



Microsociology of big events:

the dynamics of eventful solidarities in “For fair elections” and Euromaidan protest movements

Oleg Zhuravlev

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute

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Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Content

Abstract.....	11
Chapter I. General Introduction: the hope of eventful change	13
The contexts: authoritarianism and depoliticization.....	17
Chapter II. Theory: eventful approach, pragmatic sociology, social movement studies.....	27
Eventful identity.....	27
Eventful protests: change or reproduction?.....	30
How do events move: pragmatic sociology and political semiosis.....	37
Pragmatic of culture.....	44
Chapter III. Methodology.....	51
Methods: political semiosis, pragmatic approach, life stories analysis.....	51
Narrative analysis.....	51
Life stories.....	58
Case selection: why Russia and Ukraine?	59
Fieldwork and Data	64
Russian case	64
Ukrainian case.....	67
Chapter IV. The Russian case: “Bolotnaya”	70
Introduction: political or a-political?	70
The dynamics of the events	73
The trigger of the protest: moral investment and moral shock	75
The eventful identity of the “Bolotnaya” movement	78
Collective identity in slogans.....	81
Demands and voting strategies	85
The crisis of the movement	91
Chapter V. After the protest: from rallies to local movements.....	96

Pragmatics of local collective action.....	96
Politicization of local activism.....	106
Integration familiar and public	106
Politics and Getting Real Things Done	109
Facts and Politicization	115
Biographical Hybrids	119
Illustrated by one interview	125
The Emergence of a Group Style	127
Conclusion.....	134
Chapter VI. The Ukrainian case: Euromaidan	136
Introduction: Civil war of civic nation?	136
The dynamics of the events	144
The trigger of the protest: moral shock.....	155
The Eventful Identity of Euromaidan	162
The Politics of Authenticity	167
Chapter VII. After the protest: polarization.....	172
Transformation of eventful identity: from inclusion to exclusion.....	175
Not true Ukrainians are almost Russians.....	181
Radicalization of nationalism	185
Stigmatization by exclusion	187
Stigmatization by inclusion	189
As seen by the eyes of Antimaidan.....	195
Local and national.....	198
Biographical trajectories of Antimaidan activists	201
Conclusion.....	226
Chapter VII. General conclusions.....	234

Events.....	234
Cultural and pragmatic factors	237
Structural factors	239
Bibliography	244

Abstract

The thesis is devoted to a micro-sociological analysis of “big” protests. Comparing Russian “For fair elections” movement with Ukrainian Euromaidan, I study how eventful identities, solidarities, and cultural representations that emerged in the course of the protests then developed and changed contributing to either socio-political change, or reproduction. I analyze dynamics of both the uprisings themselves and the dynamics of post-protest collective action. The first part of the text analyzes a phenomenon new to Russia: the politicized local activism that has emerged in the wake of the “For fair elections” protests. Urban activism in Russian has been rarely politicized; rather, it addressed “familiar”, “close to home” problems and that kept distance from “politics”. Anti-Putin rallies of 2011-2012 changed the landscape of Russian civic activism. Inspired by the experience of collective actions, protesters resolved to keep it going in their own neighborhoods, establishing local activist groups and tackling smaller-scale problems typical of apolitical activism, e.g., defending parks from deforestation and buildings from demolition, and working for improvements. However, activists attributed oppositional and “political” meanings to practices that had been rather apolitical before the protests of 2011-2012. Thus, my study revealed the significant eventful change in the political culture of Russian urban activism. At the same time, in many cases mass events lead to the intensifying of pre-existing political and cultural structures, cultures, identities and discourses. In the second part of the text I show that Euromaidan consecutively first weakened and then enforced the ethno-cultural and political split between Western and Eastern Ukrainian citizens. While “Euromaidan” initially succeeded at creating a new civic identity that united the protesters, this identity failed to spread beyond the event. Paradoxically, the

initial push for civic unity and inclusivity, when intensified, transformed into a tool of promoting exclusivity. The text is based on the analysis of in-depths interviews and focus-groups. The conclusions address the theoretical discussions within the eventful approach in social science, pragmatic and cultural sociology.

Chapter I. General Introduction: the hope of eventful change

Some of the biggest protests against authoritarianism and for democratization in the post-soviet region since the time of the colored revolutions has been the Russian “For fair elections” (“За честные выборы”) and Ukrainian “Euromaidan” movements. These disruptive mass mobilizations seemed to be “revolutionary” events to both participants and opponents because having begun as reactive protest campaigns (against electoral fraud in Russia and in response to the dispersion of a student rally by special forces in Ukraine), they rapidly developed into demands for regime change. But what is more important is that both Russian and Ukrainian protesters believed that these events were bringing about fundamental social transformations. These protests emerged within societies that have been considered as apolitical and undemocratic by many researchers (e.g., Prozorov, 2008; Way, 2015). That is why the protests were conceived as both surprising and promising by academics as well (e.g., Bikbov 2013).

Researchers, journalists, and politicians have been debating the causes and possible consequences of the protests. However, there are still no empirically grounded analyses of the long-term causes of mobilization in Russia and Ukraine. My research does not attempt to give an answer to the question of why these protests occurred. My intention is rather to explore some consequences of these abrupt protest events. The question I pose in the thesis is whether these large protests that happened in authoritarian countries lacking institutionalized civil society and effective political representation has led to any significant social transformations. The focus of my research is thus eventful protests and social change.

In both countries, any revolutionary inspiration that emerged from the protests was quickly dispersed by political skepticism. Encouraged and empowered by the inspiring mass rallies, Russian protesters believed that their apolitical and conservative society had been changed dramatically. The protest movement, however, failed to articulate a political program that could attract wider audiences or consolidate the supporters. Consequently, after a year of mobilization, the protest movement faced a severe crisis. This crisis together with state repression demobilized the coalition of the opposition leaders and demoralized rank-and-file protesters.

In Ukraine, participants of the Euromaidan movement believed they had solved the problems the Orange revolution failed to do. The protesters assured themselves that the new Maidan overcame regional cleavages between Western and Eastern parts of the country, built up institutions of civil society and replaced the old political elite and oligarchs with new political forces that were democratic and accountable to society. It did not happen, however. Euromaidan was followed by the rise of the so-called “Antimaidan” movement and then by the emergence of the civil conflict in the Eastern and Southern parts of the country. At the same time, even though some new politicians entered the political scene, the old elites preserved their political power. Although some new forms of popular counter-power or, rather, counter-democracy (in terms of Pierre Rosanvallon) were introduced, they failed to reverse the restoration of the new oligarchic neopatrimonial and authoritarian state. Finally, the Russian military invasion transformed the armed conflict into a conventional war (Arel and Driscoll, 2016). The war, in turn, reinforced the civil conflict and reanimated regional cleavages and xenophobia in society, all the while strengthening the positions of the Ukrainian far-right.

The optimistic and pessimistic views on the protests are both

partial. Indeed, the protest events on one hand invoked some social change, but, on the other hand, they turned out to be the instruments of social reproduction. In Ukraine, the politicization that occurred during the Euromaidan and the war influenced the formation of a new national identity, facilitated the emergence of new civil society institutions and inspired some political reforms. At the same time, the rise of nationalism, its transformation into the ideology of the new oligarchic government together with the rise of far-right (un)civil society alienated large groups of people from both the political consensus and the emerging nation (Arel and Driscoll, 2016). In Russia, the huge rallies against President Vladimir Putin gave birth to a new civic activism that then developed into well-organized activist groups and the movement of independent municipal deputies (Kolesnikov and Volkov, 2017). At the same time, the nationwide opposition coalition disintegrated. However, this allowed the charismatic blogger and activist Alexey Navalny to become the leader of the stagnating movement. After 2014, Putin manufactured a counter-politicization. After the annexation of Crimea, he efficiently stigmatized the opposition in the eyes of major groups of Russian society (Kalinin, 2017).

Why did the events manage to change some things while they failed to change others? And what influenced the post-protest trajectories of the protesters? Why did Russian protesters start, en masse, to create and join local activist groups after the protest declined? And why did Euromaidan activists become combatants and civil volunteers helping Ukrainian military forces while avoiding engagement in the new political movements and parties? It is easy to explain the post-protest dynamics referring to solely “external” causes, for example, the Russian military invasion in Ukraine, and Putin’s authoritarian turn and repressions. However, one needs to look at the hidden micro-dynamics of collective action

in order to understand the mechanics of both social change and social reproduction caused by the protests. In my text, I will analyze these micro-dynamics of social changes and inertia caused by the two events. I will show that micro-analysis of post-protest collective action can reveal some hidden but significant processes behind “big” events. The aim of my work is thus to develop a microsociology of eventful social change.

My thesis is a study in the microsociology of big events. I will focus on solidarities that have emerged from the protests. These solidarities have expanded beyond the events themselves, invoking new dynamics of collective action. I will consider various dimensions of these solidarities, first of all, as collective identities. I will show how these new solidarities have influenced post-protest social change and, alternatively, political inertia.

Then, I will trace how the events emerged and how certain eventful identities and solidarities that were born out of the protests developed thereafter. Finally, I will analyze how these micro-dynamics have influenced broader processes, namely changes in political cultures and in *social* identities.

In her book on eventful protests against authoritarianism, Donatella della Porta proposes the “conception of eventful democratization [that looks] at waves of protest for democracy [and focuses on] the internal dynamics and transformative capacity of protest” (della Porta, 2014: 30). Della Porta’s research question is similar to my own as it focuses on protests for democratization in authoritarian countries, considers these protests in terms of eventful mobilizations, and explores micro-dynamics of collective action: “Rather than analyzing the long-term effects of these moments as foundational (or not) for democracy, I will reconstruct protests during episodes of democratization, their origins, characteristics, and short-term effects. Without assessing the long-term consequences of

these episodes to see if they bring about sustained changes, I define them on the basis of their short-term effects in moving a step forward in the direction of democracy” (ibid: 17). However, the longitudinal research I have engaged in has allowed for not only short-term but also some middle-term effects to be considered.

In my thesis, I will explore the dynamics of eventful collective identities and solidarities within two of the newest major protest movements—the Russian “For fair elections” and Ukrainian “Euromaidan”—through the lens of the theory of political events, pragmatic sociology, and social movement studies. I believe that the results of my research can contribute to both theoretical debates on the role of events in contentious politics and understanding of what happened in Russia and in Ukraine in 2011–2013 and 2013–2014 respectively.

The contexts: authoritarianism and depoliticization

Both Euromaidan and the “For fair elections” movements were responses to the increase in authoritarianism: In Russia, the early 2000s were the most important period for the contemporary political regime. Ivan Grigoriev and Anna Dekalchuk have established three key dimensions of authoritarianism in Putin’s Russia:

It was in the first years of the first Putin administration that the regime moulded its character and learned its ways. A vast and theoretically rich literature documents and explains this process. Golosov (2011; 2013) shows how making regional authorities responsible for the United Russia party electoral performance and embedding the local and regional political machines into a single integrated system of delivering votes became the major building

block of the new Russian political order. Gel'man (2003; 2005) describes the governmental policies towards opposition parties to show how a new equilibrium of the “imposed consensus” was created. Lipman (2005) and Lipman and McFaul (2005) chronicle the governmental campaign to suppress independent media (first and foremost, television) (Grigoriev and Dekalchuk, 2015: 3).

These circumstances led to the situation within which apolitical local activism and rare and short-lived one-issue protest campaigns became the most widespread forms of collective action in Russia. At the same time authoritarianism determined electoral protests. As Natalia Savelyeva and Margarita Zavadskaya explain,

by many counts Russia belongs to this type of authoritarian regimes with all ambiguities of “elections without choice” (Hermet and all 1978), implying that voters have the right to vote, but do not choose. The latter often forms a weak point of a regime: under certain circumstances fraud favors the break-out of mass protests or even “electoral revolutions which may end by an incumbent's dismissal and opposition's ascent to power with further regime change” (Savelyeva and Zavadskaya, 2014: 221).

In Ukraine in the 2010s “[President] Yanukovich used his party’s control over the legislature to rapidly consolidate a greater monopoly of power than had existed before him” (Way, 2015: 78). Lucan Way describes the authoritarian tendencies that were similar to what had been happening in Russia: “Press freedom declined and electoral fraud increased, while parliament took on ‘a largely rubber-stamp role.’ In late 2010, Yanukovich successfully pushed through a reversal of the 2004 constitutional reforms” (ibid.). However, it would be wrong to argue that Viktor Yanukovich was a dictator who

diminished the democracy developed by the previous truly democratic “orange” coalition: “increased pressure on journalists and expanded executive powers—were in sync with the aims of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko during their tenure” (ibid.). The difference was that Yanukovich managed to monopolize political power while Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko failed. Yanukovich learned that blocs and coalitions were temporary and unstable while a strong party was more useful in gaining political control over parliament and press. That is why Yanukovich chose another strategy and created the “Party of Regions” (“Партия регионов”) that was well organized and accumulated money from the Ukrainian oligarchs: “Backed by Ukraine’s ‘first party in power’ that dominated both the presidency and the legislature, Yanukovich was able to overcome the formal fragmentation of power, utilize the legislature to concentrate control, and pressure the judiciary to a much greater degree than had been possible in the Yushchenko era” (ibid.: 79). This strategy turned out to be successful: “As of September 2013, officials from the Donbas area controlled half of all government ministries, including the ministries of energy and the interior, and occupied high-ranking positions in two-thirds of the country’s provinces. Finally, like Kuchma, Yanukovich benefitted from the support of the country’s richest oligarchs” (ibid.). However, what the Yanukovich regime lacked was legitimacy based on ideology or the ability to suppress uprisings. That is why after the ex-President announced he would not sign an agreement with the European Union, the Euromaidan protests led to the regime collapse. As Way puts it, “Yanukovich’s authoritarian state—while relatively well-funded and organized—lacked the non-material sources of cohesion necessary to carry out consistent and sustained high-intensity repression. As a result, the regime collapsed in late February 2014” (ibid.: 90). Thus, the increase in authoritarianism in

both Russia and Ukraine made the regimes stronger and, at the same time, weaker in the face of mass protests. Another circumstance that influenced protests was depoliticization.

Post-communist depoliticization has largely been considered in terms of societies' retreat into the private sphere. Scholars studying late Soviet society have shown that fear of repression limited protest behavior and decreased interpersonal trust (Kharkhordin, 1996; Shlapentokh, 1989). This led to the emergence of private networks that consisted of people who felt they could rely on each other. As Ingrid Oswald and Viktor Voronkov puts it,

The public, or, rather, the “official” sphere was the realm of society which was ruled by formal law and repression through state authorities. All other social realms were regulated by norms of everyday life [...] in the Soviet Union the social spheres governed by norms of everyday life expanded at the expense of the realms where formal law prevailed. At the same time, informal and formal spheres were completely mutually exclusive. What was allowed to be expressed in the one sphere was—almost automatically—perceived as non-valid in the other one. [...] The official sphere, with its formal judicial norms, became more and more clearly demarcated from the world of everyday life, with its own ideas of decency, compromise and justice. As these spheres and their distinctive legal norms became separated, informal legal norms became increasingly dominant in daily life. [...] Not everything that happened outside the official-public sphere was “private”. Initially (in the early Soviet era), the private realm was rather undeveloped and hardly perceived as worthy of protection. This became manifest in the ideology of collective life or in facilities such as the famous “kommunalka” (Oswald and Voronkov, 2004: 105).

When the official and policed public sphere of the Soviet Union disappeared after its collapse, nothing came to replace it, and the subjects retreated into their circles of friends and relatives. In his research of the civil society in post-communist Europe, political scientist M. Howard claims that there is a direct interrelationship between the persistence of a private sphere and the lack of political and civic participation in post-communist countries (Howard, 2003).

Howard argues that post-communist societies inherited a specific type of structure of social bonds that makes it difficult for civil society to develop:

[In Communist societies] as a result of the high politicization of the public sphere, many people could express themselves openly only within close circles of trusted friends and family. Moreover, in a shortage economy, with few available goods to buy, connections played an essential role [...]. Today, a decade after the collapse of the system that created and sustained this vibrant private sphere, networks of close friends and family remain important [...]. Unlike in many Western societies—where voluntary organizations have become a central part of the social and political culture, and where people join organizations in order to meet new people and to expand their horizons through public activities—in postcommunist societies, many people are still invested in their own private circles, and they simply feel no need, much less desire, to join and participate in civil society organizations (Howard, 2002: 163).

However, depoliticization is not just a lack of political participation. One needs to decipher this normative umbrella term to use it as a conceptual notion. In my view, post-communist depoliticization as a social and historical condition has generated certain beliefs as well as some specific modes of vision, attitudes,

and feelings toward politics in general (Zhuravlev, Erpyleva and Savelyeva, 2018). Among others, I am specifically interested here in two features of post-communist depoliticization: distrust of political representation and negation of any political teleology. Generally speaking, this means the rejection of the ideological, the representational, and the total, in favor of the factual, the direct, and the concrete. As Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim argue in their book on post-communist civic culture, the latter is based on the Kantian belief that “the principle of representation contradicts the self-determination of the individual” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 209). The authors claim that “there is a subterranean connection between wanting to have fun and grassroots opposition, which has so far been little noticed but which constitutes the actual core of what one could call the ‘politics of youthful antipolitics’. Those who (whatever their intentions) refuse to care about institutionalized politics (parties, organizations etc.), but playfully follow the attractions of, for instance, advertising, are unintentionally acting very politically by depriving politics of attention, labour, consent and power” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 162). The authors also argue that this anti-political and anti-representational ethics presupposes the cult of specifics, or concreteness as opposed to political or ideological generality: “An ethics of everyday life is developing its own subpolitics, which is often very local and concrete and which politicians don't recognize because they don't know the cultural nerve systems of these individualized cultures. It is an ‘antipolitics’. We are witnessing today an actively unpolitical younger generation which has taken the life out of the political institutions and is turning them into zombie categories. This Western variant of antipolitics opens up the opportunity to enjoy one's own life and supplements this with a self-organized concern for others that has broken free from large

institutions” (ibid.: 162). This trust in concreteness has been the result of the distrust of ideological discourses. As political theorist Sergey Prozorov writes on the post-Soviet condition, the latter is characterized by the “messianic suspension of all teleology, whereby the sacrifices of the past and the dreams of the future are all equally redeemed in the timeless now [...]. In a sense, the 1990s were the time of the many ends of history, the simultaneous expiry of all teleological metanarratives that ultimately displaced the very teleological terrain in which they could compete. With the end of the Soviet order history ended not because of the ultimate supremacy of Western liberalism, but rather because the pitiful demise of the Soviet order made the very idea of rivalry between grand teleological metanarratives inconceivable” (Prozorov, 2008: 214). “Putin’s bureaucratic depoliticization—the author argues—suspends the legitimacy of all political options (witness the decline of all ideological parties, from liberals to communists) without itself occupying a substantive ideological locus” (ibid.: 220). In this thesis I will show that post-communist depoliticization has dramatically influenced the protests. The distrust of political teleology determined the protesters’ disinclination to articulate a political program for the movements. The rejection of political representation together with the anti-teleological “timeless now” temporality contributed to the emergence of the eventful protests that celebrated the unique and singular moments of togetherness within the autonomous and distant from “politics” spaces. In other words, post-communist depoliticization influenced the protests making them varieties of what I will define as *the politics of authenticity*. However, the influence on the protests of post-communist depoliticization was not only negative. As I will show, the politics of authenticity impacted the post-protest trajectories and repertoires of collective action.

Thus, authoritarianism and depoliticization were among the

significant factors at hand that influenced the protests. It should be noted that the two are interrelated. Authoritarian states in post-Soviet countries have been based on depoliticized, fractured societies. As Allen C. Lynch points out: “a weak state structure facing a fragmented and exhausted society [...] fatefully constrained Russia’s prospects for political and economic development. [...] Too little structure existed in post-socialist Russia [...] to give shape effectively to the country’s political and economic course on behalf of public purposes” (Lynch, 2013: 50). According to Lucan A. Way, central to understanding both Russia and Ukraine is that “the weakness of formal rules makes it very difficult to characterize how in fact the systems operate” (Way, 2015: 91). Finally, Prozorov explains Russian authoritarianism in terms of the disintegration of state and society:

We can thus better understand why the frequently discussed depoliticization of the Russian society took place almost immediately after the anticommunist revolution in August 1991. Rather than a betrayal of the anticommunist revolution, this societal retreat into immanence was rather its logical conclusion. The exodus of the society from the sphere of value-based political antagonism left Russian politics to its own devices, so that it increasingly resembled a spectacle with an ever-diminishing audience. In turn, the alienated, spectacular, self-consciously inauthentic nature of the postcommunist political order progressively contributed to this exodus, while from the mid-1990s onwards the regime began to consciously foster it as a convenient way to achieve the withdrawal of the system into self-immanence. It is therefore possible to speak of a mutual exclusion of the state and society from each other’s respective domains, whereby formal politics and social life unfold at such a distance from each other that it is increasingly impossible to

conceive of any possible relation between them (Prozorov, 2008: 214).

My thesis is devoted to a comparative analysis of the Russian and Ukrainian protests and their outcomes. The main problem I study is a post-protest social change. In the next chapter, I will describe my theoretical framework. I combine eventful approach, pragmatic sociology, cultural sociology, and social movement studies to explore eventful collective action in process. In the third chapter, I will expose my methodological approach and my data. I will describe how I combine discourse analysis, including narrative analysis, and life stories. In the fourth chapter, I will analyze the event of the Russian “For fair elections” protests. I will show the dynamics of the protest’s collective action and its subjectivities. In the fifth chapter, I will turn to an analysis of the process of the “re-grounding” of these subjectivities and solidarities. I will study post-protest local activism inspired by the “Bolotnaya” protest movement. In the sixth chapter, I will analyze the “eventful identity” of the Euromaidan mobilization. I will show some ambiguities and contradictions behind this new form of protest nationalism. I will demonstrate that Euromaidan nationalism could be interpreted as both inclusive and exclusive. In the seventh chapter, I will analyze the violent conflicts that occurred between the supporters of Maidan and Antimaidan movements in Ukraine and the role protest nationalism played in these. Finally, I will draw some theoretical conclusions in the last chapter. I will show how pragmatic sociology as well as political semiosis method help to develop eventful approach. I will make some conclusions about possibilities of democratization in the authoritarian capitalist societies. Finally, I will show how eventfulness as a temporal phenomenon is changing within the new revolutionary protests. In other words, I will show

the fruitfulness of my theoretical approach and how it contributes to the ongoing discussion on protests, social change, and democracy.

Chapter II. Theory: eventful approach, pragmatic sociology, social movement studies

In his study of the French Revolution, William Sewell (1996) suggested an innovative approach to the analysis of social change. Sewell argued that the outburst of violence and public discussion that attended the taking of the Bastille shaped a new collective identity, a civic nation, the French people. In their programmatic article, Sewell and Doug McAdam define historical events as “turning points in structural change, concentrated moments of political and cultural creativity when the logic of historical development is reconfigured by human action but by no means abolished” (McAdam and Sewell, 2001: 102).¹

Eventful identity

Analyzing Russian and Ukrainian protests I will show that the collective identities of these events were the results, not preconditions of the mobilizations. I will term them “eventful

¹ However, an event does not appear out of thin air: its impact depends on the selfsame structures the event transforms. We simply must consider that events have their own rationale and causative force. Sewell stresses that a political event is not an accidental occurrence, but a convergence of different social processes, the outcome of the synchronization and mutual aggravation of crises in different parts of society. “A revolution is not just a forceful act in that it expresses the will of the people. [...] Only when it became clear that the taking of the Bastille had forced the king to yield effective power to the National Assembly could the acts of the Parisian people be viewed as a revolution in this new sense. The epoch-making cultural change—the invention of a new and enduring political category—could therefore only take place in tandem with practical changes in institutional and military power relations” (Sewell, 1996: 853).

identities”. In their work dedicated to an analysis of theories of identity, James Jasper and Francesca Polletta assert that in certain situations, the events of the protest can, in itself, form a collective identity. They explain the phenomenon of eventful identity by using the concept of moral shock:

‘Moral shocks’ produced, for example, by a photograph of a tortured animal or the disaster at Three Mile Island can mobilize people who do not know each other or the organizers...political activity itself provides that kind of solidarity:...we are caring, critical citizens. These ‘movement identities’ may come to serve much the same function as a preexisting collective identity (Jasper and Polletta, 2001: 291).

The American sociologist Jeffrey Goldfarb, in their stead, suggested calling the global wave of protests of the years 2011 to 2014 “the new social movements,” thus designating those movements in which mobilization was not merely a means to an end, but the goal of collective action. He argues that demonstrators occupied a space and the way they did so, the way they interacted with each other, was an important end of the movement. The form of interaction, as well as the identity and interest content, was central (Goldfarb, 2012).

How could the identity formed by such protests be characterized? Sidney Tarrow, in his research on the American Occupy Wall Street movement, perceptively remarked that such an identity is not founded so much on belonging to certain social groups or political camps, but on an occurrence of co-presence experienced by participants during collective action. He termed this type of identification the “we are here identity”: “By their presence, they are saying only, ‘Recognize us!’ If Occupy Wall Street resembles any movement in recent American history, it would actually be the new

women's movement of the 1970s <...> their foremost demand was for recognition of, and credit for, the gendered reality of everyday life" (Tarrow, 2011).

Researchers have different answers to the question of what the emergence and meaning of such a type of identity is related to. As such, the sociologist Cihan Tugal asserts that these identities are the result of the central role played by the middle class in these new protests. Tugal writes,

"The contradictoriness of these revolts manifested itself not primarily in the demands formulated (as they often tended to avoid concrete demands), but in the composition of the revolters, their de facto demands (such as the toppling of the Egyptian dictator Morsi through a dictatorial coup), their discourse, and their 'prefigurative' style. The common egalitarian style--a collectivistic occupation of the Commons that prefigured (or lived and anticipated) the world to come, rather than demanding it--was unintentionally coupled with class distinction...This specific predisposition to politics (where the pleasure of debate trumps the formulation of demands) should be added to the political markers and markers of class" (Tugal, 2015: 80).

Other researchers suggest that such identities are, on the contrary, linked to a falling apart of social classes and an atomization of social groups, accompanied by an "evaporating" of group self-awareness and political ideologies (c.f., for example, Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2003; Eliasoph, 1997). There are multiple points of view regarding the political effectiveness of movements united by such identities. Ernesto Laclau believes that ideologically "empty" emblematic identities are a guarantee of the unity of a movement, giving it strength (Laclau, 2005), while at the same time Ivan Krastev believes

that eschewing an articulation of concrete interests and preferences weakens a movement (Krastev, 2014). This brings us to the central problem of eventful protests and social change.

Eventful protests: change or reproduction?

There are two different aspects of eventfulness of protests. The first one is conceptualized in a phenomenological analysis that sees an event as a specific type of collective experience. This experience is an involvement in an abrupt collective action that transforms subjectivities and reshapes social relations within the very occurrence of mobilization. Such focus can be found in the concept of ‘eventful protests’. Donatella della Porta claims that “protest events have cognitive, affective and relational impacts on the very actors that carry them out”. Within the events, the author argues, “participants experiment with new tactics <...> create feeling of solidarity, and consolidate organizational networks” (della Porta, 2008: 30). Following William Sewell, della Porta analyzes specific temporality of an event within which a protest becomes “an arena of debates”, “brings about new networks”, and develops “feeling of solidarity in action” (ibid.: 32).

The second aspect of eventfulness of protests is its structural effect. Analyzing how movements emerge from the experience of “eventful protests” such as social forums or local struggles della Porta focuses on the temporality of a singular mobilization while for Sewell himself who studies tectonic changes “internal temporality of events” is “duration between the initial rupture and the subsequent structural transformations” (Sewell, 1996). In fact, Sewell analyzes both aspects of eventful temporality. On the one hand, he argues that

the event “certainly raises the emotional intensity of life” and therefore intensifies collective action and public debates. Just as della Porta does, Sewell underlines the productive, or generic character of protest mobilizations that can generate new cultural meanings, collective identities and social relations. As I already wrote, in his brilliant study of French Revolution Sewell shows that the new understanding of a revolution and people’s sovereignty as well as new civic national identity emerged immediately after the taking of the Bastille and were the result of innovative interpretation of the violent attack on Bastille as a popular uprising. This interpretation was constructed in the intensified public debates among Parisian activists, deputies and intellectuals in the course of the mobilization itself. On the other hand, eventful temporality is a duration when structural changes in different realms of society coincide and constitute a societal structural transformation. Sewell argues that “a revolution is not just a forceful act that expresses the will of the people, but such an act that puts into place a new political regime. Only when it became clear that the taking of the Bastille had forced the king to yield effective power to the National Assembly could the acts of Parisian people be viewed as a revolution in this new sense. The epoch-making cultural change – the invention of a new and enduring political category - could therefore only take place in tandem with practical changes in institutional and military power relations” (Sewell, 1996: 853). Thus, a historical event is the result of a coincidence of different disruptive events in different social realms which is accomplished by significant institutional changes.

This approach is similar to one of Pierre Bourdieu who, in his analysis of the political crisis of 1968, develops his own sociological theory of protest events. Bourdieu shows how the growth in the size of the population of both university students and

lecturers led to their downclassing due to the fact that the diploma of the former turned out to be devaluated while careers of the latter became at risk. As a result, conflicts between students and professors who defended the university order intensified and, after the crises in different departments and faculties coincided and met the crises in agencies of cultural production, the general crisis emerged (Bourdieu, 1988).

Bourdieu considers event as a coincidence of various structural changes that happens within the specific eventful temporality. He argues that “a regional crisis can extend to other regions of social space and thus become transformed into ... a historical event, when, through the effect of acceleration which it produces, it is able to bring about the coincidence of events <...> It follows that the position of the different fields in the general crisis and the behavior of the corresponding agents will depend ... on the relation between the social time-scales germane to each of these fields, that is to say between the rhythms with which, in each one of them, the processes generating its specific contradictions are accomplished” (Bourdieu, 1988: 173). For Bourdieu eventful temporality facilitates what he calls the synchronization of various crises. Unlike Sewell Bourdieu argues that eventful temporality does not produce anything new but accelerates integration of critical moments in different fields of social space: the event “displays and amplifies the effect of synchronization produced by the crisis” (ibid.: 185). At the same time Bourdieu does not reject the crucial role the event itself plays in social change. To the contrary, only the analysis of structural changes that precede an occurrence of the event helps us understand its transformative capacity. As the author claims, “paradoxically, it is no doubt only if we reinsert the critical moments into the series where the principle of their intelligibility resides,

negating what ... makes for their singularity, that we can understand what is the unique criterion of definition of the critical situation, if not 'creation of unpredictable novelty', at least as intrusion of the possibility of novelty ... as open time when all futures appeal possible, and are indeed so for that very reason" (ibid.: 162).

Bourdieu and Sewell both analyze political events in their relation to social structures. However, if Bourdieu focuses on the structural causes of the event, Sewell explores consequences. That is why while Sewell shows how one abrupt event then invokes a series of other disruptive occurrences that together lead to structural change, Bourdieu analyzes the event as a mechanism that accelerates and makes visible various local ruptures that being integrated and reinforced within eventful "public time" produce the experience and image of a "historical event".

Thus, the experience of rupture in the routine of everyday life and coincidence of structural changes in various social fields within an eventful temporality are two different dimensions of eventfulness of protests. The two are interrelated: the crisis produces an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and joy that mobilize collective action, initiate public debates, and intensify collective emotions. In turn, mobilized human action reinforces the uncertainty, synchronizes various social struggles, articulates new cultural meanings, and brings about social change (Bourdieu, 1988). However, these two dimensions are different. Moreover, there are major political events that produce the condition of uncertainty, mobilize collective will and inspire a struggle for social change, but do not lead to any structural transformations. Should we say that such mobilizations are not eventful? I believe, the answer is no. However, we should clearly distinguish between the two aspects of eventful temporality when defining and analyzing events. Indeed, as

Adam Moore argues, these two dimensions of eventfulness are as different as they can constitute contrast definitions of what an event is: “events stand apart from this ordinary background of life. This way of conceptualizing events stands in clear contrast with Sewell and Sahlins, who base their distinction upon analytically defined outcomes — structural transformations — rather than social experience and narration, where I think they can be more properly grounded (Moore, 2011: 300). In my thesis, I intend to link the two aspects of eventfulness of protests raising the following question: under what conditions an experience of rupture can become a factor of social and political change?

