesa said that while online communication tools and mobile phones were very useful for organizing on the ground and for watching the action in Kyiv at a distance happen in real time, they were less useful for deliberating on joint protest claims or negotiating a common strategy in the long-term context. An Odesa-based history student offered this explanation:

I think the Internet erased that barrier of location: we saw what's happening in Kyiv, and we could immediately react here. If something bad happened here, we got attacked, we had live streams here or someone tweeting, so it got out and Kyiv and everyone else knew about it too. And it was helpful in the here and now, but we can't rely on technology or media to make sense of the future. We might all want to change things, and some of them are different and personal, and some are the same. Figuring out the common ground and making that change large-scale and long lasting is a challenge, and I don't think that's something technology or live streams can help with.

#### 5.4.4 Outside Ukraine: Washington, DC, United States

All DC-based respondents reported that they found out about the drop of the EU association agreement by President Yanukovich through Ukrainian news media, but Facebook was overwhelmingly the source where they learned about the ensuing protests in November 2013, with a few people citing influential Afghani-Ukrainian journalist Mustafa Nayyem and his call to protest on Facebook and several similar popular online figures as their key sources. One respondent, a financial analyst in an international company, said Facebook was her first means of getting wind of the events in the Ukrainian capital and seeing visual evidence of the protest:

I was not following Mustafa Nayyem, I only started following him later... But I think it was some of my friends who were posting, the friends who are currently in Kyiv. They were posting about them going to Maidan and reposting his message. I think it was Thursday, but then on the weekend it was

a whole bunch of... on the weekend you saw a lot of people who were posting photos of themselves protesting.

Another respondent in DC, a graduate student, said Facebook was also her choice of platform to not only receive updates about the association agreement fallout, but also to discuss these news with her network.

Facebook was how I first found out, and then just talking to the friends there, discussing the news that our government decided not to sign the association agreement. Of course we also talked offline about it here, how could we not.

But the first one was Facebook.

Although a few of the respondents were catalyzed to connect with other Ukrainians in the US and act as soon as the first Ukraine Euromaidan protests started on November 21, 2013, for most others it was the first burst of violence, when students were beaten by riot police on Maidan in Kyiv on November 30, that made them decide to engage.

An interviewee who works in the banking sector recalled:

It was late at night in Kyiv, but here it was afternoon, so I was just getting off work and saw these photos of people beaten to a bloody pulp come across my Facebook feed. And then someone shared a video... It was shocking, for something this graphic, this brutal to happen and to be shared by people online. I don't think anyone expected this, and that only made it more shocking to see.

Further engagement was also boosted by ongoing conflicts between protesters and government forces, including the shootings and brutality in Kyiv in January and February of 2014, which took the lives of over a hundred people. Each of these

attacks was meticulously documented by those on the ground in Kyiv and the records were then shared online, with many of them translated and saved in multiple locations to preserve information.

Personal networks, augmented by the opportunities for engagement with the transborder protest community offered by social media (Shah and Gil de Zúñiga 2008), were the means of choice for first connections with other Ukrainians in the DC metropolitan area, in other US cities, and in Ukraine. In the words of one female respondent,

...it was just me and a couple of other friends, and we decided we'd go and protest in front of the Embassy. We filed a permit to get it. None of us had done this before, but we did in in a matter of a day. First we just spread the message around our friends, it was about twenty people who said that they'd come, and we posted a Facebook post with an event, and people signed up. I think the first time about 50 or 70 people came there...

All the respondents based in the US said they first used their personal connections, augmented by Facebook, email or Twitter, to get in touch with other Ukrainians and to engage in any protest-related activity. Some underscored that personal connections remained important and helped create an atmosphere of trust in the network, which was important for sensitive issues like fundraising and making financial decisions once the money was raised to help activists in Ukraine.

On the other hand, several respondents acknowledged that having wider networks on social media (e.g., friends of friends) afforded them the opportunity to amplify their messages and achieve increased awareness about the protests and the

activists' needs. Scholars have found that social media platforms can be instrumental in converting casual connections into weak ties that could have more longevity and be useful in protest networks (Ellison et al. 2011). The "weak ties" networks also allowed Euromaidan participants in the US to gain access to a wider pool of expertise needed for various tasks during the protests and seek out people such as designers, translators, investigative reporters and analysts, fundraisers, and other professionals. One interviewee, a graduate student, enumerated some of the opportunities his extended network on Facebook and LinkedIn provided him with:

A lot of it, it started just as a protests, pickets and things like that, but later on... this thing had gone on for three months... probably after a month of the protest activity, we decided that it's not that effective, so me and a couple of other friends, who have also been very active, we started seeking out people to start doing fundraising, we started writing letters to the senators, the congresspeople...

Valenzuela et. al. (2009) have shown that, in a civic engagement context, social networks can generate and cement interpersonal interaction and broaden social ties, opening access to new, potentially useful connections in a network. Another interviewee, a financial analyst, said she connected with a group of people possessing very specific skills, and they then used LinkedIn to find other professionals, verifying their trustworthiness through checking in with common connections on the network.

...professionally I do [financial] investigations, so I became part of the group who was doing investigations on, like, the lobbyists of Ukrainian authorities here or investigations on some of the members of the [then-ruling] Party of

Regions and then got connected with investigative journalists in Kyiv, started helping them with the things they needed to be covered in America. Our team here had a very special skill-set and it was good to find we could use it to help the Euromaidan.

Digital social movement studies have indicated that the global nature of ICT networks has meant that transnational protests are also becoming easier to organize (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005). A respondent from the group who had previously worked in the government sector said establishing transborder contacts with Kyiv-based activists was essential to connect the local, national and international contexts, and to see how people based in DC and elsewhere in the US could be most useful to the protest movement and to its cause. One example she gave of how social media enabled such a multiplicity of connections was the intricacy of researching lobbying firms used by the Ukrainian government in the US.

At first, to get people together, to get some information about what we could do, it was mostly Facebook and personal contacts...[...] To find information, we just used open source, it's all public, so for example, to do the research on lobbyists, you just look at all of the media coverage that was done, look at the lobbyist disclosure records, look at the letters, who funds them... Also, it's useful knowing people who have been involved in professional arena in some things, so for example, someone who is in one of the closed Ukrainian Facebook community groups suggested not just to send a letter to whoever, to [Senator] John McCain, but to his chief of staff and also his secretary, just to make sure it's gonna get to whoever, gets their attention.

Eight of the ten interviewees based in the US reported engaging in fundraising for the Euromaidan movement in some form, from simply donating money to organizing drives and coordinating the purchase of medical supplies and protective equipment for protesters in Ukraine. Quite a lot of the fundraising in the US was done online, soliciting funds in Facebook groups, doing public drives on Facebook and Twitter, but also creating Facebook event pages for offline charity events such as art sales, dinners and concerts. Most of this activity was closely coordinated with Kyiv-based protest communities who were the end recipients of the funds. Transferring money, as one active fundraiser among the respondents stressed, was very delicate business, and it was important to find trustworthy activists at the epicenter of the protest to establish the flow of funds or whatever they had helped purchase.

In addition to raising some financial support, you also have to figure out who you're giving it to. Mostly through personal contacts, people who've been spending a lot of time on Maidan, mostly living there, we were gathering information on the needs, and then doing targeted fundraising. Like, they would tell us that, for example, 'we need a defil... defib.. I never can spell that, defibrillator.' And so we look around at the market, the costs, is it cheaper to buy here and ship or buy it there, how to arrange the transfer and confirm the receipt. It's a process that takes time and effort.

Public and open groups on social media, mainly Facebook, were also useful tools for organizing and structuring the protest effort within the US. Several loose networks of Ukrainian Americans that engaged in Euromaidan through local protests, fundraising, media outreach and government and international organization outreach, solidified

into communities and then into non-profits, with a lot of their coordination and communication done via email and private-or public-facing Facebook pages. Because these communities were spread between DC, New York, Chicago and other parts of the US, having these platforms allowed them to keep their members informed about latest events in Kyiv, coordinate simultaneous fundraising and lobbying efforts, and cross-promote their activities in other similar communities. They also instituted a practice of publishing regular online reports about their fundraising successes and how the funds were being spent, and sharing these reports widely with their networks. These were, one respondent in DC argued, key to building trust within the local and international protest circles:

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

Although scholars agree that networked social media transform our perception of the concepts of place and distance (Varnelis and Friedberg 2008), the latter in a physical sense still has an impact on how protest participants experience the protest as a phenomenon overall. All respondents explicitly said that geographical distance from the events in Ukraine made a difference for how they experienced and perceived Euromaidan as a protest movement and an event. Most talked about a difference in

their own protest tactics and discussed things they could and could not do in terms of political activity (e.g., standing on the square in Kyiv or helping in the makeshift hospital vs. fundraising or contacting congresspeople in DC). As one activist put it,

We can't actually go to Euromaidan and occupy the square, so we have to get creative: I still want to express myself as Ukrainian, so I go and stand in front of the White House or the Ukrainian Embassy in Georgetown and protest. Or I see people changing their avatars to Ukrainian flags and I do the same, because that creates some sense of unity. Or... when the first people were shot to death in Kyiv, we went to the [Ukrainian] Embassy and staged a lie-down protest, covered ourselves with flags, like dead bodies. The Ambassador called the police, but hey, we had a permit, so US law was on our side!

A few interviewees talked about the difference in perception of the events, suggesting that they had a bigger and more balanced picture of what was going on from afar, although real-time info from social networks and live streams afforded them the same speed of receiving news as the people on the ground, and often the same level of emotional hardship as well. A marketing manager in DC said had had trouble concentrating on work and bouts of anxiety during Euromaidan, knowing friends and people she knew in Ukraine were involved in it, but also said she felt guilty discussing how difficult it was for her to follow events online, because she felt like it was much harder for those who were actually involved in the protest at the epicenter:

When you're just watching this online, it's a dumb feeling of sorts, because you can see it from many angles, see the confrontations, the action, but there's nothing you can do apart from sharing the news online, reposting the videos

and livestreams, translating what is going on into different languages. And you can't sleep.

One respondent said that she felt “less difference in perception based on geographical distance, and more difference based on political distance” (that is, people’s political persuasions), as she found it hard to discuss the events in a reasoned way with people on the other side of the argument. Over three fourths of the respondents said they joined quite a few of the many protest-related communities on Facebook and Twitter that supplied regular updates about events on the ground, to have access to more information in a few concentrated streams. One in seven respondents said the Ukrainian events made them reconsider Twitter and find it more useful during breaking-news events and periods of unrest, with one respondent saying he “realized what it was for and how it could be used effectively to follow news in real time.”

## Chapter 6: Discovering Affordances of ICTs for Protest

This chapter draws on participant interviews to describe some more specific affordances of the internet and social media for protest activity, including information sharing and distribution; managing protest frames and contesting mainstream media depictions of the protest; building communities and networks of protesters; and augmenting the notions of co-presence and witnessing for protest participants.

### *6.1 Information Sharing, Protest Frames, and Narratives*

In the socio-technical context, the central role of information and communication technologies in enabling their users to consume, create, and distribute information is a key tenet of understanding why people use these technologies and platforms in the first place. Equally important is how these information- and communication-related practices, mediated by ICTs, afford citizens opportunities for civic and political engagement or constrain them. As social media and the Internet become more and more ubiquitously used, they become increasingly interwoven with various sectors in society (van Dijck and Poell 2015), including state institutions and actors, the media organizations, and civil society, both its activists and its less engaged citizens.

Boulianne (2015b) summarizes a number of relevant research studies on social media use and participation to find that social networking sites emerge as “a critical mechanism for gathering information or news from family, friends, or traditional news media organizations,” and afford users some potential for engaging with civic and political issues. In terms of situating the role of ICT use in society in more political terms, Christensen points to a changing power dynamics in the political

sphere, where social media have thwarted the discursive monopoly of political elites on mainstream media channels and “have made possible the presentation of alternative discourses to local and global audiences, challenging the orthodoxies of those in power” to define “what is right and wrong, what is legal and illegal, what is legitimate dissent or treason” (Christensen 2009).

Beyond the more general affordances of social media to create, distribute and consume content and the abstract discussion of alternate discourses within a political system, social movement and protest scholars are also concerned with the kinds of interpretive work that occurs within activist and protester communities and networks. One way to consider how protesters perceive, interpret and make meaning of their actions is by examining how the participants frame the movement and themselves within it. In social movement theory, framing is defined as “generating cognitive contexts within which data acquires meaning” (Ganz 2001). Through the prism of collective action frames, social movement and protest participants are regarded as “signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning” for other participants, those they protest against, and those observing the activity (Benford & Snow 2000).

Thus protesters and activists, along with the media, government, and state actors, participate in what Hall (2006) terms “the politics of signification,” generating meaning in the context of the protest activity they engage in. By using the term “framing,” social movement scholars conceptualize this “signifying work or meaning construction” (Snow & Benford 1988). As an active verb, framing implies a dynamic, evolving process wherein social movement or protest movement participants exercise

their agency to produce and offer contentious interpretive frames that challenge existing ones, often at the level of reality construction.

However, more recent scholarly work has called for a less structural approach to understanding meaning-making in social movements, collective action, and protest activity and suggested researcher should go beyond the concept of framing and consider storytelling and narratives as central to social movement strategies and activity. Storytelling, they argue, is central to social and protest movements as it constructs agency, shapes identity, and motivates action (Ganz 2001).

This section, therefore, considers the role of the Internet and social media in information sharing practices in the context of dissent-related activity as reported by interview participants. It also rounds up participants' discussions of how these platforms and spaces limited or afforded the construction of protest frames versus competing mainstream media frames and allowed protesters to engage meaning-making and crafting and sharing protest narratives and stories, both individual and collective.

#### 6.1.1 Affordances of ICTs for Information Sharing

Research from the New York University Social Media and Political Participation lab scholars indicates that there was a clear and identifiable spike in the use of Facebook and Twitter in Ukraine during the period of the EuroMaidan protests (Tucker, Metzger, and Barberá 2014), including an increase in the number of pages, new and active accounts, page views, comments, and likes. Many of the interview participants reported an increase in time spent using social media and a growing intensity of use during the events of November 2013-February 2014. Among other things, they

started following new users and pages adjacent to or related to the protest movement, seeking new sources of information and new ways to share and distribute it.

Milan (2015) finds that protesters adapt the technical and design features of social media platforms to turn them into affordances for the information and communication-related needs of the protest movement or event: they use hashtags, retweets and mentions to call people into action, raise awareness of protest causes, direct attention, and promote conversations and content exchange. In the Euromaidan context, Facebook and Twitter were particularly instrumental in affording these. Twitter, though used by a relatively small number of Ukrainians overall (hundreds of thousands as opposed to the millions using Facebook), was particularly instrumental in helping protesters connect with one another and in allowing them to inform broader networks of users (including those abroad and international observers) about developments on the ground (Tucker, Metzger, and Barberá 2014).

Protest participants used hashtags such as #євромайдан (Ukrainian), #евромайдан (Russian), and #euromaidan (English) to consolidate attention and create a visible discursive field that could be easily found by those seeking information about the protest. At the same time, participant attention was sometimes diffused by competing messages on these hashtags (Lokot 2013). These hashtags became progressively more popular during the first weeks of the protests, with more than 8,000 tweets per hour published on 22 November, the second day of the protests, and as many as 4,800 per hour on 30 November, the night of the first violent crackdown by the police on student protesters (Texty 2013; Lokot 2013). However, hashtags are only crucial during the first stage of organizing and mobilization, while

activists position themselves within the protest discourse online (Lokot 2013)—once the discourse is established and the level of awareness about the protest reaches saturation, users generally drop the hashtags, since everyone participating in the discussion already knows the context. To further mark out the discursive space and establish reliable information sources, within the first week of the Euromaidan action activists created ‘official’ protest Twitter accounts—@euromaidan, @EuroMaydan, and @EuroMaydan\_eng—that rapidly accumulated tens of thousands of followers and provided regular updates.

Several interview participants who said they had been generally skeptical of Twitter confessed they recognized its potential to quickly disseminate news and information and focus attention, however one Kyiv-based respondent was still doubtful of Twitter’s overall effect as a means of connecting with a mass audience.

With Twitter, there’s a very peculiar subsection of society already on it: people who are more keyed in, who follow news, so... [...] journalists, political observers, media analysts. So it’s great as a tool and it’s great that more people are joining, but I don’t think it matters that much in the grand scheme of things.

Participants abroad had a slightly different view of Twitter’s importance, noting that it gave them the ability to easily follow information streams and breaking news during the protests. Some tied it to Twitter’s greater popularity in the US, and one interviewee, a graduate student, also drew attention to how well Twitter lent itself to multilingual use.

When I looked at [Euromaidan] Twitter activity it made it seem like there was so much going on. It was probably out of proportion, the sense that every few minutes something was breaking, someone was saying or reporting something important. And I think the different language hashtags were a great idea. Plus I saw people translating tweets on the go, to make them reach even further out to new people. At some point, I got into the translating groove as well, though it proved to be very time-consuming.

Facebook, as the more popular platform among Ukrainians, was also widely used by various Euromaidan groups and communities to establish and manage information flows and raise awareness of the protest. The most famous Facebook page, called simply “Euromaydan,” set a record in Ukraine, attracting more than 76,000 followers in just eight days, and reaching more than 200,000 followers within the first 10 weeks of the protests (Savanevsky 2014). Other pages and communities directed information about protest logistics, provided creative support to the movement and engaged in aggregation of mainstream media reports about the protests and international outreach.

The majority of interview participants (51 out of 59), regardless of distance from the heart of the protest in Kyiv, said they followed the largest Euromaidan Facebook page, and many also reported joining other smaller groups. One interviewee in DC, a marketing manager, said they were the first new addition to her Facebook Euromaidan ‘diet’:

Definitely, Euromaidan on Facebook. When I joined I think it was 50 thousand people, now it’s over 260 or 270 thousand. So yeah, a lot of the

Maidan-related ones, like Euromaidan SOS, Euromaidan... there's a whole bunch of them.

Other participants reported also following new individuals, usually in an organic way, because someone on their feed had reposted someone else's post with information, an opinion or a call for help. These new sources of information included activists, reporters (both Ukrainian and international), commentators and political observers, academics and other opinion leaders. As one interviewee from Odesa remarked,

I followed Mustafa [Nayyem] because, well, he was an online celebrity before and then everybody followed him after his post about going to protest. But over time, I also found people whose names I didn't know, but who were writing really well about the action, or who posted really good photos, so those went on my feed as well.

Euromaidan scholars also note a circular relationship between the social media, which initially helped to fuel protest mobilization and action, and the protest events themselves, which, in turn, increased user demand for social media.

The majority of respondents (84%) said the combination of personal connections and extended social networks online, such as Facebook and Twitter, was one of the most useful tactics that afforded them opportunities for engaging in protest-related information exchange and discussions. This mixture allowed them to exploit their existing strong ties in online networks, but also afforded wide reach to the weak ties in the broader networks to share information and event calls. Those respondents who used social media to catch the attention of other observers of Euromaidan said they thought internet tools, especially social networks, significantly

amplified their efforts and messages in cases of raising awareness. A human resources specialist in Kyiv who worked on coordinating protest efforts from the first days of the civic occupation of the capital's downtown said in a December 2013 interview (a little over a month into the protest) that their Facebook page gained thousands of followers almost immediately and was far more popular than their standalone website.

We have a Facebook page. We also have a separate website, but it's kind of lame, not enough people to keep it up. Facebook functions well, it's updated daily with dozens of posts, 80% is our own news produced by us. We're at about 6-7K followers right now, after 10 days of existing.

An IT manager in Kyiv who helped run one of the crowdsourced logistics hubs for the protest, said the website they created was successful in raising awareness of the protest needs in large part due to the information sharing work they were able to do on social media.

The site was the most visited of our platforms, after November 30 [the first case of police brutality against protesters] we had a peak, December 4 we had 80K visits a day. An increase after every police clash or something big happening. But traffic also depended a lot on our promotion efforts, Facebook reposts, retweets.

Another activist in Kyiv said their group combined working with traditional media and citizen resources to amplify their voice and bring more attention to the work they were doing within the context of Euromaidan.

...And collaborating with other public pages and traditional media like radio, we worked with civic media. The Euromaidan public (the most popular page) was super-helpful for us in terms of driving attention. Without them and their reposts we would probably be able to do a lot less.

Respondents in regional centers, Kharkiv and Odesa, reported similar dynamics of building presences on Facebook and Twitter, working with local independent media, but also said they connected with Kyiv-based groups and sources online. Regional protest groups relied on them for up to date information about events at the epicenter, which they often re-shared and reposted on their own pages, but also worked to push out their own local protest news, stories and related statements, manifestos and claims to a broader audience focused mainly on Kyiv and the events and discourse emerging from there. An activist in Kharkiv who worked with a group that reported on Euromaidan-related rallies and events in the city said their photos and videos were often picked up by more prominent communities on social media, giving them a boost in views and sometimes creating a cascading attention effect typical of the hybrid media and attention systems Chadwick (2013) describes:

A retweet from EuromaidanPress would often get us massive traffic, and if the tweet they retweeted had a link to our Facebook page, that went up as well.

And if a major Kyiv community retweeted you, it was more likely the media and the foreign reporters would notice, too.

In terms of international outreach, activists used a variety of approaches to attract the attention of foreign media and to secure support and a loyal audience from users abroad. Activists have reported ongoing crowdsourcing translation efforts to share the

latest news about Euromaidan (Bohdanova 2014), creating Facebook communities such as Euromaidan As It Is (Facebook 2013a) and Maidan Needs Translators (Facebook. (2013b), but some of the interviewees also said they engaged in individual content translation efforts on Twitter and Facebook. This was especially popular as an activity with respondents abroad, one of whom said that translating important posts and news was a way of “being useful” while situated very far from the protest action on the ground, as translations helped spread awareness of protest events beyond the Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking online and offline networks and provided an alternative dimension to the international mainstream media coverage of Euromaidan.

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

Other international awareness-raising efforts online included circulating viral video appeals to international viewers and organizing mass ‘Twitter storms’ to bring Ukraine-related hashtags to the top of worldwide Twitter trending topics (Minchenko 2014; Lokot 2014). Ukrainians living abroad and representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora were at the heart of these social media activities and helped increase Euromaidan’s visibility and promote its message abroad (Bohdanova 2013).

During the interviews, respondents shared the various ways in which social media platforms were useful for them as means of managing the overwhelming flow

of information as Euromaidan gained in size, volume and speed. The affordances of social networks to curate, aggregate, and prioritize information (Boulianne 2015b, Valenzuela 2013) proved to be useful for both internal communications inside Euromaidan groups and for external uses of those participants who consumed, produced, and shared information online.

One of the more experienced organizers within the Kyiv respondent group said both mobile communication and social media were useful in directing the multiple flows of information that coordinators inside the protest needed to convey, which was often difficult to do in a densely people-packed protest camp where, in her own words, “despite the huge stage and [...] broadcasting of stuff from there, there were tons of people who had no idea what was happening and would come up to tents or booths and ask ‘What’s happening? What’s going on?’” Social media were also useful in coordinating and sorting through information that went out to different groups of people scattered around Kyiv, and, later, in the regions of Ukraine as well. When interviewed in December 2013, during the second month of the Euromaidan action, she said:

[During] the first days in Maidan, people learned very quickly, each day was so intense it seemed like ten days. The flow of information is humongous, I wake up in the morning after two-three hours of sleep and I have 26 missed calls, so we have to spread the work around, and Facebook proved to be a good way to make stuff available to many people at once, but also to have a controlled way of sharing information and contacts with a select group.

Another Kyiv-based respondent who helped manage a community that coordinated the needs of protest participants and the resources available to them, said that, while they had a dedicated website with a crowdmap through which information could be submitted, social networks were still the major source of information for the project administrators and moderators, and also served as an amplifying mechanism for the most urgent requests for help.

Where do we get info from? The website is only the top of the iceberg, we might get hundreds of messages only through the web interface. The rest—the majority—comes through email or social media. Everything that ends up on the website (the map) is then reposted on Facebook (on our page) and then it is reposted by other people there—we ask our friends to repost, and at some point we also hooked up with the aggregator pages, like main Euromaidan one.

He also added that the wide reach of some of their need-based Facebook posts and the actual reaction of people who participated in the protest or were sympathetic towards the movement served as evidence of the network and its serendipitous connections being effective at affording access to a broader pool of users who might not have otherwise seen their messages.

As a channel, as a media, Facebook worked great, and we have confirmation that the ads and calls for help we posted on Facebook, they were shared, they didn't just stay up there, they were read and people bought stuff and brought it where it was needed. You can't measure it, since we didn't track the history... But there was definitely an effect.

A respondent in Odesa said he had seen a fair amount of criticism from those who felt online efforts to direct information and resources were largely useless, but contended that for him “the Internet and social media played a huge role for me and meant a lot” in terms of how informed and engaged he felt during the protests.

I don't watch TV, all news I found out from Facebook mostly all of this time, so I don't know [...] it's obvious that it had a great impact, maybe from my place I'm blowing its importance out of proportion. For me this all unfolded through the prism of the Internet and social networks. Even in places I felt a sense of guilt: oh here I am clicking on buttons instead of making sandwiches somewhere there, on the ground.

In an autoethnographic participant observation report of his own engagement with Euromaidan and its information and communication context during the protests, Ukrainian media scholar Kulyk (2014) notes that because of the overwhelming amount of news and a lack of time to look through everything, he found himself paying attention “only to those texts from foreign media that were reposted on Facebook by my friends or friends of friends whose recommendations promised quality or at least relevance” (p.181) and noted that he consumed local media and news in much the same way.

Among the interview participants, many reported that they used their Facebook and Twitter feeds in a similar fashion, unsatisfied with the overall quality of media coverage and trusting that their existing network and the new people and groups they were adding to it would supply them with a selection of news and information that would be at once reflective of the situation on the ground, relevant in

terms of offered opinions and reliable. At the same time, many of those who consumed information this way said they still felt overwhelmed by the constant barrage of information, saying the “information field” influenced them “quite heavily emotionally” and created a “feeling of constant hyperawareness.” One respondent in Kharkiv described it as a somewhat difficult experience, referring especially to the instances of brutality against protesters and the clashes that took place in Kyiv and other cities, which caused a sense of “vicarious trauma”:

It’s almost like PTSD in a way. We see awful stuff, both online and on the street, people attacked, firebombs, Molotovs... and then we see it all echoing around the [social] networks, and we can’t stop watching. It becomes this nervous habit, almost, checking for new messages and refreshing feeds, to see if anything else has happened. And after a few months, it seems like you’re desensitized, but seeing an image, a video or reading about someone hurt is still horrible.

In line with the earlier mentions of interview participant discussing the affordances of social networks to manage and aggregate information and connections for organizing and informing protest participants, as well as curate their own news consumption patterns, there were also instances of using social media to create ‘shortcuts’ between the private and public communications of protest participants when the circumstances required it, and to bridge different forms of ICTs within this context collapse activity. Examples of ‘shortcuts’ afforded by social media include copying and posting information from text messages and message apps into public Facebook posts and tweets to make the private public. Occasions for such cross-context dissemination

included seeking help or offering available resources, looking for missing persons, and issuing warnings of riot police action. An example of the latter, offered by one interview participant, is an anonymized public Facebook post from February 18, 2014, that was shared by one of her Facebook friends. The post is essentially a word-for word reproduction of someone else's text messages, copied and pasted by the Facebook user into a public posting. It is translated into English and reproduced below:

[17:37:51] Dasha: BERKUT [riot police] IS LOADING INTO THE METRO AT DARNITSA!!!!!!!!!!

[17:39:33] Dasha: Info from subway staff: Berkut is being brought to the depot en masse and then loaded onto trains to be taken to central stations to crack down on the people.

During the months of Euromaidan Facebook was used for a variety of purposes by activists: groups were created for specific events, such as Sunday rallies, or ongoing activities, providing information support and publishing previews for things like the Maidan University (a series of public lectures on various social and political topics); special pages curated information and reported on current needs of protesters (Kulyk 2014).