As discussed earlier, eventfulness of protests can be understood in terms of collective experience of rupture in daily life and in terms of structural changes. Although the two can be different aspects of the same dynamics, they also can be viewed as contradictory. Indeed, while eventful structural change presupposes durable temporality of multiple transformations that occur in parallel social worlds, the experience of eventfulness is one-time. This contradiction becomes especially visible in some of contemporary protests that avoid political representation and an articulation of a political program. Indeed, as Kevin McDonald argues in his research on globalization conflicts and social forums, “the refusal of representation, the temporality of the present and the culture of immediacy involve a rejection of the idea of mediation and indeed mediated experience ... The temporal experience of activists is strongly informed by the social experience of information technology: activists live a culture where the mobile phone accelerates temporality and mediates a culture of simultaneity <...> The temporal pressure associated with actions produces a sense of urgency that is central to the culture of activism, and to forms of

action constructed in terms of ‘the event’”. The author claims that many recent protests are characterized by “the imperative of immediacy, the utopia of instant exchange and simultaneity” (McDonald, 2010: 119).

I suppose that events can invoke structural changes if they can attract and mobilize people outside spatially and temporally limited occurrence but also if they can change dominant cultural meanings, identities, and power relations. But how can eventful subjectivities, solidarities, and cultural meanings that are invented in action cause a transformation of dominant collective identities, social relations and symbolic structures? My argument is that the structural change an event produces can be an extension of subjectivities, relations and meanings that emerged within an event beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of the happening.

We should take into account the fundamental paradox of eventfulness. The ambiguity of eventful protests is that their atmosphere of spontaneity and uniqueness facilitates their expansion as it invokes the process of contagion but, at the same time, hinders their extension beyond limited time and space because the latter requires long-term collective action and cultural work, political representation and ideological debates that are often rejected as bureaucratic and authoritarian, as something that contradicts the very eventfulness as such. Inclusiveness of eventful protests is one example of this ambiguity. For instance, Donatella della Porta argues that the recent mass protests, especially American Occupy, Turkish Gezi and ‘Arab Spring’ were exemplary ‘eventful’ because produced collective identities and shared emotions within the very experience of the mass uprisings that were shared by thousands and were immanent to the very acts of mobilizations. These ‘contingent’ identities and emotions were definitive for the protests as they were

more important for protesters themselves than political agendas, ideologies, parties etc. The lack of strong ideological and representative impositions as well as highly emotional and self-referential character of these protests made them tend to be “open to all”, she argues (della Porta, 2015). However, I suppose that the same features of political events can make them perceived by outsiders as not open but exclusive and sometimes even repressive. In fact, uniqueness and singularity of an event can make its effect limited by its direct experience. The openness experienced by participants of the event can be perceived as sectarian exclusiveness by outsiders. In other words, protesters should decipher the protest meaning for outsiders who do not share the eventful experience with these protesters. Otherwise outsiders can see a protest as a danger for them.

In order to understand how events can invoke structural changes we need to elaborate the theory of political events defining them as not only happenings but also social mechanisms that multiply, reinforce and extend the effects caused by these happenings. We need to explore the events’ capacity to go beyond themselves as unique and singular occurrences.

Born out of the experience of an event, new identities and social connections spread through society and change it due to the synchronization and accumulation of changes in different social spaces. Sewell writes that

“events should be conceived of as sequences of occurrences that result in transformations of structures. Such sequences begin with a rupture of some kind--that is, a surprising break with routine practice...an occurrence [then] becomes a historical event...when it touches off a chain of occurrences that durably transforms previous structures and practices. This happens above all when a rupture in

one particular structural and spatial location also produces reinforcing ruptures in other locations” (Sewell, 1996: 843).

We see that, according to Sewell, structural changes are the result of the spread of an event beyond the boundaries of the region where it emerged, of its migration to contiguous social spaces. But how do events arise? How, specifically, do they migrate from one social space to another? In my opinion, this practical aspect of eventfulness is not sufficiently explored in Sewell’s seminal works.

How do events move: pragmatic sociology and political semiosis

Pragmatic sociology, in analyzing individual and collective experiences in different situations, allows us to examine in detail, on the phenomenological level, how events arise and spread beyond a specific time and place. Laurent Thevenot, in his recent works, suggested a theory of “regimes of engagement,” which analyses the various ways and scopes of people’s engagement with the surrounding world. He writes, “In our contemporary societies human beings constantly need to change the scope of their engagement, shifting along a scale between greater or lesser generality” (Thevenot, 2005). According to this theory, an experience of an event corresponds to a specific regime of exploration which is “exclusively present-oriented. Value is placed on surprise and the assurance of an excited self depends on the unflagging rejuvenation of the environment--including one’s body--which has to be arranged to produce the shock of newness” (Thevenot, 2014: 15). But does this shock produce a social change?

Pragmatic sociology of Bruno Latour who focuses on the transition from smaller scopes of social action to bigger ones² allows a better comprehension of the problem that interests me. Latour studies spread of eventful experiences and meanings beyond the scope of the event. He thinks that this movement produces social transformation. In his famous study of the “Pasteurization of France,” Latour continues his study of technologies of belief, which contribute to transforming localized laboratory practices into universally recognized “scientific facts”. He strives to answer the question of how people begin to believe in the reality “discovered” by scientists in laboratory settings. Latour believes that scientific facts “are like trains, they do not work off their rails” (Latour, 1983: 155). In other words, in order for people beyond the laboratory to believe in the reality “discovered” within the laboratory, that reality must be convincingly presented in new contexts and situations.

In his work, Latour shows how Pasteur first “localized” the problem of Siberian ulcers in his laboratory, where he “discovered microbes,” then transferred his experiment to a farm. He practically built that up into a laboratory, and then initiated grandiose transformation in agriculture, technology, and the collection of

² Here, we should clarify the difference between Thevenot’s and Latour’s approaches to the question of scale. Thevenot writes: “the development of microhistory, accompanied by a strengthening of attention paid to ‘changes in scale,’ contributed to a rethinking of the classical sociological conundrum regarding the relationship between the micro and macro levels of analysis. An understanding of scale taken from cartography leads us to the perspective of the researcher, and to the problems he is confronted with in understanding society. What interests us, however, is the multiplicity of levels of involvement of the actors themselves, their interaction with the world and among themselves in activities of different scales” (Thevenot, 2006).

statistics on a national scale. As a consequence, he succeeded in having microbes recognized as a biology reality. At the same time, he succeeded in having the political danger of microbes recognized as they threatened all of France, and thus confirmed the political influence of microbiologists, simultaneously as political agents and those who fight microbes.

In reality, Latour formulates his own theory of the political event, one not determined by “social context” but, on the contrary, one which changes society. Latour writes,

The congenital weakness of the sociology of science is its propensity to look for obvious stated political motives and interests in one of the only places, the laboratories, where sources of fresh politics as yet unrecognized as such are emerging. Microbiology laboratories are one of the few places where the very composition of the social context has been metamorphosed. It is not a small endeavor to transform society as to include microbes and microbe watchers in its very fabric. [Pasteur’s discovery of microbes] is [a] fresh source of power for modifying society and cannot be explained by the state of the society at the time (Latour, 1983; 158).

The reality of the discovery of microbes by researchers became the lever for creating social change, which works due to a change of scale; from the laboratory to France in its entirety.

This spread of “scientific facts” beyond the space of their “discovery,” their taking root in society as a whole, occurs alongside changes in common social practice. As Latour states,

It is only by hindsight that we say that in this year 1881, Pasteur invented the first artificial vaccination. By doing so we forget that to do so it was necessary to move...from the laboratory to the field, from the microscale to the macroscale...But how can laboratory practice

be extended? ...only by extending the laboratory itself. Pasteur cannot just hand out a few flasks of vaccine to farmers and say: ‘OK, it works in my lab, get by with that.’ If he were to do that, it would *not* work. The vaccination can work only on the condition that the farm chosen...for the field trial be in some crucial respects transformed according to the prescriptions of Pasteur’s laboratory...On the condition that you respect a limited set of laboratory practices (disinfection, cleanliness...) you can extend to every French farm a laboratory product made at Pasteur’s lab (ibid.: 155).

What was at first a capture of interest by a lab scientist is now extending through a network that spreads laboratory products all over France... Since scientific facts are made inside laboratories, in order to make them circulate you need to build costly networks inside which they can maintain their fragile efficacy. *If this means transforming society into a vast laboratory, then do it* (ibid, 166).

Latour’s theory allows us to study what facilitates and what hinders an expansion of eventful “inventions” outside an event itself. I will show that the networks of elections observers allowed to translate protest experiences and meanings into urban activism in Russia. I will also show that within Ukrainian case protesters both managed and failed to distribute the new national identity into outside the revolutionary “laboratory” of Euromaidan where activists “discovered” a civic nation. That is why the huge event of the Ukrainian uprising failed to bring about social transformations it proclaimed.

How do we trace the trajectory of eventful identities that relocate into “parallel” social spaces? The American researcher Robin Wagner-Pacifici critiques Latour for not paying enough

attention to the diversity of cultural forms in which an event can manifest itself as an event and point to a new, reliable, and stable reality. She writes, “It is the cultural work of the performatives, demonstratives, and representations to exile the mutability and dynamism of events as events appear to take the form of hard facts” (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010). In her more recent works dedicated to war, acts of terrorism, and violence, she formulates an original, culturosociological theory and methodology for studying political events (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010; Wagner-Pacifici, 2017). One of the main theses of her theory is that events are constantly in flux. Events become incarnated in different genres, such as, for example, representations and performative speech acts. Thanks to these genres, events last, multiply themselves, and develop--on the one hand asserting their completeness and maturity, and on the other continuing to arise in new forms, meanings, and contexts.

Within this lies their paradox. It is important to note that different groups of creators and consumers of culture--who help these events to happen, last, and end--endlessly argue over the meaning of these events and struggle for legitimate interpretations. Wagner-Pacifici agrees with Sewell that political events create new collective identities that contribute to social changes: “Great things are at stake, including the remaking of social and political identities and the redistribution of power and resources” (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010: 1358). Additionally, she rightly criticizes Sewell for not describing in enough detail the process of the spread of cultural manifestations of an event in time, space, and various forms, as “[the representations of events] need to be generated and sent outward into the wider world of audiences and witnesses at a distance.” For that reason, she urges “to consider the [events’] specificities of the modalities, the diverse domains, and their interrelations” (Ibid).

In fact, Wagner-Pacifci, just like Latour, poses the problem of “building the rails” upon which representations of the event spread throughout “society,” transforming culture and power. The only difference is that Latour studies “costly networks,” adding their materiality to the “symbolic structures” common to sociology, while Wagner-Pacifci focuses above all on “cultural forms.” She writes,

The pathway of an event is never one-dimensional and linear--even as social and political actors consider the respective demonstratives, performatives, and representations, there is also the significant problem of identifying the accumulated effect of multiple modalities at work at the same time. The question of colligation here suggests a need for specification of historical technologies of communication and circulation. Modern mass-mediated communication travels in an instant, makes representations ubiquitous, and inserts the public into private, intimate domains of offices and homes (ibid.: 1374).

She takes a significant step in the direction of normative and essentialist understanding of the event, insisting that those structural changes studied by Sewell are the consequences not of a monolithic, completed event, but the effect of a non-alignment of the different cultural forms of its incarnation and reincarnation, or of the disputing of the political meaning of the event among different publics. Wagner-Pacifci argues,

“The restlessness of events is a function of the ongoing interpretive and interactional competitions and contestations among principal actors and witnesses...specific emergent significations may not quite work or may work only with particular participants or in particular contexts. Thus, we look not only for articulations between diverse semiotic modalities to make sense of the shapes being taken by events but also, and especially, for disarticulations to local event

fault lines. In fact, the transformational potential of events is best seen in these disarticulations. Thus...Latour...grasps but does not highlight the ways that these handoffs are managing the unsettled shock wave of an event (ibid.: 1372). This ambiguity of events makes eventful protests vulnerable to both social change and social reproduction.

In fact, as Adam Moore demonstrates, large events are capable of not just changing, but also reproducing, established social structures. Analyzing the violent clashes between Bosnian and Croatian football fans in the Bosnian city of Motsar in 2007, Moore argues that a disruptive event blocked the articulation of a perception of social world that would be alternative to the dominant ethnocentric discourse and therefore contributed to reproduction rather than transformation of social structures. “As an instance of ethnic violence — rather than mere hooliganism — the events served as warning for those who sought to carve out alternative ways of coexisting and identifying themselves” the author claims. Moore argues that although social scientists often presuppose that social structures reproduce themselves in the normal course of daily life, while disruptive events tend to change structures, we should recognize that often social reproduction requires “maintenance work”, while abrupt events can be a mechanism of this work. In his research the author argues that “since the end of the war, ethnicity has remained the chief framework through which social life is organized and interpreted in the city <...> but cracks in the facade were beginning to show, opening up space <...> for people to consider the possibility of alternative forms of social identification and association” (Moore, 2011: 308). However, the two days of unexpected violence in the city that were followed by the work of interpretation of this violence in terms of ethnical cleavages,

contributed to reassertion of the ethnocentric discourse: “emplotted into this narrative framework, the violent events in Mostar were specters of ethnic conflict past and future, proof that attempts to return to a multiethnic way of living that existed before the war would be futile, or possibly even dangerous” (ibid.). Moore concludes that political events if they do not articulate discourses and identities alternative to the dominant ones contribute to reproduction of social structures: “though the violent clashes recounted here were undoubtedly ruptures according to Sewell’s criteria — “a surprising break with routine practice” — the overwhelming response to them was neither repressive nor dismissive. Rather, the narrative reaction was that they illustrated the pervasive power of ethnic division in Mostar, despite the gradual institutional integration of the city in the previous decade. Narrated in this way, the events served to reinforce rather than threaten an existing social order” (ibid.: 309). In what follow I will describe how do I study structural change.

Pragmatic of culture

Although I believe that William Sewell’s approach is insufficient for research of eventful protest, I agree that what is crucial is structural change. In my text I will study how and to what extend the events of Russian and Ukrainian protests managed to change the dominant cultural and symbolic structures that define collective identities.

When I speak of cultural structures, I follow Jeffrey Alexander in assuming that it is built from society’s prevalent cultural structures, i.e., binary codes, charged with collective emotions, that convey positive meanings to one pole of semantic oppositions, while imparting negative meanings to the other pole

(Alexander, 2003: 152). Alexander used his method to research US politics. Analyzing US civil society, he writes about the prevailing opposition in it between democratic and anti-democratic meanings. “‘Rule regulated,’ for example, is considered homologous with ‘truthful’ and ‘open,’ terms that define social relationships, and with ‘reasonable’ and ‘autonomous,’ elements from the symbolic set that stipulate democratic motives. In the same manner, any element from any set on one side is taken to be antithetical to any element from any set on the other side. Thus, hierarchy is thought to be inimical to ‘critical’ and ‘open’ and also to ‘active’ and ‘self-controlled’” (Alexander, 2003: 123). This culture makes one practices legitimate while other stigmatized: “because worthiness can be achieved only by association to the discourse of liberty or by active opposition to the discourse of repression, political legitimacy and political action in the “real world” are critically dependent on the processes by which contingent events and persons are arrayed in relation to the “imagined” one” (ibid, 153).

If the US deems the opposition between democracy and repression the most significant semantic code, Russia is typified by a culture of a-politicism, based on the opposition between the political and the apolitical or freedom from politics. Associated with violence, hypocrisy, and corruption, politics is regarded as an evil; it is contrasted with the honest, sincere individual life, dominated by personal relationships, the pursuit of prosperity, careers, and self-distancing from the political realm (Zhuravlev, 2014). My text shows that post-protest local activism has altered the culture of a-politicism, destigmatized politics. At the same time, within Ukrainian case I study regional, linguistic and national oppositions, for instance, East and West, Russian and Ukrainian. I will show how these oppositions have been reproduced not changed in the course of collective action.

At the same time, Alexander's approach appears excessively structuralist. I will show that the transformation as well as reproduction of political culture has occurred due to changes in the communicative and practical use of cultural codes. Hence, I will be relying on the approach to culture introduced by Laurent Thévenot and Nina Eliasoph, who in their research show how people differentiate cultural meanings in different ways, depending on the specific communicative and pragmatic circumstances (Eliasoph and Lichterman, 2003; Lamont and Thévenot, 2000). In what follows I will describe some basic elements of their approach.

Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman argue that one should analyze culture in a more pragmatic way than Alexander does. The sociologists agree with Alexander that cultural codes rooted in society form our collective representations. However, they argue, one need to analyze how these representations are used in *practices* of interaction and communication in order to grasp meanings of these representations that are, in fact, vary in different situations and for different persons. Eliasoph and Lichterman argue: "Groups use collective representations from the larger culture in a way that usually complements the groups' meaningful, shared ground for interaction" (Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2003). Analysis of the communicative dimension of culture allows the sociologists to describe what keeps participants of various civil society groups and communities together. Indeed, shared meanings of collective representations (not representations themselves) that are produced and reproduced in practice of communication is what constitutes commonality of participants of various civil society groups (ibid.). However, Lichterman and Eliasoph limit their analysis by the focus on communication. Pragmatic sociology developed by Laurent Thevenot allows to see how culture can be seen in different day-to-day practices beyond communication. More importantly, this

approach allows analyzing various pragmatic “regimes”, “grammars”, “modes” that form commonality.

We need to consider “regimes of engagement” and “political grammar” in order to understand how the event changes codes and meanings. The regimes of engagement include familiarity, when the individual dissolves in a familiar environment whose objects are seemingly extensions of her body: interacting them with them does not demand goal-oriented behavior. Lying in our messy bedroom, we switch on our laptops out of habit, automatically, as soon as we have woken up. Another regime of engagement is that of individual planning, which involves a functional attitude to things in the environment and the prediction of routine actions in the future, e.g., as we get on the tram, we count on its taking us to the right stop. Finally, there is the regime of justification. People argue in the public space about the common good, e.g., employees and management sit around a table negotiating. The employees see the common good in terms of good pay, while management imagines that the invisible hand of the market sets wages and distributes goods fairly. Thévenot describes a fourth regime of engagement, that of exploration, which is “exclusively present-oriented. Value is placed on surprise and the assurance of an excited self depends on the unflagging rejuvenation of the environment—including one’s body—which has to be arranged to produce the shock of newness” (Thévenot, 2014: 15). The concept of this regime gives us a key for analyzing how the Russian protests were experienced as an event that gave impetus to the emergence of new local activist groups. I will show that, during the politicization of local activism, a new type of individual and collective know-how has been produced that integrates the familiar and the public, seemingly inserting one into the other. This integration influenced transformation of the opposition between “political” and “apolitical”.

“Grammars of commonality” “help to differentiate ways of voicing concerns and differing” (Thévenot, 2014: 9). Thévenot identifies three such grammars. The first grammar, the grammar of orders of plural worth, is modeled on the negotiating table, on circumstances when individuals or groups discuss the common good. The second grammar, the liberal grammar, involves people coming together, communicating, and acting in concert via the articulation and taking into account of individual needs, objectified as a list of publicly available options to be chosen. (It is the act of choosing itself that corresponds to this grammar.) Finally, the third grammar, affinity through common places, involves a more silent means of uniting and acting in concert, based on the personal, emotional investments people have in common places, which can be places per se (homes or parks), but also songs, pictures, and things in the real world. Thévenot stresses that common places are never merely symbolic; they are likewise grounded in material circumstances. We shall see that, despite the centrality of fair elections and liberalism to the Russian protest movement, the grammar of commonality typical of both the “For fair elections” protests themselves and post-Bolotnaya Square local activism is not the liberal grammar, but the grammar of affinity through common places.

Finally, a reality test is a concept suggested by Thévenot and Luc Boltanski. This concept will help me to analyze how obviousness of alleged facts and personal know-how was politicized. As I already mentioned, despite Lichterman and Eliasoph, I examine communication in the broadest sense, thus avoiding reducing it to speech alone. As Boltanski and Thévenot have noted, “[T]he looming disagreement cannot be expressed in a pure debate over ideas; arguments have to be substantiated by things” (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006: 36). Consistent methods or manners of reinforcing one’s own rightness with words and things are the reality test.

“People’s claims had to be confronted with the real world, hence pass a series of more or less standardised procedures they called tests [...]. In the end, it is the outcome of these tests that lends substance to the judgements people make. This is what provides them with the strength that they need to stand up to challenges” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 167). In my work, I show that the politicization of local activism has caused a new type of claim on legitimacy (cf. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007), in which the persuasive power of self-evident facts and an appeal to personal experience have mutated from the idiom of a-politicism into a tool of political campaigning. This influenced the transformation of the opposition between “political” and “apolitical”. At the same time, within the Ukrainian case reality tests facilitated involving into opposite political camps whose struggle over each other has been reproduced dominant symbolic oppositions.

Thus, the eventful approach together with pragmatic sociology, cultural sociology and social movement studies will help me to research eventful social change at a micro level. Analyzing different theories of eventful collective action I showed that eventful temporality can be considered ambivalently. On the one hand, eventful temporality is analyzed in terms durable periods of social change. On the other hand, contemporary social movement researchers consider eventfulness in terms of experience “in action” that is characterized by the “break with routine”. In other words, eventfulness can be seen as at the same time future and present-oriented. I then showed that a “break with routine” can be transposed into a process of structural social change if an eventful collective action spread over various social spaces. I suggested that pragmatic sociology as well as cultural sociology, including political semiosis and narrative analysis, are fruitful for a research of how events “travel”. Finally, I analyzed the theories of cultural structures as well

as pragmatic approach to how they constitute and change. In what follows I will expose my methodological approach. Narrative analysis as well as discourse analysis in general is the main methodology in my text.

Chapter III. Methodology

Methods: political semiosis, pragmatic approach, life stories analysis

Narrative analysis

My research is mostly based on an analysis of in-depths interviews. Analysis of the informants' narratives allowed me to grasp eventful experiences and identities. Narratives are the sort of discourse that often used to represent eventful experience. Moreover, narratives about events are the part of events themselves as they reinforce eventful temporality. This dimension of the narrativity is in the center of the methodological analysis of Margaret R. Somers: "While the older interpretation of narrative was limited to that of a representational form, the new approaches define narrative and narrativity as concepts of social epistemology and social ontology. These concepts posit that it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities". The author emphasizes the role of narrativity in the process of dramatic subjectivity transformations: "Ontological narratives make identity and the self something that one becomes <...> Ontological narratives affect activities, consciousness, and beliefs and are, in turn, affected by them" (Somers, 1992). Adam Moore in his work about "eventful reproduction" emphasizes the role of narrativity that influences political effect of eventful collective action: "Narrated in this way, the events served to

reinforce rather than threaten an existing social order” (Moore, 2011). As Francesca Polletta argues: “grasping the prevailing common sense about storytelling is important to understanding not only how narrative figures in everyday life but also how it figures in efforts to bring about social change” (Polletta, 2006: 2). At the same time that author claims that “stories are influential as preservers of the status quo” (ibid.: 15). Polletta poses the fundamental question: “does personal storytelling in general is ineffective for disadvantaged groups or that it inevitably reproduces rather than undermines the status quo?” (ibid.: 18).

A narrative as a genre is a temporal representation of events sequences that are socially, temporary and spatially localized. As Andrew Abbott argued, “[for those who propose a narrative as the foundation for sociological methodology] social reality happens in sequences of actions located within constraining or enabling structures. It is a matter of particular social actors, in particular social places, at particular times” (Abbott, 1992: 428).

Being a discursive practice that constructs eventful identity a narrative is different from discourses based on classifications, taxonomies, categories that express more stable and developed systems of beliefs and preferences. Indeed, as Fancesca Polletta argues, “narrative’s temporally configurative capacity equips it to integrate past, present, and future events and to align individual and collective identities during periods of change. These features distinguish narratives from frames, which are said to contribute to identity-formation through taxonomic atemporal and discursive processes of analogy and differences” (Polletta, 1998: 139). Temporal organization of storytelling makes narratives an alternative to taxonomies way of political subjectivity formation. That is why it is fruitful to exploit narrative analysis when studying

collective identities that are immanent to political actions, that are formed in the course of these actions. As Margaret S. Somers puts it, “Without emplotment, events or experiences could be categorized only according to a taxonomical scheme. Yet, we do not act on the basis of categories or attributes. Polkinghorne implicitly addresses the difference between emplotment and categorization when he notes that social actions should not be viewed as a result of categorizing oneself (“I am 40 years old; I should buy life insurance”) but should be seen to emerge in the context of a life-story with episodes (“I felt out of breath last week, I really should start thinking about life insurance”) (Somers, 1994: 616). Within the process of politicization new identities are forming and social relations are reconfiguring: “While a social identity or categorical approach presumes internally stable concepts, such that under normal conditions entities within that category will act uniformly and predictably, the narrative identity approach embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space. It thus precludes categorical stability in action. These temporally and spatially shifting configurations form the relational coordinates of ontological, public, and cultural narratives. Within these temporal and multilayered narratives identities are formed; hence narrative identity is processual and relational” (ibid.: 621). In what follows I will describe methodological dimension of my empirical analysis.

In this work I consider the processes within which protesters’ narratives of events construct identities, both individual and collective. In both cases, Russian and Ukrainian, I study how narratives of individual political subjectification during the protests and stories of emergence of a nation or a civil society constitute identities. As Francesca Polletta argues,

“the relation between narrative and self operates <...> in everyday contexts. We act, say narrative psychologists, not on the basis of identities defined in categorical terms but by locating events within an unfolding life-story. We fit events in our lives into incipient stories of tragedy or triumph, redemption or self-discovery <...> the stories that we tell ourselves align our actions with our identities, often subtly altering both. This is true of collective identities as well as individual ones. In telling the story of our becoming, as an individual, a nation, a people, we define who we are. Narratives may be employed strategically to strengthen a collective identity, but they also may precede and make possible the development of a coherent community or collective actor” (Polletta, 2006: 12).

In my text I consider three dimensions of narratives: their plots, their interrelations with other narratives and discourses and, finally, what Polletta terms an epistemology of narratives (ibid.: 27).

Studying protesters’ narratives of eventful self-construction and self-discovery, I consider the plots of their stories that “have an identifiable beginning, middle, and end” (ibid.: 6). In both cases, the informants tell two central stories: one of their individual politicization and another one of civil communities’ (Russia) and civic nation’s (Ukraine) emergence. The fact that in most of the interviews the narratives of self-discovery (or transformation of the self) were temporarily limited by – and reduced to - one, single imaginary big event has allowed me to argue about “eventful identities” that were narrated as momentarily forged. Analyzing these single-event narratives within which beginning and end of a story often coincide, I consider how narratives reflect and form eventful temporalities and experiences. Within my cases, protesters’ narratives often lack any developed political or ideological discourses, therefore their stories do not “say explicitly to their

audiences <...> rather, larger meaning seems to arise from the events themselves” (ibid.: 10). Analysis of the plots of the narratives of self-transformation “in a moment” allowed me to construct the conceptual model of collective action which I call “politics of authenticity”. In a sense it is somehow similar to what Polletta describes in her book: “episodes of mobilization set poorly in to our standard models of movement emergence, which view challengers and their interests as long-standing. To the contrary, in these cases, people’s stakes in collective action seem to have been generated <...> the event, which drove people to act even in the absence of organizations devoted to the cause. The force of stories of a child abused or a community endangered seems to come from the clarity of their normative conclusions. Events demand concerted action” (ibid.: 19). However, one should not take informants’ narratives at face value. The main “minimalist” narratives of eventful politicization are related to other narratives. Moreover, they are possible only because other narratives exist, and the latter make sense of the former.

Francesca Polletta argues: “stories are influential not because they are told over and over again in identical form but rather because they mesh with other familiar stories” (ibid.: 15). Within my both cases I, first of all, analyze interactions between two narratives, one of personal politicization and another one of emergence of a nation or a civic community. The fact that they often coalesce into one narrative allowed to reveal the mechanisms behind new “eventful” identities formation. At the same time, these narratives of eventful and successful formation of new subjectivities and new nations are related to other narratives – that of personal political apathy and failed attempts to create a civic nation or a civil society. As Polletta writes, “for every story that enjoins us to turn the other cheek when

insulted, another instructs us to let no assault on our dignity go unavenged. Stories attesting to the virtue of the unencumbered individual are countered by stories about the virtue of loyalty to the group” (ibid.: 15). In other words, narratives of personal “awakening” referred to stories about previous depoliticization while the story about emergence of a civic nation in Ukraine was based on the narratives of Ukrainians’ “political passivity” and of failure of the Orange revolution to build up a nation. I also compare in my text the informants’ narratives of politicization and of emergence of civic communities with other forms of discourse in order to resolve my main problem of eventful protest and social change.

Francesca Polletta claims: “Much of the time, structures are reproduced through stories that thematize familiar oppositions. Sometimes, stories undermine those oppositions in ways that mobilize overt challenge <...> [stories] navigate similarly between the culturally privileged and denigrated poles of well-known oppositions <...> People can and do tell stories that refuse the standard cultural oppositions, and sometimes these have powerful effects. But more often, such stories are discredited, ignored, or assimilated to one or the other side of the oppositions they are intended to challenge” (ibid.: 15-16). In my text I analyze how “challenging” narratives that proclaim social change either transform dominant cultural oppositions or, alternatively, turn out to be assimilated by them. Comparison of protesters’ narratives of their and their countries’ transformations with other discourses: with taxonomical statements of the same informants within the same interviews, with their narratives and rhetoric within follow-up interviews and their Internet posts; finally, with official and dominant political hegemonic discourses allow to analyze social reproduction and social change. For example, analysis of the

evolution of narratives and rhetoric of Russian protesters revealed that the opposition between “politics” and “real deeds”, which had been the foundation of the culture of apoliticism, has been transformed into an opposition between “good politics” and “bad politics”. At the same time the comparison of narratives and taxonomical discourses of Ukrainian protesters as well as research of the evolution of their narratives over time revealed that while during the Euromaidan protests the participants claimed that many Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians were welcomed in the movement which overcame the very opposition between Russian and Ukrainian and between Eastern Ukrainian and Western Ukrainian, these oppositions were reasserted and re-politicized during the military conflict that started in 2014.

Finally, in my text I analyze epistemologies of the protesters’ narratives and rhetoric. Polletta argues: “by an epistemology of storytelling, I mean a set of popular assumptions about how stories work: how audiences respond emotionally to stories, how stories convey or circumvent the truth” (ibid.: 22). It is analysis of narratives that allowed me to make some conclusion about civic cultures or, rather, civic epistemologies of Ukrainian and Russian protesters. As we know from at least Michele Foucault the issues of politics and truth are interrelated (Foucault, 1967). Analysis of protesters’ narratives allows to reveal which events among others the informants emphasize as decisive or as the moments of truth. These events are narrated as triggers of activist involvement and collective action. Analyzing the informants’ narratives, I suggested that both Russian and Ukrainian protesters shared political epistemology of self-evidence within which what were represented as self-evident “facts” or felt as authentic experience were more reliable than, for example,

political ideologies or programs. Apart from discourse analysis I use biographical method in my research.

Life stories

Finally, I will conduct biographical analysis. One needs to scrutinize life stories of interviewees in order to understand the factors at work in eventful identities dynamics. As Donatella della Porta argues, Donatella della Porta says that “in order to study the formation of collective identities it is necessary to have detailed information on the whole process of political socialization, from the first encounters with politics to the choice of political activism <...> The focus of the analysis here becomes the way in which the story transforms within the individual conscience, how public events interfere in private life, how the perception of the external world induces or blocks active behaviors with respect to this” (della Porta, 2013: 279). In fact, analysis of life courses will allow to understand which conditions and experiences were crucial for identities formation and transformations. Although I did not do quantitative analysis of factors and causes of mobilization, the analysis of biographies allows to figure out some structural factors as well as “turning points” that influenced politicization and identity. Indeed, life stories contain information about an informant’s social position, key events and experiences that influenced her politicization and emotions and representations of these events and experiences. That is why analyzing life stories one can make conclusions about causal relations between “objective” circumstances and “subjective” outcomes. As Olivier Fillieule puts it, people’s biographies are both “a series of objective changes of position and an associated series of subjective upheavals” (Fillieule, 2010: 4).

In what follows I will argue about the case selection and describe my data.

Case selection: why Russia and Ukraine?

The global protest wave of 2011-2014 inspired the new discussions on the old problem of protests and social change. On the one hand, the huge uprisings that led to a regime change, failed to transform dominant social, economic and political orders. Many explained this referring to the fact that the protests lacked a positive program of social transformations and failed to transform themselves into political parties. That is why the “revolutionaries” turned out to be too weak in comparison with the elites which acted in favor of maintaining status-quo. On the other hand, some other protests, at first sight unsuccessful, could lead to structural changes, although hidden and occurring at a micro level. For example, Lance Bennett argued that the protests of 2011-2014 did not propose social and political demands. However, they eventually changed the very language of public discourse: “protesters raised questions about inequality and the false promises of deregulated markets. These underlying issues stemming from the Indignado and Occupy protests circulated widely in many societies, leading to changes in national conversations and political agendas. These shifts in national discourses were major accomplishments coming from loosely organized protests that are not easy to classify as social movements, since they lacked central coordination, collective identity frames, and focused political demands” (Bennett, 2012; 31). This change in the public discourse then led, in turn, to broader transformations in the society and politics. Russian and Ukrainian protests I study in this text are the part of the global protest wave of 2011-2014.