Another important subsection of activist-used social media, including individual pages and topical groups on Facebook, collected, archived and shared various Euromaidan-related documents, evidence, programmatic statements and artworks, both verbal and audiovisual. These collections were perceived by protesters who collected them to be important markers of a political, civic and cultural

milestone that was Euromaidan, but reflecting on the archival work later, interview participants said they realized that this digitally generated and stored content not only had historical or cultural value, but came to serve as key evidence in investigations of the violence, crimes, and human rights violations that occurred during the protests. An interviewee in Kyiv, who helped crowdsource citizen video footage of the shootings that took place during the last days of the organized protest and left dozens of protesters dead, thought social media and mobile devices were key in uncovering more information about what happened.

I think the one big difference for me that technology, like smartphones and mobile Internet, made was that it made possible to not just see the thing happening if you happened to be right there, but also to capture it as it was happening and then make it public by putting it on YouTube or Facebook. It was made public and it stayed public. Especially when people started getting shot, it was so important to have this footage, these images. [...] I think the people who held the camera at those moments even though their hands were shaking were exceedingly brave.

Live, unedited video streams proved to be one of the more compelling media products to come out of the Euromaidan protest and become significantly more mainstream in the eyes of Ukrainian Internet users. The first live stream appeared on the very first night of the protest on November 21, 2013, and was set up by a student blogger. Many more appeared after the first confrontations with riot police and the first incidents of police violence, and these were run by both individuals streaming from their smartphones and citizen and professional news outlets, like Radio Svoboda, the

Ukrainian outpost of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; Hromadske.TV, an online-based public television project; and several other outlets which provided ongoing live online video coverage of the protests (Savanevsky 2013).

Because of their multiple viewpoints, extreme mobility and interaction with viewers via social networks, live casting journalists and citizen reporters were especially instrumental in providing timely updates and performing prompt fact-checking to debunk rumors and misinformation. Though interview participants on the ground confessed they were often too busy to watch the live streams when they actually went live, some noted that archived videos were still useful to re-watch later, to spot provocateurs in the crowd and discuss tactics for protecting the protest camp. Interviewees who were further away from the epicenter of the protest said they watched the live streams religiously, and protesters in other regions of Ukraine said they soon adopted the practice for broadcasting and documenting their own protest gatherings and police brutality. Later on in the protest, some activists even used drones with affixed video cameras to capture the size of the protest camp and show the scale of the human presence in the capital, which by that time was playing host to many protesters who had travelled from other towns. Videos of the drone-enabled footage were recalled as an example of technological innovation by several interviewees and became another popular symbol of the protest.

The acceleration of information flows and networked nature of social media mean that news and useful information are not the only thing that travels fast. Especially in a crisis situation such as a mass protest, where people are already experiencing intense information-related stress, rumors and fakes spread just as

easily. Respondents who were in Kyiv during the protest were especially dismissive of the social media's ability to spread unverified and false information, with one Kyiv-based interviewee recalling the story of a volunteer medic who was shot by government forces during one of the more dangerous days of the protest (Sevilla 2014).

Do you remember this story? It went viral, I think. This medic girl got shot in the throat and tweeted that she was dying before losing consciousness. Then someone posted a photo of her with a bloody neck, and the social media went wild. What's worse, mainstream media took the story and ran with it. And then it turned out she survived, so they had to publish retractions.

Interestingly, when asked why she tweeted as her "last word" instead of calling someone or sending a text, the volunteer medic reportedly said that she thought a public post would get out and reach her family faster, in case they weren't looking at their phones (Sevilla 2014).

This story exemplifies the numerous instances of publishing unverified information or misstating the facts discussed by participants, who complained this sometimes resulted in wasted resources or time. Even worse, according to some interviewees, were some of the international media outlets who often borrowed "sensational" photos published by Euromaidan protesters on social media and used them in their coverage, but "misunderstood the context" and often used social media posts and content without bothering to confirm the provenance of the images or information.

Although bothersome overall, this propensity of social media to spread both facts and fakes led some participants to think more critically about their digital media literacy skills and to attempt to engage in verification and debunking practices on the very platforms which were spreading unverified or blatantly fake information. These activities involved fact-checking suspicious information in the comments to Facebook posts or replies and mentions on Twitter; asking multiple individuals to confirm something someone had reported online as happening; asking for images or video from a reported location or event to support a claim; and networking with other social media users to find related or similar posts reporting the same incident. One Kharkiv activist joked that “people became very suspicious very quickly and learned to be cautious of everything,” but said that despite an increase in digital media literacy practices, “false alarms and rumors” were still quite persistent on social media, and were often hard to lay to rest “once they got picked up by mainstream media.”

Discussing the kinds of content and information that was the most popular on social media and was shared widely by protest participants and observers, interview participants in all locations were united in suggesting that visual content, including images, photos, art, and video and animated materials were the most powerful, both in terms of reach and in terms of the potential emotional effect. Earlier scholarship notes the power of images to ‘place’ those viewing them in specific viewing positions and convince them to view events or subjects in a certain way (Lister and Wells 2001) and suggests the potential of certain ‘persistent images’ to contest or even reframe the dominant media narratives (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008).

Though art and images were, of course, very much present in the protest camp at its center in Kyiv's Independence Square and other locations, it was on social media that activists were able to express their creativity, solicit ideas for the protest's visual language and create memorable visuals, many of which came to associated with the protest itself. Several of the activists who had worked in or near the protest camp in Kyiv remembered that a good share of the printed art and images hung around the camp came from various social media communities—and just as many were created on the protest site and then went to become viral on social networks, creating a kind of never-ending online-offline circle of information dissemination.

Several communities were created by activists on Facebook to create and circulate evocative protest-themed art and slogans: StrikePoster (СтрайкПлакат) brought together graphic artists who created and circulated free Euromaidan posters aimed at keeping protesters motivated, with one respondent recalling that he and his fellow protesters regularly printed out posters from the community to put up in the city “as a kind of paper graffiti”.

Another online initiative, which brought together participants of all kinds, including designers, advertising managers and other creative professionals, was called ‘I’m a Drop in the Ocean’ (Я—крапля в Океані) (2013), inspired by the idea that everyone's small contribution (‘a drop’) counted toward the achievement of a common goal. The group created its own visual language, using the image of a water drop and the title of the community and made available poster templates where anyone could add their own personal expressions and meanings of what it felt like to be “part of a huge community of like-minded people.” The group also designed

complete posters, videos, and put together a visually evocative website with stories about Euromaidan and its participants (Ukrainska Pravda 2014).

Other respondents said images were an easy way to express your identification with a cause—one interviewee in DC recalled that during the many days of mourning the increasing number of those who died during the government-sanctioned violence in Euromaidan, countless Facebook and Twitter users changed their avatars on social networks—a practice common for online awareness campaigns (as seen in Vie 2014)—to black squares crossed with a ribbon in Ukrainian flag colors, yellow and blue.

Suddenly everyone’s profile pic looked the same and, overall, it made quite a powerful impression—that of a country, a people in mourning.

In an account of the interactions between traditional media and new media during the first months of the Syrian uprising, Trombetta found that activists used social media as “the press-office for the protests, providing daily bulletins of the regime’s victims and violations” (Trombetta 2012, p. 7) and using images and videos to great effect. Similarly, graphics, visual explainers and summaries were also a popular format for sharing information among Euromaidan communities and making it easily identifiable and memorable, according to one participant who worked on an initiative coordinating logistics and resources for the protest in Kyiv.

We came up with good formats—graphic formats like digests which are images with lists of needs, they are shared quite well and attract attention.

Then we do offline work, so we print these graphics out and stick them up in

key places of the protest [camp], so people can find us online or call us and ask, and bring their needs, information, or resources to us in this way as well.

Discussing the power of amateur photography, Sjøvaag (2011) suggests that images possess “affective and evidentiary force” (p. 84) as carriers of information, and can become focal points for political debate and public reaction, including public outrage. A participant in DC who was involved in fundraising activity said evocative images were helpful in attracting attention to their cause (collecting funds for medical supplies for one of the protest’s volunteer medical facilities) and creating the right emotional message for potential donors.

Images and pictures work wonders for increasing sharing and driving traffic on social media. And there were so many amazing photos coming out of Euromaidan. We used them a lot.

Overall, interview participants commented frequently on the role of social media in offering alternatives to mainstream media frames and filling in the gaps in traditional media coverage of the protest, including live coverage, powerful imagery, and opinions that contributed to creating an accessible space for political and civic debate.

#### 6.1.2 Contesting Mainstream Media Frames

The popularity of social media in Ukraine grew during Euromaidan, triggered by the turbulent protest activity and led to a shift in information consumption patterns. During the period between fall 2013 and spring 2014, the number of click-throughs from social media to Ukrainian news websites (many of them partisan or independent) rose to almost 2.5 million daily (Valenzuela et al. 2014). This signaled the decreasing ability of the authorities and government-friendly media owners to

control the flow of information or impose their dominant narrative through traditional media.

However, a significant number of interview participants reported consuming some mainstream media content related to the Euromaidan protests and commented on the use of social media by protesters to contest and shape the Euromaidan news frames appearing on traditional media channels.

Generally, participants reported getting their news from a collection of sources, which included some traditional media, some citizen media outlets that emerged during Euromaidan, as well as social media communities created by activists to curate, aggregate, and disseminate Euromaidan-related content. Here is an example of a typical media consumption pattern from an activist in Kharkiv:

Mostly it's online TV, like Hromadske, Spilne. There are actually a couple of websites that allow you to watch six [stations] at the time, so I've been watching that. Also, reading newspapers, [Ukrainska] Pravda, ZiK, a several other publications. I also follow, read Dozhd and Echo Moskvy, just to get the other perspective. And obviously Facebook and VKontakte. But you need to have like, nerves of steel, to read a lot of the stuff there.

Especially for mainstream Ukrainian media outlets, but also for international media, participants said they were concerned about them not only as a source of information about what was happening in Ukraine and in relation to the Euromaidan protests, but also as an indication of how media owners and editors wanted their outlets to represent these events, that is, how ready they were to present an “independent,

unbiased, inclusive” depiction of protest events, or even to “support the protesters rather than Yanukovych’s government” through their news frames.

In view of this, several participants said they tried to use social media to influence the mainstream media frames, including communicating directly with journalists of various media outlets on their social media accounts, reaching out to media outlets with opportunities for interviews about protest activity and the work their initiatives were doing within Euromaidan, producing press releases and making visual content such as photos and images available to the press online; staging and participating in social media flash mobs and “storms” to raise the profile of the protest in general and specific claims it addressed, to gain media visibility.

Of those activists who used social media to engage with traditional media outlets, a few of the “newer” protesters remarked on the scale of effort and skill necessary to successfully relay the ideas behind the protest and to influence the frames the media imposed on Euromaidan events, often indulging in what interviewees scoffed at as “sensationalist coverage.” One participant interviewed in Kyiv during the protest, who was a founding member of a Euromaidan-related logistics crowdsourcing initiative, confessed he had never had to deal with journalists directly before, but found it necessary to raise the profile of their project.

Also new for me, one of the challenges was this public nature of the activism and being open to dealing with the outside, with other people working in other places, press, interviews, this was completely new and uncomfortable. I recently gave an interview to a German TV and made a complete fool of myself.

Euromaidan participants abroad also came together to crowdsource a community of semi-professional and professional English-speaking pundits to represent Ukrainians and the Euromaidan cause and offer succinct comments to US-based and other foreign media. A participant interviewed in DC said their larger protest network included a media relations wing:

I was not part of that group, but there's a big media and public relations part of it, people were giving interviews to local media, going on places like Voice of America, CNN, things like that, spreading the message.

As evident from the participant responses, social media platforms were used widely in the protest networks to compensate for lack of accurate media coverage, as well as to establish rapport and connections with reporters in a bid to influence their framing of the protest events.

### 6.1.3 Affordances of ICTs for Shaping Protest Frames and Narratives

Circling back to Christensen's conceptualization of social media as disrupting the media agenda and framing monopoly of political elites, recent Euromaidan research using large-scale analysis of social network data and mainstream media content during the protest found some cross-directional information flows of frames, narratives, and viral memes between the media coverage of protest events and their discussion on Twitter (Karamshuk et al. 2015). While some of the persistent politically charged "buzzwords" emerged within mainstream media discourse and were later picked up by Twitter users, pointing to possible evidence of propaganda and information manipulation, in other cases social media denizens were able to

create their own frames and viral terms tied to key moments in the protest and push them out to the mainstream media agenda.

Though Facebook, Twitter, and other networks allow protesters to organize and contest event and news frames, Milan (2015) argues that the downside of social media in the context of protest action is their tendency to listen to and echo the voices of like-minded people, discouraging critical engagement or dissent. While several respondents mentioned talking with people they knew in their social network circles who did not support the protests and trying to convince them and give them the facts, only one respondent said she systematically discussed these issues with people on social networks and made systematic efforts to raise these people's awareness of the political, social, human rights contexts in Ukraine and to try to provide a convincing narrative about "the reasons for the protests and the facts about the situation in Ukraine."

Throughout the interviews with protest participants, three main protest-related frames emerged, often supplemented by personal stories or community narratives: that of the *self-organized or grassroots* nature of the protest; that of the shift from a *single-issue protest* to a *multiple-issue* one with a broad spectrum of claims; and that of the *protest that the internet made possible*. Some of these frames that participants said were perpetuated on social media, though dominant in a number of discussions, were also contested by some of the interviewees, who recognized their existence but argued they weren't entirely reflective of their perception and experience as Euromaidan participants. Most of the differences in framing lay along the lines of disparity between "old" and "new" protesters, and between people who had been

physically located at the epicenter of the protest and those who had participated elsewhere.

When interview participants talked about the *self-organized or grassroots protest* frame of social media protest activity, they usually referred to social media discussions and posts containing terms such as “citizen,” “decentralized,” “from the ground up,” “self-organized,” “public,” “open-source,” “non-political,” and “do-it-yourself.” In terms of discourses within this frame, the absence of “political party leadership,” no affiliation “with any specific political party,” “horizontal organizing structures,” and “ad-hoc” strategic and tactical decisions made by “loose communities of protesters” emerged as the main discursive markers of a self-organized protest phenomenon. These discursive markers triangulate with Karamshuk et al.’s finding in their social media data analysis of Euromaidan framed as a ‘leaderless protest’ (2015). With regard to the specific affordances of social media platforms which helped perpetuate this frame, participants talked about the “public nature of social media,” the “networked” nature of relationships on Facebook and Twitter, the power to “bypass mainstream media and mainstream politics,” the “ubiquitous nature” of digital devices and the pre-existing “habit of using the Internet to organize our own lives.”

The *self-organized/grassroots protest* frame was the least contested one throughout the interviews: multiple participants, including “old” and “new” activists, offered their own stories of self-organization or observations of such self-organization occurring both online and offline. The more experienced protest participants leaned towards a greater role of pre-existing civil society networks and protest experience in

affording Euromaidan its grassroots nature, while the ‘novices’ mostly believed that overall enthusiasm, a desire to “join the action,” coupled with the viral potential of digital social media and personal strong-ties and weak-ties connections on social networks were key for the genuinely grassroots mobilization, organizing, planning and action happening around Euromaidan.

When interview participants talked about the framing of Euromaidan as shifting from a *single-issue protest* to a *multiple-issue* one they discussed social media protest activity using terms such as “revolution of dignity,” “fed up,” “disillusionment,” fighting against “corrupt authorities,” “not just pro-European,” “human rights,” “justice,” and “reforms.” Discourses mentioned within this frame were suggestive of a broad spectrum of claims and included, along with the initial “EU-directed movement,” discussions of human rights and dignity as “lacking” in the country, the need to reform the law enforcement and judiciary “co-opted by the authorities,” “economic reforms,” as well as broader comments on the “equality” of claims brought by various participants to the protest, and the overall role of “civil society” in making decisions about the country’s “future development and reforms.” Social media were said to provide opportunities for these “multiple maidans,” per Wilson (2015), within one protest movement, through allowing for “a plurality of voices,” affording “anyone a platform to speak their mind,” “connecting people across political divides,” and creating “multiple self-contained, but connected communities” whose protest claims and goals could overlap productively to achieve “greater synergy.”

Participants from all groups mainly supported the frame of a *single-issue protest* shifting to a *multiple-issue* one, but offered varying and sometimes competing narratives of how and when the shift had occurred. While some cited the first cases of violence on the protest grounds and their amplification by social media as the turning point in the programmatic development of the protest, others said the shift came later, as the protest gained a more solid foundation through the crystallization of key protest communities and physical, information and communication infrastructure. Still others credited the lack of coherent agenda, clear leadership and defined political aims after Euromaidan “outgrew” its initial grievance of the EU association agreement failure with enabling the “multi-faceted,” all-encompassing nature of the protest movement and affording it the opportunity to be “about many things at once.”

When framing Euromaidan as the *protest that the Internet made possible*, participants discussed the prominent role of ICTs in general and social media in particular using terms such as “real-time information,” “borderless communication,” “instant access,” “going viral,” “hashtag activism,” “Facebook mobilization,” “live-tweeted protest,” “live streamed protest,” “digital citizen” journalism, and “constantly connected.” The discourses revolving around Internet enabling expressions of dissent around Euromaidan included mentions of “higher Internet penetration” in Ukraine, the “ubiquitousness” and “user-generated” nature of social media, the pre-existing “transborder” and “transcultural” connections between Ukrainians in the country and abroad that afforded “a broader reach” to protest claims, and the availability of free and open digital tools for “mobilization, building civic structures, disseminating messages” and “creating alternative spaces for debate.” Participants who advocated

this frame drew on differences with earlier protests in Ukraine and argued that it was digital technology, Internet and social media that made Euromaidan “grow so quickly and find such overwhelming support” among Ukrainians and even beyond Ukraine, diminishing the costs of joining the protest activity and providing “constant and convincing evidence that the protesters were in the right.”

“New” protesters and those respondents who were engaging with Euromaidan protest activity at a distance were most enthusiastic about the *protest that the Internet made possible* frame, citing many of the factors described above in their reasoning. At the same time, more experienced activists and participants who spent more time at the epicenter of the protest held a more skeptical view of this frame for their protest experience. They said that, among other things, “existing civil society networks” and the general level of “the citizens’ disillusionment with the political elites” were also equally mobilizing factors, and that in terms of organization and building protest communities and structures, personal connections and face-to-face communication had also served a purpose. Some of the criticism was directed at activities on Facebook that “didn’t necessarily help those on the ground” (Kulyk in his 2015 participant observation account notes that “all too often,” the Facebook activity “served as an ersatz” of the action in the protest camp). Seasoned protesters also found fault with those who, instead of doing anything useful for the protest cause, whether online or offline, criticized various protest activities or decisions, disseminated sensational “facts” and gloomy predictions, and otherwise contributed to general anxiety. These “armchair analysts” and their behavior were one of the less

helpful arguments in the discourse about the *protest that the Internet made possible* frame.

Lyubashenko (in Valenzuela et al. 2014) posits that while social media was not in itself a cause of Euromaidan, it afforded the protest the potential to achieve scale and intensity. Despite the critiques of the latter of the three protest frames that emerged in the interviews, there was a general consensus that the Internet and social media did contribute to a sense of what Gerbaudo (2016) calls “digital enthusiasm”: a significant enough number of activists who did use social media to organize, coordinate and otherwise mediate protest action produced a “hopeful narrative” that less experienced participants and protest observers were receptive to, which generated a process of “emotional contagion,” or, in this case, “framing and narrative contagion” that enabled mass protest participation. While such moments of enthusiasm are rare and ephemeral, they are nonetheless important in the overall momentum of political and social change that affordances of ICTs help enable.

### 6.2 Building Protest Communities and Networks

Confirming some of the findings already relayed in previous subsections, existing research in the socio-technical field has found that the Internet and social media reduce barriers for creating social cohesion, organizing protest movements, and allow individuals to participate in civic and protest activity at a reduced cost and without necessarily relying on physical co-presence. However, these same affordances provided by ICTs also threaten traditional social movement organizations because the barriers for competitors are also reduced (Earl and Kimport 2011). This raises the issue of the alternative forms of protest movement organization, as well as their basis

and structural rigidity, and whether the latter is necessary for the protest to work or succeed.

Protest and mobilization scholars have noted that historically successful mobilization in mass protests has depended not so much on the sheer number of ties between protesters, but on the interplay between social ties created by insurgent organizations and preexisting social networks, both within protest movements and beyond their context (Gould 1991). This section examines the affordances of ICTs and social media in particular for protest movements for leveraging these ties and networks in their everyday organizing, to build trust and social capital in protest communities, and to empower individuals to be significant agents of change and dissent within their networks alongside more traditional social movement organizations. Discovering how the experiences of Euromaidan protest participants triangulate with existing research in the field might offer new opportunities for how we think about communication, agency and social capital in the context of digitally augmented protest movements and events.

Wilson (2015) contends that the Euromaidan protests revealed that Ukrainian civil society overall was stronger and more developed in 2014 than in 2004, and that citizens and citizen groups were more proactive, modern and technically literate than the political elites. Civil society actors, Wilson writes, “used technology, which the political class did not” (p. 106) to organize, build, and maintain communities, create and disseminate claims, crowdsource human resources and funds as well as build trust within the protest movement and with external networks. While interview participants for this research study provided some evidence to this effect, various

groups and individuals ascribed varying degrees of importance to the Internet and social media in how these afforded them opportunities to organize, build trust, and leverage networks and communities. Participants also discussed ICT's impact on the role of existing or insurgent civic organizations versus the role of individuals in the protest movement.

#### 6.2.1 Affordances of ICTs for Organizing

In a meta-review of research exploring the relationship between social media and citizen engagement, Skoric et al. (2015) show that a significant number of studies, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, find that social media use generally has a positive relationship with engagement, helping citizens make use of digitally augmented networks, interpersonal ties, and communities for civic engagement, political participation and building social capital. Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012) suggest social media platforms allow individuals and organizations to “better manage their social networks and connect with new individuals” beyond the traditional reach of organizational ties. Investigating the use of social media in protest events more specifically, Valenzuela (2013) finds that Facebook often serves as a sort of “information hub,” where users can turn to receive ‘mobilizing information’ and find greater opportunities for engagement by following particular individuals or joining public and closed groups.

##### *6.2.1.1 ICTs, Organizational, and Personal Culture*

Understanding whether the Internet and digital social media afford certain opportunities for action should take into account how these technologies fit into the organizational and cultural structure of protest movements. Even within Euromaidan,

there were certain disparities between how strongly various groups of activists relied on digital technology to organize and communicate, depending on their previous activism experience or lack thereof. Several more experienced interview participants indicated that social media had not been a significant part of their internal organizing toolkit in previous work, and that, while they regarded it as a great public-facing tool to promote protest messages and engage with observers and the mainstream media, they largely relied on personal or direct contact to run their organizations or groups. Some also pointed out that their work during Euromaidan started with cooperating with other known activists, so there was no immediate need for digital mediation. In the words of one “old” activist,

There were quite a few people on Maidan at the start whom I knew, and there was also a lot of chaos there. Since I’m a person who has been trained to organize and manage processes, I just saw that I could help this environment, which contained so many of my friends, to become more orderly. But they were all right there [next to me].

At the same time, as the protest grew in size and drew in more participants, experienced civic organizers said they used a combination of tools to manage volunteers, delegate tasks, and plan their activity. An interviewee in Kyiv who helped coordinate housing, transport, and other logistics for the protest said ordering information and making sense of the logistics issues at scale were greatly aided by social media platforms.

At the time, I was compiling and ordering a database of volunteers and finding housing for people from out of town. This was at the point when word got out,

and many people wanted to come in from the regions, at the same time many Kyivites wanted to offer their homes to them—but no one was coordinating it. So we set up a public [Facebook] page to connect these people and posted new arrivals info. That time was crazy in terms of the tempo of the work, barely two hours of sleep each night, and we spent a lot of time organizing the process, sorting the information available, but creating this public hub took some of the stress off.

For internal organizing and coordination, both “old” and “new” participants reported using a mix of offline and online communications and contacts, choosing what worked best in each case and what helped them work more efficiently. Here is a description of the typical organizational communication setup in one Euromaidan community from a “new” activist in Kharkiv:

The coordinators have in-person meetings for strategy and planning, and the broader circle of volunteers and activists receives a daily briefing either via email or through personal communication with main news, what happened or was important that day, what the plans for the immediate future are, what needs to get done. We use phones as well for calls and text messages, but it is important to meet people in person as well, especially for the first time.

Another participant who had previous protest organizing experience from the 2004 events and other smaller protests said the scale of Euromaidan as a movement was “unprecedented” for anyone in Ukraine, so organizing efforts had to be scaled up as well, and the Internet’s “connective tissue” was helpful in establishing links between

disparate protest groups and bringing some order to the enthusiastic individuals who joined the action without a clear idea of what to do.

It's one thing to organize a sit-in or coordinate a march. But when you have all of these and more happening simultaneously, and thousands of people are joining, there has to be some sort of canvas that you can pin these things to, to find connections so the cumulative effect can be more productive. Just knowing that there was a way to find out about what other people were doing by looking at their pages and connecting [with them]. I've never worked with or coordinated a million people before, and having this extra layer of connections helps.

Interview participants who were engaging with the Euromaidan protest over geographical distance were adamant that social networks were an important augmentation of their personal networks to create productive relationships with protesters on the ground in Ukraine. A financial analyst in DC described the evolution of her involvement in the fundraising efforts that were part of the protest activity.

At first, the engagement to people in Kyiv was mostly through financial support. I sent money to several of the people who are there but also, as this thing evolved, a couple of the activists here, in DC and New York, we formed this closed group on Facebook and connected with a couple of people in Kyiv who were helping us to buy supplies and things like that. This way we could always ask what they needed, and they could let us know if something urgent came up.

### *6.2.1.2 Digital Communication as Organization*

Because of the ubiquity of social media and Internet access in Ukraine, for many Euromaidan participants who considered digital communication part of their daily life the form of communication (in this case enabled by ICTs) was closely connected with the form of organization (Tufekci 2014). Especially for those protest participants who were experiencing protest organization and activity for the first time, this was the only way they knew how to communicate, coordinate and make things work: to them, it was impractical (or often impossible) to view the digital platforms in separation from the movement they existed within.

Especially those interview respondents who were used to solving management, organization or logistics problems with the help of digital technology, discussed their organizing efforts within Euromaidan through the prism of ICTs. One respondent, a programmer in Kyiv, whom I interviewed in the midst of the protest in December 2013, described his initial reaction to the self-organization efforts that, while “very enthusiastic,” were also “totally chaotic”:

Optimization sucks, there are lots of examples of people doing the same thing twice or in parallel, and not just online or in the media—offline in Maidan itself as well. In terms of logistics, resource centers, there are several hubs that barely interact, don’t share resources effectively. Why? I think, just lack of time and attention, so of course I want to try to fix it. How can we bring order to this by automating things, optimizing things, letting people see the information at their fingertips to make better decisions?

An Odesa interviewee who worked in management said organizing the local protest was akin to “playing an online game” in that “you had to know what resources you

had and what you didn't, and who to ask to get what you needed to win—and if you have a constantly updated dashboard showing how you're doing, that's a great motivator.” In Kyiv, a respondent explained his reliance on digital tools to coordinate local volunteers and needs by saying:

We thought it would be good to coordinate these resources. And since I'm an IT guy, the idea of using the internet for this was kind of self-evident.

A Kharkiv respondent who participated in a local community that provided citizen media coverage of the protests, including online, said many of the volunteers who contributed content initially had a low level of digital media creation knowledge, which caused “lots of chaos and non-effectiveness,” but noted the more experienced citizen journalists were able to work with an IT developer to “perfect the instructions and technical tools for volunteers” to make the workflow more intuitive.

Describing the means of internal organization and communication of their Euromaidan-born collective that crowdsourced and monitored protest needs and resources using an online interactive map, a marketing manager in Kyiv said their team relied on a number of digital tools, including social media, chat apps and online document and storage services to get their work organized and work around the clock.

Google docs, group chat, several documents with instructions and manuals, where we describe the basic algorithm, and where everything is stored.

Several extra information resources: a history of our communications with coordinators in various places related to Maidan, we keep a log of that, whom we called and when and what happened, and similar things for transport and

such. That's it. Plus we have a Facebook inbox, and email inbox and they're comfortable to work with.

The respondent noted that such selection of tools was not only due to the fact that the project was built around an online map, but also because most of the team members were joining in to work from wherever they happened to be at the moment, so they needed ubiquitous access to organizational documents, contact databases and means of communications with other volunteers and coordinators, scattered around the city and the country.