Ukrainian and Russian uprisings share with some of the protests in the U.S., Europe and Northern Africa several important features: eventful experience and celebration of togetherness; revolutionary ambitions but the distrust of political representation; finally, disillusionment after decline of movements or a regime change (Zelinska, 2015; Bikbov, 2014; Krastev, 2012). This disillusionment was caused by the feeling that the events have gone while the societies and governments did not change. That is why I believe investigations of the post-soviet cases will allow to understand better the wave of the protests of 2011-2014.

At the same time, some journalists and researchers for no good reason have been represented this wave as a singular phenomenon. Such generalizations ignore the fact that the events are slightly different. That is why one should carefully study differences and similarities between the protest events if wants to reveal a range of factors at hand that influenced the movements and therefore the whole wave. From this perspective, the comparison of Russian and Ukrainian cases against the global background is useful because the two protests are similar and at the same time distinct from each other and from Western European, American and African events. Moreover, these cases represent the story of huge mobilization, dramatic struggle for social change, disillusionment and hidden and slow social and political transformations. That is why an investigation of these cases is useful in researching the issue of eventful protests and social change. Both Euromaidan and anti-Putin rallies were characterized by avoiding articulation ideological preferences and social demands. Instead, both protests were focused on the emblematic slogans of a regime change and fair democracy. Protesters believed social and economic demands were secondary or were to be implemented automatically after the political changes

were brought about. However, if Ukrainian protesters managed to change the government Russian did not. Unlike Russia, Ukraine had competitive party system and institutionalized political opposition as well as violent far-right groups together with the tradition of long-term anti-government campaigns with protest camps. That is why the violent mobilization of protesters from below together with parties' activities from above led to the regime change while in Russia the uprising was suppressed by the authoritarian state. However, while in Ukraine the war, rise of radical nationalism and the new oligarchic authoritarian state blocked social and political reformation, in Russia the energy of the protest was channeled into development of the new local social movements after the decline of the nationwide rallies. The huge mobilization of the Euromaidan could continue within social movements as well as conventional politics but was transposed into the military volunteering. At the same time, the very war and the rise of nationalism that have been legitimized by the inheritance of the Euromaidan now allow the post-Maidan elites to reproduce the old order against which the protesters struggled: to strengthen authoritarianism, to maintain neopatrimonialism, to impose ethnic, regional and cultural exclusive nationalism. The Russian case shows something different. Tired of an abstract rhetoric of the "fair elections" agenda, rank-and-file protesters engaged into local activism that started struggle for a social change at a micro-level. At the same time, the opposition movement led by Alexey Navalny developed a political program that helped him to oppose Putin during the presidential electoral campaign of 2017-2018. Thus, the both cases represent paradoxical and contradictory processes of struggle for social change.

The goal of my thesis is to ground the issue of eventful protests and social transformation in empirical research. The

research is aimed at overcoming the normative discourses that evaluate empirical data against the background of political theories or of immediate subjective experience of the very protesters. In my opinion equating social change with a regime change is too formalistic while reducing social change to transformation of subjectivity is too optimistic and apologetic. In other words, comparative political science that often measures social change with a regime change often cannot see some deeper social dynamics. At the same time, it would be misleading to equate social change with elusive, solely subjective and invisible experience and knowledge of actors themselves. The ambition of my thesis is to study change and reproduction as structural phenomena though at a micro level. In my text I will show how allegedly revolutionary protest in Ukraine led to reproduction of collective representations and cultural meanings that supported regional divisions Euromaidan wanted to overcome. In other words, I will show how exactly the allegedly “transformative” event finally reproduced those symbolic structures it pretended to downplay. At the same time, I will show how “failed” uprising against authoritarianism in Russia produced structural transformation of what can be called a civic culture. In concrete terms, I will show how the eventful experience of collective action led to the transformation of the very meaning of a civic action and of those cultural structures that defined and articulated it.

The problem of social change and reproduction has been traditionally studied within quantitative research (Bourdieu, 1984; Vester, 2004). However, I follow a case study approach as a research strategy. Although social change is a structural phenomenon, it is not always possible to measure it. In my research I deal with identity formation, collective representations, cultural meanings that are structurally determined, but, at the same time, hardly measurable.

However, a case-study strategy allows to grasp and investigate structural dimension of eventful social changes and reproduction of identities and culture. My research devoted to eventful identities studies both structural changes in collective representations and cultural meanings and their contribution to broader processes of social and political changes.

Another reason to prefer case study approach is that social changes I deal with occur at a micro-level. I analyze the protests that are allegedly aimed at a systemic change, but, at the same time lead to neither any societal transformations nor emergence of new long-term movements or parties. However, these protests change protesters' subjectivities and political cultures dramatically. But one has to look at a micro level of local political and civic practices in order to see these transformations.

Since the new protest wave revealed the new types of social change caused by the eventful mobilizations, it is useful to follow a case study strategy. As Donatella della Porta puts it, "in qualitative ... comparison based on a case strategy, explanations are genetic (i.e. based upon the reconstruction of the origins of a certain event), and generalizations are historically concrete (Ragin and Zaret 1983: 740). Theorization and generalization, in this tradition, are provided not by statistical regularities but by ideal types. These are abstract models, with an internal logic, against which real, complex cases can be measured" (della Porta, 2008: 206). Within this text my goal is to analyze micro-processes that are invoked by eventful experiences in terms of social change. In other words, I am interested in how micro-dynamics of collective identities and collective action invoked by eventful protests can contribute to a larger social change or, alternatively, turn out to become an instrument of a social reproduction. In this perspective, my aim is 'not to maximize

resemblance or even to pinpoint differences among whole countries but to discover whether similar mechanisms and processes drive changes in divergent periods, places and regimes' (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 82)" (della Porta, 2008, pp. 215-216). Finally, methodologically I am aimed at what Philippe Schmitter calls "discovery" not "proof": "There exists a very broad range of social and political topics for which it is possible to conceptualize the variables that may contribute to an explication, but not to assign any sort of provisional 'if . . . then . . .' status to their relationships. For these topics, the opposite research logic is one of discovery and not of proof. The purpose is to improve one's conceptualization of a topic, probe its plausibility against a range of data and eventually generate hypotheses among its conclusions, but it would be premature to expect them as a pre-condition for conducting the research itself" (Schmitter, 2008, p. 271). However, my investigation is not limited by only "discovery". Rather it is discovery and proof. Using systematic analysis of the interviews, focus groups and observations I come to the conclusions about structural transformations or reproduction of collective identities and political cultures.

Fieldwork and Data

Russian case

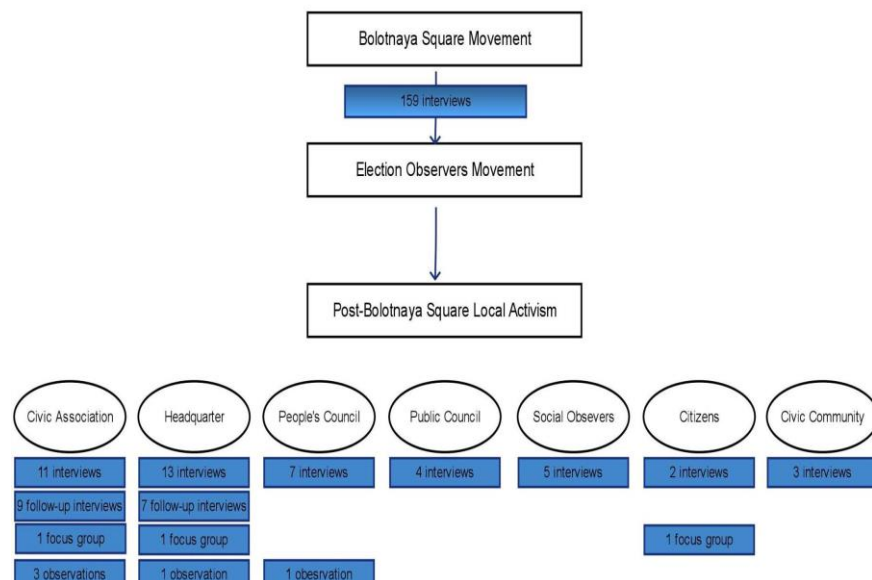
My text is based on three types of empirical data: interviews with rank-and-file Bolotnaya Square protesters; interviews with focus groups, comprised of members of post-Bolotnaya Square local

groups; and, finally, participant observations of the work done by local activists.

Semi-structured interviews with rank-and-file members of the Bolotnaya Square movement were conducted by the authors and their colleagues in the Public Sociology Laboratory (PS Lab) during 2011–2013, as well as during elections to the Opposition Coordinating Council. The interview guide included questions about the chronology of events, motives for involvement in them, assessing the movement, and the political experience and views of informants and their social origins. Each interview lasted from fifteen minutes to an hour. I conducted and analyzed a total of 159 interviews.

The second and third types of empirical data we collected were individual interviews and focus group discussions with activists in post-Bolotnaya Square local pressure groups, as well as embedded observations of their work. We studied seven such groups, six in Moscow, and one in Petersburg: Civic Association, Headquarters, People’s Council, Public Council, Social Observers, Citizens, and Civic Community. (All the names of the groups have been changed to protect them.) The guide for the in-depth biographical interview consisted of a biographical section, as well questions dealing with how the interviewees had become engaged in local activism, how they assessed the work of their groups, their practices and motives for involvement. Each interview lasted from one to three hours. The interviews with members of Civic Association, Headquarters, and Citizens were conducted in 2012–2013; the interviews with members of the other four groups, in 2015. We were able to conduct follow-up interviews with certain activists from Civic Association and Headquarters in 2014–2015 to get a fix on how their motives, discourses, and practices had evolved. In general, we interviewed nearly all the most active members of Civic Association, Headquarters, and People’s Council, while Public

Council, Social Observers, Citizens, and Civic Community were surveyed only partially. We also conducted three focus group discussions with activists from Civic Association, Headquarters, and Citizens in 2014. The focus group discussions were meant to chart the evolution of the new local activism. Finally, we conducted several embedded observation sessions of activists from Civic Association, Headquarters, and People’s Council in action (holding general and informal meetings, interacting with voters during an election campaign). My analysis is thus based on 45 informants, sixteen of whom we interviewed on more than one occasion, as well as three focus group discussions and five participant observation sessions. The following diagram summarizes the data on which the conclusions in the text have been based.



Finally I will use the PEPS (Protest Events, Photos, and Slogans) dataset kindly provided by Mischa Gabowitsch and his colleagues from the Bremen University.

Ukrainian case

Within the collective research project of PS Lab we collected 75 interviews with the participants of Euromaidan rallies and camps in Kiev, Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv and 70 interviews with the participants of Antimaidan rallies, marches and camps in Kharkiv, Odessa, Sevastopol, Simferopol and Kerch'. Among bystanders of Euromaidan we interviewed 44 men and 35 women who were from 17 to 53 years old. All interviews were collected in summer 2014. We chose those respondents who were not politically active before the protests. Usually we found the accounts in Facebook and Vkontakte that fitted our criteria of being a 'newcomer', or 'first-timer'. This criteria helps to grasp the effect of the event.

We took semi-structured interviews that consisted of several blocks: biographical one; experience of participation in public sphere, activism and politics; political and ideological preferences; experience in Euromaidan / Antimaidan; opinions on the general situation in the country. As I focus on the problem of eventful collective identities and their development after and beyond the event I will mostly analyze the answers to the three blocks of questions. The first block of questions concerns eventful collective identities: "What were the most important things for you in Maidan?", "What did you feel when you came to Maidan", "Who are people who come to Maidan?" etc. The second block of questions concerns national identities: "Do you feel and consider yourself as Ukrainian?", "What does it mean for you to be a Ukrainian?" etc. The third block of questions concerns social identities especially regional, linguistic and ethno-cultural ones: "Could you describe the sides that are present in the conflict in Donbas and in other Eastern and Southern areas?", "Do you see any differences between people from different regions in Ukraine?", "Do you see any difference

between Ukrainians and Russians and between Ukrainian and Russian societies?”

Finally, I will refer to the interviews we took with pro-separatist combatants in Donetsk and Luhansk in 2016-2017.

Chapter IV. The Russian case: “Bolotnaya”

In the following two chapters, I will show how the eventful protest influenced the fundamental element of Russian culture, namely, a-politicism. In this chapter I will focus on the rallies against Putin and for fair elections. In the next chapter I will analyze how this protest impacted urban activism in Russia.

Introduction: political or a-political?

In the wake of the unexpected, strident protests of 2011–2012, when hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest the Putin regime and demand fair elections, the academic and public debate about whether Russian society was apolitical sparked up again with renewed fervor. Some sociologists argued Russians were passive conformists, worried only about personal prosperity, not the common good. Moreover, Russians, who were paternalistically minded, counted on achieving this prosperity with the state’s assistance rather than through their own efforts (Zharkov, 2017; Gudkov, 2017; Gudkov, Dubin & Zorkaya, 2012; Rogov, 2011). They were opposed by more critically minded and methodologically progressive researchers, who pointed to the diversity of disagreements, conflicts, and protests in Russia (see, e.g., Clément, Miryasov & Demidov, 2010). The latter approach is much more theoretically and methodologically congenial to me than the first, and yet I would be the first to admit that Russian society has largely been apolitical. At the same time, I do not equate a-politicism with passivity. A-politicism is a specific culture, meaning a set of habitual ways of understanding the immediate world and acting in it.

These ways generally lead to non-involvement, but they can, on the contrary, provoke specific forms of collective action.

I argue that a-politicism should not be deemed a tautological umbrella term, denoting popular passivity, but a set of cultural and practical mechanisms that generally supports non-involvement in public politics, but might also encourage the emergence of certain types of collective action. I define a-politicism in Russia in terms of three basic elements. The first is a culture that opposes a-politicism, supposedly part of a normal life, to politics. In other words, the societal majority buys into the notion that politics is associated with violence, empty rhetoric, deceit, and corruption. It is something amoral, while private life, associated with honesty, sincerity, success, and dignity, is something good. Second, a-politicism represents the primacy of the private or, rather, familiar realm in people's daily lives and careers. Whereas the culture of a-politicism consists of collectively shared and emotionally charged meanings, the primacy of the familiar realm means that a particular know-how is widespread in society. The dominance of private or, rather, familiar know-how in Russia has generated a public realm that is unfamiliar and underdeveloped, and sometimes even "frightening" (see, e.g., Prozorov, 2008). Third, a-politicism is based on certain regimes of visibility, i.e., on means of telling truth from falsehood, the authentic from the inauthentic. When communist ideas forfeited their legitimacy in late Soviet society, a specific regime of authenticity emerged. It consisted in the fact that, in contrast to the ideological narratives and clichés people heard on TV and mistrusted, things that spoke for themselves, so to speak, "self-evident facts," and personal experience came to possess more truthfulness. People in the Soviet Union contrasted the lies on television about the Soviet people's increasing prosperity, supposedly due to the Party's growing ranks, with the self-evidence

of poverty, decline, and boredom (Yurchak, 2005). It was this regime of truth that has remained a vital source of mistrust in politics and political discourse. Thus, a-politicism in Russia is a stigmatization of politics, the immersion of daily life in private experience, and the authenticity of facts confirmed by personal observation in contrast to ideological mumbo-jumbo. These elements have the force of an imperative, of an obligation. In other words, society says to its members: do not get mixed up in politics, which is dirty; do not step beyond the realm of the familiar; do not trust the ideologically freighted speeches you hear on TV.

I will show that the event of “For fair elections” protest transformed this a-political condition. However, the eventful protest led to limited changes. The transformation was happening only at the local level. Yet, I do not say about ephemeral influence of the protest on protesters themselves and their subjectivities. I will show that the event has produced new stable form of collective action. It politicized local activism that has been a-political in Russia before 2011. Indeed, local activism for the past ten years has been the most widespread form of collective action in Russia, but which has taken on a new shape and content only since 2012. I have decided to focus on local activists for two reasons. On the one hand, after the protest rallies of 2011–2012, Russian local activism converged with opposition politics, and we were thus able to observe politicization in action. On the other hand, local activism involves a liminal state between political protest and apolitical boosterism.

This politicization was caused by transplantation of the eventful identities, solidarities and cultural meanings into the space of local activism. In what follows I will describe my vision of local activism as a political activity and depoliticization as a cultural phenomenon.

The dynamics of the events

In December 2011, the wave of huge rallies, marches, and “Occupy” camps began to emerge in Russia. The protests were triggered by the fraud in the Duma election of December 4, 2011 – the fraud that was not greater or more cynical than the previous elections in the 2000s. There had been no strong opposition parties, either within or outside the Parliament, that would have prepared or organized the protest. But suddenly, after the Facebook and vkontakte.ru had been flooded by the reports of the fraud by the independent observers, and the ruling “United Russia” party showed historically low results even after the fraudulent boost, thousands of people - many of them youngsters participating in protest actions for the first time - flooded the streets, and on the Sunday to follow, about 100000 people gathered for an authorized rally in the center of Moscow (with much smaller but relatively considerable rallies in other big cities). Protesters mainly opposed the authoritarian corrupt regime in power and wanted a political change (namely, Putin personally became a target of discursive attack, particularly after he had violently offended the participants of the demonstrations, comparing their insignia, white ribbons, with condoms, and accused them of getting “cookies” from the West). But, as in the US and Western Europe, the movement quickly started showing its limitations, both in the breadth of protests (which were mostly concentrated in Moscow and, to a much lesser extent, St. Petersburg), and in the radicalism of agenda. The main slogans of the protesters included fair election (and the replay of the December vote) and the denunciation of corruption. Honesty and dignity were the main values involved. The objective statistics shows that the protesters, heterogeneous as they are, represented on the average a

richer and more educated strata of population that even the population of Moscow not speaking of other regions (Volkov 2012).

Another form of protest were, in fact, the occupy actions in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. Copied from the US OWS initiative, these actions created a sense of festivity and joy for a few days of their existence, until they were ultimately dissolved by the police. Activists ran regular assemblies that were supposed to coordinate the life of the “camps”, and the political demands (fair elections etc.) were restated, but no effort was made to coordinate assemblies in different cities or create a representative organ on their basis. The main political message of the Occupy, everywhere, was not a demand, actually, a fact of occupying the city and of being-together.

During the autumn of 2012, new local activist groups were created in several districts of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Nizhny Novgorod, while the people who pretended to be the political leaders of protests tried to institutionalize their leadership. On the one hand, the so-called “leaders of the opposition” (well-known politicians and journalists as well as bloggers and leaders of radical left-wing and right-wing groups which appeared as spokespersons of the movement) organized primaries to the “Steering Group of the Opposition” in order to legitimize their leadership and to organize the rallies and marches on behalf of the “For Fair Elections Movement”. On the other hand, a few rank and file participants united in local groups which devoted themselves to observing election procedures, solving local civic problems, discussing local political campaigns and participation in municipal elections.

On the May 6 2012, police brutally dispersed the mass rally. Many rank-and-file protesters were accused of attacking the police and imprisoned. At the same time Putin won presidential elections. Finally, the movement faced severe internal crisis as it failed to propose a strong political program and agenda. People demobilized

while the state became more authoritarian. In 2014, Russia annexed Ukrainian Crimea. Russia's regular army as well as voluntary military units took part in the war in Ukraine.

In what follows I will analyze the eventful protests for fair elections and the effects it had on Russian local activism.

The trigger of the protest: moral investment and moral shock

The Russian campaign "For fair elections" began as a reactive protests mobilized by a moral shock. People were outraged by the fact they were cheated by the authorities. In this sense, the elections themselves invoked the mobilization. Many political scientists who study post-electoral protests argue that electoral fraud can be an independent factor of a mobilization. Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik claim that elections can cause mass mobilization that would not have occurred without such a trigger (Bunce and Wolchik 2010). In the analysis of the Russian protests Natalya Savelyeva and Margarita Zavadskaya argue that "rigged elections can be transformed into an independent protest agenda per se for two reasons. Firstly, the time of elections decreases the costs of participation - less repression, more international attention etc. Secondly, elections facilitate mobilization because of the simultaneous involvement of large number of people <...> In the case of Russian protests, a whole bunch of necessary mobilizing factors according to "color revolutions" literature (e.g. Tucker 2007) is absent, but elections become the trigger of protests <...> the fraud [itself], despite its "insignificance", nonetheless creates an imagined community of robbed voters by providing mass nature of participation. Besides, the individualized nature of the voting act

makes the perception of fraud, regardless of their expectedness, “a moral shock” or perception of procedural unfairness and, therefore, not 'the stolen elections', but rather 'the stolen votes' become the protest trigger” (Savelieva and Zavadskaya, 2016: 226). Thus, sudden mobilization was a surprise for the very participants and produced the experience of rupture in daily life.

However, one could surprise why electoral fraud caused moral shock in Russia? The elections of 2011 were not the first rigged elections in the country's recent history, and the close attention paid to the vote count was the hobby, so to speak, of a narrow circle of opposition-minded observers. Many believed that what mattered most in elections was that they were generally fair and brought back a logical result. What changed in 2011?

Following the argument of Natalia Savelieva, I assume that, thanks to an extensive media campaign, which focused the attention of ordinary people on the elections (and included, on the one hand, a discussion of potential vote rigging and, on the other, elaborated a voting strategy meant to harm the ruling party, United Russia), a large number of people attached great personal importance to them, although previously elections had been regarded as unimportant, not worth anyone's time, a mere formality that had no impact on anything. Speaking in Thévenot's terms, the cliché of the elections turned, in a matter of six months, into a common place, situating the post-electoral mobilization in the grammar of personal affinities to multiple common places.

This was how one of our informants answered the question of why he decided to attend the protest rallies.

Yes, I believe that [fair elections] are important, because whatever the elections are like, they should be fair. They should not forget we are not fools. People have eyes and brains. We understand everything quite well, and they should not take us for fools. I'm not

sure we can shunt aside Putin, because he is backed by major financial organizations. He's the head of state, what can you say? But, in fact, we could at least show them that we are not stupid louts, that we see the violations, that we know they are deceiving us. Why are they doing this? So yes, I support fair elections. What matters is that elections are held. Let people have their say. That is what matters to me: the right to vote (Interview RU1).

In this case, we see that the appeal to personal feelings and emotions is both subjectively significant and the most legitimate argument for the man's involvement in the movement. Our informants told us they had been personally insulted by how the elections had been held. It was not a problem for the protesters that a vote for a party other than United Russia had not be tallied, but rather that each individual vote had not been counted, whatever party the person had voted for.

One's vote was not deemed a means of expressing one's opinion or part of the machinery for maintaining the commonweal, but as a personal belonging. Our informants first morally invested in voting and, then, after encountering incontrovertible proof their votes had been stolen, as shown on YouTube, for example, they were outraged.

Yeah, those videos showing violations [at polling stations]. Yeah, it's quite important: those video also influenced me. [I watched] literally a dozen of them, but they had a big impact on me. [Question: In what sense?] Well, you see they're deceiving you. And anger rises inside you: what the hell?! It's like you want change, you believe [in the process] and go to vote, you spend time going to the election, you spend two hours or so on it, and before that you spend a bunch of time figuring out whom to vote for, although there is no one to choose from (Interview RU2).

Chockablock with moral and personal utterances, such as “My vote was stolen!” and “Give me back my vote!”, the vocabulary of the

protesters pointed to the fact that votes were regarded as something personal and even material (see, Savelyeva and Zavadskaya, 2014).

The eventful identity of the “Bolotnaya” movement

The experience of eventfulness that influenced dramatically the dynamics of the “For fair elections” mobilization was produced not only by the moral shock but also by the feeling of unexpected togetherness and solidarity. Protest mobilizations, especially what della Porta calls “eventful protests” usually produce the feeling of solidarity. However, I would claim that in the Russian case this emotion was especially significant and constitutive for the dominant collective identity. The protests “For fair elections” was the first huge mass political protest after 1993 and therefore produced the effect of contrast between previous experience of private sphere and abrupt experience of collectivity in public (Zhuravlev, 2014). The very collective action was the end not just a mean of the mobilization. I would say that the Russian movement is similar to what Jeffrey Goldfarb calls “new new social movements”. The author suggests that the recent movements such as American Occupy and the Arab spring are characterized by a certain inversion of ends and means: “The coming together based on some shared concerns with different identities and even different goals has been a common feature of the movements in our most recent past. The demonstrators occupy a space and the way the do so, the way they interact with each other is an important end of the movement. The form of interaction as well as the identity and interest content, is central” (Goldfarb, 2012). Indeed, *disruptive experience of unity, association and presence rather than articulation of specific demands or interests* dominated the discourse of motives of the most of our

respondents:

Q.: What do you like about this rally?

A.: I like the fact there are lots of us, that we exist, that we are talking, that we have come to the rally (Interview RU3).

Another respondent answer to our question:

Q.: How can you change the situation in the country? How can you make a difference?

A.: To come to the rally. Just to show that I'm more than nothing (Interview RU4).

The very reality of many different people who united was the end of the movement:

Q.: What do you like in these rallies?

A.: I like that many people come. You know, yesterday there were even more people! (Interview RU5)

Another respondent expresses the similar impression:

Q.: What do you like and dislike in this rally?

A.: I appreciate the fact that more and more people are coming. People became organized. Now they can express their opinions. What I don't like is that ... I would like if there would be more people in the streets. Many talk about this with each other but unfortunately they don't come (Interview RU6).

The identity did not denote and express a take on civil rights and equality or a doctrine of the civic nation, but rather the eventful experience of “awakening civic consciousness,” to borrow the words used by our informants themselves. This experience was produced in the regime of exploration, which Thévenot connects with digital consumption, but which just as nicely captures the experience of sudden politicization in an apolitical society, an experience that consists in discovering a new world—the public sphere. As a common place in which protesters invested know-how and emotions, Bolotnaya Square was not produced in the course of repeated

practices by a select group, as in Thévenot's textbook examples about the photos and songs of lovers and friends, but during an eventful public and, simultaneously, personal, intimate experience enjoyed by thousands of people. In other words, the experience of the event facilitated a common place in which thousands of people invested - not in the regime of familiarity, however, but in the regime of exploration, in the eventful regime of discovering and navigating the public sphere. The grammar of common places in the regime of exploration: this was what brought the protesters at the Bolotnaya Square rallies together.

My findings are supported by the results of other research. Sociologist Alexander Bikbov argued about the Russian protest that "it was not an experience of negation [of those in power] but the experience of constituting the new commonality" (Bikbov, 2012a). Bikbov claimed that "in the space of the rallies people acted as if anything did not exist before them" (Bikbov, 2012b). The sociologist wrote that "when people came to the streets all the previous motives [which pushed people to come to the rallies] became insignificant" (Bikbov, 2012a).

In what follows I will consider collective identities that were articulated in the protest. I will show that the dominant collective identity was an "eventful identity", i. e., a collective identity that is produced within and by an experience of collective action and shared by participants and bystanders of a protest event. Such an identity is different from what is usually meant by the term as it presupposes presence rather than belonging. I will analyze the collective identity of the Russian protest movement exploring slogans as well as interviews.

Collective identity in slogans

Slogans are important instrument of not only articulation but also production of collective identities in action. As Pierre Bourdieu argues “in politics, ‘to say is to do’, that is, it is to get people to believe that you can do what you say and, in particular, to get them to know and recognize the principles of de-vision of social world, the slogans, which produce their own verification by producing groups” (Bourdieu, 1991). As mentioned above, Russian protesters enjoyed the experience of mobilization that became an end of the movement and an instrument of its mobilization besides any concrete demands. As researchers have argued, various forms of individual and collective self-expression were an important practice within this experience (Gabowitsch, 2017). Different personal and collective identities were articulated within the rallies and marches “for fair elections” via slogans. In what follows I will present the results of a systematic analysis of all the slogans that are available in the database PEPS. Some slogans contained references to social positions and social groups on behalf which a protestor speaks (“honest citizens”, “hoodwinked investors”) or to which she appeals (“Russians”). Then, there are slogans that contain statements with reference to persons (“I”, “we”, impersonal). Which identities do the slogans represent?

David Snow describes three types of identities: social, personal and collective. Social identities are social roles; they are used to place people in the social space. Personal identities are “self-designations and self-attributions regarded as personally distinctive”. Finally, collective identities “are constituted by a shared sense of ‘we-ness’ and ‘collective agency’” (Snow, 2001). Participants of the rallies for fair elections occupied various and different positions in social space. However, there are few slogans

that express social identities. The slogans that refer to social groups (“anthropologists”, “young families”, “hoodwinked investors”, “pensioners” etc.) or speak on behalf of movements and parties (“Communist Party is for fair elections!”, “Moscow University is for fair elections!”, “Autonomous action is for direct democracy” etc.) are rare.

I should note that usually social groups are represented as subjects of claims in the slogans that articulate the universal demand “for fair elections”: “Anthropologists are for fair elections!”, “Creative urban class? It’s about us!”, “Make way for the young, we are here!”, “Veterans of Chernobyl are for the people, Russia and constitution, AGAINST Medvedev, Putin and criminal power vertical!”. At the same time in the slogans that express social critique or social demands social groups are represented as not subjects but targets of demands: “Hands off Russian army”, “We demand increase of pensions not of the presidential term” etc. Thus in the slogans that contain the demand “for fair elections” collective “we-ness” is depersonalized as it does not express any specific demands. At the same time in the slogans that articulate specific social and political demands any collective “we-ness” is absent. The more frequent slogans are the slogans that articulate what I call “quasi-identities”. These slogans refer to fairy-tale and movies characters (Chuck Norris, Cheburashka, Father Frost etc.) or to state media discourse that stigmatizes protesters (“network hamsters”, “Bandar-logs” etc.). They aimed at normalization and justification of protest behavior through the assertion of evidence of truthfulness and legitimacy of protesters’ claims. For instance, well-known Russian musician Oleg Nesterov says in interview about his poster: “You see? Even Cheburashka is for fair elections not to speak about more serious

persons such as Crocodile!”³.

When protesters refer to media stigmas, they either negate them (“We are not Bandar-logs”) or they use subversion to destigmatize themselves (“Network hamster shrugged”, “Saluto from Bandar-logs”). In one of his speeches one of the leader of the protest Alexey Navalny said: “They call us little hamsters from social networks. Yes, I am a little network hamster! And I’ll gnaw through the throats of these cads”. Another type of collective identity can be termed a “negative identity”: “We are not an opposition, we are your employers!”, “We are not scum!”, “We are not a crowd!”, “We are not slaves!” etc. Finally, to directly refer to the subject of the actionparticipants of the meetings used several vague categories such as “the nation,” “citizens,” “the country,” “Russia,” and “146%.” At first glance, it seems that they refer to concrete groups, albeit broad, undefined ones, such as, for example, “residents of a single country.” In addition, they have their own goal of not indicating a specific group, but asserting the community as such by using universal categories that include all members of society. Slogans such as “#ordinarypeople,” “Russia, get up!,” or “We are citizens of a free country!” do not articulate any new or previously created specific identities referring to existing groups, their interests, or demands. On the contrary, this abstract identity refers to a situational unity of all protesters, having suddenly come together at the meeting and feeling solidarity.

This identity that is the most widespread in the Russian rallies is produced by participants and bystanders who constitute together the imaged community of those who are involved in the unique and singular event of the uprising. Filling the space of slogans

³ <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27267727.html>

with expressions such as “Can you see us over there? That’s us!,” and “We exist!,” the “For Fair Elections” movement represented itself by highlighting its own presence. The “we” of the protesters says nothing about their interests or goals, but it does announce ordinary people’s eventful experience of solidarity in public sphere. At the same time, the reference to national categories such as “Russia” or “the people” are not arbitrary. In a way, this identity is civic and national. The protesters claimed to represent the whole society, the whole country except of the minority of those in power -the “crooks and thieves”. Protesters claimed they represent not a minor group of the society or a conglomerate of such groups but the society as whole.