#### *6.2.1.3 Digital Shortcuts*

In describing new hybrid forms of social action, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) demonstrate that digitally mediated connective action formations are frequently larger and scale up more quickly, and are more flexible in terms of political targets and bridging social issues. This certainly stands true for the Euromaidan protest, which was able to grow beyond the initial city square into a sprawling network of locations that was at times discordant in terms of political agendas, but performed well in terms of tactical diffusion and replicating protest repertoires. One of the main advantages of using or adapting pre-existing digital platforms, such as social networks, to build new kinds of activist or protest communities is that they allow citizens to create new pathways—shortcuts of a sort—between existing nodes in the network using digital means where previously there were none, optimizing resources, time and relationships to achieve protest organizing goals and connect existing and potential participants in new ways.

Quite a few of the protesters interviewed implied in their narratives and examples of organizing activity during the protest that they used ICTs to create these

*shortcuts* in the fabric of organizing and managing protest-related work. Several referred to the necessity of training new volunteers who joined a community or an initiative, with one interviewee in Kyiv mentioning they used Skype chats with local and regional volunteer coordinators to speed up the transfer of skills for lack of time and human resources to do hands-on training:

The first days in Maidan, people learned very quickly, each day was so intense it seemed like ten days. So now, a month in, we have people working on logistics who are third wave: and our regional coordinators, they were trained over chat and calls by people whom I had trained previously.

Another activist in Kyiv, who was in charge of the online crowdsourcing map created to aid the logistical management of Euromaidan resources, also said creating a digital version of their training manual and making it available to new volunteers was a key time-saving feat:

One of the main issues was a lack of hands. This was resolved by calling for help among friends, and recruiting new friends and acquaintances and using a few new tech tools. One of our activists came up with the idea of holding webinars to train our incoming new volunteers to get them trained and acclimated faster. By that point we were so tired of teaching each new volunteer the algorithm of work. But the webinar we recorded once and then gave the link to the video to all new volunteers, and it was helpful at least in part and saved us the hassle.

The crowdmap project's story of decentralized workflow with distributed contributors in different locations was similar to the experience of another interviewee in Kharkiv,

who had spent the Euromaidan period as part of a moderator team for one of the largest protest-related Facebook communities. The moderator team for the group was scattered around Ukraine, and two of the moderators were located abroad in a different time zone, which aided in around-the-clock volunteer availability. The participant shared some of the details of the community's digitally mediated processes for making decisions and tracking the workflow.

There wasn't really a system for making decisions: at first the several founders, they said 'let's do it this way,' and if these were all logical suggestions, no one opposed them, but we offered opinions. We also had a Google Doc called Memo to Moderators where we compiled how we work and tracked what we were doing, and if we saw something was going wrong, one of us, whoever saw it, suggested some means of optimization, updated the doc and made everyone aware and explained it to everyone. Other things were resolved in the group chat by the people on the shift. So somehow we managed to get this done without a single physical general meeting or getting everyone together, everything was resolved in process.

In a slightly different context from the more dispersed groups of activists who benefited from ICTs affording them the ability to work on a common Internet-based project without being physically co-present, a respondent in Kharkiv who worked as a volunteer psychologist offering counseling to participants in the local protest camp said she and her colleagues were rarely in the same place together simply because they all had day jobs and could only take shifts to volunteer. The psychologist said

they used Facebook chat to discuss difficult cases or current events and protest news, and used a Google Docs spreadsheet to track their work.

Time was our main common resource, so we had a timetable online with slots to take shifts and people could just add themselves there and check where and when help was needed.

Discussing the work of a decentralized team of Ukrainian Euromaidan participants based in Washington, DC, and New York City who collaborated on fundraising and media outreach, one participant, a former operations manager at a software company who now co-runs the nonprofit the community has become, said he and his fellow protest participants relied on connections through email and social networks, as well as digital project management tools such as Basecamp to optimize their organizing efforts and to function as a coherent team:

In terms of my profession, the main skills are getting people together to do a new thing. This is exactly what we have done here. Organizational work, communication, motivation, coming up with processes, making things work in a team, logistics—the Internet played a part in each. We all did part of the hands-on work, but we needed the structure under it that these tools provided to keep in touch and work as a team.

#### *6.2.1.4 Self-Organization and Horizontality*

The self-organized or grassroots protest frame and the role of ICTs in facilitating it that emerged out of the interview participants' discussion of their Euromaidan experiences was also reflected in participants' frequent mentions of the organizing and group structures underlying the protest movement. More experienced activists admitted that having digital media platforms allowed for less co-presence and more

decentralization to make the protest activity functional, but put more emphasis on having “some organizational structure” and “clear lines of responsibilities” in order to be able to exert some authority as a cohesive movement. Newer entrants into the protest field among interviewees for the most part believed that formal organizational structures were not necessary to achieve protest-related goals, and that dividing and managing tasks and responsibilities could be achieved through as little hierarchy as possible and through having a “flat,” “horizontal,” and “leaderless” structure, given that the Internet and social media afforded them opportunities to “coordinate,” “document successes and mistakes,” to keep “a public breadcrumb trail of our work” to preserve accountability, and to “let our public-facing presence speak for itself.”

As early as December 2013, a little over a month into the Euromaidan protest activity, an interview participant in Kyiv who considered himself part of the “old guard” said:

There is very little hierarchy in all these communities that are working out there now. All the best protest activity now happens according to the principle I mentioned: if you want to get something done, do it yourself. The [group I work with] and all other communities work this way.

The two activists in Kyiv who helped establish and run a crowdsourced interactive map to help with protest logistics both said in interviews that the flexibility of the resource management and volunteer operations structure meant, among other things, that the project was able to adapt quickly to the changing needs of Euromaidan, going from “collecting camping gear, tea and phone chargers” at the start to “crowdsourcing medical equipment and bulletproof vests” when the protests turned violent.

A graduate student interviewed in Kharkiv who participated in a country-wide legal assistance initiative during Euromaidan, said the distributed, networked nature of their community underpinned by the digital communications that enabled it, as well as the desire of the protest community members to “keep everyone on an equal footing” was what made the protest tick more generally:

What I think is unique about this movement and the many groups in it, is that we manage to make decisions through discussion, negotiation and consensus, not leadership. It happens organically, there is some kind of synergy, and that’s an amazing achievement.

A graphic designer who was heavily involved with several projects during Euromaidan, creating printable posters, daily online news digests and signage for the protest camp in Kyiv, as well as spending time in the central square during some of the protests’ more tense moments, was ambivalent about the protest’s flat and ephemeral structure enabled by ICTs and said he believed the movement was experiencing “growing pains” towards the end of the protest activity, as its many members considered how it would develop.

...then as Maidan started growing, and things happened, something that was disappointing was a bit of this discord in the community, some separation within the movement, internal conflicts that became obvious when we got deeper into all of it, some inefficiency of the movement as a whole. A difficult question, to be sure: on the one hand Maidan, as a self-organized system was very effective, no leaders, at least from the point of view of logistics and grassroots initiatives, it worked very well. On the other hand, as a generator of

a unified civic position and as a political instrument, it arguably had a very doubtful effect.

These comments align with the ongoing cultural trend toward “horizontal, non-institutional movements” that Tufekci (2014) suggests predate the internet, as a precursor to new, participatory civic movements that thrive on networks and connective action and are less rigid in structure than classic social movement organizations. Such “horizontal” protest movements are enabled by the affordances for less formal organization provided by ICTs and, in concert with the citizen’s growing distrust of institutionalized authority, emerge as expressions of grievances and claims or statements of identity, but rarely make structural or policy demands.

#### *6.2.1.5 Online, Offline, or Both?*

Much of the later literature on the Arab Spring protests reveals a more complex picture than that of a “Facebook” or “Twitter revolution”: studies such as Tufekci and Wilson’s research on protest and social media in Egypt in 2012 find an enmeshed protest reality that mixes both digital and physical elements. Interviews with Euromaidan participants revealed a similar set of perceptions about the nature of the Ukrainian protest. Respondents’ stories, both those of personal engagement and those of working in communities or groups, usually constituted a densely interwoven fabric of multiple online and offline spaces and connections between them, where social media, websites, email and cellphones were superimposed on existing social ties between friends and families, professional relationships, carpools, accidental meetings, and physical protest locations.

While the recipes of this mixture of online and offline spaces, connections, activities, and opportunities differed for each participant depending on their age,

technology use habits, location and their role in the protest movement, a common thread was that the Internet and social media were more often than not combined with offline elements to tweak each particular recipe to work better in a protest context: to fix an issue, to fill in a missing link, to add an element to a process to optimize it—in other words, to augment overall protest activity or a small part of the machine by creating a *shortcut* between two “places” in the imaginary protest “mechanism” that were either not connected, were connected inefficiently, or had become disconnected due to some combination of factors, making the whole “machine” stutter and slow down. So it wasn’t just a matter of using the Internet and social media on their own, for their own sake, but rather combining them with existing offline networks, resources and opportunity structures to achieve a greater effect.

An example of such enmeshed online/offline protest activity is the crowdsourced online interactive map put together by activists in Kyiv, two of whom were among the interviewees. Online support for protest initiatives during Euromaidan in Ukraine formed spontaneously around particular needs, and in some cases just a few individuals were able to take projects off the ground due to the affordances of existing free, open-source platforms that enable volunteer signup, project management and resource mobilization online. One of the participants said they were inspired to create the map when they saw that, while “there were lots of people on social media willing to help the [Euromaidan] protesters” in Kyiv and elsewhere, the management and distribution of physical resources (funds, transportation, lodging, medications) was “chaotic and inefficient.” The interviewee and his fellow activists thought the offline protest resource management efforts could

benefit from an internet-based coordination tool, but admitted that it was the combination of online and offline efforts that made it work:

...without offline work, calls, trips, the map wouldn't have worked. It wouldn't work just on the Internet. And the main thing that helped it happen were volunteers who worked on specific things, and connections to people on the ground, who often didn't have internet connection, and when we sent them texts, they would ask us to catch them up on what was happening in the rest of the city.

A programmer in Kharkiv who volunteered in a team that did citizen media outreach and coverage of the protests and cooperated with people in other Ukrainian cities as well, said that to achieve synergy, it was important to have a community of people whose skills and efforts complemented each other, cutting across the “physical/digital” divide:

...someone did logistics, someone did design and printing of posters and stickers, someone did media outreach and social media, someone did internal coordination—it all worked because we each picked up the different bits we could do, online, offline, wherever—and worked on them.

There were also protest-related initiatives that started offline, then flowed online or remained floating somewhere in the enmeshed space. The data journalist interviewed in Kyiv recalled the case of IT Tent, a physical tent originally set up to offer free Internet access, phone charges and computer equipment to protesters, where people could donate used devices, USB sticks and power cords. When “a critical mass of tech-minded individuals” accumulated around the Tent, it slowly evolved into a space

where IT developers and programmers met and consulted with professional activists on a number of ICT-enabled civic projects, taking the collaborative coding and design online (to sites like Github), but also staging hackathons to work on “quick and dirty digital solutions” to protest-related logistics and communications problems.

### 6.2.2 Affordances of ICTs for Building Social Capital

A recurring theme in the interviews with Euromaidan participants was the impact of ICT and social media use on relationships, trust, and expectations within the protest community, both in smaller groups and the movement as a whole. Social movement and protest scholars collectively refer to these as *social capital* to signify “the resources embedded in one’s social networks that can be accessed for collective action” (Lin 2008). Social capital manifests in both structural and psychological dimensions, and is “strongest in a dense network of reciprocal social relations” that people can draw on to achieve their interests (Putnam 2001). The psychological dimension motivates community participation, reinforcing trust and reciprocity (Shah and Gil de Zúñiga 2008). But accumulating social capital also depends on structural external forces that determine the extent of opportunities individuals or groups have for creating networks and drawing on the resources they make available (Skoric et al. 2014).

Theorists distinguish between two forms of social capital: bonding or strong ties, and bridging or weak ties (Granovetter 1973; Putnam 2001). Bonding social capital relies on networks of strong, informal social ties that individuals maintain through frequent interactions, providing emotional and social support, access to scarce and limited resources, and promoting reciprocity (Skoric et al. 2014). Bridging

social capital networks more diverse types of individuals although these ties are relatively weak as they usually involve loose contact (Granovetter 1973), but also encourage those they connect to be more open-minded and view themselves as part of a broader group in a particular society.

Since it is generally expected to foster civic participation, researchers have studied the affordances of social media platforms for developing and maintaining of bridging and bonding social capital. Social networking sites were found to be useful for “generating and affirming interpersonal interaction, broadening social ties, and providing information about how to become involved” (Valenzuela et. al. 2009), as well as contributing to “conditions necessary for community engagement” that, in turn, also sustain social capital (Shah and Gil de Zúñiga, 2008). Researchers also found that social media enable users to intensify their interactions with online and offline contacts and to expand their social networks (Hampton and Wellman 2003; Sessions 2010), and therefore, their social capital.

In the context of their engagement in the Euromaidan protest, interview participants overwhelmingly talked about relying on social media to expand their networks, engage in community or group efforts as part of their protest activity, with many saying social network use afforded them a greater intensity of both online and offline interactions with other protest participants and observers. An experienced activist in Kyiv who managed human resources and logistics for one of the broader Euromaidan protest communities said that, while strong ties and pre-existing civic networks had enabled initial organizing, new connections on social media brought a

larger circle of volunteers and new protest participants into the fold and allowed for knowledge sharing and community growth.

I am amazed at how quickly some of the people who have never done civic activism are volunteering, connecting and learning. And we're all so different. If we met under different circumstances, we'd be unlikely to be such fast friends, because our views are very different. But in working together on this we were able to find common ground and solidarity.

A participant interviewed in DC, who participated in Euromaidan action, among other things, by working on financial investigations into corrupt Ukrainian officials, said that weak ties were very important in enabling the transborder work of her team, underscoring the importance of bridging social capital in loosely-connected protest communities.

There only so much of your own personal network that you have, and a lot of the times you find yourself having to seek people out and reach out to them online. For example, during one of our investigations, I had to do a check in Belgium, so I wrote in the Facebook group called "Ukrainians Abroad for EuroMaidan", and several people from Belgium replied and helped me to look for some records. The same was in Cyprus: we were looking for some companies in Cyprus, and we got people who could look through phone books locally to help us out.

Some interviewees underscored the relative importance of strong ties on social media, especially when they were used in the initial stages of the protest as a filtering mechanism to build communities from the ground. An activist who was part of the

Kyiv-based crowdmapping logistics initiative said they initially searched for moderators among close friends and acquaintances on social media by “checking their recent posts,” to make sure they were recruiting among those sympathetic to the protest cause:

We posted recruit ads for volunteers on Facebook, but made them friends-only or friends of friends, to filter it at least a little, so most people came from these networks. Since we didn’t know which of our friends were sympathetic towards the protest, we didn’t want to harass everyone.

In Odesa, a protest participant who helped manage a Facebook page that aggregated local protest news, information and resources, said her small group also found it useful to connect with other willing volunteers on social media as it was fairly easy to see how people’s online activity and posts reflected on their participation and willingness to help.

The people who were around during the protest, if they didn’t show up and weren’t ready to work, if there wasn’t this emotional connection, nothing would have happened. So it was very important to assess people and figure out what you could expect this person to do. Friendships and existing networks helped a lot, but other people simply showed up and took up work.

Some of the more popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, tend to tap into pre-existing offline networks of social ties and sometimes supplement this with a real-name policy, which has been shown to promote reciprocity, greater trust and commitment (Kavanaugh et al., 2005), especially when compared to more anonymous or pseudonymous platforms, such as micro-blogs, or media-sharing web

sites. A graduate student in Kharkiv said he replied heavily on the opinions and reports of his pre-Euromaidan Facebook connections, whom he had already held in high regard, in making a decision to engage with the protest more fully:

For me what other people I trusted said in their [Facebook] posts was important. They weren't the ones who changed my mind, but their words resonated and pushed me to act.

One participant in Kyiv who volunteered with a group that aggregated transport and fuel supplies and used Facebook to report on the funds received and spent, said the existing networked connections who already knew each other or whose identities were easily verifiable were key to establishing trust while managing online donations in a transparent way.

Money wasn't our thing generally, mostly in-kind donations, but we did get some funds and we then did a bit of our own fundraising through friends and networks and bought easy things like a generator when we knew there was a place that needed one. We also used some of the funds to pay for firewood transport and such. Since most of our moderators are friends or people we know, the issue of trust doesn't come up.

Trust and civic engagement, according to Putnam (2001), are mutually reinforcing as people who trust their fellow citizens volunteer and participate more often in community and political activities. Social media, in the case of Euromaidan, sometimes afforded social trust, bolstering protesters' willingness to ascribe good intentions to other participants and creating opportunities for bridging social capital in

the protest networks. Such was the case of a legal assistance initiative, which started work in Kyiv, but whose reach broadened to include other regions later in the protest.

An interviewee who worked with the initiative recalls that they initially established their willingness to engage with different networks after the first cases of police brutality in Kyiv by putting up Facebook posts to solicit information and contacts from both protesters who needed legal help and volunteer lawyers who could assist in legal action. As its networks developed, the legal initiative played the role of an information hub, as it shared contacts of other protest groups, provided hotline numbers, and engaged with regional coordinators through its Facebook bridging ties. The interviewee posited that their digitally enabled openness and willingness to engage was key:

Our very public activity and always being available online, within a click of a button, our public reports on Facebook, I think it created a certain ambience, a certain environment of trust—people knew we were there for them, they relied on us, it gave them a sense of security.

Ellison et al. (2011) found that Facebook can be particularly useful in facilitating the conversion of casual connections into weak ties that can be considered bridging social capital that could be useful in protest networks. Over two thirds of respondents said they thought internet tools, especially social networks, allowed for more effective recruitment of specific people with specific skills for Euromaidan needs, as well as a certain level of serendipity, making it easier to find professionals and verify their credentials through networked connections. Those respondents who were engaged in fundraising efforts also suggested it was easier to establish whom to trust with the

money based on a combination of personal connections and social media activity of particular fundraisers or initiatives handling the funds. One respondent in DC who helped raise funds for field medical operations in Kyiv, recalled:

One group in Kyiv raised money for medical equipment for field hospitals, but also posted regular reports of funds spent and photos from the hospitals, so I knew where my money went.

### 6.2.3 Affordances of ICTs for Networked Protest Communities

Networked social movements, replicating the underlying nature of Internet communications, can, of course, be networked both offline and online, connecting both in useful ways and creating new spaces for discourses of dissent, exchange of opinions, and protest action in the fabric of interaction among individuals, places, and Internet networks. In these networks, spontaneous coordination (Opp 1993) can take place, affording discontented citizens the opportunities to arrange acts of protest with minimal effort and few incentives for participation. Online social networks may also afford a greater measure of interpersonal influence that Lim (2008) suggests is key to political mobilization and engagement as social networks provide more transparency and substance in terms of the content of relationships, common interests in politics or shared political and civic identities.

In their interviews, several participants referred to what they termed “networked communities” which they believed enabled greater levels of self-organization and were underpinned by the affordances of social media and other ICTs for leveraging existing and building new networks easily. One respondent in Kyiv described their “networked community” of IT-savvy volunteers in the following way:

I think it's simple, two things: we have a common network through which they [volunteers] were all found, and then the website as a platform, a technical platform that people work on together, that they use to work on something. It's not just the public interface, it's also the group chat for the team, all our social media pages, all that context and field of work.

Some scholars argue that the networked protest communities afforded by ICTs can be less stable and long-lasting than traditional protest movements (Kavada 2010), however they can still help mobilize resources and people and manage information more efficiently, and can act as "first responders" during the critical moments in a protest. A protester in Kharkiv who contributed to an initiative that provided online coverage of main protest events on social media and video live streams said their networked community proved to be illuminating in how productive people could be with very scarce resources when they came together and were inspired by each other:

People pleasantly surprised me. I always knew there were tons of great people around, but that there were so many, so close and it was so easy to get things done with them - it was a revelation. The ease of people coming, joining, is one of the biggest discoveries for me.

Another protester in Kyiv, although she was new to the civic action scene, said she believed the participants linked by networked communities created during Euromaidan would continue to exist as a community and engage in civic activity, exactly because there were no formal structures obligating them to do things "a certain way":

I think people who simply come together and do something, with no formal structures, they will keep doing things together, they've grown friendships, got used to working together, they're staying connected on [social] networks, so I think they will want to do more together.

Though some researchers suggest that due to their mainly loose ties and flexible structure, such networked “insurgent” protest communities tend to dissolve when the crisis passes (Castells 2013), their emergence may, in the end, enable a new kind the new kind of ephemeral, but effective participatory dissent that some scholars believe to be the next phase in the evolution of protest movements (Tufekci 2014; Earl and Kimport 2011).

#### 6.2.4 Affordances of ICTs for Networked Individuals

The emergence of Internet-based social media that allow for communication and information sharing that is fast, cheap and decentralized has made it possible for individuals to become prominent figures in kinds of protest movement activity that has been traditionally carried out by organizations (Micheletti et al. 2004).

In their discussion of the emerging social movement phenomenon of connective action enabled by ICTs, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) note that social media enable connective action in two possible ways. First, it makes possible organizationally enabled networks that rely on loose coordination around civic or political issues and personal action frames generated by social movement and protest organizations, but allow individuals greater agency within digitally mediated organizational structures. Second, connective action (dubbed as “crowd-organized/technology-enabled”) also comes from self-organizing networks, which are

“individuals with little or no organizational coordination of action and collective action is entirely about personal action frames” (Bennett and Segerberg 2012). For these individuals, engaged in personal expression and possessing a strong voice, social media plays an integrative organizational role and affords for the most visible activity of the network. Such self-organized actors activate their own followers and social networks, without relying on organizations.

Dahlgren refers to such highly visible individuals as “online public intellectuals” and asserts that digital media allows them to amplify their messages and play a significant role in alternative civic and political spaces (Dahlgren 2013). This in turn, affords these influential users the ability to effectively activate their social networks to engage in connective action.

Tufekci (2013) conceptualizes the role these individuals play in networked protest action and social movements as “microcelebrity networked activism.” She describes these microcelebrity activists as “politically motivated noninstitutional actors who use affordances of social media to engage in the presentation of their political and personal selves to garner public attention to their cause”, and usually use a combination of testimonial narratives, digital advocacy, and citizen journalism to do so. In some of the movements with transborder concerns, the microcelebrities might serve as bridging agents, using different languages on social media (especially English) to draw global attention (Tufekci 2013), though such dispersed messaging might in turn dilute their effect on internal protest or movement networks.

Interview participants who were “new” to protests or had less experience in traditional activism prior to Euromaidan protest mentioned individual protest activity

and opportunities afforded by the Internet and social media more often. However, despite their general inclination to rely on movement organizations and community foundations, “older” activists also noted the role of prominent “opinion leaders” in the emergence of Euromaidan as a more coherent movement, citing examples such as journalist Mustafa Nayyem, whose Facebook post, though one of many calling to go on the street in November 2013, was remembered by many as a key message “driving participation.” Other examples included several anti-corruption and urban activists who had a significant following online, bloggers, and journalists. An interviewee in Odesa explained the importance of these “singular voices”:

I get that not everyone might want to join an organization or might be wary of membership. But these people, they do an important service as they raise the issues that are at the heart of the protest and allow others to engage with these issues less formally...[...] Their posts make people think, and if you have people’s attention, you can use it to ask for other kinds of help.

A journalist from an online outlet interviewed in Kyiv said that for her, having a space on social media apart from her professional work was helpful as it allowed her to engage with a diverse selection of different networks and gauge people’s opinions, while also offering her own “take on things.” She did note that since she already enjoyed more attention from Internet users than the average citizen, she felt more responsibility for checking her facts and making sure that what she posted was “constructive [for the protest movement], rather than destructive.”

Discussing their own or their protest peers’ individualized activity as connective action, participants said engaging with those “on the other side” and

debating the merits of Euromaidan and its mission was an important, but difficult part of their networked connective practices. Only a handful of participants said they had attempted to use social media conversations to reach out to those who opposed Euromaidan, and admitted they preferred to engage with other supporters or raise awareness among those who were indifferent or agnostic, as it was “more productive.”

Only one participant, a graduate student in DC, discussed at length her efforts to connect with disparate communities and individuals who were against the protest and its premises. Using Facebook and VKontakte, she engaged these individuals and tried to change their mind through providing “reasoned arguments” in favor of the Euromaidan movement.

I’d like to say the debates were constructive, but certainly not always, and conversations would regularly dissolve into shouting matches. Sometimes it felt like people were pre-programmed to spout vitriolic anti-Ukrainian or anti-Euromaidan sentiment, and on social media this can get very ugly and personal. [...] Obviously, they had a different set of opinion leaders than we did, and those networks would pick up their opinions, circulate them and tout them as valid.

Overall, participants felt that the social media-enabled networks that converged around Euromaidan allowed both groups and individuals equal access to productive collaboration and created a welcoming space, serving as evidence that a self-organized, less formal networked protest structure was not only possible, but could

lead to accumulation of social capital and more sustainable transformations in how people thought about collective protest activity. In the words of one Kharkiv activist,

To try and generalize it, I'd say it's some kind of maturity, adulthood, self-awareness, a desire and readiness to act, on their own, of some kind of internal motivation. The motives are different for everyone, [Euro]Maidan is this whole system of different groups and people with their own goals and programs, but this active position, readiness to act, self-organize, not follow someone, change the reality around you yourself—that's the main unifying thing.

### *6.3 Co-Presence and Witnessing*

When can one say that they are genuinely present and participating in a protest, given that our lives and bodies are increasingly mediated and entangled with digital media platforms? And what does being a witness to historic events mean, given that a moment of violence or of excitement within a protest can be experienced and seen and remembered by participants in so many different ways? This is further complicated by the fact that the witnesses can be present in the physical space or present in the digital space or quite likely in both at the same time as they film, post, react, and share information. This changes the notion of what it means to participate—to see, hear, and experience—not something that is performed either online or offline, but a subtle entanglement of what previously had been considered separate spheres. This section discusses how participants reflected in interviews on the role of ICTs, especially social media, image sharing platforms and streaming video tools, in how they conceive of the notion of co-presence and of being witnesses

to the events of the Euromaidan protests. These observations emerged as a prominent theme in the interviews, highlighting the importance of understanding how ICTs can afford protest participants these alternative forms of emotional, affective and symbolic connection as well as play a role in creating unity, cohesiveness and solidarity within a decentralized, loosely connected protest movement.

### 6.3.1 Affordances of ICTs for Augmented Co-Presence

Physical and mediated co-presence during the Euromaidan protest was augmented by the Internet and social media in different ways for interview participants, depending on their proximity to the center of the protest, their ICT use habits, and their civic activity experience. Across the board, however, respondents noted that ICTs afforded them new ways to think about the meaning of “being present” and “being together” within the protest movement, as well as made even part-time participation meaningful.

In their examination of the affordances of the Internet and digital media for activism, including social movement work and protest activity, a key point argued by Earl and Kimport is that ICTs afford activists a reduced need for physical co-presence to organize and mobilize participants (2011). But as modern lives and social interaction increasingly occur simultaneously in physical and digital realms, we must also consider whether digital media augment how protest participants conceive of co-presence generally, and how the concept of co-presence can be rearticulated given that it might not necessarily be tied to physical proximity or geographical co-location.

Poster (1997) suggests that the age of public sphere as face-to-face conversation requiring physical presence is over, and that holding on to a fiction of

“full human presence” as necessary for a democratic discourse obscures critical reflection and inhibits development of theories about the new, postmodern condition. The discourse of the new public spaces or spheres is mediated not only in more traditional ways, such as mainstream media, but also by people’s everyday thoughts, conversation and activities that may, under certain conditions (e.g., in critical moments of protest), bridge the private and public contexts, commingling the everyday and the extraordinary. Couldry et al. (2007) note that the mediated public sphere is shaped by public-related talk and media consumption that circulate discourse about public issues that might not otherwise come into people’s daily experience. Bruns (2008) offers an amended model of a mediated, networked public sphere offering up a variety of new spaces that augment and supplement the existing mediation by adding new modes and models of being co-present and engaging in civic and political activity. These new modes of interaction no longer require physical co-presence and emerge instead in networked private and public spaces, allowing citizens to engage in debates and to experience political and social action in both collective and personal ways. These new, networked modalities of togetherness allow citizens engaging in political action and dissent to negotiate their new, augmented civic identities that now exist both online and offline.

In his research on the evolution of the Occupy protest movement, Juris (2012) finds that ICTs enable both a “logic of aggregation,” which involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces, and a “logic of networking”—a cultural framework that helps give rise to practices of communication and coordination across diversity and difference on the part of

collective actors. Both of these logics have played out in the case of the Euromaidan protest. There, the Internet and social media first played an important role in helping a critical mass of physically co-present individuals to accumulate in strategic locations (the Ukrainian capital, other city centers). Second, ICTs enabled a networked “connective tissue” of participants in different locations, both near and far from the epicenter of protest, connected by loose ties that allowed for a variation in political identities along with productive organizing, coordination, information dissemination and framing of the protest, its messages, and claims.

Unsurprisingly, protest participants based abroad said they relied heavily on ICTs to learn about, understand, and sympathize with the experience of those protesters who were at, or close to, the center of the protests, with many saying social media afforded them an ability to “empathize with” the Ukrainians on the ground and see it “through their eyes.” One respondent in DC, a financial analyst, said:

It’s strange to talk about it, but being in the midst of all the Facebook discussions and fights about ideology in the comments, connecting with people in Kyiv to coordinate help, seeing people post photos from the tent camp on Maidan and reporting on attacks on Twitter—it all made me feel like I was right there, because I could participate in the debates, add my two cents, and see what was going on as the action happened.

Another respondent in DC, a graduate student, said that for her the protest as a whole had “unfolded through the screens and windows of social networks”—even though she had engaged in other ways, including in local pickets and rallies in the US as well as by raising funds.

I would spend every bit of spare time trying to read as much and see as much as I could of what people were posting—people who were there, telling it in their own words. There was so much information available. It was impossible to stop because seeing those stories, tweets, videos made me feel as if I was living this thing with everyone else. I often think that I probably knew more about what was going on in Euromaidan [in Kyiv] than the average person in the [protest camp on] Maidan or on Instytutaska<sup>9</sup>...

Protesters on the ground relied less on ICTs to mitigate physical distance from the protest, but still noted that these tools were useful as shortcuts when coming together in one place was difficult for logistics or other reasons, as people often managed several responsibilities at once. One Kyiv participant who worked on a logistics initiative said that their group relied on “online group chats” to resolve process-related issues in their project, and added that since a lot of their volunteers worked short shifts online while engaged in other protest activities, they never actually had a “physical meeting” of the whole team. Instead, they coordinated volunteer activity through chats, messengers and calls.

Though they were physically at the heart of the protest and were often able to witness the growing number of people in the Maidan firsthand, some respondents noted that social media and their metric-based ways of recording and reporting the number of people involved in the protest (including check-ins, likes, retweets, reposts and shares) were valuable as markers of co-presence as they created both a sense of “emotional support” and a certain feeling of validation for their work and

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<sup>9</sup> Instytutaska Street is a central street in Kyiv, near the Independence Square, and houses key government buildings, so it was an important site of the Euromaidan protest.

participation in the project. An IT manager in Kyiv said he did a lot of his protest-related work from his office, as he shared his time between work and protest-related tasks, but would “still run down to Khreshchatyk,” the city’s central street close to the protest camp, “after work just to add another check-in on Foursquare to the protest event there, to boost the numbers.” Consequently, this allowed him to feel like he was “present and involved” within the protest space, even if he didn’t get to enter the physical center every day.

A participant in Odesa said that she thought the number of people, both physically present in Kyiv’s Maidan and the smaller protests around Ukraine, mattered as much as the numbers of participants, followers, and members of protest events and communities on Facebook, VKontakte, and Twitter, as both kinds of figures, offline and online, were “indicators of public acceptance.”

Did the numbers matter? I think yes, as anything big creates an impression, and then there was the sports interest—more, more people. And, of course, there’s safety in numbers, it makes you feel like you’re not alone.

An experienced activist in Kyiv who helped manage the logistics and later coordinate volunteers said she found it ironic that, even though she was often on the sidelines of the protester-occupied square, most of her activity actually allowed her to see very little of the protest itself or its scale. She found observing the “mass of activity” on social media helpful, even though “of course not every one of those who liked a page was actually out there” in the street.

There were days when I was so overwhelmed with work that I didn’t even see the [Euro]Maidan in its entirety, didn’t even go out there to see how many

people there were, because we were so bogged down in logistics. Of course it is inspiring when you see and feel that there are many others like you.

The affordance of social media and online platforms for providing “real-time” and “live” access to protest activity and events was singled out by both old and new activists, regardless of their distance from the center of the protest or location. Several older activists actually indicated that platforms such as live streaming apps and online TV initiatives were a key difference between their experience of Euromaidan compared to the 2004 Orange Revolution protests. While the “orange” protesters relied mostly on mainstream media to show the scale of the protest and had little control over creating a sense of presence for those not directly in the street, in the case of Euromaidan, live media and citizen streams not only allowed all to see the physical volume of people in the square, but also increased the numbers of people that were co-present with the main crowd in mediated ways.

The first live streams were set up by citizen journalists at the very beginning of the Euromaidan protests. Amateur streamers gradually improved their technique, providing views of the action from different angles, figuring out the best shooting locations, and adding live commentary in different languages, including English. Later the citizen live video offerings were supplemented by semi-professional and professional online TV channels (such as Hromadske TV, Radio Svoboda, Espresso TV, Splino TV), showing key moments of protest-related violence and tension as well as routine life in the protest camp. Typical video streams showed activities such as cooking, singing, training security guards, and public lectures for protest participants.

Numerous Twitter and Facebook users also live-blogged the most heated moments of the protest and posted strings of photos almost in real time.

Onuch (2015) found in rapid interviews with regional Euromaidan participants that they viewed live video streams as “easier to consume and understand” than traditional media coverage or Twitter messages, and had changed their outlook on the protests and made them more motivated to join in. Regional and Kyiv-based activists perceived live streaming as “direct information for direct action” and as information that was “...interactive, real-time, unfiltered, uncensored [and] not politicized” (Onuch 2015). These findings align with how interview respondents in this dissertation research study talked about live video provided by citizen and professional journalists in terms of facilitating feelings of “being in the midst of the action,” “seeing it from people’s point of view,” and “following the clashes [between protesters and riot police] as they happened.”

Live video streams and nearly real-time coverage of events on Twitter were an especially poignant in terms of creating a perception of co-presence for participants outside of Kyiv, including those in the regions and abroad. An interviewee from DC, a banking software specialist, said that the temporal aspect of being able to watch coverage from the ground in real-time was, as he put it,

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

Another participant, a graduate student in DC, said that for her, the real-time capabilities of social media were important as they provided an emotional connection to those on the ground, while also allowing protesters in other places around the world to share information with those in Kyiv, to demonstrate solidarity, and create a greater feeling of cohesiveness in the overall movement.

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

Establishing some form of collective identity is an important element of protest engagement, as it allows the participants to feel a sense of belonging to a larger movement and to have something in common in terms of values, language, or objectives. Conceptualizing her idea of digitally mediated protest as “cloud protesting,” Milan (2015) argues that social media platforms afford activists the opportunity to develop “a collective, communal identity that binds them together, helping them to turn the performance of few protesting individuals into a large-scale event.” Milan notes that social media platforms allow participants to extend their collective identity online, combining the affordances of ICTs for non-physical co-presence and the activists’ own sense-making activities (Milan 2015), thus extending the life cycle of civic action and the networks behind it.

When discussing how ICTs allowed them both to feel co-present with other protest participants within Euromaidan and to feel as part of a community that shared

certain ideas and values, participants most often discussed various visual and multimedia symbolic markers that anchored their understanding of what it meant to be part of the protest movement. For instance, images of the crowd gathering on Maidan in Kyiv or images of the clashes between protesters and riot police were some of the most common imagery shared by protest participants on social media to show they were joining the discourse of Euromaidan dissent. These visual symbols were also quite commonly cited as the inspiration for more engagement and activity within the protest. A respondent in Kyiv who said he was more of an observer of the protests at first recalled seeing the video of the first police crackdown on protesters on Facebook:

When on November 30 [2013] ...when the riot police brutally disbanded the student Maidan, [...] in the morning when I saw the video of this horrible event, I was over it, I wanted to do something.

While visuals of violence and conflict were powerful, respondents also cited more positive and inspirational videos as instrumental in creating a sense of belonging and community. A respondent in Odesa recalled another video<sup>10</sup>, shot with a drone during one of the more massive gatherings in Kyiv's central square during Euromaidan in mid-December 2013, that was quite popular among social media users:

Do you remember this amazing footage, shot from above, when Okean Elzy [a popular Ukrainian pop-rock band] played in Maidan? [...] It got dark, and so people lit up their phones, thousands of them, and when the camera got up

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<sup>10</sup> See one of the versions of the video described above on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0q-BBj6IBkY>

high, all you could see were these tiny lights, a sea of tiny lights... It was really quite a sight, and it made me think 'I am a part of that'...

Although videos were said to be most memorable and have the most emotional power, there were other visual symbols that created a sense of co-presence and were both observed and used by interview participants in their own social media activity and self-presentation during the protest. These included changing their user profile pictures to Euromaidan-themed avatars; sharing digital versions of the posters created for the protest movement by collectives such as StrikePoster and "I am a Drop in the Ocean" community and using these images as profile backgrounds on Facebook and Twitter; posting protest-related memes and photo manipulations; sharing images of protest-themed graffiti spotted in Kyiv and other places. Protest participants and observers also reposted and retweeted photos of protest signs from the barricades in Kyiv, the rallies in the regions and the Euromaidan-related protest events around the world; and, after the first protester deaths on the ground in Kyiv, shared photos of the fallen "heavenly hundred" citizens on social media as personal and collective digital memorials.

A psychologist in Kyiv mentioned one particular protest-inspired image (Figure 3) that stuck with her from the days of the protest, after she saw it repeatedly shared on Facebook:

It was this yellow sign, it looked like a road sign, you know, like those they put up when they do construction work? And it had this little human on it, and it said: 'We're changing the country. We apologize for any inconvenience.' I thought it was quite touching.

Incidentally, a similar image appeared during the Occupy Wall Street protests, and was even spotted at the time of the 2011-2012 Winter of Discontent in Russia (Oates 2013), which provides some evidence in favor of not only tactical, but symbolic diffusion of a common visual protest language on a global scale.



Figure 3. Photo of the "We're changing the country. We apologize for any inconveniences" sign in the Euromaidan protest camp in Kyiv. Image from EuroMaydan on Facebook.

A Kharkiv-based protester, a journalism student, recalled the first person killed in Euromaidan, a young Armenian-Ukrainian named Serhiy Nigoyan, whose face (Figure 4) became an “iconic symbol” of the Euromaidan protest:

After he was shot [on January 22, 2014], it turned out there were quite a few photos of him shot by press photographers and other protesters, documentary makers had even video footage... And he has such an open face, captivating, dark eyes... The days after his death, the whole of Facebook, Twitter were just his photos, and we were all, I think, united in mourning him and the terrible sacrifice he made...



Figure 4. Mural depicting Serhiy Nigoyan, based on a popular photo, in downtown Kyiv. Photo by Tetyana Lokot, December 26, 2015.

Although the internet is now a highly visual medium (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008), enabled by greater speeds and optimization of digital content formats, the common “protest language” used by Euromaidan participants on social media went beyond visuals and extended the symbolic arsenal that helped create a sense of sharing a common space. Interview participants mentioned several things as having symbolic meaning within the context of Euromaidan. Common hashtags, such as #euromaidan (the main protest hashtag in Ukrainian, Russian, and English), #euromaidan\_sos (calls for legal help or offers of help), #helpmaidan, etc., not only served an aggregating purpose, making it more convenient to find relevant information about the protest or follow the events in real time on Twitter and Facebook, but also provided a striking, dynamic symbol of the “sheer amount of people all engaged in

the same community.” The data journalist interviewed in Kyiv recalled that, during the more restless days of the protest, tweets on the #euromaidan hashtag reached into tens of thousands, and that “just to see the hashtag trend, and keep trending” on Twitter was meaningful and added to all the protest action on the ground, making it “more visible.”



**Figure 5. An example of the Euromaidan variation on the "Keep Calm" meme. Courtesy image from Twitter.**

Other forms of common protest language online included popular protest slogans such as “Ukraine is Europe,” “You can’t stop freedom,” “Freedom or death,” “Away with the gang” (referring to President Yanukovych and his milieu), “Yanukovych—under arrest!” and many others: these would usually be chanted or shouted in the protest camp and at rallies, but also put on posters and images shared online. Also popular were humorous twists on existing slogans, quotes of prominent

Euromaidan personalities or memes that were either born in Euromaidan or adapted to its context. A graphic designer in Kyiv said in an interview that one of his personal favorites was a play on the famous British poster “Keep Calm and Carry On” that someone changed to reflect their “Euromaidan feels” and posted online:

It was yellow print on a blue background, Ukrainian flag colors, with the EU stars logo in the middle, and it said. ‘I’m a Ukrainian and I cannot keep calm.’ It was very clever, and it went very viral. I saw it on Facebook pages, then on printouts in Maidan and in people’s offices, then on t-shirts and phone cases.

A protest participant in Kharkiv gave another example of an amusing Euromaidan meme, tied to an opposition politician, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who was one of a handful of mainstream politicians regularly appearing on stage before protesters and addressing the crowd.

This was the time, I think, after the first people [on Euromaidan] had already been shot, so everyone was uneasy and wary, and Yatsenyuk was talking about going to face off with [President] Yanukovych on behalf of the protesters, and saying he realized how dangerous the stakes were for everyone, and he said something like: ‘And even if it is a bullet to the head, so be it!’ And as grave as the moment was, for some reason the people in Maidan, they found it quite funny, and very soon there was a #bullettothehead hashtag, and it became Yatsenyuk’s codename, that’s what people on [social] networks called him.

Technological affordances of the Internet and social media often combine with users’ activities and preferences to articulate each other in unexpected ways (van Dijck and

Poell 2015). One of such unexpected observations made by many participants while discussing the intricacies of what it meant to be “present” and “co-present” within the context of Euromaidan protest was how ICTs afforded them the capability to engage in the protests on a “part-time” basis, while still feeling that their activity and input was meaningful. Information communication technologies also allowed them to feel engaged and connected with broader protest communities and networks. ICTs afforded them a reduced need for collectivity and physical co-presence (Earl and Kimport 2011) by creating opportunities for action outside of the physical center of the protest, but also allowing them to feel like they were present in the protest environment despite only spending a section of their day on it.

Lyubashenko (in Valenzuela et al. 2014) calls these participants “part-time revolutionaries,” enabled by social networks to have “small-scale engagement on a mass level” (markedly harder to achieve pre-mainstream ICT use) and to join and be present in the protest environment at Euromaidan’s most crucial moments, for instance, during confrontations with government forces.

Several interview participants described their involvement with Euromaidan as “part-time,” explaining that they all had regular day jobs and other responsibilities that many of them couldn’t abandon, but noting that online networks provided them with ways to have some presence within the movement. A software engineer in Kyiv who was involved in several different Euromaidan initiatives, said he was at first skeptical about whether he would be able to combine work with being a protest participant, but added that it proved to be possible, because he didn’t always

physically have to be at the protest site and could manage his time more efficiently thanks to working online.

I saw that you can work on several projects at once, and even though it might seem like work might put more pressure on you, you can do things in parallel when you have the right tools, [you can] manage stuff.

An interviewee in DC who volunteered with one of the local Ukrainian protest collectives that did everything from media outreach to fundraising said networking on social media had enabled their team to be very flexible and direct its efforts at particular causes within Euromaidan when team members had time and effort to spare.

So, just the way this thing evolved, you see it, there is a group of about ten people who are actually very, very active, and they don't just do one thing, they come and do work or they drop out, but this very active group forms, and this is how it works.

The Kyiv interviewee who helped build and run the crowd-sourced map of Euromaidan resources and needs said high volunteer turnover was one of the main issues for them during Euromaidan protests, but the relative ease of training new volunteers and the fact that the map moderation was accessible online and didn't require physical co-presence helped keep the momentum going.

Most new recruits found out about [our project] through social media, and saw it as a low-maintenance commitment that nonetheless allowed them to join the protest effort in a meaningful way and be part of the action, even if they could only spare a couple of hours a day.

A participant in Kharkiv who worked on one of the several teams that coordinated resources, logistics, and information for the protest, said he had mixed feelings about the part-time revolutionary afforded by ICTs. She felt that more could be done, but still noted that at least this allowed more people to join in the protest and contribute to the feeling of multitudes working together and experiencing the protest as a collective phenomenon.

It was a cocktail of this feeling of right and the satisfaction that we could, but also disappointment and sadness at lost opportunities, because there was so much to be done, still is, and we can see where we can help, but because I also combined it with work and personal life—like we all did, actually—we couldn't do everything.

### 6.3.2 Affordances of ICTs for Augmented Witnessing

Tufekci asserts that ICTs afford the emergence of spectacular, 'statement' movements more easily (2014)—protests that can express identities, grievances, and claims to an attentive public, but aren't necessarily willing or able to connect with the traditional political institutions to exert these things. While this claim about a disconnect with mainstream politics doesn't allow us to discount the political influence of such movements wholesale, the spectacular nature of such protest movements begs closer scrutiny. This is especially important in order to understand how exactly the Internet and social media afford protests to be highly visible spectacles when they become an integral part of the protest fabric and what implications this has on how witnessing of these events happens, and what effect it has on the outcomes of such protests.

As we have already seen, ICTs augment protest movements and events in several important ways, allowing for distributed organizing, networks of protest communities as well as influential individuals working together across geographic and temporal barriers. In addition, there is a sense of co-presence afforded by the emotional and symbolic “common protest language” on social media. With spectacular protests, this augmentation also reaches the performative components of protest and the mechanisms by which it can be witnessed. We speak then, of an *augmented counter-spectacle*, wherein the augmentation comes by way of the offline and the online *extending into each other and beyond the sum of the two*.

An augmented protest as spectacle necessarily has significant digital and physical components, working together to produce a single spectacular reality. Protest events can be conceived of as spectacular moments, which, augmented by the affordances of the internet and digital media, gain new characteristics. Wanenchak suggests the term *augmented eventfulness*, implying the need to recognize that “the dynamics of an event need to be understood in the terms of augmented reality,” and that they have a reality that goes beyond the physical (2013), and thus, new ways in which that spectacular reality can be understood and interpreted.

While interview participants discussed the spectacular nature of Euromaidan as represented in its cultural, symbolic, and visual language, they continually touched upon the act of bearing witness to the protest events, articulated as part of participating in or engaging with the protest itself. In interviews, they mentioned terms such as “seeing it with my own eyes,” “being witness to historic events,” “witnessing history made live,” as well as “seeing events unfold” on their social

media feeds, being “glued to my phone” and “preserving” records of “how Ukraine was transformed, along with its people” for posterity. Therefore it makes sense to dig deeper into the concept of mediated witnessing and to consider what, if any, affordances, the Internet, and social media offer for witnessing as it is currently conceptualized by media scholars. At the same time, we should consider how we might conceive of new ways of thinking about this concept.

In media studies, media witnessing is a term that refers to witnessing performed in, by, and through the media (Ellis 2009). Every act of witnessing essentially implies some kind of mediation: at its most fundamental level, it is putting an experience into language for the benefit of those who were not present for the experience. But every act of mediation also entails a kind of witnessing, particularly the use of technology as a surrogate for an absent or remote audience (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009). The process of mediated witnessing, then, involves the agent who bears witness, the content of the testimony (text, audio, images, video), and the audience who witnesses the agent delivering testimony.

Ellis (2009) suggests that witnessing has become ubiquitous as a generalized mode of how humans relate to the world in the age of mass media, and certainly the Internet and participatory social media make it even more so. As we engage in producing and consuming user-generated content, more and more citizens create testimony not only because we can appear *in* media and tell others that we were there and saw what happened, but because we can bear witness *by* media, thanks to the wide availability of mobile phone cameras and internet-connected devices that we carry around with us every day. This ubiquity of media-witnessing devices and their

everyday use in routine contexts has also meant that digital media users are able to capture remarkable, and often unexpected or serendipitous events and occurrences, because of a habit of perpetual vigilance (Frosh and Pinchevsky 2014), the being ready to record, document, and to bear witness.

The protest as a spectacular event aimed at attracting attention and capturing the public imagination, expects to be witnessed, and seeks to become meaningful as a symbolic performance staged for its intended audiences. Its intrinsic nature as an event, a moment to be captured, distributed, repeated, and symbolically transformed, is precisely the reason for its occurrence, and ICTs can play an important role in affording these objectives through creating opportunities for witnessing in, by and through digital media means. As one Kyiv participant pointed out,

It's part of why we created slogans, why we made posters and memes, why we wanted photos and videos to go online, and the news to talk about us. We wanted people to see, and we wanted them to be captivated by what they saw.

Peters (2009) differentiates between four modalities of witnessing: 'being there' (presence in time and space); 'live transmission' (presence in time, absence in space); 'historicity' (presence in space, absence in time); and 'recording' (absence in time and space). To Peters, in that order, these have increasingly lower value as faithful accounts of events witnessed. However, the advent of interactive, real-time media with new affordances for engagement, participation, and co-presence, augments the mechanics of witnessing in protest events, entangling its basic elements in new and complex ways. Even as citizens become protest participants and thus engage in the

event and action being witnessed, they also simultaneously bear witness themselves in various ways enabled by ICTs: through ‘being there,’ through live streaming, through creating records and archival content, and so on. Finally, the very same citizens engaged in protest and bearing witness to it from their various vantage points also become the audience reading, hearing, or seeing the testimony of other witness-bearers.

Protest participants had various ways of how they conceived of their engagement with the protest as witnessing. While those in Kyiv and some of those in the regions spoke of the importance of physical presence at the site(s) of the protest, and those in the regions and abroad discussed creating their own physical protest sites to mirror the epicenter of the action, many also said they counted the protest activity mediated by ICTs as not just “being there,” but “being it [the protest event or action].” As a DC financial analyst said in an interview,

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

Media scholars find that citizen video, especially live streamed footage of events, can encode an extraordinary sense of presence and participation (Andén-Papadopoulos 2013). Respondents regardless of location noted the importance of live video streams in making them feel as though they were not only observing the protest action, but directly” in medias res,” due to the format of the video streams, which were shot from

hand-held devices and often from within the mass of people, allowing those viewing to look at the scene from the position of the person in the crowd. A programmer in Kharkiv recalled watching one of the many live streams from the confrontation between protesters and police in Instytutska street on December 11, 2013:

...It looked like a video game, in the sense that you could see what was happening at the video streamer's eye level, just like you would if you were standing right there... And though it was shaky and would break up often because the connection wasn't that good, it still felt like I was right there...[...] I could see steam coming out of people's mouths in the cold, could hear them breathing next to the camera, the tension in the crowd was almost palpable... When I remember it now, I wasn't there pushing against the cops, but it feels like I was.

This augmentation of 'being' and 'participating' shifted the attention somewhat from the physical epicenter of the protest: although mainstream media still centered on the burning tires and barricades and masses of people as their main representations of Euromaidan, there were also reports on the other ways of being participants of the protest: reports of live streams and Twitter feeds, screenshots of important protest-related posts from Facebook and hashtag archives—these were all becoming *legitimate* sources of action and information worth reporting and worth witnessing.

Discussing the importance of bearing witness to the events of the Euromaidan protest, participants stressed that ICTs played an important part because they allowed people to see, witness, and emotionally connect with the protesters and their actions on the ground and elsewhere. Importantly, social media and other online tools also

offered flexibility and an array of ways to bear witness, including providing raw live coverage, publishing posts that could be read later in chronological order, posting photo albums as well as archiving edited or unedited videos and making them publicly available.

A participant in Kyiv who at one time volunteered as part of the “self-guard” (“samooborona”) security forces in the protest camp, said he tried as much as possible to capture details of protest events in photographs, notes he posted on Facebook, and to keep a diary of the days he spent in Euromaidan. He said seeing what was happening in other locations, as well as online, was made possible for him via live reports or online footage he could watch later.

This wasn't just important to see strategically, to see how they [the police] were acting, and what we would have to learn to protect against. It was also an emotional thing, a connection. I am here, standing guard because that's my task and my place, so I will tell what I saw from here, but I want to see what is happening elsewhere, so that later I can say: look, I was part of this too, and tell the story.

Another important task of those who were bearing witness, according to interview participants, was to capture the protest events and their “essence” to make it available to others: “preserving for posterity,” “keeping a record,” “adding to the collective memory” all came up in the interviewee's narratives. Participants talked about how the Internet and social media allowed them to participate in the moment of witnessing, but also to extend the witnessing act beyond the moment, to make it more meaningful and impactful. An interviewee in DC, a bank employee, said it was

important for her to have the mediated evidence available and to add her own to the mix:

These are unforgettable events, so we will all tell our stories of course, but I think it is important to also have all these public records, available to anyone, that can help us tell the story, add color, add details, make it sharper. This is a record of our history, of how we changed as a people, so it's important to preserve it. We have to remember it.

Another participant in Kyiv, a human resources specialist, said it was important that the content captured by those bearing witness (most of whom were also participants and part of the event) was made publicly available, but that none of the single narratives should be taken as objective:

I'm glad that there are many videos, many posts... They are each a story of how a person or a group of people perceived or engaged with the movement, but none of them tell the whole story on their own. I think when we try to make sense of these events later, this multitude of voices will be important, and in itself a sign of how grassroots and self-organized this all was.

An Odesa participant, a computer science student, was also complimentary of the “multiple histories” and “multiple maidans” that the Internet and social media afforded protesters to preserve and make visible as they bore witness to the protest events:

...the Internet is like a database of Euromaidan histories, and that we are able to search, juxtapose, compare, overlay is a good thing. [...] It's not just one, official record, but many records, and that enriches the memories, allows us

all to consider that there is more than one way to understand what we went through.

In addition to being part of the protest events and bearing witness to them, participants also discussed witnessing in terms of being the audience and seeing and reading what others who bore witness had put online. A point made by several interviewees was that being part of this networked audience felt at once very personal and like “being a part of something big,” with one respondent in DC saying it gave her a certain feeling of validation:

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

Referring to the “part-time revolutionary” discourse, another Kyiv participant said that live streams and rapid reports of what was happening on Twitter and Facebook were important to him to feel like he was “keyed into” the protest activity and mood, so that he could pick up where he left when his next “protest shift” came up.

Because there were so many people, working on so many things, the mood swings were frequent, so it was always good to check on what was going on it be aware and prepared. [...] It was quite something to watch how people’s emotions and feelings shifted a changed on social media, like this great ocean of joy then despair, then elation again.

The collective yet personal meaning-making as watchers of the content produced by those who bore witness was compounded for many participants by the affordances of ICTs for engaging with the content published on social media more actively, and not just passively consuming it. Several of the participants recalled reposting photos and videos from Euromaidan and adding their own comments, memories or stories to them. One participant in Kyiv said she remembered seeing several “videos composed of various user-generated footage and images overlaid with music” as well as some “iconic Euromaidan images” edited by other users to add “inspirational slogans and quotes,” resulting in a kind of remix culture appearing around Euromaidan.

Yet another important role that ICTs played in affording witnessing as audience work was allowing users to examine the many videos of shootings of protesters, archived on YouTube and other platforms<sup>11</sup>. Many of these videos were later used in crowdsourced investigations into the deaths of Euromaidan protest participants. Social media users were asked to assist in dissecting the footage and examining it closely. A data journalist interviewed in Kyiv said it was a “terrible task,” but also “a unique opportunity.”

We have these shots, this footage because someone was brave enough to be there and record it. So we, as viewers, it is our responsibility to make as much as we can out of this content, to see what it is telling us, to squeeze every bit of useful information and data from it that we can.

Finally, being part of the engaged audience and seeing the live citizen and media reports of the events in Euromaidan was what had moved many interview respondents

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<sup>11</sup> An example of video archiving and analysis of the bloodiest days of Euromaidan protest is available on YouTube (warning: graphic content): <https://youtu.be/ZYjEp1C4hzI>

to become more active within the protest. Especially for “new” activists, seeing the videos and photos of police brutality and repression against “ordinary people,” “peaceful protesters” was an emotional experience that played a part in their mobilization and further engagement with the protest movement. An Odessa-based interviewee who lived in Kyiv at the time of the Euromaidan protests recalled seeing the footage from the first police attack on November 30, 2013.