Another dominant expressive form was the strategy of individual representation. The refusal to identify different groups by their individual interests within the single whole of the protest meant that its basic element was necessarily the individual. The universal and abstract “we” represented in the eventful identity indicates the insufficiency of collectivity, as much as that “we” can fall apart in a moment into its individual parts, not belonging to any concrete commonality. This is expressed in the frequent use of the possessive (“My voice was stolen,” etc.) and reflexive pronouns (“I want to choose the president myself,” etc.), appeals to personal wishes (“I don’t want 146%, I want the truth!”), feelings (“I am very angry!!” etc.), and personal experience (“I saw them stuff the ballot-box”). In other words, the majority of the participants of the protests appealed using the first person, represented with their slogans not their group affiliation, but their individuality. Thus, the dominant collective identity of the protest is in a way self-referential: it does not serve as an instrument of expression of social content (that is, of the goals and interests of the sociopolitical subject of society) through the medium of a political form (i.e., a political association of citizens

along with the mechanisms of representation). Instead the content is subordinate to the form: people gathered together to express a feeling of community that is produced by this very mobilization and to demand the acknowledgment of the authentic nature of the event of mobilization itself.

Demands and voting strategies

In what follows I will show that the avoidance of sociopolitical self-definition of the collective “we” was a conscious step, a particular strategy of the protesters who wanted to sustain the “situational” community constituted by the experience of the event.

The central slogan of the protest was “for fair elections”. However, this slogan was rather a metaphor of systemic change than a specific claim. Indeed, the Russian protest movement was not a single-issue movement. It was the movement against the political regime. Although the protesters sometimes claimed that it was the strategic reason to focus on the demand of fair election and to eliminate other demands, we should not rely on their own words. In her brilliant work on local activism, Nina Eliasoph shows that although activists insisted they were engaged in collective action because they wanted to improve some specific conditions of their life, in fact they wanted to believe they could make a difference, because this belief was rooted in American political culture (Eliasoph, 1997).

Although Russian protesters adopted the procedural discourse of the liberal leaders, they were not committed followers of the liberal political doctrine. Ilya Budraitskis claims that “in Russia the previously passive and depoliticized social groups that made up the diverse composition of the Moscow protests united

precisely around a demand for a return to purer procedures of representative democracy. A fundamental rejection of the current political choices was tied to the slogan of “fairness,” while the dubious tagline, “Democracy is a procedure,” became one of the most popular expressions among opposition leaders and journalists”. However, the slogans were so popular not because the participants of the rallies were proponents of representative democracy, the author argues. Alternatively, “people demanded a return of the very right to politics, but they refused to think about how that right might be realized meaningfully” (Budraitskis, 2014). Budraitskis thinks the Russian protest was aimed at a radical change in the political system. Elections were the main mechanism and symbol of this system. That is why it became the target of the protesters. The author argues:

“The tradition established through years of managed democracy preferred a sequential relationship between the elections to the Duma and the presidential elections: the first always took place in December and preceded the second, which took place in March. The parliamentary elections <...> were a necessary step, revealing fully Parliament’s status as a mere simulation of politics. <...> at first the ruling party would win the repellent speculative fight, and then, already as a form of triumphant legitimization, the president would affirm his rightful power above even the political sphere, and above society as a whole. <...> United Russia, defined as the “party of power” <...> fulfilled an important function in that scheme. <...> However, the circumstance of these electoral procedures in Russia, which had to reinforce the political alienation of the absolute majority of the population from participation in politics, turned out to be the political school that enabled a significant portion of the voters to study the system’s weak points. In the summer of 2011, even before Putin’s run for a third presidential term was made public, the popular opposition figure Aleksei Navalny called in his blog for

people to vote for “any party at all other than United Russia” <...> From the start, the idea of voting against United Russia suggested that the main political challenge of the elections was to wreck the symbolic victory of the ruling party <...> Navalny only voiced what millions of people understood intuitively <...> In the end, the question of the future Duma served to focus the passive mass discontent that not only could find its political expression but also, outside the parameters of the electoral process, could become the general foundation for active protest” (ibid.)

Indeed, despite its apparent concreteness, the demand for “fair elections” intuitively became understood by the protesters as a metaphor of an effectively working social system in which no one steals, lies, takes bribes, etc. For this reason, many protesters insisted that the problem of the elections needed to be addressed first, and that everything else would “take care of itself:”

I think that the demand for fair elections in itself implies certain changes that will make life better not only for the hipsters, for example, but also for retired people, and so on. That is, global changes. It's not so simple: “Let's put whoever did it in jail. Once again, it is the system. That is, everything is interrelated and everything is connected (Interview RU7).

What about other slogans and demands? My argument is that avoidance of any particular demands was the conscious strategy and, at the same time, ethics of protesters. In order to demonstrate this, I turn to the answers we received to one of our questions: “Do you think that the “Movement for Fair Elections” should include new demands?”, and to our analysis of voting strategies for the Coordinating Council of the opposition. The creation of the Council was proposed by the leaders and speakers of the movement who wanted to legitimize their leadership in the eyes both participant and outsiders of the movements. At the same time formation of the

Council allowed to organize “the first fair elections in the country”.

The answers we received to the question about new demands led us to conclude that the protesters consciously did not want to include concrete demands into the movement’s agenda because of the fear of singling out specific collective identities within the movement and fracturing the eventful “we” of all the protesters, which was considered a guarantee of solidarity and the durability of the movement. Here is a typical example:

Q.: Do you think the movement for fair elections could possibly include any social demands?

A.: The movement “For Fair Elections” is good because it unites a lot of people. And if it is changed in some way to include some social or political demands, anything other than fair elections, this would just divide people. Some people would support some of the demands, some people are on the left, some are on the right, some are against private property, somebody wants something else, and so on. It would just divide people, it would not be such a strong movement, and everything would die off (Interview RU8).

Furthermore, our respondents even refused to include in the general agenda social, economic, and political problems that appeared socially important and might demand solutions at the level of civil society and government. Together with Natalia Savelyeva and Maxim Alyukov we examined the logic behind this refusal by studying the voting strategies of the Coordinating Council of the opposition:

I made notes every time after the debates. I took note of people who were capable of talking about their ideas beautifully, coherently, of drawing a crowd, whose point of view...I agree with, and even those with whom I didn’t agree, for example the nationalists, but those who could unite the protest. ...Probably, KS should organize the protest meetings and make people of different viewpoints not argue with

each other, and go out and do what had to be done (Interview RU9).

Created from above by the speakers who wanted to preserve their status as “leaders” the Council reflected the ideological and political heterogeneity of the speakers’ community. This strategy aimed at preserving status quo in the self-proclaimed leadership rather than at representing the protest movement from below. At the same time, this approach corresponded with the mood of ordinary participants who wanted to preserve the “unity” they experienced during the mass rallies and marches. The participants believed that representation of every ideological camp and every political position allowed to preserve the unity (Zhuravlev, Savelieva, Alyukov, 2014). According to the procedure, voters were to choose not one or several candidates from the list, but a certain number of candidates from four lists (general, leftist, liberal and nationalist “curies”). As a result, many ordinary participants voted not for candidates they liked, but for at least one candidate from every “curia” (often they voted for one leftist, one liberal, and one nationalist candidate). In a way, the Council was to represent not a variety of positions and groups but a certain meta-political principle, not all the participants of the protest movement but the movement as a whole. At the same time, as Natalia Savelyeva has shown, it was to represent both the participants’ differences and their unity. Any contradictions and differences between political positions or ideological preferences had to be represented and, simultaneously, overcome (Savelyeva, 2013).

The logic of representation of the “unity of different” did not presuppose that people who had different political preferences would reject them in favor of a “general line”. Leftist were not expected to become liberals while liberals did not need to become conservatives. The “condition of possibility” of collective action of these very different people was based on the belief that they were already

united, that they already had something in common - something that was evident for all but was not clarified (even if was symbolized by the label “For fair elections”). As Natalia Savelyeva argues in her article on the Coordinating Council, “the members of the council did not have a task to create something new for the movement, to articulate a political program of the protest. Alternatively, the only goal they had was to find out the goals that allegedly had already been evident for the participants” (ibid.). As one respondent said:

I understand, that people who come to the rallies are different and that they will behave differently, and I'm tolerant. But I like that people are united by the common necessity to come to the streets for some reason (Interview RU10).

The very experience of the eventful protest constituted this tacit knowledge of the common ground of the protest movement. The phrase “for some reason” in the quotation that expresses uncertainty of the movement’s agenda refers to the self-referential character of the eventful protest. Indeed, the desire to sustain and reproduce the collective action itself led to the rejection of any concrete demands which seemed to be superfluous. The participants perceived the movement as a unique moment:

Q.: Do you think the movement could include more demands into its agenda?

A.: This is a one-time action. This is not a continuous process. This is a situation that emerged in this moment. That is why now we need to solve this problem [of fair elections]. After that a normalized political process will start, and every political party will agitate (Interview RU11).

Q.: Do you think the movement could include more demands into its agenda?

A.: I think it should be limited by the one demand of fair elections. This is the amazing moment, when Udaltsov, and nationalists and

liberals are in agreement! (Interview RU12).

The crisis of the movement

The eventfulness of the protest “For fair elections” having facilitated mobilization of thousands of previously apolitical people, at the same time hindered articulation of a political agenda. As historian Ilya Budraitskis argues, “the movement’s slogan, “For fair elections,” was the right strategy, capable of activating the internal contradictions of the political system and of becoming a rallying point for a disintegrated society. This slogan not only did not suggest a unifying program for making radical changes, but as a strategy, it turned out to be limited to a specific political moment” (Budraitskis, 2014).

After the battle between protesters and police that took place on the 6th of May 2012 more than 10 ordinary activists were arrested and then imprisoned. The movement gradually demobilized. In the end of February 2015 Boris Nemtsov, one of the movement’s speaker was killed. The march in memory of Nemtsov mobilized about fifty thousand people. This demonstration was arranged before Nemtsov’s murder and was supposed to be a march against the war in Ukraine and “against the economic crisis”. Interestingly that although it was the first time the “leaders of the opposition” articulated an economic agenda, the causes of crisis were framed in terms of moral condemnation of Putin’s aggressive foreign politics and unrecognized by the Russian state military aggression in Ukraine. Annexation of the Crimea and the war were framed as the causes of sanction that in turn caused the crisis. In other words, although economic issues were articulated there were no public discussions and demands concerning neoliberal economic politics.

Instead, the previous frame of condemnation of the immoral and authoritarian President was now adjusted to the new issue. Ilya Budraitskis wrote that the march was the finale of the protest movement: “Now it is clear that the movement will not go away. It became the way of self-expression of the certain part of the society. At the same time, this is the deadlock of the movement that should be overcome in order to give the voice to those people who suffer from the war and the crisis but prefer to keep silence because do not know how to speak and act” (Budraitskis, 2015). Collecting the interviews in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 we could see how the initial empowerment and inspiration gave place to a disillusionment:

Q.: Did you plan to participate in the march before you found out what happened last night?

A.: Yes, I did.

Q.: Are you familiar with the demands?

A.: Maybe I read something what Navalny spoke about, however, I did not read what Nemtsov wrote.

Q.: Do you support any of these demands?

A.: These demands? OK, I support that all these economic problems are caused by the war. I agree that it should be stopped. Maybe it was Nemtsov who argued that the main anti-crisis measure is to stop the war.

Q.: Which demands do you suppose to be the most relevant now? In general?

A.: I think it is now impossible. It is meaningless <...> I don't believe something will change. It is absolutely clear (Interview RU13).

As political scientist Ilya Matveev noted about the Nemtsov march, “Most of the speeches were confused and contained clichés. The necessity to suggest a real political agenda, and articulated political positions was evident” (Matveev, 2015). Thus, the crisis of the movement and its demobilization were caused not only by the

state repressions but also by its specific self-referential character. Many respondents told us that the rallies were meaningless for them after 2013. As one of them claimed

I [...] began to understand the senselessness of what was happening in the form it was happening, that rallies were pointless (Interview RU14).

Another respondent says:

The wave of the protests declines <...> For me the rallies now are absolutely meaningless. And I think they are meaningless now for very many. And one can understand why. The demands that are proposed in the rallies are not fulfilled. Why to come there?! (Interview RU15).

One of the respondents who attended the rallies criticizes them in 2013:

There are many who are against [the regime and Putin]. There are more than 100 thousands people who came to the rallies. But if you don't explain why we come to streets, in favor of what, then people don't want to come. They don't want to come just for Navalny or Nemtsov. They don't like them and I don't like them. That is why political program, not just people, is what we need. But we don't have it (Interview RU16).

Another respondent who gave us the interview in 2015 told the typical story of how he had been changing the attitude toward the protests:

[When the rallies started] those in power let say have seen us. Russian population got known about us as well. We have realized that our activity is popular. However, on the other hand, the subsequent rallies – and I came to them as well – they not only became marginalized... Not only less people came... There was the feeling that people came but didn't believe it was possible to change

anything... They just dallied away time...

Q. What do you mean when you say that the rallies became marginalized?

A. I don't know... Maybe there were too many people ... Maybe we just did not understand why we came and what we wanted to achieve anymore... (Interview RU17).

We see that the lack of a program and demands is the target of the critique of the protesters. However, the dominant collective identity being transplanted into other contexts became more concrete and more effective.

Thus, I showed how the “Bolotnaya” movement produced the very vague collective identities that have been immanent to the collective action itself. These identities are characterized by the lack of ideological and political concreteness as well as by high level of inclusiveness. In a sense the dominant identity of the protest is self-referential as it expresses not a belonging to a social group or common interest but rather the experience of togetherness itself. At the same time, this identity is based on the populist opposition between morally defined citizens and ethically stigmatized elites headed by the president Putin.

In the next chapter I will show the evolution of the eventful identity within the local activist groups that were created by the rallies' participants in their local areas. I analyze mechanisms and outcomes of this identity transplantation.

Chapter V. After the protest: from rallies to local movements

In this chapter I will consider the post-protest local activism in Russia. I will show how the political subjectivities that had emerged during the rallies changed within the local activist groups. Considering this process of transformation, I will study the broader question of how the process of politicization invoked by the “Bolotnaya” movement spilled over to urban activism. Finally, I will show how the protest event of the anti-Putin rallies has transformed the culture of local activism in Russia by politicizing it.

Pragmatics of local collective action

The sociology of social movements has been more and more interested in local activism in recent years. Moreover, the discussion has centered on the question of evaluating the political weight of small activists in society as a whole. Is local activism capable of driving social change and democracy? Are small deeds politics and weekend campaigning merely ways of letting off steam that only aggravate the alienation of ordinary people from socially important decision-making? The issue of the a-politicism and politicization of local activism emerges against this background.

In what sense is local activism apolitical? It contained the three basic elements I figured out defining a-politicism in Russia: stigmatization of the political, dominance of familiar over public, and the authenticity of facts confirmed by personal observation in contrast to ideological discourses. Indeed, when speaking of the apolitical politics of small deeds, sociologists have noted three of its

features: an ethic of “civic” rather than “political” action (Bennett et al., 2013); the physical proximity of the space in which activists operate (Eliasoph, 1996); and, finally, a specific idiom whose persuasiveness relies on “getting things done,” which is contrasted with, allegedly, hypocritical and mendacious ideological discourses as being more authentic, reliable, and sincere.

In her study of activist groups, the American sociologist Nina Eliasoph discovered that activists would refuse to regard their actions as political even when, objectively, they directly affected the state and the public sphere. She dubbed the phenomenon “avoiding politics.” Volunteers worked in a space they labeled “close to home.” In their conversations with each other and presentation of their work to others, they evaluated it according to the tangibility of specific wins and small changes. Eliasoph writes, “In interviews, most volunteer group participants used the labels ‘close to home,’ ‘for the children,’ and ‘affects me personally’ interchangeably with ‘do-able’ and ‘not political’ (Eliasoph, 1997: 608). Eliasoph thus regards the spread and popularity of local activism in the US as a consequence—and driver—of depoliticization.

Other scholars have described local activism as an institution that, on the contrary, politicizes society. Indeed, are a distancing of oneself from big-time politics, concern for the local environment, and an ethic of concrete deeds always apolitical? In a recent work dealing with US activist and volunteer groups, Elizabeth Bennet and her colleagues have echoed Eliasoph’s notion that the local activism of recent years has been motivated by “disavowing politics” (Bennett et al., 2013). The sociologists discovered that while engaged in local collective action—combating pollution, fighting to save the local heritage, unmasking corruption in local governments, etc.—the activists stubbornly refused to define their work as political. However, Bennett and her colleagues arrived at a more optimistic

conclusion than Eliasoph. Due to the stigmatization of politics, increasingly deemed a dirty, corrupt business, local activism had become an exemplar of a public realm not stained by politics. As the sociologists noted, “By making politics ‘bad,’ civics can be ‘good’” (Bennett et al., 2013: 523).

Local activism is thus fundamentally ambivalent in terms of politics. On the one hand, it is fundamentally apolitical, since it permits people to be content with small deeds while ignoring the large-scale political processes on which people’s lives depend. On the other hand, it functions as a hidden channel for politicizing the apolitical.

Just as with the US politics of small deeds, we must note, however, that these selfsame elements of depoliticization in Russia have not only defined political apathy but have also triggered specific kinds of collective action. First of all, we have in mind the grassroots local activism prevalent in Russia in the 2000s.

The stigmatization of politics spurred apolitical local activism in Russia during the 2000s and 2010s. This activism was marked by the emergence of a particular ethic of collective action that might be called the principle of getting “real” things done. In contrast to dirty, deceitful politics, activists fashioned an ethic that affirmed the primacy of specific actions, producing outcomes beneficial to society at large. A similar ethic of small deeds was typical of volunteers in Moscow and other fashionable social practices. During the late 2000s, it latently politicized the urban communities whose members would later constitute the Bolotnaya Square movement. The ethical focus on change that began with something small or with oneself was widespread among young civic activists (Zheltnina, 2014). Gradually, the principle of small deeds was transformed from an ethic of local collective action into a quasi-ideology of civic action (Volpina, 2012).

During the 2000s and 2010s, the familiar realm was a source of local campaigns, centered on, for example, historical preservation and NIMBY battles. Sociologist Boris Gladarev has shown that Petersburg’s right to the city movement emerged from an “attachment to places close to home”. Petersburgers saw their city as something physically and emotionally familiar to them, and so the destruction of the historical built environment mobilized them to campaign, sometimes successfully, to preserve the so-called Northern Capital’s historic look. According to Laurent Thévenot, an “attachment to near and dear places” is not strictly individual. It can connect people and thus lead to collective manifestations. “Protests anchored in personal and familiar attachment to places—not only historical monuments but old trees or courtyards too—can nevertheless attain a large scope and level of commonality. Places or monuments are protected not only as historical relics but as common places which are invested personally and emotionally” (Thévenot, 2014: 22).

Finally, the regime of visibility, which endows personal know-how and self-evident things with authenticity, in contrast to ideology, facilitated both oppositional and pro-Putinist politicization in the wake of 2011. For example, it led to the emergence of what my and Ilya Matveev have dubbed the “politics of authenticity.” Analyzing the success of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Matveev writes,

The displacement of [ideologies and] discursive politics likewise generated a demand for authenticity. [...] Alexei Navalny’s popularity is largely based on the fact that all his statements are exposés featuring inevitable demonstrations of the alleged evidence: scanned copies of documents, video clips, etc. These pieces of evidence do not serve as proof as such as much as they generate an aura that makes the utterance universally valid. [...] Authenticity’s

“apolitical” aura provides confidence in it. [...] [Navalny] divined it was the right time to toss aside labels and -isms, and speak only of “concrete” problems (Matveev, 2012).

Thus, we have seen that a-politicism, understood as the stigmatization of politics, the primacy of the familiar realm, and the obviousness of alleged facts and personal know-how can both restrict and inspire collective action. A vivid example is local activism, both in Russia and other countries. And yet, Russian local activism has remained apolitical in the sense that it has failed to establish stable and socially reproducible patterns of politically meaningful collective action. It has not established its own political tradition. How could local activism become part of the political culture and the political tradition? My texts attempts to answer this question.

We shall see that the new local activism has overcome isolation in the familiar sphere, destigmatized the political, and gone beyond self-evidence facts and personal know-how. In other words, unlike collective action prior to Bolotnaya Square, post-Bolotnaya Square activism has been an outcome (as well as a mechanism) for transforming the basic norms, rules, and practices of a-politicism; hence, we are able to speak of social change. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that politicization in Russia involves a break with a-politicism, that it is implemented in the process of leaving private life behind and entering public life, of rejecting small deeds in favor of campaigning on behalf of a party or during an ideological conversion that strips individual facts and personal experience of authenticity, reducing them to particulars. On the contrary, politicization involves integrating the familiar and the public, small deeds and politics, self-evident facts and political arguments. As Carine Clément and Anna Zhelnina rightly argue, “[P]oliticization is not a move from the close and familiar environment towards

generalities, but the positioning of politics within the close world which has been practically and emotionally [...] inhabited” (Clément and Zhelnina, forthcoming). In my analysis, I shall try and prove that the expansion of the realm of collective action to a more public sphere has relied on the know-how of the familiar sphere, that destigmatizing the political has required reliance on getting real things done as a means of legitimation, that the transition from the language of facts and personal experience to a language of more generalized political judgments has been impossible without particular techniques of persuasion and affirmation, based on a belief in facts and trust in immediate experience.

In what follows I turn to the analysis of how the event influenced post-protest local activism.

In his article on the Occupy Wall Street movement, anthropologist Jeffery Juris traces the evolution of collective action from “clusters of individuals” to “working groups” (Juris 2012). In his analysis of how mobilization, in the shape of gatherings of many people in a single place and time, gives way, as it wanes, to the creation of working groups who set themselves the task of tackling specific social and political problems, Juris briefly notes that these two forms are linked by continuity: activists establish local groups to continue the Occupy Wall Street movement amidst new conditions. Donatella della Porta in her analysis of “eventful protests” touches upon the similar dynamics focusing on its mechanisms. She shows how “protests create communities”. Following William Sewell, she argues that protest events even if are not “transformative” in Sewell’s sense can have some transformative micro-effects. “Looking at the “byproduct” of protest itself” della Porta explores how mobilization create an environment in which “organizational networks develop; frames are bridged; personal links foster reciprocal trust. In this sense, protest events—especially,

some of them—constitute processes during which collective experiences develop in the interactions of different individual and collective actors, that with different roles and aims take part in it”. The author argues that collective identities are one of the most important “byproducts” created by protests. These new contingent identities can then inspire new, post-protest social movements (della Porta, 2008: 30). We have observed the similar evolution of forms of protest and collective identities, at the basis of this transformation, of replicating the experience of being in the movement, in Russia in 2011–2013, when after the large-scale rallies people who were involved in them organized local activist groups.

Encouraged by their experience of the public events, some of the people involved in them, sensing that the protest rallies were becoming less and less meaningful, i.e., that they had achieved their goals (which had never been articulated), decided to organize neighborhood associations that, on the one hand, would enable them to realize their desire to engage in public work, and, on the other, render collective action more specific, tangible, and effective. However, as one might have expected, it was no accident that the activists turned to this type of work. First, thanks to their time as polling station observers, activists from the same neighborhood were able to meet each other and, in Moscow, independent candidates to the city’s municipal districts. They could have met each other before, after or during the 2012 presidential elections, or they might have been personally acquainted through the same internet community, such as an electronic mailing list. Our interviews have shown that in many cases networks of election observers were the basis for the emergence of local groups.

This shift in mobilization from mass rallies to local groups is rather atypical in Russia. For example, both Carine Clément and Boris Gladarev, who have studied the protest movements that

functioned in Russia before the rallies for fair elections, point to the same trend: people organize themselves into movements when they encounter problems in their daily lives, problems they have a stake in solving (Clément et al. 2010; Gladarev 2011). For instance, using Laurent Thevenot's theory Gladarev shows that "breakage" within "a regime of familiarity" in private realm invokes collective action. As Thevenot himself summarizes, Russian "protests anchored in personal and familiar attachment to places – not only historical monuments but old trees or courtyards too – can nevertheless attain a large scope and level of commonality. Places or monuments are protected not only as historical relics but as common-places which are invested personally and emotionally" (Thevenot, 2014). Unlike these protest groups, which spring into existence because of urgent local problems familiar to everyone involved, the pressure groups on which we focus were not mobilized by a specific issue requiring immediate collective action. Members of these groups decided to come together before choosing the issues on which they would work. As a female lawyer involved with Civic Association told us, "[A]s for the issue that arises before us, of what [issue] to take up, one can take up anything. Because there are an enormous number of tasks we face" (Interview RU15). On the one hand, the new local groups resemble the social movements studied by Clément and Gladarev, since their problems and agendas can be the same — preventing trees from being cut down in parks, stopping the demolition of old buildings, etc. On the other hand, the genesis of these groups is completely different: they were mobilized not by incursions by authorities into familiar spaces or by problems demanding immediate solutions, but by the desire to extend collective action as such, to continue the experience they had at protest rallies or during their work as elections observers.

How can we explain the reverse order in the process of politicization, from the general to the specific, as opposed to the more usual sequence, from the specific to the general? In my view, the answer lies in the role that the rallies and the experience of being elections observers have played in the lives of people involved in the movement. I assume that the rallies were an event that created the collective identity of those involved, who have attempted to extend the experience of protest activity after the mobilization waned.

Why did protesters choose to continue their protest activities by taking up local problems and choosing a local scale of action? The fact is the new movements are connected with the rallies in terms of both continuity and contrast. Many members of new local pressure groups see activism in their neighborhoods not simply as a consequence of the Movement for Fair Elections, but as part of the movement and a means of continuing their activism until the next elections.

We are just a small part of it all [i.e., the Movement for Fair Elections]. [...] Until the next elections, [in] the off-season, [we have] to reposition ourselves as some kind of civic association, that is, to gradually solve problems in the neighborhood itself (Interview RU18).

In other words, the eventful identity that was shared by the temporary community of those who were involved in the unique event, was transmitted into the local groups. Moreover, as one could see, this collective identification was one of the mechanisms of the emergence of these groups. The new local groups have been sparked by the same emotions that triggered the wave of protests in 2011–2012. Then, according, to Denis Volkov, the “unexpectedly large number of protesters and many new young faces at Chistye Prudy [in central Moscow] generated, according to interviews with participants, an enthusiastic atmosphere. This feeling stimulated

[people] to create new public associations, as well to get involved and change existing associations” (Volkov 2012). This enthusiasm was due primarily to a sense of unity with other protesters. Many activists from local groups stressed this continuity with the rallies and their working as elections observers, which had to do with the desire to extend the experience of solidarity and collective action as such.

From the outset we thought about this and probably realized it wouldn't end like this, that something would still connect us, because we had spent several days together, studying these books, and had closed ranks. So somehow right off the bat the thought didn't even occur to us that we wouldn't do something together (Interview RU19).

The narrative of the informant refers to the abrupt experience of “being together during several days” that formed eventful collective identity that, in turn, inspired activists to sustain the moment and reproduce the community who share this identity.

On the other hand, these same civic activists have spoken about their motivations for joining the groups in terms of “real deeds,” as opposed to the mass rallies, which were too much like politics and too remote from people’s specific needs, leading to no practical changes.

I [...] began to understand the senselessness of what was happening in the form it was happening, that rallies were pointless. If I had to choose between attending a dubious, unauthorized rally with no clear point, to taking to the streets with [leftist protest leader Sergei] Udaltsov's red flags, and really trying to do something in my neighborhood, I would choose to try and do something in my neighborhood (Interview RU14).

As I have argued the lack of concrete demands and political agenda led to the mood of disillusionment. Post-protest local

activism seemed to be a kind of collective action that allowed preserving the experience of eventful collective action and, at the same time, overcoming the political tautology of the rallies. Thus, the work done by activists in new local pressure groups embodies two aspirations. They want to see the direct results of their efforts while also extending the experience of community they had during mass demonstrations and while working as elections observers.

Politicization of local activism

In what follows I turn to the analysis of politicization of the post-protest local activism. I will show how familiar and public were integrated, how a-political ethic of “real things” was re-framed, and how what I termed the obviousness of facts became an instrument of political polemics.

Integration familiar and public

Although the post-protest local activism was rooted in the protest event it would be mistaken to think the neighborhoods themselves were mere projections of the new civic meanings and tactics. As they began their work as local activists, they identified themselves and what they did with Bolotnaya Square. However, as they became involved in local activism, the protesters rediscovered their own habitats, their own neighborhoods and towns. On the one hand, neighborhoods took on more specific shapes; their borders and geographies emerged. On the other hand, these were not geographies of familiar places, but geographies of issues in need of solutions and action. The agenda was broadened. Whereas before the 2011 mobilization, local campaigns had orbited around particular issues,

they now dealt with the whole slate of issues plaguing an area. The work they did made the activists see the area as their own.

I liked my neighborhood more [after taking up local activism]. When you do something for it, try and solve its problems, it becomes a living thing to you. Your attitude to it changes. So, when things happen, when trees are cut down, when paving tiles are laid down in parks where they should not be at all, it cuts you to the quick (Interview RU20).

Acting according to a plan—canvassing neighborhoods to hand out newspapers, photograph violations of planning laws, etc.—the activists re-appropriated them. More important, however, is the fact that the rediscovered neighborhoods are not just places or constellations of issues, but have come to be seen as civil society in miniature. The neighborhoods were seemingly repopulated with “citizens.”

“We are going to try and find relevant projects in our neighborhood and engage as many people as we can in them in order to wake up civil society” (Interview RU21).

In other words, activist saws their neighborhoods not only in terms of issues but also in terms of people, who had either become citizens or had the potential to become them.

The people [in our neighborhood] are active, and there are not so few of them, something on the order of ten to twenty people, which is, indeed, a serious number. I saw that the residents of our neighborhood were also not some kind of rabble, but that there were many decent, caring people among them. This despite the fact that it is an average neighborhood where people who did not live there before move because it is cheaper for some of them (Interview RU22).

It is important to note that this integration of civic and familiar was happening in the course of re-discovering local areas.

One of the informants told us about the campaign within which the activists managed to get a housing repair grant from the government. This campaign finally led to the creation of a housing cooperative in one of the houses. The house, therefore, became the space of civic action:

“I understood, you know, this is a funny thing <...> local problems are ... I just realized that the house and communal areas ... it is not something alien, this is something common <...> And we can have an impact on it if we want and other people can have <...> And I realized that we should attract not only people from the protest movement but rather and mostly such chairmen of the housing committees because they know local problems and how to solve them” (Interview RU23).

The activist of another group wrote in his Facebook:

Again and again, I listen to blah-blah-blah about strong men who are waiting for taking power <...> But the base of Russian life is not such men but women, middle-ranking civil servants, workers in housing bureaus, directors of schools etc. Women who solve various local problem and plant flowers in courtyards. Some of them support Putin but rather they support the Communist Party, some of them are a-political but still... (male, born in 1976).

Thus, the integration of familiar and civic, or public, happened in the course of post-protest local activism dynamics. It occurred not because the familiar was abandoned for the sake of the public, but because local activists saw the civic in the familiar. They came to see the familiar as part of the commons generated by the protest movement.

Politics and Getting Real Things Done

We have seen that a peculiar double transition, first from individual outrage over stolen votes to large-scale protests, and then from the latter to localized collective action, resulted in an integration of the familiar and the public. Continuing this line of my analysis, let me proceed to study yet another hybrid that fused apolitical small deeds, regarded in pre-Bolotnaya Square activism as part of familiar space, and the political, which was outside this space.

I have written that pre-Bolotnaya Square local activism reproduced the prevailing cultural opposition between the political and the apolitical in the opposition between real things and politics. The ethic of many activist groups was based on this juxtaposition.

Jefferey Alexander argues that high-profile political events cause a re-articulation of fundamental cultural codes (Alexander, 2003). Indeed, the 2011–2012 wave of protests, despite its politicizing tendency (or, on the contrary, thanks to it), re-manifested the opposition between politics and a-politicism. For example, many activists in post-Bolotnaya Square groups emphasize the specific and productive tendency of getting real things done, as opposed to meaningless political rallies, when talking about their motives.

I understood the meaninglessness of what was happening. The rallies were meaningless in the way they were held. They had to be conducted in a way that was meaningful. But when they are held merely for the sake of holding them. [...] Later, I joined Headquarters and realized it was more productive. [...] If I had to choose between attending a dubious unauthorized rally, a rally with no clear message and chockablock with [far left opposition leader Sergei] Udaltsov's red flags, and trying to get something real done

in my own neighborhood, I would choose to try and get something done in my own neighborhood (Interview RU14).

Elaborating and simultaneously criticizing Alexander's approach, Eliasoph and Lichterman have called for a pragmatic way of analyzing cultural codes. The sociologists argue that in different circumstances and different communities people understand, articulate, and give meaning to the prevalent cultural oppositions in different ways (Eliasoph and Lichterman, 2003). My study has also shown that when new local groups are launched, politics and specifics can be combined and evaluated in different ways in the rhetoric of activists.