It was wild and wrong on some fundamental level, seeing these helpless people bloodied and bruised, running away from the police in full riot gear... It made me afraid, but it also made me angry. It made me feel helpless, so I knew this was the time to do something more. I think for many people [...] seeing these things brought it home that this wasn't about EU or whatever, not anymore... This was about humanity, about dignity, and that was being taken from us.

In the new reality of mundane Internet and social media use to broadcast, record and make sense of our daily lives, the moments of civic and political “firestorms” (Fossato et al. 2008) find their participants prepared to not only to participate, but to simultaneously bear witness and be the audience that witnessing is directed at. The experience of the event and its story/narrative enmesh and become one, complicating the process and phenomenon of witnessing by mixing offline and online components and extending them into each other.

The personalized and distributed nature of the Internet and social networks afford both large-scale collective experiences of protest events, and the telling of “multiple protest histories.” In many ways, this augmented media witnessing casts the

tripartite 'participant/witness/audience' identity as both the ultimate addressee and primary producer, making the collection of engaged individuals both the subject and object of witnessing in the context of protest events, testifying to their own historical reality even as it unfolds, producing ad-hoc communities of attention on both a local and a global scale (Frosh and Pinchevski 2014).

## Chapter 7: Online Content Analysis Findings

This section contributes to the findings from the participant interviews by providing an in-depth look at a cross-section of posts from three Euromaidan protest Facebook groups of different size and scale, sampled during three different periods throughout the protest (see a detailed description of the sampling in the *Methods* chapter). The online content analysis complements the interview narratives by providing some examples of how different protest communities used a social media platform such as Facebook (one of the more popular choices for Euromaidan participants), what kind of information they shared, and what discourses were perpetuated in these groups during the different stages of the protest as it unfolded.

The findings in this section underscore some of the more salient points and ideas about the affordances of ICTs for citizens engaging in dissent that emerged from the interviews. These include: curating and aggregating information in a protest; creating shortcuts between various individuals, networks, hubs and communities, both online and offline, and serving as a sort of connective tissue that helps bridge these gaps. The affordances explored also reflect on reducing the need for physical co-presence to be emotionally, organizationally and meaningfully involved in the protest activity; enabling a certain flexibility and ephemerality of protest participation, engagement and activity; and enabling protesters to be at once participants in and witnesses of protest events through the use of live streams, digital video, images, and other means.

### 7.1 Analyzing Online Social Media Content

Unlike social network analysis, which concentrates on describing networks of relationships, analyzing the affordances of ICTs for protest participation through the means of social media is primarily content-based and demands more attention to what people are saying or posting rather than how they relate to each other. However, content can rarely be analyzed without context, so any available characteristics of the environment or context in which the posting of online content occurs add to the general understanding of the purpose these platforms may serve. Cohen and Mitra (1999) argue that systematic analysis of online texts (in the broader sense of the term “text”) can not only reveal “the content and implications of the text,” but also help understand the users who have produced the text.

While there were scores of users posting on social media individually during the Euromaidan protests, for this research study I decided to choose three different Euromaidan-related communities that were all managed and published by groups of individuals. This was a conscious choice, first of all because these would be easier to compare with each other, and second, because they would complement the testimonies of individual interviewees, many of whom have engaged in the protest as individuals, but also participated in various group and community initiatives related to the protest. This also allowed for a variety of scale and number of posts, providing a comparison between macro-, meso-, and micro-communities, all of which co-existed within the larger protest context.

Collecting and analyzing online content from Euromaidan-related social media communities provided opportunities to observe how participants were using

these platforms, what kind of materials and media they were publishing and sharing, what topics and ideas they were discussing, as well as what perceptions and opinions of ICTs and their role in protest activity, if any, were being expressed. The collected data was first subjected to quantitative analysis to answer the “what” question and describe the kinds of purposes social media posts served and the types and formats of content that were being posted. Quantitative results were also useful in comparing the findings across all three community types, as well as across the different protest stages. Then, qualitative analysis approaches, such as thematic and discourse analysis, were employed to answer the “how” and “why” questions and glean the dominant discussion and post topics among the communities, and their correlation with the protest stages or community types.

### 7.2 Coding Scheme Details

The coding scheme for analyzing online content collected from the three Facebook groups was constructed to allow for quantitative content analysis and thematic analysis. The main goals of this comprehensive analysis complementing the interview findings were to understand how participants were using these platforms, to determine the kinds or types of materials and media they were publishing and sharing, what sorts of ideas or concepts were raised in the posts and which ones dominated, and to determine what perceptions and opinions of ICTs and their role in protest activity were being conveyed, either indirectly or directly. The themes emerging from the results of the analysis of online content would then be triangulated with the analysis of the interview texts to enrich our understanding of the affordances of the Internet and social media for citizens engaging in protest activity.

The coding scheme book (Appendix 2) is structured into five distinct parts. The first part collects basic information about the units of content analysis (Facebook posts), such as the post's source name (the name of the Facebook group), the period when it was published (start, middle or end of the overall protest timeframe), the post's date and time, and the post's URL. Here, the coding scheme also provides a place to make a note of whether the post contains web links, images, video, or other kinds of multimedia.

The second section of the coding scheme provides a space to record the function of the post and offers a few typical categories for online and social media posts deriving from related research studies on civic and political activity online (Fossato et al. 2008, Oates 2013). This code category allows us to categorize posts into those that provide general information about protest-related matters, promote a future protest-related event, report on protest-related activity or events that has already occurred, aggregate or amplify information from other sources (through reposts), ask for information or ask for help. The section also provides an open-ended category for other post functions that may emerge from the data.

The third section of the coding scheme provides codes/categories for the actors mentioned in the Facebook post, including activists or protesters; non-profit organizations; political figures, state officials or government bodies, agencies and institutions; law enforcement officials or police officers and relevant agencies; media outlets and journalists; Ukrainian citizens (referenced specifically as a category of people); international bodies, agencies or organizations, such as the European Union, the European Commission, the United Nations, NATO, and their representatives. The

section also provides an open-ended code for recording other types of actors named in posts.

The fourth section of the coding scheme, aimed at capturing the themes and discourses emerging in the posts is based in part on related earlier case studies of online political and civic activity (Oates 2013), but adds new elements with regard to the specific phenomenon of the Euromaidan protest and the political and social context surrounding it. This section contains coding categories to capture the presence of themes such as direct mention or discussion of the Euromaidan protest events; discussion of Ukrainian or international politics; discussion of Ukrainian or international media coverage; discussion of civil society or activism in general (including volunteering, fundraising, and other grassroots activity); and discussion or attribution of power or agency to certain groups or actors adjacent to the protest. The section also provides an open-ended coding category for other kinds of discourses of themes that might emerge in the posts.

The fifth section of the coding scheme serves as a broad category for capturing any specific discussion of the role of ICTs in protest activity and participants' perceptions of these new technologies as well as the possibilities for action they might offer. The coding categories in this section account for how the discussion of ICTs, including the internet, social media, and citizen media platforms, is framed in the Facebook posts. This includes mentions of ICTs' role in the protests (negative or positive, usually through a specific example or case); mentions of roles or affordances of ICTs versus mainstream media in the protest context; comments on the use of specific technologies or platforms in the protest (with names and

examples); and comments on Ukrainian citizens using ICTs in the protest context versus users in other countries. This section also records possible mentions of ICT use in the context of witnessing events and ICTs as a allowing for co-presence—the two coding categories that emerged from preliminary examination of the pilot round of interviews and existing literature on ICTs and activism.

Finally, the coding scheme also provides an additional free text comment box for any other relevant frames or discourses observed in the posts that did not fit into the existing coding categories or that require an additional explanation.

### 7.3 Content Coded

Social media content was sampled from three Facebook groups, all of them created shortly after the Euromaidan protest began in November 2013 (Appendix 1). Facebook, as popular social media platform in Ukraine, was a key online space for Euromaidan participants who created multiple Euromaidan-related communities, pages and groups, many of them active to this day. The Facebook groups selected for content analysis reflect the varying scales of Euromaidan communities: one is EuroMaydan, a macro-community devoted to general coverage and discussion of the protest, with 303,016 followers; the second is EvroMaidanSOS, a medium-size or meso-community coordinating legal assistance and other forms of support for Euromaidan participants, with 123,678 followers; and the third one is Galas, a micro-community devoted to improving protest logistics and need/resource coordination, with 7,300 followers. The numbers of followers for each community reflect those on a specific date (January 20, 2016) on which content was scraped from Facebook.

The Euromaidan protests went on for several months from November 2013 till February 2014, with periods of active unrest and even violence interspersed with lulls in protest activity. To capture social media content reflecting both kinds of protest contexts (the ‘firestorms’ around key peak events (Fossato et al. 2008) and the day-to-day, routine protest activity), I sampled content from the three groups during three periods: a week around the end of November-start of December 2013 (Period 1, November 25-December 2, 2013, beginning of the protests); a week around mid-January 2014 (Period 2, January 6-13, 2014); and a week around the end of February 2014 (Period 3, February 17-24, 2014, around the end of the protests). For each one-week period, all of the posts published in each community were collected using the DiscoverText in-browser software for scraping data from Facebook. The textual content and metadata from each post were compiled into several datasets, along with any visual content, if available through the Facebook Graph API. The total number of collected posts for each source and the number of posts from each source per each designated sampling period are reflected in Appendix 1.

#### 7.4 Content Analysis Findings

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis are arranged by coding scheme section, preceded by some overall quantitative observations. Each section discusses the findings for each Facebook group during each of the three protest periods, combining quantitative and qualitative observations, drawing comparisons and offering some discussion of differences and similarities between content posted in different groups at different points in the protest. The findings conclude with a juxtaposition of the findings from the online social media content analysis and the

themes that emerged from the Euromaidan participant interviews, various aspects of which were discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

#### 7.4.1 General Remarks on Collected Content

The numbers of posts collected from each Facebook group for each sample period correlate closely with the scale of the group and the size of its follower base (see Appendix 1 for breakdown). EuroMaydan, the group with the largest following (over 300K Facebook followers) published 1,369 posts during Period 1, 307 posts during Period 2, and 3,002 posts during Period 3; EvroMaidanSOS, the medium-scale group (at over 120K followers) published 140, 268, and 876 posts, respectively; and Galas, the group with the smallest number of followers (over 7K), published 28, 8, and 223 posts, respectively.

Two of the three groups also exhibited a similar pattern of change in the number of posts depending on the protest time period (see Figure 6): for both EuroMaydan (Appendix 4) and Galas (Appendix 6), there was some activity during the initial stage, then a lull and a significant drop in the number of posts in the middle (during a period of relative inactivity), and then a sharp rise in the number of posts as the protest reached its climax during the last period. This pattern did not hold true for the meso-group, EvroMaidanSOS (Appendix 5), which showed growth in the number of posts from the first period to the second (likely due to ongoing legal battles for the rights of activists detained or injured during the initial protest activity period), but even in this case, there was a rather sharp rise in the number of posts during the last, most climactic period of the Euromaidan protest timeframe.

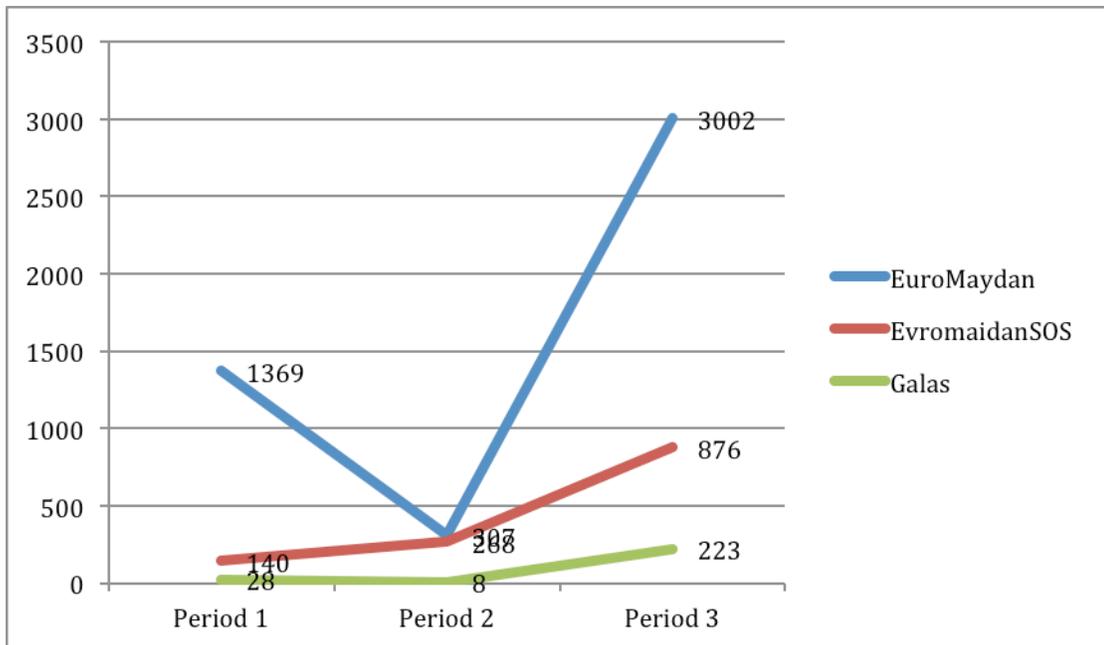


Figure 6. Change in number of posts during the three periods

In all three communities, both Russian and Ukrainian were used interchangeably for posts, comments, and conversations, with no preference exhibited for one or the other. This reflects the general trend for lingual neutrality among Ukrainians alluded to earlier in the discussion of the interview process. The macro-group, EuroMaydan, also posted quite frequently in English during the periods posts were sampled, catering to a growing international audience: about one in five posts was either in English only or had an English translation of the Russian/Ukrainian posts accompany the original text. The other two groups had no posts in English during any of the three sample periods.

#### 7.4.2 Post Functions and Content Types: What Did They Use It For?

##### 7.4.2.1 EuroMaydan

For EuroMaydan, the Facebook group with the largest following, the most common types of posts overall were general information (51.5% in Period 1, 85% in Period 2, 53.4% in Period 3) and reporting on or promoting protest-related events (22.9% and 30.8% in Period 1, 1% and 6.8% in Period 2, and 14.4% and 33.7% in Period 3), which corresponds to its function of informing a wide circle of users about a broad spectrum of protest-related news and activities (see Table 3 for details). Importantly, this community sometimes shared or linked to opinion posts and columns by various

|  | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2, 2013,<br>1,369 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 2</b><br>(January 6-<br>13, 2014, 307<br>posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 3</b><br>(February 17-<br>24, 2014, 3,002<br>posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Total</b> (over<br>three periods,<br>4,678 posts) |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>                       | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>           | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>               | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i>        |
| Post function: inform general                                | 51.5% (705)  | 85% (261)  | 53.4% (1,604)  | 54.9% (2,570)   |
| Post function: ask for info                                  | 1.5% (21)  | 14% (43)   | 1.2% (35)  | 2.1% (99)   |
| Post function: publicize event/action                        | 22.9% (313)  | 1% (3)   | 14.4% (432)  | 16% (748)   |
| Post function: report on activity/event                      | 30.8% (421)  | 6.8% (21)  | 33.7% (1,012)  | 31.1% (1,454)   |
| Post function: amplify/aggregate                             | 9.2% (126)   | 22.1% (68)   | 53.8% (1,614)  | 38.6% (1,808)   |
| Post function: ask for help                                  | 1.8% (25)  | 0.7% (2)   | 7.2% (215)   | 5.2% (242)  |
| Post function: other   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.7% (21)  | 0.4% (21)   |
| Content: links   | 30.1% (412)  | 76.2% (234)  | 59.4% (1,782)  | 51.9% (2,428)   |
| Content: images  | 7.2% (98)  | 7.5% (23)  | 23.8% (715)  | 17.9% (836)   |
| Content: video   | 14.8% (203)  | 33.2% (102)  | 32.7% (983)  | 27.5% (1,288)   |
| Content: other multimedia                                    | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (2)  | <0.1% (2)   |

**Table 3. Post functions breakdown for EuroMaydan**

protest participants, including activists and political actors—something the other two groups did not do. During the period of lull (Period 2) general information posts dominated all other types (85% of all posts in the period), ostensibly reflecting the relative inactivity of the protest movement itself.

Asking for information or assistance were less common throughout the three periods, although requests for information grew slightly during the lull period (14% in Period 2, compared to 1.5% in Period 1 and 1.2% in Period 3), and requests for help, especially of the medical kind, grew slightly during the final, most violent period of the protest (7.2% in Period 3, compared to 1.8% in Period 1 and 0.7% in Period 2).

One of the more interesting trends was the significant growth of posts meant to amplify or aggregate information, usually containing reposts of content from other Euromaidan-related communities: this number grew from 9.2% of posts in Period 1 to 22.1% in Period 2 to 53.8% in Period 3. These reflect the growing importance of the online community throughout the course of the protest as a hub for connecting other groups and individuals, affording them *shortcuts* to each other and useful information, and creating the “connective tissue” in spaces where there were previously none. The high numbers of shares on many of the reposts (often in the hundreds) and the recurring use of the word REPOST in capital letters at the beginning of such posts to encourage further distribution across the networks serve as additional evidence of this affordance of social media for shortcuts and connectivity.

In terms of types of content, links were the most common throughout for EuroMaydan posts (30.1% of posts in Period 1, 76.2% in Period 2 and 53.8% in Period 3 contained links). The posts usually linked to mainstream media, political party websites, civic media websites or user blogs. The number of images in the Facebook posts grew significantly towards the end of the protest (from 7.2% in Period 1 and 7.5% in Period 2 to 23.8% in Period 3), and the images were mostly

photos from the protest in Kyiv or Euromaidan-connected protests in other regions and abroad. The use of videos was evident in Period 1 (14.8% of posts), but grew noticeably in Period 2 and 3 (33.2% and 32.7% of posts, respectively), as protest participants began to witness, record and dissect the evidence of state violence, clashes with riot police and government-sponsored thugs, and later, the killings of protesters in Kyiv. Most of the videos were embedded live streams or archived footage from YouTube, UStream and other platforms.

#### *7.4.2.2 EvroMaidanSOS*

For the more specialized Facebook group with a mid-level following, the most popular type of posts was general information on their specific subset of issues, including legal advice and assistance to protesters and updates on those in police custody, in courts, or missing persons (75% of posts in Period 1, 90.2% during Period 2, 57.3% during Period 3). Table 4 presents a detailed breakdown of post types. Another function of the community posts, as it became more popular, was to curate and amplify posts with relevant information from other communities not limited to legal assistance, including information about resources or needs and posts from regional pages (30% during Period 1, 53.7% during Period 2, 33.2% during Period 3). These types of posts frequently also included the REPOST plea at the start and were shared by numerous users, providing evidence that a meso-level Facebook group can also afford the creation of “shortcuts” and “connective tissue” as it grows its reach in the overall protest networks. However, close to the climax and the end of the protest, the community showed an increase in activity reports (from 2.9% in Period 1 to 43.3% in Period 2 and 30.1% in Period 3) and requests for help, predominantly

|  | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2,<br>2013, 140 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13,<br>2014, 268 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24,<br>2014, 876 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Total</b> (over three<br>periods, 1,284<br>posts) |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>                        | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>          | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>            | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i>           |
| Post function: inform general                                | 75% (105)   | 90.2% (242)   | 57.3% (502)   | 66.1% (849)  |
| Post function: ask for info                                  | 24.2% (34)  | 10.4% (28)  | 4.9% (43)   | 8.2% (105)   |
| Post function: publicize event/action                        | 28.6% (40)  | 12.3% (33)  | 15.1% (132)   | 15.9% (205)  |
| Post function: report on activity/event                      | 2.9% (4)  | 43.3% (116)   | 30.1% (264)   | 29.9% (384)  |
| Post function: amplify/aggregate                             | 30% (42)  | 53.7% (144)   | 33.2% (291)   | 37.1% (477)  |
| Post function: ask for help                                  | 13.6% (19)  | 23.5% (63)  | 29.5% (258)   | 26.5% (340)  |
| Post function: other   | 0% (0)  | 1.1% (3)  | 1.4% (12)   | 1.2% (15)  |
| Content: links   | 33.6% (47)  | 75.4% (202)   | 69.3% (607)   | 66.7% (856)  |
| Content: images  | 2.1% (3)  | 6.7% (18)   | 15.9% (140)   | 12.5% (161)  |
| Content: video   | 0.7% (1)  | 10.1% (27)  | 5.5% (48)   | 5.9% (76)  |
| Content: other multimedia                                    | 0% (0)  | 0.7% (2)  | 0% (0)  | 0.2% (2)   |

**Table 4. Post functions breakdown for EvroMaidanSOS**

medical help for wounded protesters (from 13.6% in Period 1 to 23.5% in period 2 and 29.5% in Period 3). At the same time, requests for information (usually about missing persons or other matters) and promoting events decreased between the start and end of the protest (see Appendix 5 for detailed numbers).

Links to other legal assistance websites, legal documents, news media and blogs were the dominant type of non-textual content in the EvromaidanSOS, and the number of posts with links grew as the protest unfolded (33.6% in Period 1, 75.4% in Period 2, and 69.3% in Period 3), signifying additional evidence for increased connectivity and aggregation of information. The use of images and video was less dominant, but also showed some growth between the start of the protest and its

second and third stages: posts with images (mostly those of missing people) grew from 2.1% in Period 1 to 6.7% in Period 2, and 15.9% in Period 3, while posts containing video grew from 0.7% in Period 1 to 10.1% in Period 2, but then dropped to 5.5% in Period 3. Most of the videos were embeds of live streams or archived footage showing police brutality or clashes between police/thugs and protesters, and later, footage of the protesters who were shot to death or wounded in January and February 2014. As in the case of the larger-scale group, the use of these types of content signified the growing adoption of ICTs as tools for witnessing and, in the case of the legal assistance initiative, demanding justice for protesters who were harmed by state-sponsored actors.

#### *7.4.2.3 Galas*

The micro-following group, which responded to a very specific protest need (coordinating logistics and needs/resources within the protest networks) had a significant number of posts that provided general protest-related information, and at once served as calls for help and amplifiers of other communities or groups (see Table 5 for breakdown). The general information posts were 67.9% of the posts in Period 1, 50% in Period 2 and 48.4% in Period 3. Posts aggregating or amplifying content from other groups through reposts were 53.5% in Period 1, 37.5% in Period 2 and 16.1% in Period 3. Posts asking for help constituted 35.7% of posts in Period 1, 100% in Period 2, and 72.6% in Period 3—overall, significantly more compared to the other two Facebook groups. Both the reposts and the “ask for help” posts usually had a significant amount of shares, and, similarly to the other two groups, used the REPOST keyword at the top of the posts to promote further sharing. This points to the community’s narrower specialization as a hub aggregating and rebroadcasting

needs and available resources to other groups within the protest network, but supports the overall evidence of the affordance of social media for growing new “connective tissue” between previously disparate network nodes. In this case, the micro-community itself emerges as a kind of logistical shortcut. Towards the end of the protest, most of the requests for help involved medical needs of wounded protesters (medical equipment, blood donations, etc.), and some of the regional needs and resources were also added to the previously Kyiv-centered content. The number of posts asking for information, promoting events, or reporting on protest activity was minimal (see Table 5).

|  | <b>Galas Period 1</b><br>(November 25-December 2, 2013, 28 posts) | <b>Galas Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13, 2014, 8 posts)         | <b>Galas Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24, 2014, 223 posts)     | <b>Galas Total</b><br>(over three periods, 259 posts)        |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>    | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| Post function: inform general                                | 67.9% (19)  | 50% (4)  | 48.4% (108)  | 50.6% (131)  |
| Post function: ask for info                                  | 7.1% (2)  | 0% (0)   | 5.4% (12)  | 5.4% (14)  |
| Post function: publicize event/action                        | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 4.5% (10)  | 3.9% (10)  |
| Post function: report on activity/event                      | 0% (0)  | 12.5% (1)  | 3.6% (8)   | 3.5% (9)   |
| Post function: amplify/aggregate                             | 53.6% (15)  | 37.5% (3)  | 16.1% (36)   | 20.8% (54)   |
| Post function: ask for help                                  | 35.7% (10)  | 100% (8)   | 72.6% (162)  | 69.5% (180)  |
| Post function: other   | 3.6% (1)  | 0% (0)   | 0.4% (1)   | 0.8% (2)   |
| Content: links   | 10.7% (3)   | 12.5% (1)  | 35.4% (79)   | 32% (83)   |
| Content: images  | 10.7% (3)   | 0% (0)   | 14.8% (33)   | 13.9% (36)   |
| Content: video   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |
| Content: other multimedia                                    | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |

**Table 5. Post functions breakdown for Galas**

In terms of non-textual content, the micro-community differed from the other two groups in that it generally used fewer links in their posts, preferring to post other contact information such as phone numbers and addresses or to repost the content from other communities. Posts containing links made up 10.7% of posts in Period 1, 12.5% in Period 2, and 35.4% in Period 3. The number of images was overall comparable to the other two communities, with slight variations (10.7% in Period 1, none in Period 2, and 14.8% in Period 3), but what differed was the nature of the images used: instead of photos from the protest or missing persons, the micro-community used graphics and designed images to make useful information, such as lists of places, resources, and contact information, more memorable and attract attention. Unlike the other two communities, there were no videos at all in any of the posts in this Facebook group.

#### 7.4.3 Actors Mentioned: *Dramatis Personae*

##### 7.4.3.1 *EuroMaydan*

Among the actors mentioned in EuroMaydan posts, the “activists/protesters” and “politicians/officials” categories were dominant (see Table 6 for details), though the political actors were mentioned the most at the start of the protest (80.9% in Period 1, compared to 40.1% in Period 2 and 46% in Period 3), and the activists became increasingly prominent towards the end of the protests (46.6% in Period 1 and 56% in Period 2, compared to 81.8% in Period 3), as the state lost whatever credibility it had after dozens of protesters were murdered and scores more wounded. Police and law enforcement were also mentioned frequently (39.5% in Period 1, 33.6% in Period 2, 24.2% in Period 3), as were shadier actors such as government-sponsored thugs who

had attacked the protesters multiple times (8.3% in Period 1, 26% in Period 2 and 6.6% in Period 3). Media and journalists were mentioned in the initial stage of the protest, when many journalists were among those attacked by riot police (24.4% of posts in Period 1, compared to 6.8% in Period 2 and 7.1% in Period 3).