First, the juxtaposition between politics and getting real things done could be normative. In this case, the opposition reflected the juxtaposition of two worlds. In one of them, activists could engage with specific issues for the benefit of others while keeping a distance from politics per se. In this rhetoric, the solving of specific problems was conceived as valuable in itself and an end in itself to be pursued.

I have an active stance, but I try to do my activism reasonably. I want to arrive at an outcome, not—"all the world's—" Damn. I've forgotten the lyrics of "The Internationale." "We will destroy this world [of violence] / Down to the foundations, and then / We will build [our] new world." I'm more interested in building than destroying. So, destructive and aggressive activists are not my cup of tea. I realize that when we destroy everything down to the foundations, it will be rough to build our own world on top of them. I would argue we have to build on the basis of what exists, gradually replacing the bad things" (Interview RU25).

In his discourse, the political was associated with aggression, abstraction, showing off, destruction, propaganda, critique, ideology, and chatter, while getting real things done was bound up

with specificity, meaningfulness, goodness, usefulness, practicality, effectiveness, familiarity, mundaneness, peace, and realism.

On the contrary, another discourse, based on the opposition between politics and specifics, endowed the political with a positive meaning. In this discourse, getting real things done generally functioned as a tactic that legitimized collective action, which inevitably had a political dimension.

Maybe this business [a project for producing a brochure on the history of a Moscow district], by taking a step back from politics, will get people interested by getting them used to each other, and then, when the time comes, get them into politics again (Interview RU26).

Echoing Alexis de Tocqueville's words that voluntary associations were the schools of democracy, real things were imagined in this case as a kind of recipe for civically educating the residents of the district.

Until the off-season, until the next elections, we need to reorient ourselves into a civic association, meaning gradually solving problems and scoring some political points. [...] I would not say we have deliberately decided to move together in this direction and establish a political force, but rather a certain base of concerned people, a framework for developing civic society and pressure groups in P (Interview RU18).

In this discourse, getting real things done was associated with what interested people, got their attention, raised recognition, strengthened reputations, trained people to fight for their rights, and overcame apathy. In this neighborhood, local activism was juxtaposed with "pure" politics, which in this case were not regarded as excessively aggressive, ideologized, and propagandistic, but was imagined as insufficiently effective and not based on real experience with the populace.

Juxtaposing politics to real things in favor of either of the former or the latter, both types of discourse were superseded, during the evolution of the activist groups, by a new, third discourse that united politics and specifics in a single frame. To understand how this came about, we must not only turn to the communicative use of cultural codes, but to repetitive practices that alter the pragmatic context and, ultimately, the meaning of cultural oppositions.

The activists perceive the opposition between politics and real things in various pragmatic contexts, endowing it with meaning and invoking it in the things they say. Unlike pre-Bolotnaya Square activists, the members of post-Bolotnaya Square local groups, on the one hand, have sought to reproduce the experience they went through at the political rallies on Bolotnaya Square; on the other hand, they have become involved in collective practices, including not only previous practices but also new practices or, at very least, practices rare among previous activists, i.e., involvement in municipal district elections, the publication of opposition newspapers and leaflets, and public discussions with local authorities.

The political background of getting real things done reveals itself as the repertoire of local collective actions expands. One of the turning points in the evolution of the post-Bolotnaya Square activist groups was when they became involved in elections to municipal district councils, which are not legislative bodies, but are primarily charged with overseeing tiny budgets for improving local amenities. Reflection on involvement in municipal district council campaigns quite often revealed the tactical aspect of getting real things done.

Yes, I'm more inclined to a political approach. [...] First, there are lots of political activists, and second, they say the right things when they are involved in local affairs. It is due to these affairs that people are already quite familiar with [he names three activists]. They are getting their hands dirty dealing with playgrounds, gardens, and

bike paths, and people have seen them on TV and outside, when they talked with them. They have seen them at presentations and collecting signatures on petitions. People already know them, and so when there are elections of municipal district councilors, they might vote for them, despite all the obstacles (Interview RU27).

As they have become involved in municipal district council election campaigns, the activists have, one way or another, had to deal with various issues and projects simultaneously.

Q.: Why did you decide to focus on the neighborhood level? Am I right to think that initially your idea was to do something in your city district [whose representatives sit on the city council, which has both legislative powers and has access to the city's budget]?

A.: Because I ran for a seat on the municipal district council, and I imagined that dealing with local issues is also important and realistic, if you want to call it that. You cannot take on everything, but on the local level, everything is familiar and you live here. And it's seemingly a way of getting ready for the next elections, learning about the problems of the whole city district, knowing what platform to run with during the next elections. That is why, probably.

Q.: I see. And the newspaper? What role did you see for the newspaper? What mattered about it to you?

Answer: Probably merely as a way of informing residents about what was happening, so they had a different source of information. Because all the newspapers in the district were pro-regime, and they promoted a single viewpoint. But we wanted to launch an opposition newspaper that would talk about other things the pro-regime newspapers hushed up (Interview RU28).

By becoming involved in various campaigns and projects, members of the new groups do real things and take part in opposition politics at the same time. Gradually, inspired by the experience of eventful politicization at the Bolotnaya Square rallies, the practices

of collective action bring together or, rather, integrate politics and getting real things done into a single frame. The interviews, including the follow-up interviews and the focus group discussions we conducted in 2014, pinpointed the emergence of a new discourse in which real things and politics were two sides of the same coin. They were no longer opposed to each other, nor did they relate to each other as ends and means. They had fused.

Whereas, getting real things done has been in more conventional local activism, in a certain sense, an autonomist, anti-political doctrine, the post-protest groups nurtured a notion of the inevitable relationship between specific issues and politics at a later stage in their evolution.

[Russians] have no clue that the number of trash cans at the bus stop to the subway and the number of benches next to your residential building's entryway are political issues. It depends on who is in power and what he or she does when in power. Because when people in power don't notice the needs of ordinary people, it has an impact all the same. A beer kiosk can open or an ice-cream kiosk can open. A library can open on the first floor of your building or a pharmacy can open. It largely depends on what happened on election day (Interview RU29).

The evolution I analyzed, which saw the integration of politics and getting real things done, caused the category of the political to take on a new meaning. In later interviews, activists willingly talked about politics as something essential, vital, and beneficial, emphasizing, however, that they were talking about “good” politics rather than “bad” politics, about grassroots politics, say, as opposed to official politics.

For example, an informant defined good politics—that is, democratic politics, focused on the needs of specific people—as the “ground floor” of the legislative branch, thus voicing a notion of

good politics as a peculiar compromise between politics per se and grassroots activism.

Politics, even small-time politics, is a long-term project. [...] I saw this as a really good fit with the theory of how ordinary people are involved in politics. Here they are, the ordinary problems of ordinary people. Here it is, the lowest level where legislative decisions are made and where, theoretically, they can get their foot in the door as activists, into the place where problems are solved. This energy could be multiplied by the authorities vis-à-vis the populace (Interview RU29).

Thus, the know-how inherited from Bolotnaya Square and the practice of various campaigns, including election campaigns, on the one hand, dragged getting real things done into politics, so to speak, and, on the other hand, grounded politics in specific issues. Politicization occurred not due to bypassing the theory of small deeds in favor of the so-called political struggle, but by integrating the former and the latter. The upshot was that the opposition between politics and specifics, which had been the foundation of the culture of a-politicism, has been transformed into an opposition between good politics and bad politics. This major social change—the transformation of political culture—has been an effective tool in the eventful politicization of local activism.

Facts and Politicization

We have seen how, by rooting politics in getting real things done, post-Bolotnaya Square activists have destigmatized it. Good grassroots politics has now gained a new legitimacy. In new activist groups, this legitimacy depends not only on getting real things done but also on allegedly self-evident facts.

Even as the Bolotnaya Square movement was underway, the apolitical idioms of facts and personal experience had become peculiar tools of political legitimation and agitation. In the discourse that shaped the collective anger over the alleged theft of votes, the appeal to evidence was mediated by the technique of presenting the facts, of demonstrating the act of eyewitness. The dissemination on YouTube of videos, allegedly containing evidence of vote rigging, whose purpose was to get people out to the protest rallies, is a paradigmatic example of politicizing factual evidence.

Personal experience and facts combined at the protest rallies of 2011–2012 into a single regime of visibility. For example, the well-known slogan “I Saw the Ballot Stuffing!” refers, on one hand, to the irrefutability of the video evidence of vote rigging, while, on the other hand, it invokes the personal experience of outrage as, for example, in the famous slogan “I’m angry as hell!” Another instance in which references to facts merge with references to personal experience are presentations of the self, of one’s presence, in the public sphere, the self-depiction of one’s own grassroots activism as an irrefutable fact the regime must face.

Q.: What did you expect from today’s rally?

A.: I wanted them to see we were not fools and we were not sheep. I wanted them to see that there were not five of us, like they have been saying. Eighty thousand people show up, and they say there were five thousand people. And I wanted them to know that not everyone agrees with what they are doing now (Interview RU30)

The new local activist groups have turned this technique for politicizing evidence into a reproducible practice, into a reality test (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), in which the self-evident facts

the activists have tested through their personal experiences expose the regime and support the stances taken by the activists.

I should emphasize that, when speaking about reality tests, my focus is on the pragmatic aspect of politicizing evidence that relies on the material nature of real objects in the world. Mundane believability, by reinforcing a political stance, is therefore such an effective tool of politicization, because it lets us “touch” the truthfulness of the convictions acquired during the protests.

How the politicization of evidence, of obviousness, has been turned into a sustainable practice for testing reality can be seen from one of our embedded observations. In late 2014, we observed Civic Association’s election campaign. We accompanied the activists on a “photo walk,” during which they recorded damage in their neighborhood’s infrastructure. They took snapshots of potholes in the streets, an abundance of garbage cans in places where they cannot be put by law, broken swings on playgrounds, etc. At the same time, they conversed with the local residents. This was how the activists got ready for the forthcoming municipal district council elections, in which members of their group were running as candidates.

A., the group’s informal leader, yells at M., “You talk to the residents, only give them the right message.” I ask A. what the right message is. He stops, interrupting his discussion with I. about what to photograph and how to photograph it. He explains to me that “one shouldn’t buttonhole them right away,” although they “definitely have to invite people to the meeting” He says there is no need to promise people anything, since promises are “old-fashioned.” They have to get specific things done and show results. They do not need to make promises, but to talk about what they have already done. “People don’t believe in windbags and blowhards. You have to show them you got the bench put there yourself and sat the old woman in

it yourself.” And yet as A. says this, he has brought the process of photographing the area to a halt. I. says to him, “Fuehrer, that’s enough. You can give your political speeches later, but now we have to finish the job.”

We see that the activist and his colleagues are employing seemingly apolitical language or, rather, a procedure for highlighting telltale facts by photographing the concrete problems in their neighborhood and the physical outcomes of real work—an old woman sitting on a bench. Indeed, the activist contrasts the image of the old woman seated on the sturdily assembled bench with “buttonholing” and political chatter. However, at the same time, real things function here as a political tactic meant to win people’s trust during the election campaign. Evidence and facts persuasively demonstrate the effective work of the local activists and the current administration’s inability to cope with its duties. In other words, this observation shows us how specifics, politics, self-evident facts, and campaigning combine. The activist group’s leader voices the doctrine of getting real things done, buttressing it with evidence, even as he delivers a short political speech that temporarily halts the routine job of photographing specific problems. Moreover, his speech is meant to explain a tactic that should convince and mobilize local residents to support the activist group at elections and not the ruling United Russia party. So the “fuehrer’s” comrade asks him to cut the “political speeches” and get back to the real work.

The know-how of post-protest local activism has integrated the visibility of facts, personal experience, and political campaigning. What matters more, however, is that this know-know has established a reality test that legitimates or “justifies” (as Thévenot and Boltanski put it) politics per se, for in an apolitical society you have to make excuses for your civic activism.

Biographical Hybrids

We have seen how the event of Bolotnaya Square has led to the politicization of local activism. In the wake of “For fair elections” protest, activism has produced new syntheses of specifics and politics, new combinations of the private and public realms, and new regimes of visibility. However, Bolotnaya Square has also entailed the emergence of hybrids of a completely differently kind: the combination in the lives of activists of elements of know-how which had existed independently of each other prior to the large-scale protests. On the one hand, people have met in the post-Bolotnaya Square local groups whose lives would hardly have intersected outside Bolotnaya Square. The sociologist Olivier Fillieule would have called them people with different “activist careers.” On the other hand, Bolotnaya Square contributed to the fact that previously incompatible things have been combined in the lives of the same people, for example, the value of personal self-realization, professionalism, and political activism. I shall consider both of these trends in more detail.

The analysis of the biographical interviews with members of post-Bolotnaya Square local groups revealed four different activist careers, leading to involvement in the new local activism. This analysis was conducted within the Public Sociology Laboratory project under supervision of Svetlana Erpyleva who figured out four activist careers. Representatives of the first career type, whom I, following Svetlana Erpyleva (Erpyleva, forthcoming), call “doers,” have been activists since childhood, when they were involved in any non-contentious “commotion” at school and university,” where they acted as “ringleaders” and “social activists.” As adults, many of them found a beloved profession or occupation to pursue and had devoted all their time to it while trying to make a small income or, on the

contrary, sacrificing their main occupation to realize themselves in what they loved doing. They went into local activism after Bolotnaya Square primarily to do something concrete, thus remaining true to their active attitude.

Representatives of the second type, whom Erpyleva calls “volunteers,” were also active at school and university. However, in later life, they decided to realize themselves in non-contentious social activism, mainly by working in charity organizations and foundations. After Bolotnaya Square, they joined the local groups not in order to criticize the political regime, but to help specific people in their neighborhoods.

Representatives of the third type, whom Erpyleva has dubbed “oppositionists,” hail from politicized families, and discussed and followed political events in Russia from an early age. Uninterested in public activism at school, which they considered a chore and a formality, they maintained an interest in politics as they continued their socialization, and well before the Bolotnaya Square protests they were involved in the opposition’s battle with the regime. Thus, when the large-scale protests erupted, they had almost become professional political activists. They considered local neighborhood activism as an effective means of mobilizing “ordinary” people for the long-term battle with the regime.

Finally, there are the representatives of the fourth type of activist career, whom Erpyleva has dubbed “oppositional thinkers.” They had a vigorous interest in politics and a critical attitude toward the powers that be in their lives prior to Bolotnaya Square, but it never led to any active opposition work. As an informant explained, “[Before] I just discussed [Russia’s] problems. My dissatisfaction grew, but there was never any impetus to act” (Interview RU31).

During the Bolotnaya Square protests, fourth-type careerists sensed acutely that, after a long period of waiting, the time had

finally come for action. In pursuit of this action, they organized local groups or joined already-existing groups, often becoming leaders in the groups.

Ordinarily, these four careers rarely intersect and shape different social institutions: apolitical professionalism; apolitical volunteer social organizations, focused on helping individuals but not on changing the ground rules; professional big-time politics, as reflected in the competition among political parties; and “kumbaya” oppositionism in the social networks. During the popular protests of 2011–2012, representatives of these different careers came together in the same place, and later, thanks to the event of Bolotnaya Square, they wound up in the same local groups. People who had been active at school met up with people who had hated this activism as a chore. People who believed in charity made the acquaintance of people who had criticized it as pointless and as something that propped up the current system instead of combating it. People who had always tried to do specific, tangible, and effective things, albeit on a small scale, encountered people who had preferred to reflect on the world’s big problems. The intersection of these careers within the new local activism partly shaped its hybrid nature.

Aside from bringing together activists whose paths had not previously crossed, the event of Bolotnaya Square also facilitated the fusion of various experiences and know-hows in the same careers. Thus, a focus on personal realization and a successful professional career has usually been contrasted with a focus on social and political activism, which presume that a person is forced to sacrifice career, family, and free time for the sake of their work. However, the lives of the individual members of the new local groups have shown that the idea of personal development and overcoming personal crises, and the notions of professionalism, hobby, and activism have combined in different proportions as post-Bolotnaya Square

activism has progressed in the lives of some its proponents. People who, on the eve of Bolotnaya Square, were going through personal crises and could not find their place in life discovered their calling in post-Bolotnaya Square activism. People who had devoted their lives to professionalism in a particular field and had been passionate about it for its own sake for many years at some point realized that local activism would help them become better professionals, and their professional skills make them better activists. Moreover, some of them went through a personal crisis because their beloved profession seemed pointless; local activism, on the contrary, endowed it with meaning by uniting it with higher ends. Thus, as they worked in the post-Bolotnaya local groups, some of our informants acquired their life's calling.

Good examples of such hybrids are Eli (Headquarters) and Mila (Civic Association). Eli was educated as a programmer, but for many years he had worked as a manager at an oil company, doing work he personally found uninteresting, but which paid well. After he was laid off, he discovered he had forfeited his programming skills and worked part-time as a gypsy cab driver. This moment in his life coincided with his vigorous involvement in the Bolotnaya Square protests, and subsequently he attended most opposition rallies and events. In 2012, after accidentally seeing a help wanted ad for Probok.net ["No Traffic Jams," a crowdsourced internet-based project, partly sponsored by the Moscow City Government, for solving the city's extreme traffic problems], he got a job there, since as a cab driver he was upset with the city's endless traffic jams. Becoming more and more enthusiastic about solving the city's transportation problems, his political views moderated: he became convinced that cooperation with the authorities was necessary to solve specific problems. While taking part in Alexei Navalny's mayoral election campaign in his neighborhood, he met

Headquarters activists and joined the group. At the same time, he gained admission to the Higher School of Urban Studies, having decided to engaged with the city's problems professionally. We see that until he was actively involved in a local group's routine work, his politicization and professionalization progressed in parallel, unconnected with each other. In some sense, they were at odds with each other. Because of Bolotnaya Square, his political views radicalized, while they became more moderate due to his job at Probok.net. Only his post-Bolotnaya Square activism brought together his social causes and his professional practice. Thus, for example, Eli became actively engaged in all group projects having to do with municipal improvements. A simple desire to combat traffic jams was transformed into the idea of professional self-realization in urban studies, which has become inalienable from active involvement in the reconstruction of his own district. When he was asked why he was involved in the work of the local activist group, Eli explained,

Because I live here, in this district, and I want it to improve. Besides, being involved in social activism, I have begun to understand how political power is construed and how the various social forces in the city interact, and this is something I need as an urbanist (Interview RU32).

We see he does not simply employ his professional skills in activism. The activism itself makes him a better professional.

Mila is another example of a biographical hybrid. She has chosen her profession in adolescence: she has tried to pass examination to enter journalist department of the Saint Petersburg State University twice, but failed. Finally, she entered library department in other college, but left it in a few years. When explaining this decision, Mila says that she cannot do the things she sees no meaning in. She found the job of a reporter at the local TV,

and then she worked in different local newspapers. At that time Mila became interested in covering local problems of the neighborhood. Then Mila gave birth to two kids, took a break in journalism, tried to organize the centre for kids in her neighborhood. Explaining this break, she referred not only to family situation, but also to feeling of senselessness her journalist work, which had no actual goal. However, the effort of kids' centre organization was unsuccessful and she gradually came back to the freelance journalist work in local newspapers. During the time of the Bolotnaya, she followed all the events and defined herself as a supporter of the movement, but did not visit the rallies. Being the mother of little kids, Mila participated in the campaign against burning garbage dump and met there a few activists from "Civic Association". A year after she helped to organize local debating club on the basis of the newspaper she worked in and met the leader of "Civic Association" again. It was the time when the group was preparing to the municipal elections and the leader of the group persuaded Mila to be among group candidates. After elections Mila started to do some journalist work for "Civic Association" and then became one of the group activists. She participated in all the group meetings and specialized in group press releases and the media coverage of group activity. In one year she started to help other activist groups to cover their work; she explained that as a journalist she knows how to attract media attention to a problem. The groups she helped paid her some small money, so she did not need to do other paid job. Mila also explained that activism gave her the sense and the meaning for professional activity and for the life in general:

Activism is the most important thing in my life if not speak about family, children etc. Activism does only make sense. Why did I take a pause and stopped doing journalism? Because I realized I cannot

write a word if I don't understand what is the goal behind it.
(Interview RU33).

At the time of the last interview, she saw her activist and professional mission in changing the situation in Russian journalism. Thus, Mila acquired purpose of life and became professional journalist in activism and professional activist in journalism. We can see how the idea of personal self-realization, professionalization, paid-job and political activist project merged in her biography.

The event of Bolotnaya Square has thus led to the emergence in post-protest activism of new hybrid lives. On the one hand, people with careers that ordinarily take them in different directions suddenly find themselves together. On the other hand, different kinds of know-how that ordinarily are at odds with each other suddenly become parts of a single whole. These hybrids contribute to the politicization of the new local activism, which has been negotiating the habitual opposition between the apolitical and the political.

Illustrated by one interview

I have shown how being transplanted into local activism space the eventful identities, meanings and experiences politicized it. In order to demonstrate the effect in a more concrete way I will refer to the one interview with the leader of one of the groups. Analysis of this interview allows to grasp the dynamics of politicization of local collective action.

Telling about the genesis of the activist group the informant himself articulates the continuity between eventful experience of the anti-Putin rallies and the group formation. He starts with the narration of the event that produced the new solidarities: *“This set us in turmoil. It unified and solidated us, the parliamentary elections, when everybody came to the streets”* (Interview RU18). Then he

recalls that he wanted to transform this association into an effective collectivity: “*Starting communicate with other people I realized that we should not just gather but we should become a team. Since that moment I start searching for such a team and then I found [the group]*” (Interview RU18). One can see that a motivation of localization of collective action lies not in the locality itself but in the aspiration to make collective action more efficient and effective. Then the respondent talks about re-appropriation of the locality in the course of practice of local activism:

Gradually I began ... I suppose that if I was not involved in the issue of the park, I would do other things today. I started seeing the town in a different way through these problems, I started feeling the town in a different way, I started understanding what's happening. I had never noticed that there were some problems in P. (the name of the town – O. Zh.) (Interview RU18).

In the following quotation the activist speaks about new understanding of the locality that becomes not just a place but a civic community:

My task [as an activist] is twofold. On the one hand, I want to preserve my town. Previously [when the rallies happened] I was concerned about the problems of the state, I wasn't interested in local problems. But now I see how bad the situation can be if we will not resist. So the first task is preservation. It can deals with anything: improvement of the area, separate collection of waste etc. <...> On the other hand I want people's mentality to be changed. And this is even more important. I want to inspire people. This is what Navalny has done and I want to continue. Because we [the local group] are the result of what he has done. And the second task is linked to the first task. The most important thing for us is to inspire people to unite, to do something, to act collectively. In this case we will preserve the town” (Interview RU18).

If in the cases of pre-protest local activism localities were familiar realms, they became public spheres within the new, post-protest local movements.

Then he speaks that local problems and real deeds turned out to be interrelated with politics within the activist group:

“It is needed to achieve the situation in which not one or two but fifty thousand dwellers would join the group <...> The same story was the struggle for the park. It began as the protection, but then civic consciousness emerged, then we all united and we won. If all citizens of P., i. e. ninety thousands people will join our group we will solve all the problems” (Interview RU18).

Finally, he uses the metaphor of seeing to reflect on obviousness of problems to address:

“Previously I did not note many things but ... when you start acting, you see more and more: you see one problem, then another one ... now I see everything” (Interview RU18).

The Emergence of a Group Style

I have seen how apolitical and political trends have mingled in the new local activism. However, we should note that the rapprochement between the apolitical and political was also present in earlier, pre-Bolotnaya Square local activism. But in this case, we are dealing with the emergence of relatively sustainable and reproducible styles of collective action, which were shaped through processes of integrating the apolitical and political, as analyzed above. In their work with American activist groups, Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman analyze so-called group styles, i.e., sustainable collective notions of self and others, as they exist in the communications practices of group members (Eliasoph and

Lichterman, 2003; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014). In our case, we can likewise speak of a prevalent group style, that, on the one hand, typifies all the groups we studied and, on the other hand, distinguishes them from other, conventional activist groups.

A group style is a set of notions shared by members of small groups, the group's attitude to the outside world, the way the group's members perceive themselves, and the discursive practices they use to discuss problems relevant to the group.

“Group boundaries” put into practice a group's assumptions about what the group's relationship (imagined and real) to the wider world should be while in the group context. “Group bonds” put into practice a group's assumptions about what members' mutual responsibilities should be while in the group context. “Speech norms” put into practice a group's assumptions about what appropriate speech is in the group context (Eliasoph and Lichterman, 2003: 785).

Eliasoph and Lichterman emphasize that the concept of a group style does not merely describe a set of notions and norms. It embraces the pragmatics of the collective intelligence and communication that enables us to see the practical aspect of the ideas and idioms shared by members. Can we say that post-Bolotnaya Square local activism evolved a new, specific style for all these groups? If it did, how could we characterize it? To answer the question, I will analyze three aspects of group style on the basis of my empirical findings.

How do the activists imagine the border separating their groups from the outside world? On the one hand, this border is conceived, in the spirit of Bolotnaya Square, as a frontline between citizens and the authorities, as embodied by Putin and United Russia, and, on the other hand, in terms of a local activism that gives priority to neighborhood problems. The superimposition of these borders has given rise to a stable notion of themselves as active citizens of their

districts, fighting the authorities at the grassroots. In other words, how the local groups relate to the outside world is the product, on the one hand, of the localization of a civic “we are here” identity, construed as an antithesis to the Putin regime and, on the other hand, filling the space of the familiar with civic content. The localization of opposition activism has in no way elided the opposition between people and the authorities. On the contrary, by contrast with the abstract, moralistic notion of honest citizens battling the dishonest Putin, typical of Bolotnaya Square protesters, the image of the conflict between people and authorities has become much better-defined and specific in local activism. Here is a telltale example from one of our participant observation sessions. In a small town in Moscow Region we observed how a group’s activists interacted with local residents during a campaign in which the group’s members were running for seats on the municipal district council. During a short interview after meeting with residents, a female activist explained to us that one objective of their campaign was to take as many seats as possible from incumbent United Russia councilors. Chatting earlier with residents involved in a campaign against the demolition of residential houses, she tried to persuade them not to vote for the councilors from the so-called party of power. She invoked the following arguments. If they voted for X. from United Russia, they would in fact not be voting for his political party, but for the construction company owned by the councilor, which had already demolished several residential buildings in the district. Therefore, they could continue their campaign against the destruction of the houses by becoming actively involved in the elections, by campaigning and voting against United Russia. Thus, the district’s specific problems and the obvious goals of the developers, which you could see with your own eyes by looking at

the demolished houses, concretized the idea of a political conflict, separating “us” from “them.”

The import of the border separating local activist groups from the outside world has also become better-defined in a spatial sense. Analyzing French local activists and comparing them with US activists, Thévenot and Moody write, “[The typically French idea of local community is both 1) a resident people (‘habitants’) with shared customs, family connections to the region and land, and mutual ties to a patrimony which must be cultivated and preserved; and 2) the ‘collectivité locale,’ which is less an autonomous, self-governing political entity than a piece of a much larger collective and national political unit, which is justified on civic terms” (Thévenot and Moody, 2012). The same can be said about our groups, in which collective action is conceived as both local and part of a broader opposition movement that covers the entire country. However, whereas Thévenot and Moody accent local collective identity, rooted in family ties, common traditions and norms, and so on, our activists do not have a local collective identity.

Turning to the second element of the group style, as singled out by Eliasoph and Lichterman, namely, how activists see each other, we have to identify the image of the “grassroots neighborhood” that sets the new local associations apart. This hybrid perception of the neighborhood as, on the one hand, something whole in the sense of a set of specific problems and, on the other, a Russia-wide grassroots community “scattered across the neighborhoods” (as one informant put it) has made post-Bolotnaya Square local activism a unique phenomenon in Russia. At the same time, despite the attachment to familiar places and the image of a “neighborhood’s active citizens,” local Russian activists usually do not see each other as local residents. As Eliasoph writes of a US activist group, “To summarize the group style of ‘timid affiliation,’ [the] members understood

themselves as rooted, if ambivalent, members of the Airdale community, not as random individuals with gripes, or outraged outsiders. They needed to respect each other as local residents” (Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2003: 756). In my case, on the contrary, while identifying with the grassroots movement in general, local activists, with some exceptions, see no essential differences among residents of a given district or town and the residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg as a whole. “[Our task] is to make the life [of the neighborhood’s residents] and people generally and the city comfortable. Well, at least to improve one’s little corner so that . . . You see, the environment in Russia is so aggressive that no one here feels comfortable” (male, born 1964, Public Council). In this interview excerpt, we see that your own little corner differs from the city per se only in terms of scale. Another activist has similar memories. “At some point, I went into the courtyard of my building and decided that our city was so awful” (male, born 1974, People’s Council). In other words, when he went into his courtyard, he saw his city, not his neighborhood.

Analyzing the third, communicative aspect of group style, Lichterman and Eliasoph see a link between the common idioms of groups and their motives. “[W]ithout these shared languages, communicating motives would be nearly impossible; without the communication [...] forming motives would be nearly impossible” (Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2003: 742). My research has shown that local activists have elaborated a new vocabulary of motivations. The fusion of the ethic of getting real things done and oppositionism into a single political worldview occurred while designing a new language that constructed a system of notions distinguishing legitimate motives and aspirations from illegitimate ones. As the new local groups have evolved, the activists have come to a common understanding of the movement’s objectives. They have to engage in

politics while accomplishing real things. At the same time, they have to pursue real objectives that can facilitate political change, especially the battle against the Putin regime at the local level. The concept of a group style describes the idioms, notions, and intuitions shared by all members of a group. Showing how group styles work, Lichterman and Eliasoph give examples of how discursive practices that do not conform to group styles are excluded from the space of communication or are not supported by members of the group. Similarly, in this case, by conforming to an idiom or vocabulary of motivations based on a synthesis of real things and politics, activists have excluded real things without politics and politics without real things from their group's discursive and practical commons. Thus, activists who wanted to be involved only in small deeds for their own sake gradually left the groups. At the same time, the discourse arguing that getting real things was valuable in itself has become illegitimate. During a focus group discussion, an informant recalled a comrade who had left the group.

So, that was something that N. did, maybe for six months or a year, and then he left activism. Now, for some reason, he and his brother can write such criticism in response to our critical posts. Recently, U., his brother, came back from the army, and he was interested in what we were up to. But they have this thing that they support the movement as a whole, but they don't like certain things. For example, they don't like the fact we write harsh things about United Russia. They say we had better get things done. I have always hated it when people say you should do more things, because that sentence—"Well, come on, do it!"—applies to everyone.

Q.: Do they only criticize you, or are they also involved in campaigns?

A.: No, they are not involved. They follow us on the social networks. I recently posted a snapshot of a horrible park bench, writing that

the urbanists from the Zyuzino Municipal Council had shown their stuff. The bench was awful. U. decided to show us that we only criticize. He went there and buried the bench. He went there at night with a shovel and buried the bench; then he wrote about it on our group page and asked us to repost it. People wrote to U. that it was a really cool but fairly useless thing to do. [Laughter.] He thinks, What was the point of posting a picture? Something has to be done. We believe that if something bad like this happens, the municipal council has to deal with it (Interview RU31)

In an interview, another female activist told us how she had wanted to take up the issues of rape and the neighborhood's veterans, but her aspirations were not supported. She could not persuade other group members to join her, since her proposals seemed too remote from what the group was supposed to be doing.

At the same time, excessive politicization—namely, discussions of ideological proclivities and differences—is an illegitimate discursive practice in local activist groups.

The new group style, typical of post-Bolotnaya Square local activism, took shape due to the emergence of the local activist groups themselves from the spirit and experience of Bolotnaya Square. They have become a unique meeting point where the lives of different people have intersected, although the paths of people with such different careers and interests never cross.

Thus, what all the new activist groups have in common is a unique group style, and this distinguishes them from conventional local activism. Members of the new groups see themselves and talk about themselves as “citizens of [their] neighborhoods” who do battle with specific people, groups, and companies, which are affiliated with United Russia and negatively impact the lives of local residents. These people are involved in opposition politics, but in the form of real things that can be done together, regardless of

ideological proclivities, but with the obligatory condition of opposition to Putin and his regime.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed the model of eventful social change at a micro level. This change was politicization of an a-political activism that was not a break with a-politicism, but a rapprochement, the integration and interaction of the familiar and the public, the idioms of so-called facts and campaigning, of politics and getting real things done that produced the politicization, the social change that has proved vital to Russian society. The mechanism of politicization was the impact the protests and events of 2011 had on local activism. Put crudely, we can see the way local activism was shaped as follows. In the absence of institutions that supported and reproduced collective action, public discussions, and political representation, all things that could have facilitated the formation of political subjects, the “sudden” experience of unity and collective action itself produced new varieties of political subjectivity and societal relations. Consequently, these forms have been transplanted into adjacent societal spaces, thus provoking changes. In other words, post-Bolotnaya Square local activism is the sum of two parts: the experience of “For fair elections” protests and the practices and modes of a-political local activism.