Ukrainian citizens as a broader group were also addressed or mentioned quite frequently in posts that attempted to mobilize or inspire them to act (32.6% in Period 1, 14% in Period 2, 22.3% in Period 3). Mentions of international organizations weren't too common, but remained stable throughout the protest timeframe (8.2% during Period 1, 7.5% in Period 2, 8.5% in Period 3). The mentions of Ukrainian non-profit and civil society organizations became more prominent in the posts towards the end of the protest, as coverage and discussions turned from protest activity to sustainability and further implications of the protest for Ukrainian society (7.4% in Period 1, 4.6% in Period 2, and 14.6% in Period 3).

|  | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2,<br>2013, 1,369<br>posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 2</b><br>(January 6-<br>13, 2014, 307<br>posts)       | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 3</b><br>(February 17-<br>24, 2014, 3,002<br>posts)   | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Total</b> (over<br>three periods,<br>4,678 posts)          |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Code (categories may overlap<br>and are not mutually<br>exclusive) | <i>% of total items<br/>coded in period<br/>(# of items with<br/>code)</i>              | <i>% of total<br/>items coded<br/>in period (#<br/>of items with<br/>code)</i> | <i>% of total<br/>items coded in<br/>period (# of<br/>items with<br/>code)</i> | <i>% of total<br/>items coded<br/>overall (# of<br/>items with<br/>code)</i> |
| Actors: activists/protesters                                       | 46.6% (638)   | 56% (172)  | 81.8% (2,455)  | 69.8% (3,265)  |
| Actors: NGOs/CSOs  | 7.4% (101)  | 4.6% (14)  | 14.6% (443)  | 11.9% (558)  |
| Actors: politicians/officials                                      | 80.9% (1,108)   | 40.1% (123)  | 46% (1,380)  | 55.8% (2,611)  |
| Actors: police/law<br>enforcement                                  | 39.5% (541)   | 33.6% (103)  | 24.2% (727)  | 29.3% (1,371)  |
| Actors: media/journalists  | 24.4% (334)   | 6.8% (21)  | 7.1% (214)   | 12.2% (569)  |
| Actors: Ukrainian citizens   | 32.6% (446)   | 14% (43)   | 22.3% (668)  | 24.7% (1,157)  |
| Actors: International orgs   | 8.2% (112)  | 7.5% (23)  | 8.5% (254)   | 8.3% (389)   |
| Actors: other  | 8.3% (113)  | 26.7% (82)   | 6.6% (197)   | 8.4% (392)   |

**Table 6. Actors breakdown for EuroMaydan.**

### 7.4.3.2 *EvroMaidanSOS*

Due to the nature of the meso-community's original purpose (legal assistance to protesters), the two dominant types of actors present in its posts were activists/protesters (66.4% in Period 1, 96.6% in Period 2, 79.1% in Period 3) as the victims of police or state-sponsored violence or pressure, and police/law enforcement (32.9% in Period 1, 60.1% in Period 2, and 54.6% in Period 3) as the perpetrators of the violence or pressure. Unofficial government-controlled anti-protest violent groups also got a small mention (see Table 7 for numbers).

|  | <b>EvroMaidanSOS Period 1</b><br>(November 25-December 2, 2013, 140 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13, 2014, 268 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24, 2014, 876 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS Total</b> (over three periods, 1,284 posts) |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>             | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>   | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>     | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| Actors: activists/protesters                                 | 66.4% (93)   | 96.6% (259)  | 79.1% (693)  | 81.4% (1,045)  |
| Actors: NGOs/CSOs  | 1.4% (2)   | 17.9 (48)  | 3.9% (35)  | 6.6% (85)  |
| Actors: politicians/officials                                | 12.9% (18)   | 34.7% (93)   | 10.8% (95)   | 16% (206)  |
| Actors: police/law enforcement                               | 32.9% (46)   | 60.1% (161)  | 54.6% (478)  | 53.3% (685)  |
| Actors: media/journalists                                    | 10.7% (15)   | 17.9% (48)   | 6.4% (56)  | 9.3% (119)   |
| Actors: Ukrainian citizens                                   | 8.6% (12)  | 7.8% (21)  | 16.3% (143)  | 13.7% (176)  |
| Actors: International orgs                                   | 5.7% (8)   | 11.9% (32)   | 4.7% (41)  | 6.3% (81)  |
| Actors: other  | 1.4% (2)   | 16% (43)   | 6.1% (53)  | 7.6% (98)  |

**Table 7. Actors breakdown for EvroMaidanSOS.**

Political actors, NGOs, international organizations, and media/journalists had some mentions, but all of them were mentioned most during the middle period (Period 2) when protest activity as such was minimal, and there was more room to discuss other matters beyond immediate protest action and state reaction to it.

Towards the end of the protest, there were some posts reporting on Euromaidan-aligned protests in other countries and international assistance to Ukrainian activists. Politicians and state officials were mentioned in 12.9% of posts in Period 1, 34.7% in Period 2 and 10.8 in Period 3; non-profits were mentioned in 1.4% of posts in Period 1, 17.9% in Period 2 and 3.9% in Period 3; international bodies were mentioned in 5.7% of posts in Period 1, 11.9% in Period 2 and 4.7% in period 3; media and journalists got mentioned in 10.7% of posts in Period 1 (due to violence against reporters present at the November 30 protest), 17.9% in Period 2, and 6.4% in Period 3. Finally, Ukrainian citizens as a broader group were mentioned or addressed significantly more towards the end of the protest (8.6% in Period 1, 7.8% in Period 2, and 16.3% in Period 3), aligning with a similar finding from the large-following group above, providing evidence of a turn from internal protest matters to a nationwide discussion of changes.

#### *7.4.3.3 Galas*

The distribution of actor mentions in the micro-group was different compared to the other two groups, especially during the first two protest periods (Period 1 and Period 2). The only two actor types mentioned in posts during these two periods were activists/protesters and Ukrainian citizens (see Table 8 for details). None of the other actor types were mentioned in any capacity at all during the first two periods. Posts mentioning activists or protest participants made up 28.6% of posts in Period 1, 62.5% in Period 2 and 52.9 in Period 3). Posts mentioning Ukrainian citizens made up 28.6% of posts in Period 1, 12.5% in Period 2, and 16.6% in Period 3). The rest of the posts during the first two periods simply mentioned protest needs, resources, locations or phone numbers, without referring to any actors explicitly. During the

final protest period (Period 3), the community’s posts mentioned a broader selection of actors, including non-profits (3.1%), politicians/officials (2.2%), police/law enforcement (3.1%), media and journalists (2.2%). No mentions at all were made of international organizations. This indicates that towards the end of the protest the micro-community broadened its remit somewhat, but still remained largely focused on the internal protest needs of its participants and the coordination of resources.

|  | <b>Galas Period 1</b><br>(November 25-December 2, 2013, 28 posts) | <b>Galas Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13, 2014, 8 posts)         | <b>Galas Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24, 2014, 223 posts)     | <b>Galas Total</b><br>(over three periods, 259 posts)        |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>    | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| Actors: activists/protesters                                 | 28.6% (8)   | 62.5% (5)  | 52.9% (118)  | 50.6% (131)  |
| Actors: NGOs/CSOs  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 3.1% (7)   | 2.7% (7)   |
| Actors: politicians/officials                                | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 2.2% (5)   | 1.9% (5)   |
| Actors: police/law enforcement                               | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 3.1% (7)   | 2.7% (7)   |
| Actors: media/journalists                                    | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 2.2% (5)   | 1.9% (5)   |
| Actors: Ukrainian citizens                                   | 28.6% (8)   | 12.5% (1)  | 16.6% (37)   | 17.8% (46)   |
| Actors: International orgs                                   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |
| Actors: other  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |

**Table 8. Actors breakdown for Galas.**

#### 7.4.4 Discourse: What Did They Talk About and How?

##### 7.4.4.1 EuroMaydan

In terms of discourse in the EuroMaydan posts, the protest discourse (specific discussions of Euromaidan protest activity) dominated throughout the three protest periods (89.8% of posts in Period 1, 54.7% in Period 2, 87.4% in Period 3). The posts generally covered a broad set of topics, including activity reports, legal assistance and advice, sharing media coverage of the protests, reporting on activity in regional protest chapters and international protest activity, linking to petitions, manifestos and

group statements (see Table 9 for details). There was a significant amount of coverage of the Ukrainian political debates and actions of political actors (38.6% in Period 1, 14.3% in Period 2, and 33.4% in Period 3), and a fair amount of discussion of international reactions to Euromaidan and implications for international relations (17% in Period 1, 4.2% in Period 2, 19.8% in Period 3). The amount of critical discourse about either Ukrainian or international media coverage of the protests was negligible: although the group often shared and translated content from foreign media outlets, it offered no commentary on the media frames.

While there was some discussions of power and agency attribution, usually involving state officials, law enforcement and activists (see Table 9 for details), the civil society and activism discourse grew more prominent as the protest ran its course (from 8.5% in Period 1 to 13.7% in Period 2 and 26.8% in Period 3), compounding evidence for a turn from discussions of protest tactics and events to sustainability and civil society development. A poignant post in the community from February 22, 2014, discusses the importance of building regional communities and creating networks of activists to raise awareness of the civic goals of Euromaidan and battle disinformation among those who didn't support the protest.

It doesn't matter what happens on Saturday. Maybe Yanukovych will run. Maybe they [political elites] will try to tear Ukraine apart. But we know their time is over. People who need to know the truth about what is going on are our neighbors. We have to live with them. And they're very afraid right now. We're the adults right now (even if we're young), and it's on us to tell them about what is going on. We have to explain to them that there will be no

ethnic cleansing or mass executions. Our neighbors don't agree with us and are afraid, but we have to organize and keep talking to them. [...] We are fighting for the right to live in a free country, with dignity, prosperity and peace. If they [current authorities] manage to break the society apart, it means we've lost, and our friends have died for nothing.

|  | <b>EuroMaydan Period 1</b><br>(November 25-December 2, 2013, 1,369 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13, 2014, 307 posts)  | <b>EuroMaydan Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24, 2014, 3,002 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan Total</b> (over three periods, 4,678 posts)    |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>            | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>    | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| Discourse: Euromaidan protest                                | 89.8% (1,230)   | 54.7% (168)  | 87.4% (2,623)   | 85.9% (4,021)  |
| Discourse: Ukrainian politics                                | 38.6% (528)   | 14.3% (44)   | 33.4% (1,003)   | 33.7% (1,575)  |
| Discourse: international politics                            | 17% (233)   | 4.2% (13)  | 19.8% (594)   | 17.9% (840)  |
| Discourse: Ukrainian media coverage                          | 2.3% (32)   | 1% (3)   | 2.4% (73)   | 2.3% (108)   |
| Discourse: international media coverage                      | 2% (28)   | 1% (3)   | 4.1% (122)  | 3.3% (153)   |
| Discourse: civil society and activism                        | 8.5% (117)  | 13.7% (42)   | 26.8% (804)   | 20.6% (963)  |
| Discourse: power and agency attribution                      | 4.9% (67)   | 5.9% (18)  | 2.9% (87)   | 3.7% (172)   |
| Discourse: other   | 0.1% (2)  | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (5)  | 0.2% (7)   |

**Table 9. Discourse breakdown for EuroMaydan.**

#### 7.4.4.2 EvroMaidanSOS

Since the meso-community's activity was mostly concerned with providing legal and other kinds of assistance to protest participants, the Euromaidan protest discourse was dominant in its posts throughout the whole of the protest: 74.3% of posts in Period 1, 83.2% in Period 2, and 78.1% in Period 3 (see Table 10 for details). There was comparatively little discussion of Ukrainian or international politics and the

implications of the protest, though these topics became slightly more prominent during the mid-protest lull and towards the end. Ukrainian politics was mentioned in 0.07% of posts in Period 1, 13.1% in Period 2 and 9% in period 3; international politics wasn't discussed at all in Period 1, and saw 4.9% of posts in Period 2 and 9.2% in Period 3. These dynamics signified some broadening of the overall discourse of political and social change beyond the immediate reality of Euromaidan.

|  | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2,<br>2013, 140 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13,<br>2014, 268 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24,<br>2014, 876 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Total</b> (over three<br>periods, 1,284<br>posts) |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>                        | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>          | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>            | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i>           |
| Discourse: Euromaidan protest                                | 74.3% (104)   | 83.2% (223)   | 78.1% (684)   | 78.7% (1,011)  |
| Discourse: Ukrainian politics                                | 0.7% (1)  | 13.1% (35)  | 9% (79)   | 8.9% (115)   |
| Discourse: international politics                            | 0% (0)  | 4.9% (13)   | 9.2% (81)   | 7.3% (94)  |
| Discourse: Ukrainian media coverage                          | 1.4% (2)  | 2.6% (7)  | 2.6% (23)   | 2.5% (32)  |
| Discourse: international media coverage                      | 0.7% (1)  | 1.9% (5)  | 2.1% (18)   | 1.9% (24)  |
| Discourse: civil society and activism                        | 3.6% (5)  | 8.2% (22)   | 9.9% (87)   | 8.9% (114)   |
| Discourse: power and agency attribution                      | 0.7% (1)  | 0% (0)  | 0.3% (3)  | 0.3% (4)   |
| Discourse: other   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)  | 0.3% (3)  | 0.2% (3)   |

**Table 10. Discourse breakdown for EvroMaidanSOS.**

Critical discourse of Ukrainian and international media coverage was insignificant and similar in percentage to that of the large-following group (see Table 10 for numbers). There was very little discussion of how power and agency were

attributed, usually in the context of human rights and access to justice for Euromaidan protesters. One post from this period is a January 12, 2014, post from one of the activists providing legal assistance to protesters, who reports on a meeting with other Ukrainian activists and international organizations:

We've just finished meeting with a member of PACE's monitoring committee Tina Akertof and a representative of the Swedish parliament, Jasenko Selimovic. We spoke to them about the Bankova prisoners, about court hearings and violating the law with regard to imprisoning those who were beaten by Berkut [riot police]. We spoke about the events of last night, about the context of this crisis and the Maydan, about what Europe can do to support Ukraine's shift from despotism to democracy. We passed on the analysis we made together with colleagues from Amnesty International and media organizations. Our friends are guarding the interests of Ukrainian society and are getting ready for discussing the Ukrainian question in the Council of Europe. We'll participate as well. Let's monitor and collect all the info about the events in the country—please share with us!

Finally, a broader discourse on civil society and activism intensified towards the end of the protest timeframe (from 3.6% of posts in Period 1 to 8.2% in Period 2 and 9.9% in Period 3), similar to the trend in the large-following group noted above, signifying a turn to more sustainable discussion of political and social transformations beyond Euromaidan protest activity.

#### 7.4.4.3 Galas

Because the micro-community was so narrowly specialized, the discursive focus was almost entirely on the Euromaidan protest and its internal needs and activity: 25% of posts in Period 1, 75% in Period 2, and 65.9% in Period 3. There was some discussion of Ukrainian politics at the end of Period 3, no discussion of international politics, a few critical mentions of Ukrainian media coverage (again, towards the end of the protest), and no mentions of international media coverage (see Table 11 for details).

|  | <b>Galas Period 1</b><br>(November 25-December 2, 2013, 28 posts) | <b>Galas Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13, 2014, 8 posts)         | <b>Galas Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24, 2014, 223 posts)     | <b>Galas Total</b><br>(over three periods, 259 posts)        |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>    | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| Discourse: Euromaidan protest                                | 25% (7)   | 75% (6)  | 65.9% (147)  | 61.8% (160)  |
| Discourse: Ukrainian politics                                | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 1.3% (3)   | 1.2% (3)   |
| Discourse: international politics                            | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |
| Discourse: Ukrainian media coverage                          | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 1.8% (4)   | 1.5% (4)   |
| Discourse: international media coverage                      | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |
| Discourse: civil society and activism                        | 25% (7)   | 50% (4)  | 4.5% (10)  | 8.1% (21)  |
| Discourse: power and agency attribution                      | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0.4% (1)   | 0.4% (1)   |
| Discourse: other   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   |

**Table 11. Discourse breakdown for Galas.**

Interestingly, because the micro-group emerged as a connector for other similar protest communities and networks, there was quite a bit of discussion around the overall theme of civil society and activism alongside the more specific posts about needs/resources. 25% of posts in Period 1, 50% of posts in Period 2, and 4.5% in Period 3 included references to Ukrainian civil society and its activities. However, the

drop towards the end (when the group was mostly coordinating internal protest logistics and reacting to the crises) again differentiates this community from the other two groups, where there was actually more discussion of broader civil society, social change and activism (for instance, the macro-community EuroMaydan had some discussions of joint political platforms and community manifestos during this period). This may serve as a sign that while self-organized protest communities and networks may engage in longer-term discourses about sustainable social change, some part of these networks still needs to continue providing a canvas or structure to support the ongoing self-organized activity, while deliberation occurs.

#### 7.4.5 Discussion of ICTs: Did They Talk About It?

##### *7.4.5.1 EuroMaydan*

There was very little explicit discussion of the role or affordances of ICTs for protest activity in the macro-group (see breakdown in Table 12). There was some discussion of the role of social media and live and recorded video in allowing users and participants to follow the events of Euromaidan and to see what happened, including the violence against protesters, suggesting the importance of affording people the power to both participate in the protest, bear witness to its events and take that witnessing to a larger audience.

There were also a few comments on the use of specific tools, such as Twitter and hashtags, internet-enabled walkie-talkie app Zello (used by Automaidan, a subcommunity of car owners who joined the protest), and live video apps. A few posts, especially toward the end of the protest, drew comparisons between how the

protest was covered and witnessed on social media and how it was represented in mainstream media, both Ukrainian and international.

|  | <b>EuroMaydan Period 1</b><br>(November 25-December 2, 2013, 1,369 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13, 2014, 307 posts)  | <b>EuroMaydan Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24, 2014, 3,002 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan Total</b> (over three periods, 4,678 posts)    |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>            | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>    | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| ICTs: role in protest positive                               | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (6)  | 0.1% (6)   |
| ICTs: role in protest negative                               | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (2)   | <0.1% (2)  |
| ICTs: vs. mainstream media                                   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (5)  | 0.1% (5)   |
| ICTs: comments on specific use                               | 0.3% (4)  | 0.7% (2)   | 0.2% (6)  | 0.3% (12)  |
| ICTs: Ukrainian users vs. international                      | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | <0.1% (1)   | <0.1% (1)  |
| ICTs: co-presence  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (2)   | <0.1% (2)  |
| ICTs: witnessing   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (6)  | 0.1% (6)   |
| ICTs: other  | 0% (0)  | 0.3% (1)   | 0% (0)  | <0.1% (1)  |

**Table 12. Discussion of ICTs breakdown for EuroMaydan.**

#### 7.4.5.2 *EvroMaidanSOS*

As with the large-following Facebook group, there was very little meaningful discussion of the role or affordances of ICTs in the protest in the meso-group (see Table 13). At the start of the protest, there were some mentions of the role of ICTs versus mainstream media as tools that helped find missing persons or identify perpetrators of violence. There was also some discussion throughout of specific platforms, mainly live streams and cell phone video recordings, which were solicited and used as evidence in legal defense cases or bringing charges against those who had assaulted protesters.

In the middle and last period (Period 2 and Period 3, respectively), there were several mentions of the importance of social media, images and video as tools for bearing witness, especially in the context of the mass killings in Kyiv and creating international resonance about the human rights violations that occurred during Euromaidan. One post from February 23, 2014 read:

If you have or know someone who has any video footage or photos from the days when Heavenly Hundred heroes were murdered on Instytutaska or other Maydan locations, please send links, reply in the comments or get in touch with SOS. These could be evidence for future court cases! Help us find justice for fallen heroes!

|  | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2,<br>2013, 140 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13,<br>2014, 268 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24,<br>2014, 876 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Total</b> (over three<br>periods, 1,284<br>posts) |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>                        | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>          | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>            | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i>           |
| ICTs: role in protest positive                               | 0% (0)  | 0.4% (1)  | 0% (0)  | ~0.1% (1)  |
| ICTs: role in protest negative                               | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)  | 0.1% (1)  | ~0.1% (1)  |
| ICTs: vs. mainstream media                                   | 2.1% (3)  | 0.7% (2)  | 0% (0)  | 0.4% (5)   |
| ICTs: comments on specific use                               | 3.6% (5)  | 1.1% (3)  | 0.9% (8)  | 1.2% (16)  |
| ICTs: Ukrainian users vs. international                      | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| ICTs: co-presence  | 0.7% (1)  | 0.7% (2)  | 0.2% (2)  | 0.4% (5)   |
| ICTs: witnessing   | 0.7% (1)  | 1.1% (3)  | 0.6% (6)  | 0.8% (10)  |
| ICTs: other  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |

**Table 13. Discussion of ICTs breakdown for EvroMaidanSOS.**

#### *7.4.5.3 Galas*

As with the other two groups, the micro-group rarely engaged in discussion of ICTs' role or affordances in the protest context, though had a comparatively higher percentage of posts mentioning the positive role social media and the Internet played in protest organization and gave specific examples of ICT use (see Appendix 6). This might be connected to the fact that the micro-community on Facebook was complemented by an online interactive map that they used in concert with their social media presence and other tools to gather, distribute and coordinate protest-related information. This digital media "bias" may have resulted in a greater proportion of ICT-related observations in the posts. However, unlike the other two groups, there were few mentions of ICT in connection to witnessing the protest events, which might point to the micro-community's purpose of being more of a tactical tool and an inwardly oriented connector of networks, communities and individuals within the protest rather than an aggregator of protest records or enabler of co-presence.

#### *7.5 Affordances of ICTs: Social Media Use and Content vs. Participant Perceptions*

The online content analysis from three distinct kinds of social media Facebook groups within the Euromaidan protest network revealed some differences and some similarities between the types of content, activity and discourse that occurred in the groups. While the macro-, meso- and micro-following afforded the groups different reach, they also had different aims: the macro-group acted as an aggregator and distributor of Euromaidan-related information in a broad sense, including protest events and activity, political news and international affairs; the meso-group provided

information about opportunities for legal assistance and reported on human rights violations during the protest, but grew to encompass other protest needs; the micro-group was focused on coordinating protest needs and resources as well as connecting communities and individuals around these inside the protest network.

Within their respective contexts, all groups exhibited similar ebb and flow in the number of posts published during different periods: some posts during Period 1 (the start of the protest in earnest), fewer posts in Period 2 (a relative lull in protest activity, though not in legal support, evidenced by a growth in the meso-community's post number), and a rapid rise in the number of posts in all three communities during Period 3 (the escalation of violence against protesters and the climax of the protest). During the last period specifically, two of the larger communities shifted their focus to video evidence of the protest and a broader spectrum of reactions to the protest events, as well as a more long-term discourse of civic activity in the country overall, indicating a potential shift towards movement sustainability. The micro-community, meanwhile, remained focused on internal protest needs and connections, continuing its coordinating efforts.

When drawing connections between the findings from online content analysis and the protest participant interviews, several key overlapping themes emerge that are arguably relevant as observations about affordances of ICTs for protest organization, participation, and engagement. First, the focus on aggregating and amplifying content and information from various protest communities through the use of cross-posts, linking, prominent calls for "reposting" compounds the affordance of social media discussed by interview participants to create serendipitous "shortcuts" and build

“connective tissue” between various individuals, network nodes and groups within the protest, connecting online and offline points in various configurations, and reducing the need for physical co-presence to conduct and support protest activity.

Second, the varying levels of posting activity during different protest periods, corresponding to “firestorms” and crises or a lull in the action, chime with the affordance of ICTs to enable flexible, or part-time, participation in the protest for those who wish to engage with it, without harm to the overall activity. This flexibility, while making the overall protest engagement somewhat ephemeral (as you are never sure who is involved and how many people are participating), also affords for that ephemerality and flexibility by preserving the meaningful connections already built by protest participants and communities, and allows participants to engage with the protest at different levels, depending on their availability and the needs of the protest movement.

Third, the observed trend in the more outwardly oriented macro- and meso-groups of the growth in images, live video streams and archived videos posted during the protest timeframe, compounds the observations of many interviewees about the role of digital media and social networks in affording those who engage with the protest to be simultaneously its active participants, to bear witness to the protest events occurring, often in real time despite geographical distance, and to also serve as audiences to others bearing witness, resulting in a sort of augmented witnessing phenomenon that potentially makes the protest events more meaningful. This expanded mode of witnessing and processing of protest events may have greater bearing on the collective and personal identity of the protest participants and allow

for a more long-term, productive discussions of civic activity and civil society development post-protest, as the activists' focus shifts to other political and social challenges.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions and Discussion

The final chapter of this dissertation offers a summary of the findings from the protest participant interviews and the social media content analysis, triangulating them to illuminate how the Euromaidan protesters perceived and experienced the affordances of the internet and social media for protest. The summary of findings focuses on several areas of protest-related activity, including protest organization, information sharing, distribution, and consumption during protest events as well as protester identity construction and transformation. The summary describes specific protest-related affordances of ICTs in these areas that augment protest participation, such as the emergence of communicative and organizational shortcuts, the growth of networked connective tissue, the ephemerality and flexibility of protest identities as well as the expanded opportunities for co-presence and witnessing.

A section outlining participants' thoughts on the goals and achievements of the Euromaidan protest precedes the summary of findings and provides additional participant framing of ICT-afforded protest activity and outcomes. The chapter ends with a discussion of how the findings inform the concept of augmented dissent as a useful way to frame the role of ICT use and perception of digital technology in civic and political activity. As part of discussion, the chapter also considers the implications the findings provide for future research on perceptions of ICTs and their affordances in dissent in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries.

8.1 Was the Euromaidan Protest a Success? Transformation, Participant Identity, and New Forms of Civic Engagement

While digital technology and online social media do not by themselves cause political or even revolutionary change, they do provide new opportunities (Howard 2010) and impose new constraints on actors in society (Deibert 2012), as they afford individuals and communities the power to renegotiate local or national contexts in both political and social activity. Because of this importance of context, our understanding of the role of ICTs benefits from close analyses of the successes of protests enabled by technology in specific countries, embedded in their political, social, and media infrastructures.

Using the internet and social media for mobilization and political protest, citizens connect their daily self-representation online with an understanding of their roles as individuals in more complex political systems, and of how that role is mediated by digital media. ICTs, therefore, emerge as a useful measure of political and social “change for the individual” (Oates 2013), and networked protest movements can be seen new forms of democratic engagement in a new, more independent space built around the interaction among individuals, places, and internet networks (Castells 2013).

In their discussions of the goals, outcomes, and the issue of what constituted “success” of the Euromaidan protest movement, interview participants overwhelmingly focused on the idea of *transformation*, relating it to their personal identity, the collective protest identity, and the Ukrainian society more broadly. As early as in December 2013, less than halfway into the protest events, interviewees in

Kyiv discussed the preliminary outcomes of the protest, and focused on such achievements as self-organization and coordination of activities. One interviewee, a software developer, commented on what he thought could be a more long-term outcome of the protest, underpinned by the ICT-enabled networks of shortcuts and productive relationships, both full- and part-time.

And what makes me most happy is that there are attempts to unite, come together and negotiate, talk things through, coordinate. I don't see a result of it all yet, can't forecast, but it would be good and I hope it's possible for the [Euro]Maidan to become a sort of nutrient broth for these unions, communities, people who will come together and figure out what to do next.

Another respondent in Kyiv, an HR manager and an experienced civic activist, also commented on the potential long-term implications of the networks and communities created or developed during the protest.

I see [Euromaidan] as a great example of a huge number of people self-organizing to exert some change, which resonates with me, which is in itself cool. And as a catalyst to building civil society. [...] Even if we don't achieve any political results, I hope this civic awareness will stay with people, it won't just pass without effect, both for the organizers and the participants.

Several interview participants noted that one of the protest movement's greater achievements was the possibility of organizing citizens and communities in new ways, often enabled by affordances of ICTs to create loose networks of interested individuals, to provide flexible opportunities and formats for joining the protest activity, as well as to enable participants to engage in the action on their own terms

without mandatory physical co-presence. One participant in Kharkiv said having the “always-on” connection to a loose group of enthusiastic volunteers changed the way they approached protest organizing.

Organizing volunteers is something I’ve never done before, that was new.

When people have no formal commitments or obligations before you, and all you can do is suggest an idea that might resonate and ask people to suggest their own. This was new, and I think we managed to make it work, we didn’t expect it to have an effect like this when we started, mostly because of the quality of people who came together. Maybe this is luck, or maybe it’s a quality of the network.

Another interviewee in Kyiv, an experienced organizer, said loose social-media-supported networks had played an important role in cementing a sense of community more quickly and in producing different opportunities for action compared to previous protests in Ukraine that the interviewee has been part of.

The biggest outcome for us is [...] our community itself, a very large group of people, we can produce synergy, and do civic action differently than before, better. We can coordinate, get things done. I’ve never had a case where we would come up with a campaign the night before, and the next day it would be implemented. We have a great team of people, who are connected, able and ready to work together to change things, and that’s our greatest achievement.

Discussing the organizational experience of Euromaidan, a data journalist interviewed in Kyiv thought the decentralized nature of the protest movement, afforded in part by the use of digital media and social networks, was partially what had caused some

chaos during the events, but would also be the foundation for flexible social structures that would survive beyond the protest period.

Euromaidan as a self-organizing phenomenon? I think it'll definitely stay around as a meme of sorts. [...] The essence, the spirit, the people behind the tents, I think they will live on as connections... I see now how dispersed they are... There is some merging occurring, but it will probably be these dispersed centers of pull that will live after the [Euro]Maidan, which will shrink and lose participants. I think it's also quite possible that different forms of self-organizing will emerge beyond the protest movement.

Interview participants across the board stressed that Euromaidan was also a success because its collective identity narrative emerged as broad enough to encompass different expectations and disappointments, allowing participants to engage on their own terms. As Poletta (1998) notes, compelling activist narratives are key for movements as they help “constitute a new collective activist identity and make it attractive, compel participation.” In the case of Euromaidan though, participants referred to the importance of having a broad set of values and ideas that, coupled with the flexibility of engagement offered by ICTs and horizontal organizational structures, enabled them to reconsider both their personal identity as Ukrainian citizens and find new ways of perceiving themselves as part of a networked community engaged in connective action.