In my text, I have shown that the unity felt by different people as a result of their experience at the Bolotnaya Square protests, the sense of solidarity that guided the sudden collective action of thousands of people, later spread to the neighborhoods of Moscow and Petersburg. The neighborhoods gave birth to local activist groups that, although they resemble conventional local Russian

activism, are fundamentally different from them. The activists in these groups have established a stable, reproducible group style that combines the apolitical and the political—the realm of the familiar and the public sphere, the ethic of small deeds and oppositionism, a belief in self-evident facts and political campaigning, professionalism and politics as a vocation.

This synthesis of the apolitical and political is the outcome of the politicization of local collective action, as revealed by a systematic comparison of the groups I have studied with pre-Bolotnaya Square activism. I analyzed the mechanics of this social transformation, showing how the experience of the event and the inertia of the eventful collective experience, channeled to the scale of neighborhoods and taking root in the concrete practice of doing real things, has gradually altered political (or, rather, apolitical) culture. Politics has thus ceased to be conceived as something dirty and unwanted, while the image of the conflict with Putin and United Russia has become specific and defined. For example, in the course of their work, group members have seen the connections among party leaders, real estate developers, and government officials.

My analysis enabled a rethinking of a number of methodological and theoretical questions: the relationship between culture and experience, meaning and practice, and small-scale and large-scale social action. I have also shown that, in the absence of a political subject, politicization can be based on social form. The game of small deeds, which involves a hidden political underpinning, the legitimacy of the internal and the familiar, which in reality maintains the legitimacy of public politics in general, and the involvement of facts and evidence in the game of political representation are what constitutes the politics of the new local activism.

Chapter VI. The Ukrainian case: Euromaidan

Introduction: Civil war of civic nation?

This section of my dissertation is dedicated to analysis of the way that the events of Euromaidan⁴ changed the dynamics of national and regional identities in Ukraine, including the way that the evolution of these identities influenced the ongoing military conflict. By analyzing the dynamics of collective identities, I critically examine two opposing theses, which in many ways define the framework within which discussions about the current political situation in Ukraine occur. The first of the theses postulates the ongoing “civil war” that divides Ukraine while the second one postulates the existence of a “civic nation” as a result of Euromaidan and the ensuing “Russian aggression.”

These two polemical theses reflect a dichotomy of academic approaches to studying the Ukrainian conflict. One suggests framing this conflict as a direct consequence of internal (e.g. regional) differences and contradictions, supposedly existing at the foundations of modern Ukrainian society. The other explains this conflict in terms of the actions of elites; primarily of Russian elites,

⁴ I refer to “Euromaidan” as the entirety of the protests of the winter of 2013-2014. I use this definition in order to avoid confusion: some refer to the events of 2004 as “Maidan.”

but Ukrainian and international ones as well. In other words, some suggest studying this conflict as if it were deeply rooted in Ukrainian society, often as a conflict of identities, while others see this conflict as a war brought into the society from within or above. The latter call for a rejection of the term “identity,” justifiably seeing within it the dangers of essentialism, which risks masking the changeability and multilayered nature of collective imaginaries.

It is important to note that, in a sharp and politically charged social discussion, theoretical, methodological, and political preferences are tightly entwined. As such, the language of “regional identities” and of the “cultural heterogeneity” of Ukrainian society today hints at “civil war.” Simultaneously, the attention given to the behaviors of elites conforms with seeing the Ukrainian conflict as artificial and forced onto Ukrainian society, by Russia above all. I suggest a third approach, which takes into account both the dynamics of social sentiments as well as the logics of the socio-political interests of the big players. In my opinion, the collective interests of the Ukrainian oligarchs and political elites, Putin’s government, Russian far-right politicians, and finally of American and European states and business elites played, and continue to play, an immensely important role in the evolution of the Ukrainian conflict.

Additionally, it is erroneous to perceive the actions of these players as strictly rational and sequential, proceeding from one center of decision-making and happening on one level. Furthermore, the events that shook Ukraine would have been impossible without mass mobilizations, street violence, and the polarization of popular opinion; this is more important for the scope of my text. An analysis of grassroots participation--though, in this particular case, the very definition of grassroots participation becomes another hurdle--

demands a careful study of collective identities, individual motivations, and political understandings.

Within the scope of the next two chapters I attempt to analyze the various trajectories of the collective understanding of oneself and of Ukrainian identity from emerging and declining socio-political groups, which influenced the dynamics of the ongoing conflict. In order to, on the one hand, escape an essentializing perspective that would assert a “dormant conflict between East and West” as an initial condition, and on the other hand, to attentively analyze the “internal” socio-political contradictions, I draw on theories of political subjectivity and qualitative methodologies of sociological research: political semiotics, discourse analysis, and a study of life histories. I intend to demonstrate the way that the dynamics of national and regional collective identities, wrought by Euromaidan and its ensuing events, influenced the Ukrainian conflict by both containing and aggravating it.

Televised Russian propaganda painted those that arrived from Western Ukraine as “neo-Nazis” who, having seized power, were getting ready to wage war on the “Russian-speaking East.” Against that background, one of the great claims of Euromaidan regarding the future was, on the contrary, the pathos of overcoming regional and linguistic “stereotypes” which had divided the country, which supposedly had now finally united itself due to this “dignified revolution,” for twenty-five years.

This perception of “two Ukraines,” East and West, opposed to each other, Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking, striving towards Europe and gravitating towards Russia, ethno-nationalistic and Russian imperialist has, paradoxically, for a long time been both propagated and denied by the media and those in power. The

historian Andrei Portnov writes that official government discourse, called upon to uphold the monopoly of power of the elite over the country, pushed an agenda of “Ukrainization” fraught with xenophobia while guaranteeing the “Russian-speaking East” that its citizens would not be discriminated against (Portnov, 2010).

Political scientist Lucan Way emphasizes the political instrumentalisation of this “conflict of identities” thusly:

Ukraine’s surprising pluralism was rooted in underdeveloped ruling parties, a weak authoritarian state, and national divisions between eastern and western Ukraine. Overall, leaders had little capacity to keep allies in line, manipulate the electoral process, starve opponents of resources, and violently suppress opposition challenges...each of Ukraine’s four turnovers (1994, 2004, 2010, 2014) came about because the opposition was able to mobilize strong regional support--alternatively, Russophile and Ukrainophile--to overcome incumbent advantages (Way, 2015: 96).

He asserts that “This division between western and eastern Ukraine was central to Ukrainian politics until 2014. While not immutable, the divide often dominated because it provided politicians with an easy way to mobilize supporters that leaders found difficult to ignore” (Way, 2015).

Sociologist Peter Rodgers, on the other hand, demonstrates that the residents of various Ukrainian regions were forced to appeal, one way or another, to the language of regional differences. Simultaneously, however, the stereotypical linguistic, ethnic, and regional differences dividing society into two regions does not reflect the reality within which they live. Local, regional, and national collective identities were, and remain, uncertain and fluid (Rodgers, 2006). Analysing the results of focus groups comprised of

citizens from various regions of Ukraine, Rodgers asserts of the participants that, “[although] [they] expressed a clear understanding of the regional differences across Ukraine...regionalism in Ukraine is a far more complex phenomenon than a simple, dichotomous ‘west versus east’ divide”. He further writes that his conclusions evidence “the continued significance of the ‘regional’ factor across Ukrainian politics and society...however, the real impediments to unity in Ukraine may be related to where in the country one lives and how one is doing economically rather than who one is ethnically or what language one speaks...deeply-rooted regional or sub-regional cleavages such as multi-ethnicity, cultural, historical, or socio-economic factors crosscut ethnic boundaries” (Rodgers, 2006: 171).

What Rodgers says is that, on the one hand, the regional factor matters, regional cleavages do exist, and a belonging to a region influences political behavior and electoral preferences. On the other hand, the divisions that separate “Eastern” Ukraine from “Western” Ukraine, or a “Russian-speaking Ukraine” from a “Ukrainian-speaking” one, are superficial and do not represent the complex social structure of regional, cultural, and political differences in Ukraine.

After 2004, the nationalist upsurge during the regime of Viktor Yushchenko (who continued the two-faceted politics of “to us and to you” described by Portnov) and the “pro-Russian response” of Victor Yanukovich (which, despite its gravitation towards Russia, catalyzed a discourse of national sovereignty and European choice) demonstrated the popularity of Ukrainian patriotism. It also exhibited the dangers of aggressive Ukrainization, which was perceived by many Ukrainians, especially those in the southeast regions, as a threat to their identity and economic independence. On

the whole, the rhetoric of “two Ukraines” did indeed contribute to heating up the regional conflict; but, at the same time, it dampened it, promoting the ideas of pluralism and compromise between the “East” and “West.” This pluralism was termed by Lucan Way “pluralism by default” (Way, 2015).

It is in part because of this that the idea of unifying the country--a unification not in the form of an artificial compromise, but of genuine solidarity--despite stereotypical and artificial regional differences was, and indeed remains, so popular. The project of integrating the country became increasingly in demand during moments of revolutionary protest first in 2004, and then in 2013-2014. The “Orange Revolution” became the first hope for an eventful birth of a unified nation belonging to the citizens; a civic nation. It showed that protests, the stakes of which were the unification of the country on the basis of national identity, were fraught with exclusionary nationalism and a new division of society according to regional boundaries.

After the Orange Revolution of 2004, patriotic liberal academics hailed the project of “republican nationalism” and wrote about how a civic nation was born directly in the course of the liberating protests on Maidan Square from the feelings of unity experienced by the citizens. These same scholars warned against excessive optimism in regards to the unifying character of this nationalism, reminding that for many Ukrainians who lived in the southwest regions, the Maidan protests appeared to be a threat to their identity (Shekhovtsov, 2013).

The formula of “revolution,” “civic nation,” and then “democracy” momentarily returned to public and academic discourse after Euromaidan, often in propagandistic and ideological

forms. Olga Bertelsen writes that “The Euromaidan fully awakened and united the majority of Ukrainian citizens...The revolution [promoted] democratic values, which accelerated the nation-building process in Ukraine” (Bretelsen, 2017: 305). All told, the theory of the interrelationship between revolutionary protests, “the consolidation of national identity,” and social change became, and still remains, a common focal point for patriotic liberal intellectual discourse (Kulyk, 2016), while simultaneously being an object of reflection and criticism on the side of more perceptive scholars (c.f. Arel and Driscoll, 2016). For example, the Canadian political scientist Dominique Arel defined, back in 2005 and soon after the first Maidan, a milder and more realistic version of the aforementioned formula. He wrote that the greatest task facing Ukraine as a democratic nation was the spread of the political nation born of the Orange Revolution beyond the boundaries of the central and western regions that had been seized by this Revolution. In his opinion, a “revolution” alone was not enough to give rise to a civic society in Ukraine. A governmental politics oriented towards allowing the residents of the southwest regions to recognize themselves in the new national identity was necessary (Arel, 2005). I do not share this normative perspective regarding the organic interrelationship between revolutionary protest, national self-awareness, and democracy; yet, at the same time, I suppose that uprisings do indeed give birth to new collective understandings, and consider it important to trace what happens to “event-driven” identities and the discourses that articulate them during and after these events.

The problem posed by Arel is an important one since eventful identities are, on the one hand, unique and exclusive (since they are inherent in a singular event, one bounded in space and time). On the

other hand, those that make use of those identities lay claim to nationwide representation and authorship over the form of the nation's future. I will attempt to address the following questions:

1. Which new identities, inherent to the experience of collective action, arose at the “moment” of the Euromaidan?
2. How did people who found themselves at once inside and outside a collective experience of the event articulate, understand, and appropriate or reject these identities?
3. How did these eventful identities and the discourses that articulate them migrate to contiguous social spaces, transform, and mix with former languages and meanings that remained from before the event?
4. Which social and biographical circumstances influenced the motives of different individuals in joining the Maidan or Anti-Maidan and the separatist movement, and the formation of different versions of collective identities characteristic of these movements?
5. Finally, how did the evolution of these identities affect the dynamics of the Ukrainian conflict?

The answers to these questions will allow us to explain why the initially inclusive civic identity that appeared at Euromaidan was able to both unite a significant portion of Ukrainian society (including that of the southwestern regions) under the banner of a protest movement while also “mutating” into an exclusive, sometimes even xenophobic, nationalist ideology. This nationalist ideology not only pushed a significant number of Ukrainians away from Maidan, but also contributed to their joining the Anti-Maidan or the separatist movement.

In this chapter I will analyze the very event of Euromaidan. I will show how the uprising has forged the new eventful national identity that united the protesters. Critically studying the protesters’

narratives and statements I will show the ambiguities and uncertainty of this identity.

The dynamics of the events

The Euromaidan movement began on the night of 21 November 2013 with public protests in Maidan Nezalezhnosti ("Independence Square") in Kiev, demanding closer European integration. The mobilization happened after the Ukrainian government suspended preparations for signing the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement with the European Union, to seek closer economic relations with Russia. Rallies in other cities, Kharkov, L’viv, Kherson, happened just after the mobilization in Kiev. Students represented the majority of the protesters. After the camp in Kiev was violently dispersed by the “Berkut” riot police. This event was the “moral shock” for thousands of the citizens. Mass protests that started just after the dispersal of protesters transformed the student protest for “European integration” into the nation-wide popular uprising against the state. Some structural circumstances as well as dynamics of contentious politics facilitated this transformation. Indeed, Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko argues:

“Support for Yanukovich at the end of 2013 was not strong and the polls projected that he would definitely lose to any opposition candidate in the presidential elections scheduled for February 2015 except for the leader of the far right Svoboda party Oleh Tiahnybok. Center for Social and Labor Research systematic protest events data showed that the number of social-economic protests was on the rise in Ukraine <...> Yanukovich’s slogan about living improvement

already now combined with his ostensibly luxury lifestyle and corruption became a subject of widespread sarcastic comments by the population. Yanukovich had particularly weak support in the western and central regions, where the majority of people voted for his opponents in the 2004 and 2010 presidential elections” (Ishchenko, 2016: 6).

From the very beginning, there were various motivations behind the protest. The majority of the protesters wanted to stop corruption and to increase the living standards. However, since all kinds of leftist ideology were unpopular due to the stigmatization of the Soviet past, liberal and nationalist frames turned out to be the most influential in the movement. However, it does not mean that social demands were the only driver of the mobilization while nationalism and pro-Western liberalism were just a “superstructure” as some leftist claimed during the protest. Indeed, some people were mobilized by the demand of “Europeanization” of Ukraine. However, many supporters of Euromaidan thought that an agreement about a free trade zone with the EU would harm the national economy. Others saw the protest through the lens of a struggle for a national independence from Russia. For them the president Yanukovich was the Russia’s protégé. As Ishchenko puts it, “A free trade zone with the EU would probably lead to the de-industrialisation of Ukraine unless it was combined with big investments from western corporations, who would obviously be interested in political security and control in return for their investments. All this would be combined with an economic shock for the majority of Ukrainians, especially for the highly urbanised and industrialised eastern regions. The Prime Minister, Mykola Azarov, justified the suspension by referring to concerns about the consequences in terms of austerity of the IMF credit requirements accompanying the one billion euro credit, which would not be

enough to cover the economic consequences of the losses in Russian market. At the same time, Russia was deliberately trying to prevent Ukraine from integrating with Europe by defending its economic, political and military interests, which could easily be perceived through the lens of Russia's oppression of Ukrainians in the past. As a result, right from the very start, the Maidan protests were fuelled not only by European illusions and hopes for a fundamental improvement in the Ukrainian state, economy and society but also by anti-Russian nationalism" (ibid.: 6).

The mass rally mobilized more than one million protesters in Kiev on 1 December of 2013. The protesters among which the nationalists played the important role started occupy the public administrations buildings. The politicians who represented the parliamentary opposition, including Piotr Poroshenko dissociated themselves from the protesters and claimed that hooligans not participants of Maidan occupied the buildings. The dispersal of the rally and fighting with the police provoked creation of the "self-defense groups of Maidan" that consisted of both rank-and-file participants and far-right activists. On 16 January the deputies from the President's Party of Regions and Communist Party of Ukraine passed a number of laws which criminalized protesters' methods employed during protests. The laws introduced 10-year jail terms for blockading government buildings; hefty fines and prison terms for protesters who wear face masks and helmets; and fines and prison terms for unauthorized installation of and provision of facilities or equipment for tents, stages or amplifiers in public places. The passage of the laws led to the escalation of the conflict between protesters and the police. The urban warfare was the culmination of the battles that started after the repressive laws were passed. More than 200 people from both protesters' riot police' sides died on 18 and 19 February. Ishchenko writes about the violent character of

Maidan:

“Maidan was definitely not the peaceful protest as it was for a long time described in the sympathetic western press. It escalated to levels of violence that are unprecedented in contemporary Ukrainian history. However, the major turning points in terms of the radicalisation of the protest were clearly responses to police violence and governmental repression. The brutal dispersal of the first Maidan camp turned the protest into rebellion together with occupations of governmental buildings. The package of laws passed on 16 January 2014 by the pro-government majority that broke parliamentary procedures, but which did not impose a dictatorial regime as Maidan supporters claimed, nevertheless, systematically limited freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of speech, thereby impeding future political activity by any opposition movement. It provoked the new phase of Maidan’s radicalization involving mass street violence in Kiev city’s center. The government side also systematically used paid thugs (so called titushki) to intimidate, abduct and beat the Maidan protesters. However, many cases of violence during the Maidan events are still unresolved. There is evidence that at least in some cases elements of the opposition might have strategically staged abductions previously ascribed to government agents” (ibid.: 7).

The violent events in February led to the president Yanukovich overthrow. On 21 February, President Yanukovich signed a compromise deal with opposition leaders. It promised constitutional changes to restore certain powers to Parliament. Despite the agreement, protesters demanded the President’s resignation. They occupied the parliament building, the president's administration quarters, the cabinet, and the Interior Ministry. On 21 February, an impeachment bill was introduced in Parliament. President Yanukovich left for Kharkiv and then left the country.

Parliament assigned its speaker, Oleksandr Turchynov, as interim president on 23 February. The change of the regime provoked the extraordinary political and military activity both inside and outside Ukraine. “Yanukovych's authority had already been effectively dismantled in western regions in the evening of 18 February when protesters in many cities attacked law enforcement offices and military zones, capturing arms, some of which were used in Kiev in the following days. The Parliament’s decision to depose Yanukovych was definitely in breach of the Constitution. At the same time, the opposition leaders were obviously hesitant to take power and were trying to negotiate with Yanukovych, accepting the deal signed on 21 February with the support of European foreign ministers which would leave Yanukovych as president until December 2014. The protest crowd was more radical than the opposition leaders, demanding Yanukovych's immediate resignation <...> [the strategy of the opposition] does not reject the reality of the mass uprising which was only exploited by some forces interested in violent change of power” (Ishchenko, 2016: 9). The regime change and subsequent events threatened many in the East of the country because they feared the new government would repress Russian-speaking population. As Dominique Arel and Jessie Driscoll argue: “By the time of the February 21 vote restoring the old constitution, however, Yanukovych’s political base in Russian-speaking regions was eroding. Most MPs from the south left the party’s parliamentary faction en masse. The MPs that remained loyal to Yanukovych until the end were mostly either from Crimea or from his Donetsk clan. His sudden escape had the effect of vaporizing his support outside of Donetsk, making possible his constitutional removal by the Rada the next day. The rump Party of Regions afterwards issued a statement denouncing Yanukovych for his “treason” and “criminal orders,” placing all responsibility for the debacle on him and his close

entourage. The new Rada majority quickly annulled a language law adopted two years earlier, a symbolic measure interpreted by many as imperiling the dominant use of Russian in the south-east” (Arel and Driscoll, 2016).

The huge political and diplomatic conflicts between Ukraine, Russia, the U. S. and the EU were the results of these events. As Peter Rutland puts it,

“International players (Russia, the EU, and the US) were heavily involved in the unfolding political conflict. Ironically, each accused the other of interference in Ukrainian affairs. The EU's Catherine Ashton and the US Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, encouraged Yanukovych and the protesters to reach a compromise - while Russia was pushing Yanukovych to hold firm <...> The collapse of the 21 February agreement in the face of insurgent demonstrators and the flight of Yanukovych was seen by Moscow as the point of no return. They assumed the new government would sign the association agreement with the EU, apply to join NATO, and revoke the agreement granting Russia the use of the Sevastopol base. Putin responded with force and vigour – annexing Crimea and using surrogates to launch an insurrection in east and south Ukraine” (Rutland, 2015: 130).

It would be wrong, however, to argue that the war in Donbass as well as the military conflicts in several Eastern regions were the results of only Russia's interference in Ukraine. To the contrary, the mass protests emerged in many Ukrainian cities in response to Euromaidan and to regime change. As Ishchenko puts it, “Anti-Maidan, which during the Maidan protests was mainly organized in a top-down manner by the Party of Regions to simulate mass support for Yanukovych and also to intimidate Maidan protesters, suddenly acquired a powerful grassroots dynamic in regions in south-eastern Ukraine in late February. It was indeed a mass movement involving

thousands of protesters. They usually demanded referenda to be held on the self-determination of Ukrainian regions, sometimes implying the federalization of Ukraine, sometimes implying breaking away from Ukraine and establishing independent states or joining Russia, following the Crimean scenario” (Ishchenko, 2016: 9). The proclamation of so-called Donetsk and Luhansk “people’s republics” was caused not by Russia’s interference but by the disintegration of the state in Donbass. Arel and Driscoll argue that the weakness of the state in the region together with grass-roots mobilization caused the military civil conflict while Russian invasion in August of 2014 transformed it into a conventional war: “A predominantly local insurgency faced no practical opposition from security organs in this region, after the long-standing regional political and economic elites lost their authority as a result of the collapse of the Donetsk-dominated Party of Regions at the country’s center. The disintegration of the regime in Kyiv paralyzed state institutions in the Donbas <...> The record suggests that the expectation of a Russian intervention in Eastern Ukraine in the wake of Crimea emboldened insurgents, but this expectation cannot explain why the state was much weaker in Donbas than elsewhere. This internal factor – reflected in the well-documented fact that most armed combatants challenging the Ukrainian state were, and are, territorial Ukrainian – makes the conflict a civil war. Russian military support, and eventually its full-fledged intervention, however, transformed it into an atypical and relatively rare type of civil war” (Arel and Driscoll, 2016).

Ukrainian Historian Andrii Portnov retraces the events leading to de facto separation of many Donbass cities from Ukraine: “The most important date in the timeline of how Ukraine lost control over Donetsk and Luhansk is 6 April, 2014. On that day, several thousand protesters occupied the Donetsk regional administration

building, raising the Russian state flag above it. The local police force guarding the building offered little resistance <...> This was the second time the Donetsk regional government's headquarters was occupied. In early March 2014, police had to remove supporters of an extraordinary session of the regional council after they occupied it for several days. But it wasn't the repeat occupation that mattered. Rather, it was Kyiv's refusal to retake the building by force that would have consequences. The spetsnaz unit sent to clear the building ... refused to storm it" (Portnov, 2016).

The subsequent events made Russia's role in the conflict visible: "On 12 April 2014, the armed insurrection started, initiated in the town of Slavyansk in Donetsk province by an armed group under Igor Strelkov (Girkin), a former Russian security service officer and monarchist activist. He was followed by a number of other Russian volunteers often driven by a nationalist idea of the Russian world uniting all Russian-speaking populations around the Russian state, sometimes with monarchist (the resurrection of the Russian Empire) and far-right interpretations who, during the early stages, played leading roles in the emerging Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics" (Ishchenko, 2016: 10).

By 16 April, the so-called "Anti-terror Operation" being conducted by the Ukrainian government in Donetsk Oblast had hit some stumbling blocks. The start of the Anti-terror Operation (ATO) was the crucial step in the development of the civil war in Ukraine. Arel and Driscoll argue that ATO was the trigger of the war: "Incapable of relying on local security forces, the interim Ukrainian government declared an "Anti-Terrorist Operation" (ATO) and sent in the army. Undeclared war had begun" (Arel and Driscoll, 2016). The authors argue: "The conflict, which other than Crimea had been limited thus far to the symbolic occupation of

government buildings, had entered the phase of open military confrontation, with fighters external to Donbas serving as vanguard. Within a day, Kyiv sent army units under the auspices of an “anti-terrorist operation” (ATO). Initial encounters were humiliating for the Ukrainian side. Confused and unprepared conscripts were easily surrounded (by civilians), and many surrendered their weapons without a fight. The Donbas pro-Russian protesters expanded into armed groups, with significant help from across the border. Thousands of volunteers, many veterans of the Soviet/Russian army poured in from all parts of Russia, including Chechnya, to join the multitude of battalions that were forming in Donbas towns. The presence of so many territorial Russians on the evolving battlefield led to a widespread perception in Ukraine and the West that armed aggression by Russia was now under way in Donbas. The Russian government denied any military involvement. Pains were taken to ensure that whatever material arrived did so by indirect means. Ammunition was sent and volunteers were often recruited through military boards and tended to meet, at the Ukrainian border, in military facilities – but usually with many layers of plausible deniability. Lines of command and control leading to Moscow were difficult to establish. The important point is that the vast majority of the pro-Russian fighters remained territorial Ukrainians. While there is no doubt that intelligence operatives from Russia were active on the ground, there is no evidence that regular Russian troops were present, in stark contrast to what occurred in Crimea” (ibid.)

One of the most important events facilitated the armed civil conflict in Ukraine was the violent clash between Euromaidan and Antimaidan activists on 2 of May in Odessa when 46 Antimaidan protesters and 2 Euromaidan activists were killed and over 200 people were injured. Henry Hale and his co-authors accurately retrace the dynamics of the events:

“[Euromaidan and Antimaidan in Odessa] had tense relations and their activists had clashed before, though only on a small scale and without fatalities. According to the 2 May Group investigation, representatives of local authorities developed a covert plan together with the leaders of the two warring forces (“Antimaidan” and “Euromaidan”). The idea was that, after a scheduled pro-Ukrainian unity march including local Euromaidan activists and soccer fan “ultras” of the Odesa and Khar’kiv soccer teams, which were slated to play a game in Odesa on the evening of May 2, the ultras would demolish the Kulikovo Pole tents [where Antimaidan activists gathered] and no casualties would result. This alleged plan, however, was foiled when the leadership of the Kulikovo Pole split, and one group issued an appeal to Antimaidan activists to gather in downtown Odesa to prevent the march of “fascists.” Violent clashes between pro-Maidan and Antimaidan activists in downtown Odesa resulted in the first six deaths, all by firearm. The first two were pro-Maidan activists, the remaining four Antimaidan ones. Pro-Maidan activists then marched to Kulikovo Pole, where some Antimaidan activists – up to 400 people – decided to barricade themselves inside the Trade Union building. Numerous videos show the two sides exchanging firearms fire and hurling Molotov cocktails at each other, and pro-Maidan protesters burning the tents of the Antimaidan camp. Inside the building, a deadly fire started in five separate places, according to subsequent investigations, with the main source being the barricade in front of the entrance to the building. The barricade caught fire as pro-Maidan forces attacked it with Molotov cocktails and threw other objects at it, such as a burning tire. Anti-Maidan activists defending the entrance threw Molotov cocktails as well, and the fire grew rapidly because of the flammable wooden objects that had been used to construct the barricade as well as the combustible liquids that had been brought into the building by its

defenders. The front barricade blaze subsequently spread into the lobby and up the central staircase, with temperatures rising sharply and rapidly due to the chimney effect of the central stairwell, causing 48 people inside to lose their lives from burns, smoke inhalation, and jumping out of the burning building (Hale et al., forthcoming).

Different researchers have different opinions about whether the war would start without Russian invasion. Many believe that if Russian interference did not happen the war would not start (Wilson, 2016). Others, for instance, Dominique Arel and Jessie Driscoll think that a partisan, not conventional war would start (Arel, Driscoll, 2016). Volodymyr Ishchenko supposes the war would happen even without Russia's invasion: "there were economic and cultural grievances in Ukrainian government, disorientation and sometimes sabotage of the law-enforcement in those regions for almost two months that might have produced a separatist insurrection even without support from the Russian government. However, it would hardly be able to resist the Ukrainian army for such a long time without Russian support. At the same time, the Ukrainian government has received Western support in the form of non-lethal and lethal weapons from NATO countries, military training, and loans from international financial institutions" (Ishchenko, 2016: 11).

I agree with Volodymyr Ishchenko in his general assessment of the overall results of the Euromaidan protests: "In sum, Maidan combined just social grievances against the corrupt Yanukovich rule together with European illusions and anti-Russian nationalism. Economic and historical factors determined a significant regional unevenness of support for Maidan. However, the protest violence and strong far right presence also precluded Maidan from becoming a truly fully national revolt against the government. It only made it easier to instrumentalise Maidan in the struggle between competing

blocks of Ukrainian political and business elites as well as in competition between EU, US and Russian economic and political interests” (Ishchenko, 2016: 8).

In what follows I will turn to the micro analysis of the big event of Euromaidan and its consequences.

The trigger of the protest: moral shock

The Ukrainian protest movement was called “Euromaidan”. Indeed, the start of the movement was the protest against the government that suspended the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement signing. One could see many European flags in the streets during the protests. However, does this mean that the protests were pro-European? The cliché that the movement was the manifestation of pro-European values and orientations of Ukrainians became the commonplace in the journalist and popular explanations of the causes of the mobilization. In order to understand if the movement was pro-European or not, we need to explore what exactly the protesters meant by manifestation of European symbols. In other words, we need to understand what was the representations of the participants of the protests about Europe and how these representations politicized in the course of the mobilization?

“Ukraine is Europe”. This slogan was very popular in the beginning of the protests. Indeed those who were motivated by the “European choice” for Ukraine represented the big faction of protesters. However, Euromaidan was much wider in its motivations. Surveys of Euromaidan participants conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in the moment of the protest showed that Association with European Union was not the main demand of the protesters:

“The motives of people to come to Maidan and to stay there <...> in the first place - the brutal repression against protesters (61%), also there is a second, a common motif - "desire to change a life in Ukraine "(51%, was - 36%), there are also still weighty reasons of protests against Viktor Yanukovich refusal to sign Association Agreement with the European Union (47%) and the desire to change the government in Ukraine (46%) <...> During Maidan there have been more clearly focused basic requirements that protesters believe to be the main: Viktor Yanukovich's resignation and early presidential re-elections (85%) and the release of arrested members of Maidan, end the repression (82%, increased for 20%) <...> the resignation of the government (68%) <...> dissolution of the parliament and calling for early parliamentary re-elections (59%), changing the Constitution to return to constitutional reform of 2004, which limited the government of the president (62.5%), the creation of criminal cases for all who was involved in corruption (62%), the Association Agreement with the European Union (49%), the release of Yulia Tymoshenko (30%)” (KIIS, 2014).

Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse in their analysis of the Euromaidan slogans show that “European motivation” decreased in the course of the protests: “According to interviewed protest participants, by the first weekend the central demands had shifted to ‘a better way of life’ and even though ‘Ukraine is Europe’ remained a key slogan, the broader protest discourse already focused on the expansion of political liberties, rights, state accountability and socio-economic security” (Onuch and Sasse, 2016: 12).

Euromaidan supporters came to the street on 21 of November not only because they wanted a closer integration with Europe, but also because they felt anger and humiliation. They were outraged because they believed that the authorities who suspended signing the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement neglected

opinions of many Ukrainians who were in favor of the “European choice”. In other words, the feeling that people were deceived by the government was as important as the change in foreign policy itself: *If Yanukovich did not say that he signed the agreement, if he did not bring hope, I would maybe not ... But then it was that our hope was betrayed* (Interview UK1).

We conceived it as a gratuitous slap in the face. Yanukovich showed he did not care about our opinion (Interview UK2).

The second wave of mobilization was caused by the fact that the protesting students were violently dispersed by the “Berkut” riot police. This shocking event took both proponents and opponents of the agreement to the streets:

From the very beginning I did not care about the idea of Maidan. I did not support Euro-integration. But I got into a rage when people came to express their opinions and were severely beaten <...> My position was: I'm here not for Europe, I'm here not for Russia, I'm here because I want people not to be slaves (Interview UK3).

The dispersion of the protest camp was an extraordinary event that, on the one hand, was perceived as inadmissible and unbelievable occurrence, and, on the other, was an occurrence that showed true colors of the Yanukovich's regime:

People conceived this... how it is possible to beat people in the city center and then prosecute them? It was in contradiction with the society in which we believed we lived ... because we want something better ... It was the second phase [of the protest]. That time people struggled for a better life... (Interview UK1).

It is important to say that by that time many people already felt indignant at the authorities. Many said in interviews that they never trusted any authorities but Yanukovich went beyond the pale as he and his cronies grabbed public and private money and assets, cut social spending, facilitated corruption etc. In this sense, the

dispersion of the protest camp proved the criminal nature of the regime.

I believe that the main idea of Maidan was ... It was not Europe. People struggled not for Europe ... people would not die for such a goal ... people struggled for freedom, for their rights, because they realized they did not want to live in such a society with that authorities anymore (Interview UK4).

Thus, the disruption of the student camp changed the agenda of Euromaidan. After this event, the demand for a closer integration with Europe became a secondary one.

At the same time, slogans and symbols related to Europe were continued to be visible. However, our qualitative analysis showed that those who strategically supported the demand of a closer political and economic integration with the European Union was the important and numerous part of the movement but was not a majority. Indeed, many respondents emphasized that although they came to the streets after the police dispersed the protest in favor of Euro-integration, they did not support the very demand of the integration with Europe:

I think that the main idea of Maidan was... OK, it was not even the Europe. People fought not for the Europe they fought not to become citizens of the European Union. People would not die for it. People struggled for their freedom in general, for their rights, because they saw how those in power treated them (Interview UK4).

Thus, if the first mobilization of the students for an integration with Europe expressed pro-European orientation of the students in protest, the crackdown on this rally was the trigger that made the protests not only pro-European but rather civic and anti-authoritarian:

In my opinion the main goal of Maidan was the resignation of Yanukovich. It was terrible how he treated people. The indignation

of people was huge. I cannot say that Maidan was for an integration with Europe. My personal opinion and this opinion is supported by what I heard from other people is that... OK, people said: we don't care about an integration with Europe. Not everybody even understood what it meant. The students who came to rally for the Integration agreement were for Europe, the rest of the people came to the streets because it was intolerable to beat up the children (Interview UK5).

Euromaidan that was the protest for an European integration became the protest against the state. What is interesting is that many protesters were against a closed integration with the EU due to economic and political reasons. However, for those who did not support the political demand of an integration with the European Union, Europe could still be a metaphor of a better life. As one of the respondents said:

I just want to live in Ukraine. I want neither Russia nor Europe to control us. To be honest I don't want to live in Europe, I just want to live in a free country with a freedom of speech like Europeans live (Interview UK6).

For many our respondents Europe was the symbol and example of countries where living standards were high and human rights were not violated:

There are two states of mind. The first is the soviet one. The second one is pro-European. When people speak about a pro-European state of mind, they usually mean that people want to become a part of the European Union. But in fact it means the respect for human rights for example, respect for the rights of minorities. This is what I call pro-European (Interview UK7).

Our analysis is supported by quantitative research. As Onuch and Sasse argue in their quantitative analysis, “When protest participants were asked in interviews or focus groups what they

wanted from the state, or what they hoped the ‘democratic’ or ‘European’ future had in store for them, the three different age groups of protesters described the following demands: the youngest group focused on the quality of higher education and better labour market prospects; the middle-aged group on socio-economic security, the liberalisation of EU– Ukraine travel and less corruption; and the oldest group on pensions and social redistribution. Thus, while the trigger that brought the majority of these diverse protesters out onto the streets was what they described as ‘the breaking of a social contract’ on 21 November and the ‘violation of basic civic and human rights’ on 29 and 30 November, the protesters joined the protests with a range of different claims motivating their behaviour. Neither the activists nor the political opposition were aware of the extent of the competing claims and grievances and thus, struggled to unite the demands under one umbrella” (Onuch and Sasse, 2016: 16).

We can single out two different discourses that refer to images of Europe. The first one focuses on description of European citizens. The second one refers to Europe as a set of institutions, norms and rules. Europeans are represented as educated, moderate and those who respect the law:

It is impossible in Europe that people drop litter in the streets. Unfortunately we have such habits, we sometimes behave like scum (Interview UK4).

Young people in Europe try to get education. In our country there are few who want to be educated... (Interview UK8).

Thus, contrary to the journalistic cliché the majority of the protesters did not identify themselves with Europe. They neither thought that Ukraine belonged to the “European civilization” nor they wanted Ukraine to become a part of the European Union. Rather, they believed that Europe had some level of civic, economic and political developments they wanted to achieve in Ukraine.

You should understand, when Ukrainians utter the word “European” they mean only one thing, it means free, equal, the rule of law (Interview UK4).

What is important is that protester believed that Euromaidan awoke some moral virtues in Ukrainians rather than made Ukrainians closer to Europe in geopolitical terms:

You know there is a kind of social responsibility, a kind of social consciousness in Europe where people do what is to be done not because a policeman forces them but because they know that they should do so. I see that this consciousness is awakening in Ukrainians now and I have more of it now (Interview UK9).

Protesters claimed there was only one feature that made Ukraine similar to Europe or that made Ukraine a European country in present. This was democracy they believed. When talking about democratic traditions in Ukraine the informants claimed Ukraine and Europe was the parts of the common historical trajectory:

Just as the European Union we will not tolerate such paternalistic attitudes, we will not tolerate this monarchy ... If we are democracy let's be democratic (Interview UK10).

Thus, the protesters did not share any kind of European identity even if many of them saw Europe as an desirable example of countries with high living standards and guaranteed human rights. European identity was not a one that united all the protesters. Instead, national identity was what constituted commonality of the protesters. During the movement's evolution, it was becoming progressively nationalistic. As Onuch and Sasse argue, “On 19 January, Berkut attacked the protesters at night, and between 19 and 22 January at least three people died as a direct result of police action, and many more were injured. Process-tracing and participant observation by members of our research team, and interviews highlight that this

second wave of repressions changed the composition of protesters (but not necessarily the broader group of supporters): they now included a strong majority of young and middle-aged males, and rightwing groups gained a foothold” (Onuch and Sasse, 2016). At the same time, anti-Russian slogans were becoming progressively popular (KIIS, 2014). However, the nationalistic character of the uprising can be understood differently. The Russian propagandistic media have been claimed that far-right nationalists were the organizers of the protests and then came to power. I will show that, alternatively, Ukrainian nationalism that emerged in the course of Euromaidan was spontaneous and integrated into the nationalistic consensus many people who previously were not patriots. That is why I believe that eventful approach is the best instrument to grasp the new Ukrainian nationalism. On the other hand, Ukrainian official discourses depicted the image of civic and unified, politically responsible post-protest society. I will show that the belief that Euromaidan created truly civic and unifying nationalism was too optimistic. I will demonstrate how new inclusive eventful nationalism became more exclusive and even xenophobic due to its absorption by the old pre-Maidan nationalistic discourses and stereotypes.

The Eventful Identity of Euromaidan

Academic and public intellectuals on the side of Euromaidan, criticizing the depiction of right-nationalist protest in the Russian and international press, asserted that Maidan formed an inclusive civic nation, uniting people of different political views and those who had no political leanings. Andreas Umland et al write,

“The resistance in Kyiv includes representatives from all political camps as well as non-ideological person who may have problems locating themselves politically...[They] constitute a broad movement...The situation in which Ukraine’s nation still finds itself and the enormous complications of everyday life in such a transitional society gave birth to...destructive...opinions, behaviors and discourses. Support for fundamentalism, ethnocentrism and ultra-nationalism may sometimes have more to do with the permanent confusion and daily anxieties of the people living under such conditions than with deeper beliefs”⁵.

Many researchers have been insisting that Euromaidan was not an exclusively nationalistic movement. At least, ethno-nationalistic. As Onuch and Sasse argue, “most analyses of the Maidan to date have looked at these final phases of the protests and focused on the Svoboda party and what scholars have called ‘neo-Nazi’ organisations and a ‘nationalist right’ preoccupied with ethno-linguistic-nationalist claims. What they have missed, however, is the remaining diversity among the protesters and the continuing diffusion of protest (including into the spalni reiony, the suburbs of Kyiv) throughout this phase in the protest cycle” (Onuch and Sasse, 2016: 22).

Apologist researchers described this national as free from any “ideological” content and, for this reason, as having nothing in common with xenophobia. As Bertelsen argues,

The revolution *bonded the citizens of Ukraine on the basis of civic unity*...The Euromaidan fundamentally restructured Ukrainian

⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/to-journalists-commentators-and-analysts-writing-on-the-ukrainian-protest-movement-euromaidan-kyiv-s-euromaidan-is-a-liberationist-and-not-extremist-mass-action-of-civic-disobedience>

political life, promoted patriotic feeling and sharpened civic consciousness among the majority of Ukraine's citizens...[however] in Ukraine it would be a daunting task to seek support for nationalist slogans (Bertelsen, 2017, 12).

An empirical analysis of the dynamics of the identities that arose during Euromaidan will allow us to decide whether an apolitical nature, the absence of deep convictions, and situational emotions were the conditions of the formation of a politically stable "civic nation" that united Ukraine.

An analysis of the narrative dedicated to experience of Euromaidan shows that, for the most part, they articulate a "sudden" national identity that was formed not before, but during the protest. For instance,

I never thought--I was never a patriot, I never thought...about Ukraine the way I think about it now. I didn't value it in the same way. ...We are influenced ...events of one kind or another that are happening. At some particular moment, I simply began to [madly] love my homeland....I truly don't know, which moment was the breaking point. I understand that it probably happened in the blink of an eye (Interview UK11).

Our interviews emphasize the uniqueness not only of the particular moment of the event, but also its location, where a new solidarity is formed:

The people really were like one big family--they helped and trusted one another. In general, an unlikely sympathy of spirit, one that could only be felt by going there, otherwise, it's hard to even imagine...It was like I was at home. At Maidan, everything was as if I were at home, because someone was always worrying about me--

that was probably the most surprising thing, and the one I liked best (Interview UK5).

In narratives focusing on individual and collective experience of the event, an inclusive identity is articulated, whose political meaning lies in the overcoming of stereotypical divisions that have divided Ukrainians from different regions previously. One such narrative follows:

This happened definitely during Maidan. Because, after 2004, when it seems that Donetsk and Luhansk were one part of Ukraine, and Lvov and the Carpathians, another...I think I, for some reason, met more people during Maidan from Zaporizhia, Donetsk, and Luhansk, than from Lvov. That's the extent to which Ukraine really united itself. If, before, we were truly divided...now we are united, we are one people (Interview UK12).

In this last citation we can see the way that the daily experience of meeting and co-presence with other protesters from different regions of Ukraine “converted” into a political understanding of national unity than exists above regional divisions. The mechanism of this conversion is, on the one hand, the temporality of this event (“something already happened”) and, on the other hand, the political gamble of the Ukrainian uprising--a claim to national representation.

In fact, the temporality of “already,” formed by the collective experience of a speaker and the generic specificities of narrative, is an effective instrument for the fabrication of historical “facts.” As Robin Wagner-Pacifici notes in her analysis of the events of September 11 and their role in the Congressional Committee’s report, which was written in the style of historical narrative, “...to argue that in making the statement ‘This is history’ the report is making a performative speech act means that the statement has the

illocutionary intent and perlocutionary effect of declaring the event to be history. In other words, if successful as a performative, the event is finished, and September 11 is in the past” (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010). In fact, this effect can be created not only through a performative, but also through a constative, speech act (for more on speech acts, c.f. Austin, 1999) that depicts a historically completed and politically stable state of affairs, pointing to a historical fact this is completed and over with:

Q: In your opinion, what was the most important thing at Maidan?

A: Unity. The unity of all people, from all regions. Before, for example, in the East, I'd say, 'you're, well, not bandits, do whatever you want, stay there, in the center, having stuffed yourself,' and so on. This united everyone. There were no more Kharkivians. There were Ukrainians and Ukrainians (Interview UK13).

Narratives about participation in Euromaidan reference collective identity outside ideology and political preference. This specificity of identity reflects, on the one hand, the post-Soviet culture of depoliticization (c.f. Eliasoph, 1997, Zhuravlev, 2017), characterized by ideological indifference (c.f. Kashirskih, 2012), and on the other hand, the temporal structure of the event, which assumed the primacy of lived experience over political and ideological classifications. According to one participant,

[My] worldview changed drastically [at Maidan]. Some call this a citizens' position, some patriotism, some nationalism. Everyone interprets it differently...Some think, that if I love Ukraine, I am a nationalist. I don't know. Maybe I am a patriot, maybe this is some kind of citizens' position. But the fact that I love Ukraine--that's clear (Interview UK11).

The Politics of Authenticity

In the opinions of the most diverse contemporary sociologists, depoliticization and the primacy of rich experience over political goal-setting is hardly a characteristic only of post-Soviet societies; it is a characteristic of modern capitalism on the whole. It is not coincidence that German research Gerhard Schulze calls the modern capitalism formation “a society of experiences” (Schulze, 1995)⁶, or that Laurent Thevenot links the eventful regime of exploration with the industry of consumption and entertainment (Thevenot, 2015). Additionally, the post-Soviet culture of political apathy adds to the “society of experiences” a fundamental distrust of “politics” and “ideology,” as well as a cult of authenticity and trustworthiness, which declares ideological discourses mendacious, while “facts” that speak for themselves are truthful (Matveev, 2012). It is important to note that in contrast to journalists reasoning about “post-truth politics” (c.f., for example, Pomerantsev, 2015), who oppose “facts” to “emotions,” the politics of authenticity, on the contrary, opposes the reliability of “facts” and personal experiences to the discourse of

⁶ The Russian culturaleal researcher Vitaly Kurennoy cleverly describes the Russian protests of 2011-2013 in the spirit of Schulze’s theories: “we can ‘bring forth’ a relatively simple example of the manifestation of a community of experience, linked to the newest protest movements in Russia. Participation in these events is extremely emotionally colored. The internet was full of emotional descriptions of participation in these acts: how well the people there passed the time, how they experienced new, unexpected emotions, related to sincerity, honesty, dignity. That is, the language used to describe these events is purely emotional. But attempting to put these emotions into some kind of objectified, political, group categories meets with huge difficulties. From this I can conclude that those people, who are new to these protests and political phenomena, exist within a logic that is similar to that of a community of experience. That is, direct emotional experience – and, by the way, any collective event of this kind is a very strong and unexpected emotional experience. And in many ways this experience becomes more important than long-term, rationalized political agendas, to which the existing political powers (who, of course, also exist within this social phenomenon) attempt to make this experience conform (Kurennoy, 2012).

collective interests, ideologies, and political agendas (c.f. Zhuravlev, Savel'eva, Alukov, 2014).

The ideological formula “Euromaidan fully awakened the united Ukrainian citizens” (Bertelsen, 2017) is not so far from reality if we read it pragmatically. The crux of it lies not in that Euromaidan, in uniting the people, formed a single republican nation, but in the fact that the new identity did not express a particular political conception or agenda, but rather the lived experience of politicization.

In the part of the thesis, devoted to the Russian movement “for fair elections,” I show that the discourse of “citizenship,” which founded a claim to national representation, reflected not some kind of understanding about universal citizens’ rights and freedoms or a civic nation, but the experience of the “wakening of a civic consciousness” (Zhuravlev, 2014). Similarly, the Ukrainian Euromaidan formed a new nationalism, rooted in an experience of unity and solidarity experienced, directly or indirectly, by the participants and supporters of the protests. It is important to note that the primacy of collective emotions, the rejection of ideological self-determination, and a distrust of the protest leaders not only contributed to the eventful identity being politically undefined and abstract, but also formed a certain universalist ethics of protest.

The appellation of “Revolution of Dignity” became an emblematic expression of these ethics. The rhetoric of overcoming regional, ethnic, and linguistic stereotypes formed part of this universalism:

This feeling of unity...this huge uprising of national...national and that of citizens...Not just national, but specifically national and that of the citizens, because there were no divisions there at all, yes? Nigoyan is actually Armenian. He's lived his entire life in Poland...no, Belarus, I think. The meaning of “Ukrainian” was, you

know, identical to the meaning of “person.” A person with a feeling of personal dignity (Interview UK4).

Thus, the events of Euromaidan formed a politically indefinite collective identity that expressed an experience of co-presence, solidarity, and collective action. Moreover, despite its abstractness, and its anti-political ethics, this identity was a mobilization towards strengthening the new Ukrainian nationalisms’ pretensions to national representations.

Eventful identity united in itself nationalist rhetoric and the symbolism and ethics of citizenship, which expressed the collective experience of politicization beyond any political specifics. One woman says,

It was the symbolism of Ukraine that came to the forefront...Being Ukrainian... began to be very strongly identified with this...I don’t even know what to call it, it’s that which we call the “Revolution of Dignity.” It began to be identified with nobility, with honor...with some kind of historical traditions, when our Cossacks marched and fought for honor and defended these lands. With a kind of...as is described in Gogol...he describes Ukrainians as...a good-humored, cheerful, gentle, kind people. This...feeling yourself to be Ukrainian, it’s indescribable...Even now...all I have to do...is get...a Ukrainian flag out, go like this in the metro, you know, I’m going up the escalator, and people will smile and wave like this. It’s a feeling of inexpressible commonality (Interview UK4).

Thus, the politics of identity around Euromaidan is its own form of the “politics of authenticity” (Zhuravlev, 2014), characteristic of which are a rejection of ideological self-determination and a distrust of political representation, the primacy of collective emotions over political agendas and social demands, and a special regime of

trustworthiness, which assumes a trust of personal experience and “facts which speak for themselves,” in opposition to “ideologies and propaganda.” As one of the respondents eloquently noted:

Q: How does Maidan differ as a political movement from governmental politics; after all, both are politics?

A: Maidan is authentic. (Interview UK14).

The politics of authenticity is a politics of eventful experience. It is in the *narratives* that concentrate on the experience of participating in Euromaidan that we see depictions of authenticity. However, it is important to remember that the meaning of Euromaidan’s eventful identity is changeable according to a genre, situation, and context.

One of our respondents, who was first on the side of Anti-Maidan, then joined Maidan, says the following when discussing his political preferences using the terminology of social interests of “simple people”:

It’s all the same to me if it’s Europe, not Europe, Asia, Eurasia...I will even say: many simple Ukrainians couldn’t care less, who’s in power, which direction we’ll go in. Whether it’s the direction of Russia or Europe. Ehmm...for all, most, it is important that there is peaceful day-to-day life, a good paycheck (Interview UK15).

However, focusing on narratives that record the personal experience of participating in the event, that narrative negates the relevance of socio-political demands:

Q: Do you think Maidan should include social demands in its agenda, for example, salaries, pensions?

A: ...My friends, who were at Maidan alongside those who died, says, we didn’t even think about death, because we stood for our friends. And in a moment like that, you never think about taxes, salaries,

about...social benefits of some kind...Maidan was more...highly spiritual (Interview UK15).

The changeability and ambiguity of the eventful “civic nationalism,” which - as many thought - almost overnight got rid of regional and linguistic stereotypes, makes it, on the hand, tautological: *“I think a Ukrainian is someone who loves Ukraine, who went to the revolution”* (Interview UK11). On the other hand, that “civic nationalism” is vulnerable in the face of “stereotypical” ethnic, regional, and linguistic nationalisms.

Thus, comparing narratives and taxonomical discourses of the informants I showed the contradictory character of the Euromaidan national identity. I showed that the narratives of personal politicization expressed and shaped the inclusive civic identity that had allegedly overcome linguistic, regional and ethnic divisions. At the same time, the analysis of the informants’ taxonomical discourses showed that this inclusive vision of the nation coexisted with the more exclusive one. Moreover, the politics of authenticity that is characterized by the dominance of experience over demands, paradoxically, made the inclusive identity vulnerable to its “colonization” by the more exclusive nationalistic discourses. In the next chapter I will turn to the analysis of the civic conflict in Ukraine that emerged after Euromaidan. I will analyze the role of the protest identity in the process of polarization behind the conflict.

Chapter VII. After the protest: polarization

Euromaidan won after Viktor Yanukovich left the country. However, many people especially in the East and South were disagree with and threaten by the violent regime change, persistence of nationalistic symbols, and the abolition of the language law adopted two years earlier that allowed the country's regions to use more official languages in addition to Ukrainian if they were spoken by over 10 percent of the local population. It was "a symbolic measure interpreted by many as imperiling the dominant use of Russian in the south-east" (Arel and Driscoll, 2016). Antimaidan rallies and marches mobilized many people in different Eastern Ukrainian cities. At the same time, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the separatist referendums in Donetsk and Luhansk strengthened and amplified Russian nationalistic and separatist tendencies within Antimaidan which used to be marginal before march of 2014. In an expert interview, Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko claimed that

"Euromaidan was not supported by the majority of Ukrainians in the Eastern and Southern regions. After the annexation of Crimea and especially after the war started, two contradictory processes took place. On the one hand, Ukrainian nationalistic mobilization and Russian nationalistic mobilization polarized public opinion. On the other hand, many people who were against violent regime change, who were threaten by the far-right groups voyages to the East, and who suffered from the progressing economic stagnation did not want, however, to side with Russia. That is why many of those who could wish to join an opposition movement in fact did not join Antimaidan".

Media played the crucial role in polarization of public opinion. Both Ukrainian and Russian TV were progressively becoming all the more propagandistic. They depicted contrast representations of the same events. Ukrainian media insisted that the unrest in the Eastern cities was inspired by Russia and that local people mostly did not take part in it. Russian media claimed that popular uprising was taking place in the Ukrainian East in opposition to the “fascist junta” that came to power in Kyiv. As Henry Hale and his co-authors write about the Odessa tragedy, “despite the diversity of ownership ... there was not much diversity in the narratives of the May 2 events that the different Ukrainian TV channels advanced ... The dominant narrative in the coverage of the Odesa events by Ukrainian television can be summarized as follows. On May 2, Odesa witnessed a planned provocation that was meant to be the first step in the large-scale destabilization of southeastern Ukrainian regions orchestrated from Russia. The attack on the pro-Maidan “Unity March” that started the chain of violence on May 2 was undertaken by local anti-Maidan activists and paramilitary groups from the breakaway Transnistria region of Moldova, coordinated by subversive groups that came from Russia, and financed by former officials of the Yanukovych government. The overall goal was to implement in Odesa and elsewhere in Ukraine’s southeast the so-called “Russian spring” scenario that was unfolding in Donbas” (Hale et al, forthcoming). The Russian media told an alternative story: “The May 2 events were quickly labeled “the 21st century’s Khatyn ... The deaths in Odesa were caused by Ukrainian radical nationalists who had been brought from outside into the city, in particular by Right Sector activists from Kyiv and football ultras from Kharkiv, and their actions were guided by post-Euromaidan Ukrainian law enforcement agencies (the SBU and Ministry of Interior). The fact that in mid-April, after the start of the armed

conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Euromaidan activists had set up road blocks on the roads leading to Odesa, and that Andriy Parubiy, head of the National Defense and Security Council and former head of the Euromaidan self-defense units, visited Odesa just a few days prior, on April 29, was cited as evidence that the post-Maidan government and the nationalist radicals had planned the killings in advance. Since the events in Odesa coincided with the start of Ukrainian military action against separatists in the Donetsk region (in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk), they were presented as part of a broader aggressive action of the post-Maidan Kyiv “junta” against “supporters of federalism” in Ukraine and against Russian-speakers more generally” (ibid.)

Finally, Ukrainian government as well as SBU initially framed the Ukrainian conflict in terms of an undeclared war with Russia. Our colleague from Bohn International Center for Conversion Andreas Heinemann-Grüder took the interviews with the commanders of Ukrainian “voluntary” battalions within the collaborative project with PS Lab. He revealed that, despite the image of voluntary units formed during Euromaidan and then transformed into military battalions, many of these squadrons in fact were organized and weaponed by the government and SBU. The motivation behind such a strategy was that the generals and ministers believed that volunteers alone could not fight with the Russian army they expected to meet in Donbas. After Crimea was annexed many politicians and generals believed that Russia inspired the unrest in the Ukrainian East. Another motivation was propagandistic. The government needed to construct strategically a spectre of an enemy to gain political legitimacy. One of the commanders tells in the interview:

From the very beginning there were criminals and Russians in Donbass... Security officials were passive while true Ukrainians would act in another way ... The Ministry of Internal Affairs realized that Russia was behind the protests in the East ... Russia also gave directions to separatists ... Under supervision of the Minister Avakov the decision was made to create the “voluntary special forces” ... They invited some people from Maidan to the Ministry in order to create battalions with mixed functions of police and special forces (Interview UK16).

The result of this polarization was formation of two “parallel” worlds of intersubjectivity. As Arel and Driscoll conclude, “Pro-Ukraine combatants saw themselves as fighting Russia, though in reality most of the people they were shooting at were actually citizens of Ukraine. Pro-Russia combatants saw themselves as fighting the West, while a great many of those they were fighting were exactly the members of the “Russkii mir” that they were allegedly defending. (Both sides imagine that the other is brainwashed by clever state propagandists)” (Arel and Driscoll, 2016).

Under the conditions of polarization of public opinion eventful identity transformed dramatically. In what follows I will analyze how this identity contributed to the escalation of the conflict.

Transformation of eventful identity: from inclusion to exclusion

We should not repeat the mistake of those researchers who, reproducing the rhetoric of activists, insist that Euromaidan formed a politically stable civic nation. Events are such that they are

represented as completed, as finished. But, as Wagner-Pacifici notes, in reality, they are contingent and even restless, changeable according to genre and context, politically ambiguous, and, consequently, debatable. She writes,

“[Cultural] genres provide the material for the representations, demonstratives, and performatives that direct the traffic of events, their shape takings should not be reified. A general theory of the restlessness of events must account for the continuous transformation of events, as actions and interpretations unfold across time, space, diverse media, and variably receptive publics” (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010: 1371).

Further on, I will show how the specifics of genres, the distancing of time, and the specifics of the lives of those who experienced the event from within and without can change national identity, transforming it from indefinably-inclusive to xenophobic and nationalist. In other words, I will analyze the “migration” of eventful identity beyond the boundaries of a single unique place and time of the event, the “rails” upon which it travels being life experience, cultural genres, and the media. The analysis I provide below will allow us to see the problem, articulated ten years ago by Dominique Arel, of the “spread” of civic nationalism into the “south-western” regions from the new perspective. This analysis will also allow us to understand the internal undercurrents of civic conflict and the war in Donbass, and to more accurately understand their nature without recourse to the explanations of polarized ideologies using the terminology of “civic nation” or “civil war.”

Analyzing narratives about Euromaidan that are increasingly distant from it in time, space, and genre, we can see that the discourse of authenticity is used not only for telling the history of the unification

of citizens above any kind of boundaries, but also to distinguish among different categories of citizens. Since we took most of the interviews in summer of 2014 we could grasp the moment when Euromaidan just passed while the war was just starting. It was the moment of the transformation of collective identities emerged during Euromaidan.

One participant says that *“if a person cannot truly love Ukraine, he cannot be a Ukrainian”* (Interview UK11). An analysis of the interviews showed that the formula of authenticity can be part of a narrative about unity as well as part of a rhetorical strategy that distinguishes between “real” and false”, or “true” and “not true” Ukrainians (Zhuravlev, 2015). This difference, in turn, recalls the distinction between those who were involved, directly or indirectly, in the experience of Euromaidan, and those who experienced the event from without and did not support it.

Speaking about her experience of the event, one of the respondents remembers:

Maidan is such unity..., “we became one people,” “literally two or three years ago, we never would have thought that Dnepropetrovsk would participate so actively in the protests...right now, there is no prejudiced or aggressive attitude towards the resident of Luhansk (Interview UK12).

The interview with her shows how the experience of the event, within which the residents of Kiev, Lvov, and Donbass united against a common enemy, provides an emotional charge to an understanding of “us” and “them,” “ours” and “strangers’,” and “here” and there.”

She continues,

The national guard and counterterrorist forces -- they are residents of Donetsk and Luhansk. How could you imagine that they would shoot and kill in their own cities? That--no. I don't believe it (Interview UK12).

The optics of the experience of unity as “Ukrainians” creates a picture of “all Ukrainians,” united by an event that is opposed by outside forces--among which there can, by definition, be no “citizens.” Thus, in such a condition of civic conflict, the conversion of an experience of unity into the political category of the nation serves to exclude political opponents from the national identity.

This exclusion, it must be noted, is founded on a denial of the very possibility of civic conflict, since the civic nation has *already* happened:

A person who declares that he wants to go to Russia is already automatically not a Ukrainian. There are a lot of Russians who immigrate into the country. For that reason, I don't think that this is a conflict of brother against brother...[My friends from Luhansk, who support Maidan, say that] Luhansk should be flattened and covered with cement. It is different from the rest of Ukraine. At the same time, this doesn't mean that we're ready to do away with the Luhansk region. Whatever the majority there might be, there are people there who are Ukrainians, who truly want to live in Ukraine...I think this is true heroism, because at Maidan, it was easy to carry a flag and shout 'For Ukraine!', because we were the majority. But when people in Donetsk or Luhansk carried a Ukrainian flag, they were truly heroic, because people's attitudes toward this were negative and aggressive. (Interview UK12).

In her analysis of the events of September 11, Wagner-Pacifici shows how they redefined the boundary between “us” and “them.”

In order to understand the transformation of identity due to the influence of an event, she looks at the use of pronouns and the use of the imperative mood:

“Collective shifters like “we” and “they” become particularly charged in historical transition in which identities change...Drawing on an example from President George W. Bush’s televised conference...we find several confounding deictical shifts...‘Our nation must be mindful that there are thousands of Arab-Americans who live in New York City, who love their flag just as much as the three of us do’...The “we” appears to be ultimately inclusive of all Americans, as the nation’s perspective is that initially invoked. Yet Arab-Americans and Muslims become unaccountably “they” and thus are outside the boundary of this collective “we” even as “they” are shown respect” (Wagener-Pacifici, 2010).

In the last interview quoted above, we can see the way the respondent juxtaposes “this society” (Donbass) with “the rest of Ukraine,” the Luhansk region” with “us,” “those who are not read to do away with it.” In my opinion, the rhetoric of authenticity (“Ukrainians, who *truly* want to live in Ukraine,” “*automatically* not a Ukrainian”) here serves the function of ideology, legitimizing the exclusion of movement’s opponents. The rejection of particular regions and sectors of the population, who opposed Euromaidan, who are “outside” national identity, is consequently conceived as a step on the path towards the completion of the formation of an authentic Ukraine and an authentic civic unity. As the interviewee says,

It is silly...to be within the territory of a state and say that you want to be in another state...It would be ideal if all those who want to live in Russia went and stayed there, and then Ukraine would remain as

it is, because the people there would only be those who love her (Interview UK12).

William Sewell, in his analysis of the French Revolution, analyses the rise not only of a new civic identity through the experience of an event, but also of a new *political legitimacy*, which justifies the violence and elevates it to the status of a revolutionary deed (Sewell, 1996). The activists of Euromaidan, having experienced becoming a political subject and proclaimed the unification of the nation, brought a decisive contribution to the formation of a new political legitimacy, which is now used by the Ukrainian government in waging the war in the name of the “civic nation.”

One of the respondents speaking about his participation in Euromaidan, said that *“because of Euromaidan, we started to better understand our neighbors, started thinking about Odessa and other regions.”* (Interview UK 11). The respondent also spoke about the differences between regions and emphasized the difference between the Eastern regions and Central and Western Ukraine:

Eastern Ukraine...the people living there aren't like the ones in Central Ukraine. Their level of understanding, thinking, intellect is lower, for that reason it's difficult to communicate with them, they don't understand what is being said to them. These are people who...are simply stupid, who succumbed to propaganda.” (Interview UK 11).

Speaking of the armed conflict in Donbass, he invokes the repressions of the supporters of the separatist movement, which are legitimized by an understanding of a civic nation, articulated using the language of authenticity:

After three months...those, who were separatists...if they were truly Ukrainians, they would have understood what country they're living

in, what city, and they would have changed their positions. Those who didn't change--they are also terrorists. And I don't support saying that they are 'simple people,' they don't deserve forgiveness. (Interview UK 11).

Thus, the juxtaposition of narratives, judgements, and classifications allows us to see the boundary between those within and those without the event--a boundary of time, space, and genre, which reflects the boundary between “us” and them.” Attending to this boundary allows us to carefully analyze the dynamics of a new national identity, which defines and redefines the boundary between “real” and “false” Ukrainians, Ukrainians from different regions, and “Ukrainians” and “Russians.” In addition to an analysis of genres, through which events last, multiply, and transform, a study of life stories allows us to see the transformations and mutations of eventful identity.