An experienced activist in Kyiv noted that Euromaidan had such broad appeal, especially after the first cases of police brutality against protesters, because it touched on universal human rights values, but also allowed different types of

participants to engage for other reasons, creating a “more complicated” set of protest claims and goals.

... a sense of injustice seems to be the most common motivation. My motivation as a civic activist is also, because we’ve experienced civil society before, we seek to change the country and system not through the quick means of revolution, but also through more systemic work because we know what that’s like.

In a similar vein, another Ukrainian activist in DC said that, although the failure to sign the EU association agreement was the initial catalyst for the protest, the mass appeal of joining the dissent came later, when more all-encompassing protest messages were shared through the protest and observer networks.

I guess the topic of eurointegration as a civilizational and value choice, it played a role as a great unifier for many people, plus the really idiotic actions of our government in the process I think brought the people together, closer. And this might have been a deciding success factor, because after that people joined the protest, not just those who were proponents of eurointegration, but just people who were fed up with what was going on and the ignorance. I saw somewhere on Facebook that this is the first revolution against ignoramuses and ignorance. So something floated up which resonated with a large number of people through all these mediated and non-mediated channels.

A participant interviewed in Odesa speculated that Ukrainian political and civic history also had a role to play in the shifts of civic identity that, coupled with the

affordances of ICTs for reduced co-presence, allowed citizens to enact their changing understanding of “active life stance”:

...somehow the right people came together in one place.. I guess over 20 years [of Ukraine’s independence] the right human resources appeared, of which there weren’t as many in 2004. Not in the political elite, which is a mud pit, but outside of it. And this protest revealed what can be possible if you have a concentration of people with an active life stance. Which may have been lower before, but now has reached a critical mass and made this possible.

A Kyiv-based graduate student said she thought the very configurations of the protest networks, online and offline, that made possible decentralized organizing and allowed for various ways of engaging with the protest were what enabled participants to renegotiate their identities as part of the protest and as part of the Ukrainian society in general, revealing new opportunities for interpreting political and civic action.

The environment created in the Euromaidan changes people who are participating, they see how things could be, how you can make this work...[...] I think one thing Euromaidan has achieved is a sort of maturation of the society, at least part of it, and also practical experience.

The shifts in personal and collective identity were, according to a Kharkiv-based interviewee, also due to the collective cultural, social, and media capital created and accumulated by protest participants, a large part of which was done online. The interviewee said they believed the protest symbols produced and shared on social media, such as slogans, posters, images, and avatars, were possibly ephemeral, yet

instrumental in reshaping Ukrainians' understanding of what it meant to be Ukrainian, and in offering a new outlook on the country to foreigners as well.

The image of the country abroad, I think, has risen quite significantly, this might be temporary, but it seems like a real change. Some form of pride and patriotism, those have also grown, starting from external manifestations, like flags everywhere and singing the anthem. I think this is a temporary thing, a situational means of expressing your involvement and solidarity rather than something common or everyday like the national symbols use in the US, but it's still a plus. I don't know how this activity influenced the balance of forces politically.

Interview participants discussed sustainability as one of the Euromaidan protest's outcomes, but referred more often to a broader context than just the longevity of the protest movement itself. Some suggested that it was more important that some form of momentum for communities born of the protest or for civil society as a whole might emerge from the protest and be sustained by the networks, connective tissue, as well as the social capital accrued during the protest events. An interviewee in DC said that for her, the main positive result of the protest activity was the emergence of many active hubs of engaged citizens, who she hoped would be geared towards doing similar civic work in the future.

I hope these connections, these communities and networks that were born, that they won't go anywhere, they will continue their activity in the future - this for me might be the main result, the formation of these active groups of people.

Another participant, an IT manager in Kyiv, suggested the networks of active individuals created during Euromaidan events and enabled by their digital and physical connections would become the driving force for further change in Ukraine, both political and social.

The more of these groups there will be, the better it will be for Ukraine. It's like sunrays: the warmth radiates outward, and joining in becomes easier than if you're going it alone. So I see that this fight is not in vain and that it's worth it to keep doing it. There is a chance for change.

Another Kyiv-based participant, who worked with a sprawling legal defense and support initiative during Euromaidan, said she was already heartened to see tactical diffusion and civic innovation spreading into the country's regions and taking hold in communities with little experience of civic activity. She said citizens were inspired by their Euromaidan participation or echoes of others' actions on social media to reconsider their civic identity and their agency and to recreate some of the approaches seen or heard on the broader Euromaidan citizen networks in their own local and hyperlocal political contexts, effectively filling the gaps in inefficient state governance.

I can see and feel the energy of Euromaidan living on when in little towns and big cities hundreds of new initiatives are being created, They're horizontal, created by ordinary people with no experience of civic activity or activism.

Basically, these people themselves are performing the functions of the state.

The case of the Euromaidan protest in Ukraine, as told through its online social media community narratives and the testimonies of protest participants, shows that

participatory civic movements that are less formal (Tufekci 2014) are able to express themselves and establish themselves as a constituency. However, in Euromaidan's case, such a protest movement, though less formal, is also able to relate to traditional politics as it offers new ways to organize, exert pressure, make decisions, enact agency and occupy not just physical space, but also the media and digital information sphere. This bridging, augmented nature allows the movement to intervene in everyday conversation spaces and turn existing and newly formed connections between individuals and communities into the connective tissue of flexible action networks. Such connected networks of individuals could further develop into an active, sustainable civil society, just as flexible and ephemeral, but able to achieve change in the country through alternative opportunities for action and shifts in personal and community identities afforded by ICTs. This echoes the comment by the research subject above, who talked about how the protest activities were actually taking over functions from the state, suggesting that the type of networked power structures found in the Euromaidan protests could be more legitimate (and effective) than traditional political institutions. This would be a significant shift in political culture and institutions indeed. However, participant testimonies also suggest a healthy level of skepticism about whether ICTs or online social networks enable citizens to achieve long-term political goals, such as forming political platforms, or transforming ephemeral civic activity during protest into sustained, more formal political pressure.

## 8.2 Affordances of ICTs for Protest

How can we understand the affordances of ICT for protest through the prism of a hybrid conceptualization of society, media, and technology, in which the online and offline aspects of protest activity augment each other in complex ways?

Communication, media, and protest scholars have previously examined the links between social media use and protest activity, suggesting that the former could facilitate or, in some cases, constrain protest participation. Social media platforms have been found to enable protest movements to easily mobilize and organize supporters and scale up more quickly; to provide opportunities for collective expression as well as sharing of reinforcing information among protest participants; to act as information hubs for spreading mobilizing messages (but sometimes also misleading information or rumors); as well as posting live updates from protest events (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2012). However, scholarship has diverged on what kinds of ICT uses promote and sustain protest activity: some scholars have argued that social media are best suited for expressive uses such as making protest claims, while others found that engaged citizens used online platforms to socialize and get news (Valenzuela et al. 2012). A study of the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt (Tufekci and Wilson 2012) found that the use of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter was a significant predictor of a user's likelihood of engaging in protest activity.

While information and communication technologies are certainly not the only factor enabling dissent and empowering protest participants in modern societies, they do matter as they augment the opportunities for action and, importantly, allow

citizens to engage in protest activity in a number of different ways, providing flexibility, empowering meaningful part-time involvement, and offering a choice of repertoires of contention. Importantly, the findings of this dissertation show the internet and social media contribute to shifts in how protest participants approach organizing and mobilization, how they create and distribute information, how they account for and manage state pressure in these arenas, as well as how they conceive of their personal and collective identity as civically active individuals, engaged in protest both online and offline.

Identifying the affordances of a particular type or types of digital technologies for a given social movement or protest community and understanding how those affordances can be leveraged meaningfully by participants (Earl and Kimport 2011) is best done through research and analysis grounded in contextual knowledge. Applying the theoretical concept of affordances to the role of ICTs in protest activity has emerged as a productive endeavor in this research study, given that the theoretical ideas in existing literature were examined through the lens of the specific political and social context of the Euromaidan protest. The findings of the study about what sorts of possibilities for action the internet and social media afforded citizens participating in the Ukrainian protest events of 2013-2014 were informed by the history of civic activity and protest movements in Ukraine, the everyday routines and habits of online social media use among Ukrainians, and other important factors, such as activist experience and distance from the epicenter of the protest. Additional contextualization was achieved through analysis of online social media content from three different Euromaidan-related Facebook communities, making it possible to

draw parallels between interview participants' statements and perceptions and the activity on these social-media sites linked to the protest.

The interview participants in this study discussed the role of the internet and social media in mediating the networks, underpinning the organizing efforts, directing the information flows and message production, as well as facilitating participation and engagement in the protest action. Their observations can be usefully summarized into several major observable categories, including:

- the relationship between technology and distance from the physical epicenter of the protest as a factor in protest participation;
- the potential affordances of ICT use for information sharing and framing of the action during Euromaidan;
- the perceived and observed communicative affordances of ICTs in the eyes of those engaged the protest for organizing individuals, networks, and communities, as well as setting up lines of communication between key protest hubs;
- how the internet and social media were central to and afforded opportunities for building trust, establishing relationships, and verifying information, as well as opportunities for misinformation spreading and rumor mongering;
- how digital media reflected on the shifting meanings of presence, co-presence, and witnessing during the protest and what affordances emerged for protest participants in this regard;
- and finally, what affordances the internet and social media platforms provided with regards to establishing citizen identity (both as protesters and as

Ukrainians) and forming the notions of ‘community’ and ‘civil society,’ as well as shaping the protester’s expectations, disappointments, and their understanding of what ‘success’ and ‘sustainability’ meant for those who took part in Euromaidan.

The findings of this study align with earlier scholarly work indicating that the internet and social media sites offer multi-modal communicative affordances that can supplement traditional methods of protest participation and offer new spaces and strategies for information gathering, political debate, and participation (Vitak et al., 2011). The present study also underscores the need to study both the mundane and the revolutionary uses and affordances of ICTs for citizen engagement. This will allow us to better understand how technology features and participant identities merge with the political, cultural, and social environment of the protest in question to translate into affordances and constraints for protest activity, organizing, information management, and identity negotiation as perceived by the protesters.

The findings of this dissertation also contribute to the development of the application of communicative affordances theory to the role of ICTs in social activism and protest. As previously noted, Earl and Kimport have posited several key affordances of the internet and new technologies for activism in general. These affordances include reduced costs for participation and organizing; reduced need for physical co-presence in order to participate in collective action; and reduced need for both collectivity and physical togetherness in organizing (2011). This study of the Euromaidan protest case in Ukraine finds that protest participants were indeed able to leverage these affordances, but also adds contextualized detail on how exactly ICTs

made a difference in terms of affording a variety of ways to participate; providing for a more ephemeral protest network fabric that offered less long-term sustainability, but was also more readily connective; reducing the need for physical co-presence and collectivity in organizing and action; creating a connective tissue of shortcuts among online and offline networks, communities and individuals; shaping information flows and witnessing opportunities, both in instrumental and affective terms; as well as contributing to changes in protest participant identity construction.

It is important to find out how ICTs might augment protest participation and what possibilities for action they offer to participants to gain a better understanding of how our online and offline lives are entangled and extend into each other. As the findings of this dissertation research show, protesters relied on the internet and social media to help them bridge physical, temporal, experiential, affective, and existential distance both between each other and between themselves and the protest as a phenomenon in which they wanted to engage.

### *8.3 Self-Organized Networks of Connective Protest Action*

One of the defining features of the Euromaidan protest, according to interview participants, was its self-organized, grassroots nature. For both experienced and new participants, the protest activity was informed by the existing history of protest in Ukraine. However, the Euromaidan protest movement emerged as more self-organized and decentralized than 2004 Orange Revolution. Respondents who had a history of prior civic activity, activism, or organizing said that a certain segment of primary organization during Euromaidan stemmed from existing activist initiatives. At the same time, inexperienced protest participants were drawn to the accessibility

of Euromaidan as a space for dissent for a broad spectrum of citizens and claims, enabled by its networked nature.

Given this mix of both old and new protest participants connected by overlapping networks, Euromaidan became a fertile ground for experimentation and spontaneous communities of people taking on various tasks based not only on their activism experience, but also their skills, knowledge, and availability more generally. Within this self-organized protest, the role of ICTs also was seen as more prominent, though in different ways depending on previous protest experience. Distance from events on the ground also had an impact on the kinds of affordances participants perceived the internet and social media to provide for protest engagement, including organizing and information sharing.

As a result of connective action afforded by the internet and social media to protest movements, seemingly disjointed networks can achieve coherent protest organizational forms (Bennett and Segerberg 2012) that allow them to manage resources, respond to threats, scale up quickly, and engender mass engagement, as well as be flexible and inclusive. These ICT-enabled networked configurations also benefit from a general trend toward horizontal, less institutionally dependent participatory civic movements, although they don't necessarily guarantee their sustainability (Tufekci 2014). Milan and Hintz (2013) argue that decentralized connective networks of activists organized online might "play a crucial role in building the digital backbone of contemporary social movements, experimenting with technological infrastructure, and enabling innovative forms of organization and citizen action" (p. 8).

One of the main advantages of using or adapting pre-existing digital platforms, such as social networks, to build new kinds of activist or protest communities is that they allow protest participants to create new pathways—*shortcuts*—between existing nodes in the network using digital means where previously there were none. This means that protesters can optimize resources, time, and relationships to achieve protest organizing goals as well as connect existing and potential participants in new ways. The internet and social media were more often than not combined with offline elements to tweak the overall mechanisms to work more effectively in a protest context: to fix an issue, to fill in a missing link, to add an element to a process to optimize it—in other words, to augment overall protest activity.

While mobilizing, organizing, and sustaining protest activity during Euromaidan, more experienced activists relied on the internet and social media less to afford them opportunities for internal organizing, preferring instead to depend on their existing personal connections. However, these more experienced activists still found ICTs useful for external outreach and increasing exposure of their protest communities. New protest participants, on the contrary, often used social media as their point of entry into protest activity, with digital networks enabling connections with other new activists and sometimes providing access to existing movement communities. Though fluctuating and at times chaotic, the non-hierarchical structure of the protest movement allowed for the use of ICTs to create *shortcuts* between various individuals, networks, hubs and communities within the protest, both online and offline. The internet and social media, in this case, served as a sort of *connective*

*tissue* that helped bridge the gaps in experience, information, or volunteer availability, creating connections between the necessary parts of the overall movement network to make the movement overall more efficient and to deal with redundancies.

In terms of managing, curating, and aggregating information within the Euromaidan protest, participants said ICTs allowed them to raise awareness of the protest and its claims; to amplify the voices of the different constituencies within the movement; to direct the attention of observers, local, and foreign media to protest claims and statements; to appreciate the use of visuals and live video as sources of information and affective connection. While digital social networks make it easier to spread rumors and fakes, they also allow users to mitigate false stories and perform information verification in the quickly developing context of protest events. Ultimately, ICTs afforded them the power to create *shortcuts* between various contexts and connections (e.g., between the private and public communications of protest participants). This exploited the power of both strong and weak ties to efficiently share and gather information about protest activity as well as to manage information flows both in the immediate vicinity of the physical epicenter of the protest and across international borders.

With regard to building Euromaidan protest communities and networks as well as accumulating social capital, interview participants found that digital communication tools afforded them a greater repertoire of means to manage existing ties and connect with other citizens wishing to participate in the activity. Some said the internet and social media also allowed them to scale up their organizing efforts and to build up new *connective tissue* to establish links between disparate protest

groups and active individuals. Especially for those engaging with the Euromaidan protest at a distance, ICTs also were found to reduce the need for physical co-presence to allow citizens to be emotionally, organizationally, and meaningfully involved in the protest activity. The protest as a self-organized, cross-border phenomenon relied less on traditional movement organizations and political institutions and more on connective action networks and individual input. These types of protests need the *shortcuts* and *connective tissue* ICTs provided to achieve results, build processes, as well as create a feeling of togetherness and solidarity, despite atemporality or geographical distance.

The horizontal, decentralized ICT-enabled structure of the Euromaidan protest chimed with the desire of disillusioned citizens to bypass traditional politics and institutions and instead turn to grassroots self-organization. In particular, they turned to forms of organizing that relied not only on pre-existing social movement organizations and civil society groups, but also on ad-hoc networks and insurgent communities as well as influential online social entrepreneurs and “public intellectuals.” These new forms of protest organizing indicate that social capital, necessary to build protest movements, put forth protest claims and exert change, can be found, expanded, and accumulated even in such flexible and decentralized formations. These types of formations are based on networks of connections, personal, and collective action—as well as on serendipitous collaboration.

#### 8.4 Ephemerality and Flexibility of ICT-Enabled Protest Identities

A key feature of the Euromaidan protest movement that emerged from participant interviews and observation was the flexibility of participation and engagement

modes, protest frames, and protest identities, as well as a certain ephemerality of the protest movement as a phenomenon overall. While having a less stable structure and an often unpredictable ebb and flow of participation, the protest was nonetheless able to afford citizens the opportunity to engage with it on their own terms. They could engage with it both with respect to time and resource commitments as well as with regard to providing space for a broader protest claims base that was inclusive of multiple identities and grievances.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) suggest that the use of digital networked media by activists leads to a new organizational pattern of digitally enabled ad-hoc action networks that can mobilize a wider range of individuals, allowing to reach even those not closely bound to the protest via ideological or community ties. However, it also means that the engagement might be less durable and the networks less stable (with a high turnover rate). Other movements have faced similar issues: the Occupy movement worked with a leaderless, but place-based structure in the Occupy phase, and became more decentralized and networked to remain sustainable; the Arab Spring protest networks in Tunisia and Egypt were able to replicate the loose ties networks across national boundaries and sustain them under pressure (Tufekci and Wilson 2012).

With a mix of experienced activists and novice protesters at the heart of many of the Euromaidan protest groups, the use of the internet and social media platforms afforded maximum flexibility to adjust and accommodate a fluid, diffuse base of protest participants, allowing activists to adapt their operations and message management frameworks to the changing needs of the protest movement quickly.

Among other things, ICTs afforded Euromaidan participants the chance to be “part-time revolutionaries,” allowing for meaningful engagement within limited time or with limited resources and creating a broader network of participants who were feeling involved and useful despite having made only a partial commitment to the protest cause. What this dissertation suggests is that ‘partial’ is enough—that asynchronous protest activities that take place primarily in the online sphere are not only effective, but incredibly powerful for the individual and society alike.

The ephemerality of the Euromaidan protest’s organizational structures also brought to light the crucial role of engaged individuals and online social entrepreneurs in serving as influencers and hubs connecting other participants and protest communities. Digital media allowed them to amplify their messages within the protest context and afforded these influential users the ability to effectively activate their social networks to engage in connective action, bypassing the need for building additional layers of organizational infrastructure.

Milan (2015) suggests that while the life cycles of social media-enabled protests are typically very short and tend to disappear as quickly as they emerge, the visibility of such protest movements can gain traction through frequent repetition of messages and claims, both online and offline, often aided by additional exposure from mainstream media. Gerbaudo (2016) argues that social media enable “moments of digital enthusiasm” through making public hopeful and inspiring narratives on community pages and platforms that in turn get promoted across the networks by less experienced protest participants and observers. This results in emotional contagion among protesters that reinforces the protest’s messages and identities and may

contribute to a stronger collective identity. While adding an evanescent, ephemeral quality to collective protest action, these protest movements, bridging online and offline spheres, are nonetheless able to influence not only protest activity and engagement, but also afford opportunities for renegotiating protest and civic identity. This contributes to a gradual transformation of identity and society rather than rapid revolutionary change.

The Euromaidan protests have been dubbed the “Revolution of Dignity” (Onuch 2014) and appear to have hinged on the idea of personal identity and individual transformation as much as that of the protest community (Lokot 2015). Throughout the interviews with protest participants, three main protest-related identity frames emerged, informed by community narratives and personal identity discussions. These frames were said to have been perpetuated and popularized on social media, but also were contested by some of the interviewees, who argued they weren’t entirely reflective of their perception and experience as Euromaidan participants. Most of the differences in framing lay along the lines of disparity between “old” and “new” protesters, and between people who had been physically located at the center of the protest and those who had participated elsewhere.

The frame of Euromaidan as a *self-organized or grassroots* protest was the most pervasive, as was the frame of the shift from a *single-issue protest* to a *multiple-issue* one with a broad spectrum of claims. However, experienced activists were more skeptical about framing Euromaidan as the *protest that the internet made possible*, while new activists and those farthest from the epicenter of the protest were more adamant that ICTs played a greater role in making Euromaidan into what it was.

Importantly, all three frames of protest identity co-existed simultaneously, grounded in the connective action networks, and the symbolic language of the protest adopted by social media users. This provided participants with the opportunity to craft their personal protest identities and fit them within the ephemeral, but engaging, collective narrative of the Euromaidan protest. Though some researchers suggest that due to their mainly loose ties and flexible structure, such networked “insurgent” protest communities tend to dissolve when the crisis passes (Earl and Kimport 2011), their ability to afford participants meaningful engagement and personal identity construction may, in the end, enable a new kind of ephemeral, but effective participatory dissent that some scholars suggest could be the next phase in the evolution of protest movements (Tufekci 2014).

Though ICTs afforded the Euromaidan protest movement some measure of flexibility in its organizing and frames as well as a certain ephemerality of protest narratives and participant identity, the sustainability or longevity of the protest and what remains after the climactic events have receded into history depend on many other factors apart from ICT use and its affordances for dissent. These factors could include issues such as political and economic reforms, international involvement, and other challenges that may further mobilize the Ukrainian society (e.g., the Russia-instigated conflict currently underway in the country). Still, the notion of ephemeral protest as afforded by digital media in particular contexts should become more central to the study of contentious politics (Earl and Kimport 2011). The pervasive use of ICTs by citizens in their everyday lives and during periods of heightened civic activity now requires scholars to consider new conceptual models of how political

activity and dissent can occur within less formal, more flexible and more fleeting protest networks. Analyzing the nature of these ICT-enabled grassroots movements, which, while in a state of constant flux, are able to manage resources, build social capital, construct participant identities, and deliver meaningful results, will greatly aid our understanding of the new, augmented reality of civil society and protest movements.

### 8.5 Mediated Co-Presence and Augmented Witnessing

Within the context of the Euromaidan protest, ICT use created affordances for co-presence and witnessing in different, but equally meaningful ways for those close to the epicenter and those in remote locations who were nonetheless engaged with the protest. These findings highlight the importance of understanding how ICTs can afford protest participants these alternative forms of emotional and symbolic connection, despite temporal, physical, or experiential distance. This research also highlights how ICTs can play a role in creating unity, cohesiveness, and solidarity within a decentralized, loosely connected protest movement, in both instrumental and affective senses.

Kulyk (2013) suggests that modern collective memory is “fundamentally and profoundly mediated.” The nature of this mediation depends on the particular circumstances that a protest participant might find themselves in in relation to the protest events and their connectedness to media and digital networks around the protest that enable co-presence beyond physical means. In the case of the Euromaidan protest, the internet and social media augmented this mediated co-presence in different ways for interview participants, depending on their proximity to

the epicenter of the protest and their civic activity experience. However, across the board respondents noted that ICTs afforded them new ways to think about the meaning of “being present” and “being together” within the protest movement, and augmented their instrumental presence and togetherness (affording them new action opportunities) and their affective connection to the protest event (affording them new ways to connect emotionally and process their feelings about the protest).

To participants at the protest’s physical core, ICTs afforded an expanded protest experience in which physical presence (and co-presence) was augmented by mediated awareness of other people who were also engaging with the protest. To participants who were engaging remotely, ICTs afforded a co-presence that was mediated by live video streams, Facebook posts, and tweets, allowing for collaborations through ICT-enabled *shortcuts* between network nodes and enabling a sense of togetherness beyond physical co-presence. For participants of all kinds, the internet and social media also provided a common visual and symbolic protest language of posters, photos, slogans, and hashtags, demonstrating how the concept of co-presence can be rearticulated given that it might not necessarily be tied to physical proximity or geographical co-location.

As ICTs afford the emergence of spectacular, ‘statement’ protest movements (Tufekci 2014), allowing participants to express identities, grievances and claims to a broader public, they also enable protesters to be at once participants in, and witnesses of, protest events. The spectacular nature of such protest movements means it is important to see how the internet and social media afford them to be highly visible spectacles when they become an integral part of the protest fabric and what

implications this has on how the witnessing of these events happens. The advent of interactive, real-time media with new affordances for engagement, participation, and co-presence, augments the mechanics of witnessing in protest events, entangling its basic elements in new and complex ways. The internet and social media already are routinely used to broadcast, record, and make sense of our daily lives. Because of this, the Euromaidan protest participants reported that in a moment of political and social upheaval they found themselves not only being participants in the protest, but also simultaneously bearing witness (through ‘being there,’ through live streaming, through creating records and archival content) and being the audience that witnessing was directed at, making sense of what they saw and heard. The experience of the event and its story/narrative enmeshed and became one, complicating the process of witnessing historic events by mixing offline and online components and extending them into each other. In this case, the personalized and distributed nature of the internet and social networks, coupled with its real-time reporting capabilities, afforded participants both large-scale collective experiences of protest events, and the telling of “multiple protest histories” based on individual experiences and identity shifts.

#### 8.6 Discussion: Towards a Theory of Augmented Dissent

As the research for this dissertation has found, ICTs augmented the Euromaidan protest movement and its events in several important ways. They allowed for distributed organizing thanks to useful digitally enabled *shortcuts* between individuals and groups; helped create networks of protest communities and influential individuals to provide *connective tissue* and work together across geographic and

temporal barriers; as well as enabled an *augmented* sense of *co-presence* afforded by the emotional and symbolic “common protest language” on social media and new mediated opportunities for bearing witness. Importantly, the findings also have demonstrated that ICT affordances or constraints for protest participation differ depending on factors such as individuals’ civic activism experience and their distance from the protest, whether geographical, temporal, or existential.

The theory of communicative affordances emerged as a useful lens through which to examine the role of ICTs in protest participation, as it provided some answers to all three of the research questions with which this study is concerned. The findings tell us how protest participants used the internet and social media in their protest activity, shedding light on how the use of digital tools was contextualized by participant experience and distance from the physical core of the protest. The findings also allow us to gain insight into how participants perceived the opportunities for action and the limitations of their engagement provided to them by technologies, especially through discussion of alternative means of participation, self-organizing in the absence of clear political leadership, and the impact of ICTs on participant identities, both collective and personal. Finally, the findings reveal how the affordances of ICTs augmented protest participation, offering individuals and communities new ways to engage in the protest over experiential, emotional, and physical distance. ICTs provided citizens with opportunities to renegotiate what it meant to be protest participants when one was afforded new, meaningful ways to be co-present, to bear witness, and to connect with others within the protest movement in

unexpected, serendipitous ways, melding online and offline participation into one, augmented reality of dissent.

Scholarly research on the role of ICTs in social movement and protest activity is now at a stage when studying digital technologies as an autonomous sphere is no longer possible. The challenge of studying the affordances of the internet and social media for protest and dissent, then, is to scrutinize how cultural values, user practices, political and civic contexts, and technological infrastructures are “constantly and intricately entangled” (van Dijck and Poell 2015), transforming civic action, political engagement, and dissent practices. The dialogic nature of the internet and the technologies it underpins, its affordances for erasing or replicating modes of inequalities, or for creating the spaces for oppositional discourse, its changing notions of time and place, must be examined in the context of how the digital permeates, augments and extends the physical or material, and not regarded as a separate, “virtual” plane of operation. Such a comprehensive approach would allow us to better understand what new types of participation and discourse are possible once the internet is in play, and how else citizens and communities, augmented digitally, can engage in dissent.

As we move toward a world in which the internet and digital technologies increasingly permeate every layer of existence, be in political, social, or cultural, further productive theorizing about the affordances of ICTs for protest participation demands that we shift away from a duality of the “virtual” and the “real,” or the artificial divide between online and offline activism and protest action, since most active citizens are always-already both. The internet as a new kind of space, platform,

tool, and sphere, redefines relations between humans, matter, non-matter, and reconfigures relation of technology to culture, necessarily demanding a new discourse about the effects of technology on political change and social transformations.

Although we may be tempted to consider ICTs as enabling new, digital, non-corporeal forms and means of political and civic engagement, human bodies remain present in these interactions and continue to influence the discourse and the potential for political and civic transformations, as they are augmented and extended by digital platforms and connections. The Euromaidan protest, which was about reconfiguring civic identity (the meaning of being a Ukrainian citizen) as much as about political action, dignity and human rights (Onuch 2014), emerged as exactly this kind of dissent phenomenon, where bodies and technologies augmented each other. In this context, physical distance and protest experience were mitigated by digitally enabled shortcuts and new means of witnessing and engagement, resulting in augmented organizing, augmented information flows, augmented co-presence, and augmented protest identities, never only digital or physical, but always, to different degrees, both.

Theorizing about the role of ICTs in political change, social movements, and dissent gains more depth if we choose to understand these technologies as embedded in the fabric of society and everyday life, and their use and perception as a part of our personal and collective identities. A more comprehensive theory of *augmented dissent* that considers how the digital and the physical aspects augment each other and work in concert could become a more useful approach to understanding the impact of emerging media technologies on the rapidly shifting scene of political and social transformations not only in the post-Soviet spaces, but around the world. The social

movements and protests in modern societies, whether democratic, authoritarian, or more complex ones, increasingly exist both online and offline, negotiating the entanglement of the physical and the digital, the ties between atoms and bits, and they should be studied as such.

### *8.7 Further Research*

This research study is limited as it only considers the case of one mass protest in a particular country and is, therefore, constrained by country-specific context. In view of this, further research would benefit from comparative work that could include looking at protest movements in different post-Soviet countries (and beyond) and comparing how their differing political, social, economic, and media contexts affect the nature of augmentations at the crux of online and offline protest activity. Still, the findings of this research offer insights into how ICTs might afford or constrain both opportunities for instrumental action and for affective engagement across cultures and societies.

At the same time, it is worth giving more attention to the opportunities digital media afford authoritarian governments for repression and surveillance (Pearce 2014) and the affordances for protesters and activists to mitigate these pressures, as increasingly, state bodies and law enforcement agencies are learning more about civic media and grassroots technology use.

Finally, further research in the area would benefit from more in-depth investigations of how different kinds of digital media, technologies, and platforms—such as live video streams, geolocation technology, or ephemeral social media tools—may afford different opportunities for action or create new challenges for

protest participants. This would move the scholarly literature toward a more firmly grounded understanding of what protest activity will look like in the future, given the already complicated role that social media and the internet are already playing as they are used by citizens engaging in augmented protest.

## Appendices

### *Appendix 1. Content Analysis Sources*

| Source name  | <b>EuroMaydan</b>   | <b>EvromaidanSOS</b>  | <b>Galas</b>  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Source description                                       | Macro-community of/for Euromaidan participants and sympathizers   | Meso-community of those coordinating, seeking or offering legal assistance and other forms of support during Euromaidan             | Micro-community coordinating logistics and connecting those in need of and offering resources during Euromaidan |
| Source URL   | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan/?fref=ts</a> | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/EvromaidanSOS/?ref=ts&amp;fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/EvromaidanSOS/?ref=ts&amp;fref=ts</a> | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Galas.org.ua/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/Galas.org.ua/?fref=ts</a>     |
| Number of followers ( <i>as of February 20, 2016</i> )   | 303,016   | 123,678   | 7,300   |
| Number of posts, Period 1 (November 25-December 2, 2013) | 1,369   | 140   | 28  |
| Number of posts, Period 2 (January 6-13, 2014)           | 307   | 268   | 8   |
| Number of posts, Period 3 (February 17-24, 2014)         | 3,002   | 876   | 223   |

## *Appendix 2. Coding Frame for Online Content*

*Post source name:* Name of the Facebook group that information is taken from.

*Post Period:* Sampling period during which the Facebook post was published, at the beginning, middle or end of the overall protest duration. Designate as (1, 2, 3).

*Post Date:* Date the Facebook post was published (copy and paste from post).

*Post Time:* Time the Facebook post was published (copy and paste from post).

*Post URL:* Permalink to the Facebook post (copy and paste from browser).

*Post function:* Based on the post content, describe the function of the post to the best of your ability by assigning it into one of the subcategories below. If the post doesn't fit into any of the existing subcategories, assign it into the "other" category, and add a note to explain in the "Comments" box. One post can have more than one function, so these are not mutually exclusive and can overlap.

- *Inform general:* the post contains general information related to the protest or current news and events
- *Ask for info:* the post asks for information about a protest-related matter, person or thing, such as contact information, locations, etc.
- *Publicize event/action:* the post promotes a protest-related event or activity, may link to a separate event page or give other details, such as time and place, description, etc.
- *Report on activity/event:* the post reports on a protest-related event or activity that occurred, may include date, time, location, details of event, links, images or video from event

- *Ask for help*: the post asks for help or assistance with something protest-related, such as protest needs, finding resources, funding, physical help, organizing help, volunteer human resources, finding missing people. NB: if the post asks for information, please assign it to the “*ask for info*” category, not this one.
- *Amplify/aggregate*: the post is a repost of a post from another Facebook community or a different citizen media source about something protest-related that this group wants to make its readers aware of, may or may not include additional comments beyond the original post. Original post is usually embedded or reposted by hand with indication of original source.
- *Other*: please use this category to tag posts that do not fit into any of the above subcategories, and add a note to explain in the “*Comments*” box.

*Content published*: if the post includes any content beyond text, such as links (to other Facebook pages or other sites), images, videos or other multimedia content, please assign it to a category and briefly describe what the content is. Please paste the links into the subcategory window and save the other content forms if possible. One post can contain more than one type of content, so these are not mutually exclusive and can overlap.

- *Links*: please note and paste any links that appear in the post
- *Images*: please briefly describe the image or photo and save a copy of the original, if possible

- *Video*: please briefly describe the video and save a copy of the original, if possible
- *Other multimedia*: please briefly describe the type and content of the multimedia and save a copy of the original, if possible

*Actors mentioned*: if the posts mentions or refers to any of the following types of actors, including individuals, groups or institutions, please assign it to one of the subcategories below. If the post mentions kinds of actors that do not fit into any of the existing subcategories, assign it into the “*other*” category, and add a note to explain in the “*Comments*” box. One post can mention more than one kind of actor, so these are not mutually exclusive and can overlap.

- *Activists/protesters*: the post mentions Euromaidan activists or protest participants in any form
- *NGOs/CSOs*: the post mentions Ukrainian non-government, non-profit or civil society organizations in any form
- *Politicians/officials*: the post mentions Ukrainian political figures or government/state officials, on any level: national, regional, local, may include MPs, ministers, head of state, heads of regional or local administrations, heads of political parties, and others; may also include mentions of state/government bodies or agencies as cumulative groups, such as Parliament, Cabinet of Ministers or Ministry, Presidential Administration, etc.

- *Police/law enforcement*: the post mentions police officers or forces, law enforcement bodies, agencies or individuals, riot police, “Berkut,” National Guard, Interior Ministry, State Security service, etc.
- *Media and journalists*: the post mentions Ukrainian or international media outlets, mainstream media, online media (not citizen), or journalists, reporters, media photographers or cameramen, documentary makers
- *Citizens of Ukraine*: the post specifically refers to or mentions “citizens of Ukraine” as a category of individuals
- *International orgs*: the post mentions international bodies, agencies or organizations, such as the EU, the EC, the UN, NATO, etc.
- *Other*: please use this category to tag posts that mention types of actors that do not fit into any of the above subcategories, and add a note to explain in the “*Comments*” box.

*Discourse themes*: consider what broader themes, ideas or meanings the post contains or falls into. What does what they are saying mean? Some of these are relatively hard to code as meanings can be vague. If you are in doubt, put in a 99 to indicate a possible match. If the post doesn’t fit into any of the existing subcategories, assign it into the “other” category, and add a note to explain in the “*Comments*” box. One post can contain more than one discourse, so these are not mutually exclusive and can overlap.

- *Euromaidan protest*: the post directly refers to or discusses the Euromaidan protest, its events, activity, participants, goals, meaning, etc.
- *Ukrainian politics*: the post in some way mentions or refers to Ukrainian politics or the political situation in the country, may be in reference to Euromaidan, but not necessarily
- *International politics*: the post in some way mentions or refers to international politics or the role of Ukraine on the international political arena, may be in reference to Euromaidan, but not necessarily
- *Ukrainian media coverage*: the post in some way discusses Ukrainian media coverage or framing of Euromaidan or previous protests in Ukraine, may be complimentary, critical or otherwise
- *International media coverage*: the post in some way discusses Ukrainian media coverage or framing of Euromaidan or previous protests in Ukraine, may be complimentary, critical or otherwise
- *Civil society and activism*: the post mentions or refers to in some way the Ukrainian civil society or activism in general, not just within the context of Euromaidan or protests, including volunteering, fundraising, and other grassroots activity
- *Power and agency attribution*: the post discusses or attributes power or agency to individuals, groups or categories in Ukraine or elsewhere in the context of Euromaidan protests and political and social change

- *Other*: assign the post here if it doesn't fit into any of the other subcategories, and add a note to explain in the "Comments" box.

*Discussion of ICTs*: the post explicitly discusses in some way the role of ICTs, such as the Internet, social media, mobile phones, computers, or other internet-enabled devices in the Euromaidan protest activity or the protest movement development. If the post doesn't fit into any of the existing subcategories, assign it into the "other" category, and add a note to explain in the "Comments" box. One post can contain more than one type of discussion, so these are not mutually exclusive and can overlap. and possible mentions of ICT use in the context of witnessing events and ICTs as a tool for co-presence

- *ICT role in protest (positive)*: the post mentions or gives an example of positive role or effect of ICTs in the context of the Euromaidan protest
- *ICT role in protest (negative)*: the post mentions or gives an example of negative role or effect of ICTs in the context of the Euromaidan protest
- *ICTs vs. mainstream media*: the post contains mentions of or discussion of ICT use versus mainstream media and their relative value within the context of the Euromaidan protest, including comparisons with citizen journalism, user-generated content, etc.
- *Comments on specific ICT use*: the post contains mentions, examples or comments on the use of specific ICT-related technologies, tools, services or platforms within the context of the Euromaidan protest

- *Ukrainian ICT users vs. international*: the post mentions or comments or gives examples of Ukrainians using ICTs versus users in other countries, within the context of the Euromaidan protest or related contexts
- *ICTs and witnessing*: the post contains explicit mentions of ICT use in the context of witnessing or bearing witness to protest events
- *ICTs and co-presence*: the post contains explicit mentions of ICT role in fostering perceptions or feelings of co-presence among Euromaidan protest participants or observers
- *Other*: assign the post here if it doesn't fit into any of the other subcategories, and add a note to explain in the "*Comments*" box.

*Comments (free text)*: for further details/comments on anything that does not fit into available categories, as noted above.

*Appendix 3. Interview Protocol*

**Augmented Dissent: Affordances of ICTs for Citizen Protest**

**Interview Protocol**

Intro:

This is \_\_\_\_\_. I am the researcher from the University of Maryland who recruited you for this interview. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

You were randomly selected for this interview from a pool of Ukrainian individuals between the ages of 18 and 65, amassed from public communities, societies and groups of citizens in Ukraine connected to the Euromaidan protests, who volunteered to participate in the study.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study, which explores the participation of Ukrainians in political and civic activity around Ukraine's Euromaidan protests. As I mentioned, this interview is part of my dissertation research project at the Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. I am interested in how Ukrainians participate and make meanings of their engagement with politics around Ukraine, and how they use ICTs to do so.

This project is conducted with the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Sarah Oates. There are no direct benefits to participants. However, possible benefits may include a greater understanding of how Ukrainians engage with ICTs and politics around Ukrainian issues. Your participation is voluntary and you can terminate your participation at any time.

I have 12 questions about your participation in the political activity around the Ukrainian political situation and the Euromaidan events in 2013-2014.

The interview will last about 60 minutes and will focus on your experiences with participating in politics around Ukraine's Euromaidan protests. For example, one question asks "What does political participation mean to you?" Another example of a question is, "In your experience, what are the tools and platforms used most to engage in political activity?"

Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by using pseudonyms instead of participants' identities and storing data in a secure location, i.e. investigators' computers. In addition, your name will not be identified or linked to the data at any time unless you give your express consent to reveal these identities. Only the principal student investigator and the advisor will have access to the participants' names. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the principal student investigator, Tetyana Lokot, by telephone (301-455-6507 or +38050-661-1020) or email ([tlokot@umd.edu](mailto:tlokot@umd.edu)). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact the Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Maryland, by email ([irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu)) or telephone (301-405-0678). This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Your participation in this project indicates that you have stated you are at least 18 years of age; you have read the consent form or have had it read to you; your

questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

**Do you agree to participate? [If yes, continue. If no, stop.]**

The interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and I would like to ask your permission to record this interview for accuracy. The recording will be available only to my advisor and me, and your identity will be kept confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any report. If your words are included in the research results, any identifying information will be removed.

1. General political and civic activity: What does political participation mean to you? Have you ever engaged in any kinds of political or civic activity? (e.g., voting, petitions). Please describe which ones and how you were involved.
2. Membership in organizations: Are you a member of any political or civic/community organizations, movements, campaigns? Please describe how you got involved and what your role is.
3. Have you participated in political activity around Ukraine before the 2013-2014 period? Please describe.
4. How did you first find out about the current political events in Ukraine? How do you keep up with what is going on?
5. How did you first engage with other Ukrainians around the Euromaidan events in Ukraine? Please describe your actions and the platforms/spaces where they occurred.

6. What does it mean to you to be taking part in politics around Euromaidan in Ukraine? What forms does your engagement in the political activity around Ukraine Euromaidan take? Did you join or take part in any groups or organizations, and which ones?
7. In your experience, what are the tools, tactics and platforms used most by you and other citizens in your community or group to engage in political activity around Euromaidan in Ukraine? Can you describe how you, your community, group or organization used these?
8. Did the Internet and social media play a role in how you engaged in political activity around Euromaidan? How did any of these influence your activities or decisions? Can you give some examples? (Mainstream media vs. citizen media)
9. Do you feel like the Internet and social media allow you new opportunities to participate or to do things differently as a Euromaidan participant? Can you give some examples?
10. Do you think the presence of Internet and social media has impacted how others, including media and citizens not participating, see and perceive the Euromaidan events? If yes, how? Why do you think so?
11. Can you describe the venues and spaces of the protest? Can you talk about the involvement of political institutions and grassroots civic institutions in the action?

12. What were the issues you as a protest participant had to be wary of/worry about? Did you have any concerns about things like security, privacy, control of information space? Please elaborate.

Thank you for your time and for answering my questions. If you have any questions or concerns about our interview, please don't hesitate to contact me.

*Appendix 4. Coding Results for EuroMaydan*

(based on coding frame: items coded and percent of total posts per period)

|  | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2, 2013,<br>1,369 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13,<br>2014, 307 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Period 3</b><br>(February 17-24,<br>2014, 3,002 posts) | <b>EuroMaydan<br/>Total</b> (over three<br>periods, 4,678<br>posts) |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | % of total items coded in period (# of items with code)                              | % of total items coded in period (# of items with code)              | % of total items coded in period (# of items with code)                  | % of total items coded overall (# of items with code)               |
| Post function: inform general                                | 51.5% (705)  | 85% (261)  | 53.4% (1,604)  | 54.9% (2,570)   |
| Post function: ask for info                                  | 1.5% (21)  | 14% (43)   | 1.2% (35)  | 2.1% (99)   |
| Post function: publicize event/action                        | 22.9% (313)  | 1% (3)   | 14.4% (432)  | 16% (748)   |
| Post function: report on activity/event                      | 30.8% (421)  | 6.8% (21)  | 33.7% (1,012)  | 31.1% (1,454)   |
| Post function: amplify/aggregate                             | 9.2% (126)   | 22.1% (68)   | 53.8% (1,614)  | 38.6% (1,808)   |
| Post function: ask for help                                  | 1.8% (25)  | 0.7% (2)   | 7.2% (215)   | 5.2% (242)  |
| Post function: other   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.7% (21)  | 0.4% (21)   |
| Content: links   | 30.1% (412)  | 76.2% (234)  | 59.4% (1,782)  | 51.9% (2,428)   |
| Content: images  | 7.2% (98)  | 7.5% (23)  | 23.8% (715)  | 17.9% (836)   |
| Content: video   | 14.8% (203)  | 33.2% (102)  | 32.7% (983)  | 27.5% (1,288)   |
| Content: other multimedia                                    | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (2)  | <0.1% (2)   |
| Actors: activists/protesters                                 | 46.6% (638)  | 56% (172)  | 81.8% (2,455)  | 69.8% (3,265)   |
| Actors: NGOs/CSOs  | 7.4% (101)   | 4.6% (14)  | 14.6% (443)  | 11.9% (558)   |
| Actors: politicians/officials                                | 80.9% (1,108)  | 40.1% (123)  | 46% (1,380)  | 55.8% (2,611)   |
| Actors: police/law enforcement                               | 39.5% (541)  | 33.6% (103)  | 24.2% (727)  | 29.3% (1,371)   |
| Actors: media/journalists                                    | 24.4% (334)  | 6.8% (21)  | 7.1% (214)   | 12.2% (569)   |
| Actors: Ukrainian citizens                                   | 32.6% (446)  | 14% (43)   | 22.3% (668)  | 24.7% (1,157)   |
| Actors: International orgs                                   | 8.2% (112)   | 7.5% (23)  | 8.5% (254)   | 8.3% (389)  |
| Actors: other  | 8.3% (113)   | 26.7% (82)   | 6.6% (197)   | 8.4% (392)  |
| Discourse: Euromaidan protest                                | 89.8% (1,230)  | 54.7% (168)  | 87.4% (2,623)  | 85.9% (4,021)   |
| Discourse: Ukrainian politics                                | 38.6% (528)  | 14.3% (44)   | 33.4% (1,003)  | 33.7% (1,575)   |
| Discourse: international politics                            | 17% (233)  | 4.2% (13)  | 19.8% (594)  | 17.9% (840)   |
| Discourse: Ukrainian media coverage                          | 2.3% (32)  | 1% (3)   | 2.4% (73)  | 2.3% (108)  |
| Discourse: international media coverage                      | 2% (28)  | 1% (3)   | 4.1% (122)   | 3.3% (153)  |
| Discourse: civil society and activism                        | 8.5% (117)   | 13.7% (42)   | 26.8% (804)  | 20.6% (963)   |
| Discourse: power and agency attribution                      | 4.9% (67)  | 5.9% (18)  | 2.9% (87)  | 3.7% (172)  |
| Discourse: other   | 0.1% (2)   | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (5)   | 0.2% (7)  |
| ICTs: role in protest positive                               | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (6)   | 0.1% (6)  |
| ICTs: role in protest negative                               | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (2)  | <0.1% (2)   |
| ICTs: vs. mainstream media                                   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (5)   | 0.1% (5)  |
| ICTs: comments on specific use                               | 0.3% (4)   | 0.7% (2)   | 0.2% (6)   | 0.3% (12)   |
| ICTs: Ukrainian users vs. international                      | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | <0.1% (1)  | <0.1% (1)   |
| ICTs: co-presence  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (2)  | <0.1% (2)   |
| ICTs: witnessing   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (6)   | 0.1% (6)  |
| ICTs: other  | 0% (0)   | 0.3% (1)   | 0% (0)   | <0.1% (1)   |

Appendix 5. Coding Results for EvroMaidanSOS

(based on coding frame: items coded and percent of total posts per period)

|  | <b>EvroMaidanSOS<br/>Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2,<br>2013, 140 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanS<br/>OS Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13,<br>2014, 268 posts) | <b>EvroMaidanS<br/>OS Period 3</b><br>(February 17-<br>24, 2014, 876<br>posts) | <b>EvroMaidanS<br/>OS Total</b> (over<br>three periods,<br>1,284 posts) |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | % of total items coded in period (# of items with code)                               | % of total items coded in period (# of items with code)                  | % of total items coded in period (# of items with code)                        | % of total items coded overall (# of items with code)                   |
| Post function: inform general                                | 75% (105)   | 90.2% (242)  | 57.3% (502)  | 66.1% (849)   |
| Post function: ask for info                                  | 24.2% (34)  | 10.4% (28)   | 4.9% (43)  | 8.2% (105)  |
| Post function: publicize event/action                        | 28.6% (40)  | 12.3% (33)   | 15.1% (132)  | 15.9% (205)   |
| Post function: report on activity/event                      | 2.9% (4)  | 43.3% (116)  | 30.1% (264)  | 29.9% (384)   |
| Post function: amplify/aggregate                             | 30% (42)  | 53.7% (144)  | 33.2% (291)  | 37.1% (477)   |
| Post function: ask for help                                  | 13.6% (19)  | 23.5% (63)   | 29.5% (258)  | 26.5% (340)   |
| Post function: other   | 0% (0)  | 1.1% (3)   | 1.4% (12)  | 1.2% (15)   |
| Content: links   | 33.6% (47)  | 75.4% (202)  | 69.3% (607)  | 66.7% (856)   |
| Content: images  | 2.1% (3)  | 6.7% (18)  | 15.9% (140)  | 12.5% (161)   |
| Content: video   | 0.7% (1)  | 10.1% (27)   | 5.5% (48)  | 5.9% (76)   |
| Content: other multimedia                                    | 0% (0)  | 0.7% (2)   | 0% (0)   | 0.2% (2)  |
| Actors: activists/protesters                                 | 66.4% (93)  | 96.6% (259)  | 79.1% (693)  | 81.4% (1,045)   |
| Actors: NGOs/CSOs  | 1.4% (2)  | 17.9 (48)  | 3.9% (35)  | 6.6% (85)   |
| Actors: politicians/officials                                | 12.9% (18)  | 34.7% (93)   | 10.8% (95)   | 16% (206)   |
| Actors: police/law enforcement                               | 32.9% (46)  | 60.1% (161)  | 54.6% (478)  | 53.3% (685)   |
| Actors: media/journalists                                    | 10.7% (15)  | 17.9% (48)   | 6.4% (56)  | 9.3% (119)  |
| Actors: Ukrainian citizens                                   | 8.6% (12)   | 7.8% (21)  | 16.3% (143)  | 13.7% (176)   |
| Actors: International orgs                                   | 5.7% (8)  | 11.9% (32)   | 4.7% (41)  | 6.3% (81)   |
| Actors: other  | 1.4% (2)  | 16% (43)   | 6.1% (53)  | 7.6% (98)   |
| Discourse: Euromaidan protest                                | 74.3% (104)   | 83.2% (223)  | 78.1% (684)  | 78.7% (1,011)   |
| Discourse: Ukrainian politics                                | 0.7% (1)  | 13.1% (35)   | 9% (79)  | 8.9% (115)  |
| Discourse: international politics                            | 0% (0)  | 4.9% (13)  | 9.2% (81)  | 7.3% (94)   |
| Discourse: Ukrainian media coverage                          | 1.4% (2)  | 2.6% (7)   | 2.6% (23)  | 2.5% (32)   |
| Discourse: international media coverage                      | 0.7% (1)  | 1.9% (5)   | 2.1% (18)  | 1.9% (24)   |
| Discourse: civil society and activism                        | 3.6% (5)  | 8.2% (22)  | 9.9% (87)  | 8.9% (114)  |
| Discourse: power and agency attribution                      | 0.7% (1)  | 0% (0)   | 0.3% (3)   | 0.3% (4)  |
| Discourse: other   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0.3% (3)   | 0.2% (3)  |
| ICTs: role in protest positive                               | 0% (0)  | 0.4% (1)   | 0% (0)   | ~0.1% (1)   |
| ICTs: role in protest negative                               | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0.1% (1)   | ~0.1% (1)   |
| ICTs: vs. mainstream media                                   | 2.1% (3)  | 0.7% (2)   | 0% (0)   | 0.4% (5)  |
| ICTs: comments on specific use                               | 3.6% (5)  | 1.1% (3)   | 0.9% (8)   | 1.2% (16)   |
| ICTs: Ukrainian users vs. international                      | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  |
| ICTs: co-presence  | 0.7% (1)  | 0.7% (2)   | 0.2% (2)   | 0.4% (5)  |
| ICTs: witnessing   | 0.7% (1)  | 1.1% (3)   | 0.6% (6)   | 0.8% (10)   |
| ICTs: other  | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  |

*Appendix 6. Coding Results for Galas*

(based on coding frame: items coded and percent of total posts per period)

|  | <b>Galas Period 1</b><br>(November 25-<br>December 2,<br>2013, 28 posts) | <b>Galas Period 2</b><br>(January 6-13,<br>2014, 8 posts)      | <b>Galas Period 3</b><br>(February 17-<br>24, 2014, 223<br>posts) | <b>Galas Total</b><br>(over three<br>periods, 259<br>posts)  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Code (categories may overlap and are not mutually exclusive) | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>           | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i> | <i>% of total items coded in period (# of items with code)</i>    | <i>% of total items coded overall (# of items with code)</i> |
| Post function: inform general                                | 67.9% (19)   | 50% (4)  | 48.4% (108)   | 50.6% (131)  |
| Post function: ask for info                                  | 7.1% (2)   | 0% (0)   | 5.4% (12)   | 5.4% (14)  |
| Post function: publicize event/action                        | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 4.5% (10)   | 3.9% (10)  |
| Post function: report on activity/event                      | 0% (0)   | 12.5% (1)  | 3.6% (8)  | 3.5% (9)   |
| Post function: amplify/aggregate                             | 53.6% (15)   | 37.5% (3)  | 16.1% (36)  | 20.8% (54)   |
| Post function: ask for help                                  | 35.7% (10)   | 100% (8)   | 72.6% (162)   | 69.5% (180)  |
| Post function: other   | 3.6% (1)   | 0% (0)   | 0.4% (1)  | 0.8% (2)   |
| Content: links   | 10.7% (3)  | 12.5% (1)  | 35.4% (79)  | 32% (83)   |
| Content: images  | 10.7% (3)  | 0% (0)   | 14.8% (33)  | 13.9% (36)   |
| Content: video   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| Content: other multimedia                                    | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| Actors: activists/protesters                                 | 28.6% (8)  | 62.5% (5)  | 52.9% (118)   | 50.6% (131)  |
| Actors: NGOs/CSOs  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 3.1% (7)  | 2.7% (7)   |
| Actors: politicians/officials                                | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 2.2% (5)  | 1.9% (5)   |
| Actors: police/law enforcement                               | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 3.1% (7)  | 2.7% (7)   |
| Actors: media/journalists                                    | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 2.2% (5)  | 1.9% (5)   |
| Actors: Ukrainian citizens                                   | 28.6% (8)  | 12.5% (1)  | 16.6% (37)  | 17.8% (46)   |
| Actors: International orgs                                   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| Actors: other  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| Discourse: Euromaidan protest                                | 25% (7)  | 75% (6)  | 65.9% (147)   | 61.8% (160)  |
| Discourse: Ukrainian politics                                | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 1.3% (3)  | 1.2% (3)   |
| Discourse: international politics                            | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| Discourse: Ukrainian media coverage                          | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 1.8% (4)  | 1.5% (4)   |
| Discourse: international media coverage                      | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| Discourse: civil society and activism                        | 25% (7)  | 50% (4)  | 4.5% (10)   | 8.1% (21)  |
| Discourse: power and agency attribution                      | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.4% (1)  | 0.4% (1)   |
| Discourse: other   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| ICTs: role in protest positive                               | 3.6% (1)   | 0% (0)   | 2.2% (5)  | 2.3% (6)   |
| ICTs: role in protest negative                               | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| ICTs: vs. mainstream media                                   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 1.3% (3)  | 1.2% (3)   |
| ICTs: comments on specific use                               | 0% (0)   | 12.5% (1)  | 9.4% (21)   | 8.5% (22)  |
| ICTs: Ukrainian users vs. international                      | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)  | 0% (0)   |
| ICTs: co-presence  | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 1.8% (4)  | 1.5% (4)   |
| ICTs: witnessing   | 0% (0)   | 0% (0)   | 0.9% (2)  | 0.8% (2)   |
| ICTs: other  | 3.6% (1)   | 0% (0)   | 1.3% (3)  | 1.5% (4)   |

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