Not true Ukrainians are almost Russians

I have already shown that the inclusive national identity emerged in the course of the protests became more exclusive during the development of the civil conflict. What are the sources of and metaphors used for constructing regional identities by participants of the opposing movements? I showed that often opponents of Euromaidan were described as “not true Ukrainians” by the Euromaidan participants. But who they were if not true Ukrainians? Which positive definitions were used to exclude them from the national identity? During the civil conflict the image of supporters of Antimaidan was depicted differently by Euromaidan activists. One of the ways of excluding the opponents from the national

identity was association them with “Russians”. While during the Euromaidan protests the participants claimed that many Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians were welcomed in the movement which overcame the very opposition between Russian and Ukrainian, this opposition was reasserted and re-politicized during the military conflict. What is more important is that the negative identity of Russians was used to articulate the difference between supporters and opponents of Euromaidan and the new government inside Ukraine. One of the metaphors that were used to distinguish Eastern regions from the national identity and associate them with Russia was the category of passivity. On the one hand, the image of passive Eastern Ukrainian was the element of the xenophobic discourse that Ukrainian nationalists has been using during the last decades to stigmatize citizens of the Eastern regions. They were depicted as people of “Russian mentality”, or “soviet state of mind” therefore passive. On the other hand, active citizenship became the emblem of Euromaidan that, participants believed, mobilized and politicized many “real” Ukrainians. Euromaidan revitalized the representation that Ukrainians in contrast to Russians were politically active because of the national mentality and traditions of democracy:

You now, for us, for Ukrainians, when a revolution starts... I even don't know how to explain ... Imagine, if the corn comes, you harvest it. It is obvious for us. I remember my reaction. Revolution started? OK, let's go! (Interview UK4).

Sometimes citizens who did not support the protest movement could be blamed as “passive”. The integration of two these stigmas – the new one of passive opponents of the “revolution” and the old one of passive Eastern Ukrainians - during the post-Maidan conflict was the result of the absorbing of the new protest collective identity by the old nationalistic discourse.

Passivity and lack of self-reliance was one of the main characteristic of “Russians” in the discourse of our respondents from the Maidan camp:

Concerning Ukrainians and Russians... I see the difference. Russians have less of freedom, and they think this is ok, they even don't envy those who have freedom (Interview UK18).

What is important is that in many interviews passivity and lack of freedom were represented as not political constraints imposed by the state but as the state of mind of Russians. Russians were depicted as passive consumers who “just watch the TV” (Interview UK12). As one of the respondents said, even if protests sometimes happen in Russia the majority of the population do not want to support them because of indifference: “*When the Bolotnaya movement was suppressed by the state, the Russians whom I know said something like “this was right” (Interview UK18).*

Discourse analysis allows to see that the category of “Russians” is equated in many interviews with the figure of the enemy of Ukraine:

A Russian now is a man who says that Ukrainians are his brothers but who kill them at the same time. A Russian wants to weaken Ukrainian democracy and to annex our lands. A Russian now is a man who support imperialistic ambitions of his Tsar, Putin. Indeed, the ratings of Putin are extremely high now (Interview UK19).

Similarly, Ukrainian supporters of Antimaidan were depicted as if they would be almost Russians. One of the respondents explains the fact that many Ukrainians supported Antimaidan by their dependency and the lack of self-reliance:

Maybe, initially, due to the Russia' information warfare some of [Ukrainians from Donbas] turned out to be affected by this war. They [mobilized against Maidan] because these sentiments were imposed to them, that were put in their minds (Interview UK20).

The lack of intelligence is another stereotype that proponents of Euromaidan used to distinguish Russians from Ukrainians. One of the respondents describes Russians in terms of a lack of intelligence: *Russians now degenerate. One can see it if communicate in the internet. Really, many people are foolish. You tell them a sentence. They cannot understand. Usual sentence, not very difficult* (Interview UK21).

The same respondent describes Ukrainians from the Eastern regions in the same way:

People who live in the Eastern part are different from people from the Central Ukraine. Their level of intelligence is lower that's why it's hard to communicate with them. These people don't understand what you try to tell them. They are just stupid people (Interview UK21).

Although, the struggle between Miadan and Animaidan was not a class struggle, in some cases of well-educated respondents the image of differences between West and East, and between supporters and opponents of a social change acquires some class-based connotations:

Donbass is absolutely industrial region ... It is not an area of intellectuals... People are working in the pits, people are working in the factories and they do not see anything except these pits and factories ... They have never been in L'viv not speaking about Europe ... And of course in such a situation some radicals appear who will join the separatists ... Of course there are Ukrainians there as well. But it is for sure organized by the Russians and Putin (Interview UK4).

Thus, during the civic conflict the regional differences were re-articulated in and by the discourse of Euromaidan supporters. The images of regional divisions redefined the national identity emerged

during the Euromaidan protests.

Radicalization of nationalism

In order to understand better how the old nationalistic stereotypes came back in the public sphere in Ukraine and what role the “politics of authenticity” played in this process, I have analyzed the blogs of some respondents together with their life stories. This analysis was aimed at exploration how their national identity and their representations of the Eastern regions, especially Donbass, changed through time, in the course of their life and during the war. In what follows, I will exemplify this analysis by description of two activist identity trajectories. I will show how their identities were changed through an analysis of the interviews and the blogs in Facebook.

The discourses of the respondents I chose are distinctive examples of identity evolution from Euromaidan to the war. Both of them are intellectuals who became engaged in the military activity after Euromaidan. They were involved in voluntary battalions that were at war during the Anti-terror Operation. One was the part of the “Donbass” battalion in which he became a sniper. The second became the part of the “Aidar” battalion. However, she left it then and became a pilot, an instructor and a fundraiser in her own project, the “Center of Airborne Prospecting”.

As I have pointed out the national identity that initially was based on the revolutionary discourse of a unity of the regions then was absorbed by the exclusivist and xenophobic rhetoric. One could say that a civil conflict always produces exclusion and leads to dehumanization. However, an image of the conflict was not determined. The sides of the conflicts that emerged in many

Ukrainians cities after Maidan were uncertain and undefined in early spring of 2014. The dominant representation depicted the conflict between unified Ukraine and Russia and its small-numbered agents in various regions at that time. However, this image has been changing during the war. The old stereotypes about “the East” and Donbass as “not Ukrainian” areas re-emerged and the whole regions were marked as politically hostile and stigmatized.

In what follows I will focus on the two different ways of objectification and stigmatization of Donbass region in the patriotic discourses of two Euromaidan participants. The first respondent is initially from Donbass region. As many other supporters and participants of Euromaidan he believed that the protests unified the country. Being from the cosmopolitan region, he rejected linguistic and regional stereotypes and insisted that Euromaidan should be a protest not for “Ukrainization” but for “freedom”. However, during the war he became radical Ukrainian ethnic nationalist and started claiming that Donbass was politically hostile region. The second respondent is a student from Kiev. She became a Ukrainian patriot before Euromaidan. Her parents took part in the Orange revolution while she has been identified herself with “democratic” and “patriotic” social strata. Just as another informant she was graduated from “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” that has been considered as the patriotic university, the intellectual center that produces national elites. Although during Euromaidan she greeted the revolutionary “unity” of the West and the East, she became more sceptic about a unification just after the military conflict emerged. Considering her patriotic background, it was not surprising that after Euromaidan in the beginning of the war she re-acquired the belief that Donbass as well as the East of Ukraine was different from the Central and Western parts of the country. She thought that Ukraine should not care about the East and that the government could sacrifice these

territories. However, in the course of the war she changed her opinion. She came to the idea that the goal of the “revolution” was the territorial integrity of Ukraine; otherwise, she believed, Russia could annex not only Crimea but also other regions, including Western ones. This evolution was accompanied by the transformation of her national identity. She started perceiving Donbass as not a “non-Ukrainian” region but as a field of battle between Ukrainian and anti-Ukrainian forces. I will show that both respondents developed xenophobic discourse about Donbass during the war. However, in the case of the first respondent who was initially from Donbass this stigmatization of the region was the result of the exclusion of Donbass from the Ukrainian identity, in the case of the second respondent this objectification and stigmatization of the region was the result of the inclusion of Donbass in Ukrainian identity.

Stigmatization by exclusion

A young teacher from Donetsk who initially supported Antimaidan but then became a Euromaidan activist, identified himself with multiethnic and multilingual region of Donbass. He was graduated from the prestigious “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” and then had been working as a secondary school teacher. He moved often between Kyiv and Donbass. In the interview he claims, that he is “not ready to die for Ukrainian culture”, because “every culture and every language, the Russian, the English, the Ukrainian ... is beautiful”. However, the analysis of his Facebook posts that were written after the interview show that his collective identity was transformed dramatically and became much more ethnic-based. He stopped identifying himself with the multicultural region and started

framing the conflict in terms of “Ukrainians”, “patriots” who struggled against “Russians”.

The transformation of meaning of the category of “separatists” he has been using demonstrates the transformation of the meaning of his social identity. If in the interview by ‘separatists’ he meant those who were involved in the insurgence military units, then in Facebook he termed the whole region (with which he previously identified himself) “separatist”. He stigmatized the whole region as populated by unintelligent and unpatriotic persons:

These separatists are so stupid! They lay their children open to the attack ... and then claim that we kill them. Did you try to take your children from the military zone, you, stupid idiot? Enjoy your DNR, idiot, only you are guilty of all these things. People who have the intellect left the region and went to some more safe places. But you, stupid idiot, you will live in the place you ‘deserve’ to live. I don’t care about what you say like “you kill us (Facebook post, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher).

The category of “Russians” also became the stigma for description and exclusion of the Donbass region from the political nation. In the interview, the respondent says that Russians and Ukrainians the one people: *“Russians and Ukrainians are the one people”* (Facebook post, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher).

He described Euromaidan as the movement that consisted of both Russians and Ukrainians. Moreover, he paradoxically opposes Russian mentality to Putin claiming that “Russians” who defeated Hitler will defeat Putin:

Maybe Putin has forgotten that Ukrainians are Russians too, we defeated the Nazis, we do have imagination, it is impossible to win a victory over us. Now you can see how our army, our Ukrainian army

... if it was the American army they would have died in a week. But our people they are gathering, they buy weapons, this is a popular movement (Facebook post, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher).

At that moment, the military conflict was articulated by the respondent as not a conflict between Russians and Ukrainians or between Ukraine and Donbass, but as the war between the Slavic people and the imperialistic Russian state:

I was really impressed when I saw that ordinary people, simple Slavic women found and neutralized the spies who came from Russia (Facebook post, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher).

However, the analysis of his posts in Facebook he wrote in 2014-2015 showed that his national identity began to be articulated in terms of the opposition between Ukrainians and Russians: *“I suppose these ideas were imposed by Russia but I’m writing my post in Ukraine”* (Facebook post, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher). Finally, he started writing about Donbass dwellers as if they would be “Russians”:

They say that Ukraine doesn’t allow [Donbass] people to leave the ATO zone. But, please, go to Russia! You wanted to join Russia so much. Go there! Go to Putin who is your super-star! Russia is a big country! (Facebook post, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher).

Stigmatization by inclusion

The second respondent took part in Euromaidan in Kiev. As many other respondents, she used the *inclusive nationalistic discourse within narratives of the event* and proposed more *exclusive nationalistic discourse within classifications of Ukrainian regions*.

When talking about her experience of Euromaidan in the interview she claims:

[The propaganda tries] to impose the image of fascism, Nazism, chauvinism, xenophobia. Bullshit! In fact, Azeri struggled together with gays, while gays prepared Molotov cocktails with priests, you know? And Catholics were together with Orthodox, and Muscovites from Russia were with priests. There were not these stupid borders ... it was the uprising of those who were insulted, aggrieved ... They were just people with dignity (Interview UK21).

The respondent emphasizes that this atmosphere of solidarity was the effect of the unique event:

Sometimes you hop on a bus, and you hear swears, people stamp on both your feet. But do you know how we talked in Maidan about the burned buses? "Please", "excuse me", "not at all" (laugh) ... Of course, we are Ukrainians, but ... this feeling that you are a Ukrainian ... it was the same that feeling that you are a citizen ... No one claimed "I'm the Ukrainian but you have another ethnicity" or "I'm the Ukrainian but you speaks Russian". We didn't have such problems... Russian, Ukrainian language ... doesn't matter! If you went through Maidan with a Russian flag at that time, it would be absolutely OK (Interview UK21).

However, when she replies to our answers about differences between Russians and Ukrainians and between Ukrainian regions, i. e. when she produces classifications of the society, not a narrative of the event, she uses more exclusive nationalist discourses. This discourse is xenophobic toward both Russians and Ukrainians from Donbass. The respondent says about Russians:

The Russians now have a brain cancer. Even those who have been common-sense people"; "Here our task, the task of the civil society is to control those in power because... you know they are our employees. They serve us. It is not like in your country. Despite

Ukraine and Poland, in your country people have been served Tsar from of old (Interview UK21).

She speaks about the Ukrainian East and Donbass as specific regions with unintelligent population when answers questions about differences between Ukrainians cities:

Donbass is the very specific thing. They are people with education of very bad quality. Europe is something unfamiliar for them and something unpleasant... They are sovkodrochers [a pejorative for passionate sympathizers of the USSR (literary: those who jerk off to the USSR), it is used to offend a person with positive attitude towards the USSR past by blaming him or her for masturbation to the soviet – O. Zh.] <...> After all the West and the East... maybe not the whole East but Donbass are different cultural forms <...> the majority of Donbass people are passive...maybe there are 10 percent of conscious and active citizens <> 80 percent are indifferent mass (Interview UK21).

In the moment of the interview, she claims that Donbass is not important region for Ukraine. For her Donbass is perceived as something superfluous and needless for Ukraine. This attitude is reflected in the popular opinion that Donbass is an economically beneficiary region. According to this opinion, “Ukraine feeds Donbass”. Consequentially, Donbass is not Ukraine. The respondent says: *“I don’t need this Donbass at all. It is just a beneficiary region”* (Interview UK21).

However, in half a year after she got involved in Aidar battalion, she said in the interview in the media that she changed her opinion:

[The journalist introduces M.] M. who took part in Maidan did not think she could be at war. She believed that Donbass was not worth of life of a single Ukrainian. However, she changed her views dramatically and became the part of the Aidar Battalion: “I realized the historical tendency. Putin is a classical dictator of an Empire.

*Empire will never stop a war until it has all. I realized that the not only Donbass but also the whole Ukraine is at stake in the war. Putin needs not only Donbass, he needs the whole Ukraine including Khar'kiv, Zhitomir, Odessa and Kiev*⁷

This change of opinion about desirable military strategy of Ukraine was accompanied by the transformation of the national identity. The alienating attitude toward Donbass gives place to a colonial one:

*We are not enemies with Donbass people. They are like us but they have been living in the depressed region. My uncle, he is still living in the territory of NDR ("Donetsk People's Republic"), He is minor. I remember his stories that the only thing he sow was the mine. And the only thing they did was drinking vodka. They escape from the mine and start drinking and then they go to sleep. Everyday. It's easy to manipulate them. They watch TV and believe that the Ukrainian army is guilty*⁸

The eventful national identity developed into the idea of a state integrity during the war. The integration of the Donbass region into the image of the Ukrainian nation was the most important element of this evolution. Within the process of identity work, eventful nationalism and pre-protest nationalistic discourses interacted and formed the new hybrid national identity. What is interesting is that the experience of the war is perceived in terms of continuation of Euromaidan. The experience of collective action during the protests and the war were opposed by the informant to the corrupted state politics:

The war is where you want to come back. When it will finish many will miss this time. It is hard to explain... Because everything is good

⁷ <https://inforesist.org/ukrainskie-amazonki-mariya-berlinskaya-i-nebo/>

⁸ <https://inforesist.org/ukrainskie-amazonki-mariya-berlinskaya-i-nebo/>

*in the war. Everything is good and better than here, in Kiev. Except one thing that people die. There is no corrupt police and laws in the war, only freedom! All these people in power, all these bastards keep distance from the war. And in the war you can see easily who is who*⁹

The rhetoric here is the same as in the narratives about Maidan. The struggle for freedom and for the country is opposed to the corrupt and cynical state politics. But what is more important for my topic is that the experiences of Maidan and the war assert, define and re-define a division between “us” and “them” which constitutes collective identities. In both Maidan and the war, you understand “who is who”. My point however is that supporters of Maidan changed their vision of who is who and the very principles of this vision during the war. On the one hand, the respondent believes that just as in Maidan there are not ethnic, linguistic and other stereotypical differences at war. In facebook she writes:

A war is good because you understand who is who at war. There are no nationalities, age, confessions, social status or gender at war. There are only people and unpeople at war (Facebook post, female, born in 1988, incomplete higher education, a student).

On the other hand, just as in Maidan this “politics of authenticity” produced and legitimated new forms of exclusion, stigmatization and divisions. After the respondent started perceiving Donbass as the part of the nation, she began claiming that there were “our” people and the “majority” who were against the Ukrainian army and the battalions. The imagined positions of the both groups legitimated the military operation. The presence of “our people” in Donbass meant

⁹ <https://inforesist.org/ukrainskie-amazonki-mariya-berlinskaya-i-nebo/>

that the Ukrainian army and the battalions should fight until Donbass is under control of the state while intellectuals should avoid the discourse of “European” Ukraine without Donbass:

To cut off from Donbass? Only those who hate our people could say this. On the one hand, many ours have already died there. On the other hand, many ours are still there. By the way there were many people who came to Euromaidan in Donetsk (Facebook post, female, born in 1988, incomplete higher education, a student).

However, as the majority of people were imagined as “passive”, “pro-Russian”, unintelligent etc, the informant believed they should be sacrificed for a restoration of the territorial integrity. As a result even the integration of the Donbass region in the imagined community of the nation led to dehumanization. In the Facebook she writes:

It began to rain. The fighters tell that they see the rainbow and it would be great to take a picture. I say it were better if a mushroom cloud would be rising over Donbass (Facebook post, female, born in 1988, incomplete higher education, a student).

We could see that stigmatization of the Donbass region and its dwellers was the result of two different evolutionary processes. On the one hand, an exclusion of Donbass from the national identity led to a stigmatization of Donbass dwellers who were described as “separatists” and “Russians”. On the other hand, the integration of Donbass into the national identity led to the division of its dwellers into “ours”, Ukrainians and the pro-Russian “majority”, passive and unintelligent.

As seen by the eyes of Antimaidan

It is not enough to describe the evolution of the national identity for explaining subjective factors of the civil conflict. One has to use a *relational perspective* in an analysis of collective identities if she wants to understand how they influence a dynamics of a social and political struggle. The analysis of stigmatization but also of internalization of stigma allows explaining the role of political subjectivity in the civil conflict. In what follows I will focus on interviews we took with the supporters of Antimaidan. Analyzing the categories which moved from the Euromaidan discourses to the Antimaidan ones will allow us to explore their role in the escalation of the conflict. Indeed these cliché were the instruments of mutual stereotypization and mutual hate. I have shown that the discourses that articulated national identities within Euromaidan were uncertain and ambiguous. The narratives of the event expressed inclusive, “open to all” identities while the discourses based on taxonomies were more exclusive and even xenophobic. The same respondent could use both. This ambiguity invokes symbolic battles. An opponent of the movement could accused Euromaidan of being xenophobic. In response, a supporter could refer to the inclusiveness of the movement’s rhetoric. I tried to describe the mechanism of the evolution of these discourses and to analyze the dialectic of their political meaning. Now I want to explore how supporters and participants of Antimaidan themselves conceive these discourses. How do they internalize them? Do they reject them? Did these discourses become their language of self-description? In other words, I will analyze the stereotypes that served as the instrument of construction of social identities. How the activists of the Antimaidan movement perceived representations of the new protest national

identity that emerged within Euromaidan? How did they react to the claim that this identity had unified all the Ukrainians? How did they perceive and use the stigmas such as “separatist” and “Russians”?

Although, as I pointed out above, Euromaidan proponents equated their opponents with separatists with “pro-Russian” orientations, despite media cliché Antimaidan was initially neither separatist, nor “Pro-Russian”. There was a fraction of Russian nationalists who supported imperialistic politics of the Russian state but it was not dominant and failed to impose Russian identity on all participants. Some of Antimaidan’s supporters tried to reassert Ukrainian national identity:

Why does Russia come and help us? Should Russian troops, soldiers come and help you when you are sitting in your bed and crying or just flying the Russian flag? It should not be going in such a way (Interview UK23).

Some of Antimaidan proponents who felt they were excluded from the national identity started conceiving themselves as Russians. This identity transformation made Russian nationalists and Russian imperialistic ideology much stronger.

We always have perceived ourselves as Ukrainians. Previously we went to Russia and told them: don’t confuse, we were not Russians we were Ukrainians! But after the 2nd of May we don’t want to be Ukrainians anymore. Now we feel more Russian (Interview UK24).

They were blamed as “Russians” and they interiorized this stigma but in a subversive way developing an ‘imperial’ identity. Thus, the so-called “Russian world” was not only a result of Kremlin politics but also a result of Maidan itself.

The many interviews with Antimaidan movement participants show that they conceived the category of “separatists” as stigma that excluded them from the national identity against their will: “*You*

know if we start flying Ukrainian flags we are Ukrainians too, and we have the right to express our opinion. We are not separatists, not old sovki” (Interview UK23). This respondent uses the term “separatist” in pair with the term “sovok” (the stereotype that is used to blame those who are represented as people from Soviet era, not intelligent and modern enough etc.). Another respondent says:

I'm Ukrainian, my mother is Ukrainian, my father is Ukrainian, my grandfather was Polish. And I am Ukrainian. You see what the situation is? If you don't cry ... now the segregation is happening... if you don't cry “Glory to Ukraine!” or if you don't reply “Glory to heroes!”, you are a separatist, you don't love your country because you are not a patriot (Interview UK25).

Thus, the discourse of authenticity failed to construct the new long-term identity. On the contrary, it facilitated the re-emergence of stereotypes inherited from the old Ukrainian nationalism to which Maidan supporters deliberately opposed their new “eventful” identity. Being internalized as a stigma by the participants of Antimaidan these stereotypes contributed to the escalation of the civil military conflict. Participants of Antimaidan who believed they were excluded from the national identity due to their political views reacted differently to this feeling of exclusion. I have shown two typical reactions: some activists claimed they were still Ukrainians even if Euromaidan wanted to exclude them; other started describe themselves as “Russians”. The systematic analysis of the interviews shows that there was the third typical reaction. People amplified their local identity that was opposed to the national one. In what follows I will consider this trajectory of identity transformation. I will focus on the case study we did in the city of Khar'kiv. I will analyze the *local identities* and their relation to *national identities* of dwellers of Kharkiv where both Maidan and Antimaidan were mass and influential movements.

Local and national

Kharkiv is one of the biggest cities in Ukraine. It was the big center of engineering industries not only in Ukraine but also in the USSR. There are many universities in the city. That is why Kharkiv is often called “the city of students”. Traditionally there has been very strong local identity in Khar’kiv. Our respondents from the both camps emphasized the role of the city when spoke about the disruptive political events of 2013-2014:

It is because Kharkiv is the most important and the biggest city in the region they [the government] sent the special service agents here against us (Interview UK26).

The Khar’kiv region earns really much money for the country. That is why Antimaidan emerged here (Interview UK27).

The activists of the both movements emphasized the specificity of the city. For instance, they explained that people in Khar’kiv speak special language: *“Let’s start from the language. There are many Khar’kiv words that people from Donetsk would not understand...”* (Interview UK28).

Our respondents named themselves “kharkovites” and spoke about the city as if it was a political actor: *“From the very beginning Kharkiv was against Maidan”* (Interview UK29); *“Kharkiv is afraid that something bad could start here”* (Interview UK30).

After the emergence of the civil conflict, the Kharkiv itself became the stake in the struggle between Maidan and Antimaidan movements. For example, the image of the “city of the students” was successfully mobilized by the Maidan proponents who emphasized the fact that students from Khar’kiv took the Euromaidan side: *“Khar’kiv is the intellectual capital of Ukraine. It was not a surprise that people here were in favor of the Ukrainian unity (laugh)”* (Interview UK5).

In response, activists and supporters of the Antimaidan movement claimed that these students were not kharkovites as such, but came to the city from other regions:

Khar'kiv is the student city and it is very big city and that is why the majority of those who came in support of Maidan were students, students from the Western and Eastern Ukraine (Interview UK25).

At the same time, the supporters of Antimaidan claimed their motivation was preservation of the city. For instance, when Euromaidan activists together with radical nationalists started destroying the statues of Lenin, supporters of Antimaidan defended them and claimed that the statues were a cultural heritage of the city: *When it began in Khar'kiv... let's start with the fact that we defended the symbol of the city. OK, maybe some people don't like Lenin, but the statue is the symbol of our city! The statue is located in the city center. It was here and it is here and it should stay here, ok? (Interview UK30).*

In what follows I will turn to the question of an interaction of local and national identities. In the course of the civil conflict, the local identity and local patriotism were politicized and modified. These changes were the results of the integration or, alternatively, contradistinction of the Maidan national identity, on the one hand, and the local identities, on the other. For many participants of the Antimaidan the feeling of exclusion from the national identity led to changes of their social identities. The minority of our respondents from the Antimaidan camp mirrored the Euromaidan discourse and claimed that they were true Ukrainians while those who supported the Maidan movement were not:

Now, all these people say: "We are all Ukrainians!". But in fact not all of us are Ukrainians. There are some people who supported Novorossiia. And there are ... I would say pseudo-Ukrainians, Nazi, who supported EU and the USA. We are not a single people

anymore, we have split (Interview UK27).

The majority of the informants from the Antimaidan movement in Kharkiv reacted to the feeling of exclusion from the political nation in a different way. They either amplified their local identity (and supported the separatists) or they acquired Russian identity (and supported the pan-slavic ideology and Russian imperialism). Some of the respondents claimed they became more patriotic referring to the local patriotism. This is the type of identity work that David Snow termed “identity amplification”:

You know, I can say that probably after all the events I became more patriotic, although before I loved my city as well. I loved Khar’kiv. But now I became more patriotic” (Interview UK31).

This amplification of the local component of social identities was the consequences of the conflict between the local and the national:

Q. Do you see yourself a Ukrainian?

A. Now I define myself as kharkovite but not a Ukrainian.

Q. What does it mean for you?

A. How to say... I became the patriot, the patriot of my city and my region. Now it doesn’t matter for me how people from Lvov or Ternopol will do if we will separate from Ukraine (Interview UK32).

Finally, some respondents acquired the Russian, or pan-Slavic identity. As I have already said, the activists of the Maidan movement often described Ukrainians from the Eastern and Southern regions who supported Antimaidan as people who closer to Russia than to Ukraine. Some activists of Antimaidan appropriated this stigma but in a subversive way. They started describing themselves as Russians who were more powerful than Ukrainians. One of the respondents exploited the geopolitical terms to emphasize the pro-Russian orientation of the dwellers of Kharkiv:

The conflict is between the USA and us, Ukrainians. But not those Ukrainians who supported these [Maidan] protests, but Ukrainians who grew up with Russia, because the majority of the Southern-East are Russian-speaking people (Interview UK27).

In what follows I will describe some results of the analysis of life stories of participants of Antimaidan in Kharkiv. This analysis allowed me to understand better dynamics of protest politicization and collective identity formation.

Biographical trajectories of Antimaidan activists

Since the Euromaidan did not offer an explicit agenda of social and political changes, and its media representatives were system politicians, elite of the highest ranks, and extreme right-wing organizations and leaders, the positive image of the people's 'Revolution of Dignity' was formed by direct and/or indirect experience of participation, which implies intense emotional engagement. Ukrainians who were critical of the Euromaidan—especially those in the southeastern part of the country, where they have been excluded from the experience of resistance, the new national identity, and the system of political representation—were unable to perceive the Euromaidan as a fight for a better future in the way that those who participated in it were able to experience.

In return, some of them joined the Anti-Maidan and the separatist movement. They associated the Euromaidan with unlawful seizure of power and 'Ukrainianship' as such, which is why they reacted with developing alternative identities, e.g. regional, Russian, imperial, etc. However, it would be wrong to explain people's support of the Anti-Maidan solely in reference to the absence of

being able to participate in the Euromaidan. It would be equally wrong to attribute their commitment to the Anti-Maidan to some sort of ‘Eastern Ukrainian’, ‘Donbass’, or ‘Russian’ collective identities, which existed prior to their politicization. As I have pointed out above, despite the widespread discourse of ‘two Ukraines’, identities of supporters of the two adversary movements were fluid and mobile. Rather, it is these identities in their dynamics that need to be explained.

Still, it was the rejection of the Maidan and the new government that was the main reason for massive numbers of people who joined the Anti-Maidan. And, like I have stated before, both Maidan participants and those who supported the Anti-Maidan formed their collective identities in the protesting and civil conflict experience. However, it does not mean that this experience was not defined by preceding trajectories and structural social factors. On the contrary, in order to better understand why a certain eventful experience produced one or other kinds of identities, one must reconstruct the circumstances, which do not conclude solely to this experience. In other words, one should take a close look at different circumstances and motives that spurred people on to different types of support and engagement. But is it easy to point out a set of typical circumstances and motives?

Despite the polarization of public sentiments and the dichotomy based on opposing the Euromaidan and the Anti-Maidan, the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ of Ukraine, the ‘European’ and the ‘Russian’ choice, motives and social ‘backstory’ of people’s choosing one side or another were often far from being obvious. It is true that apart from those people who had already chosen their positions by 2014—usually the position was either ‘orange’, or ‘pro-Russian’, that is, those who grew up in politicized families and those who had already

had an experience of being politically active—we met a lot of people whose socializing trajectories and, consequently, political attitudes were vague. Often, our informants told us how they hesitated when deciding whose side to take. We interviewed young people whose parents had taken opposite positions in the Ukrainian conflict, as well as those who switched from one movement to the other. It is important to note that many of our informants, if not the majority of them, belonged to the latter group.

The conclusion stating the importance of eventful experience and reaction to the image of the event does not mean that mobilization in support of the Euromaidan or the Antimaidan cannot be explained through structural factors. One could rather say that these two factors are not sufficient. First, the very same factors that were supposed to explain why one or the other side was chosen, such as Russian as one's native language or a combination of factors, for example, low social status, unstable employment, and having Russian as a native language alone often explained nothing. We have met people matching these characteristics both in the Maidan, and the Anti-Maidan movements. Second, when analyzing the Ukrainian conflict, it is easy to confuse the cause and the effect. As Andrei Portnov has rightfully noted, in discussions concerning reasons of the Ukrainian conflict the notion of identity was used carelessly as a universal explanatory scheme, while it was actually the process of emergence and transformation of new identities that needed to be explained:

“Most answers as to why Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk did not become Donetsk and Luhansk cites the Donbass' ‘specific identity’ (usually described as ‘Soviet’) as a causal factor. And depending on the ideological preferences of the author writing about it, this identity is evaluated in either disparaging or complimentary tones [...] we can (and must) argue about the correct definition of this conflict. But

we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, over the course of a year, many people have come to see it as a civil war [...] a specific ‘Donbass identity’, especially if the status quo is maintained and the ‘Transnistrian scenario’ continues to develop, could be the result (but not the reason!) of the events of 2014 and the ensuing war” (Portnov, 2016).

Third, often joining one movement or another was influenced by multiple random and circumstantial events. Explanation of politicization and analysis of variability of collective identities in terms of influence of events and in terms of structural conditions together with biographical patterns do not contradict but complement each other.

In the instance where a clear idea of mechanisms rendering social positions into perceptions of collective interests and, subsequently, into political preferences, is missing, one needs a detailed empirical analysis of socio-economic conditions of existence of different groups’ agents on the one hand, and analysis of life stories on the other hand. This kind of analysis will allow us to begin a systematic study of complicated and diverging mechanisms of political engagement. It will also allow to shed light on evolution and significance of collective identities formed within an experience of resistance and conflict.

Analysis of biographies of participants in the Khar’kiv Anti-Maidan allowed us to mark out several major factors and motives of ‘reactive’ politicization, which are: politicization as response to a threat that supporters of the Anti-Maidan saw in the Euromaidan and the new Kiev authorities (then again, it would be wrong to assume the Anti-Maidan to be an entirely reactive movement; many activists participated in it because they believed that it could have led to social

changes, such as democratization, improvement of people's welfare, decrease in corruption, in other words, to something for which the Euromaidan was fighting as well). These motives are the economic one, the one related to ideological preferences and the motive that I named the one of 'obviousness'. In all of the cases collective identity also plays an important role but in order not to fall into essentialism and not to make do with a superficial analysis that hastily explains the choice of a side through referring to a supposedly stable collective identity, I will examine it as a dependent variable. In other words, I will describe the way it changes depending on different types of activist careers. We will see that politicization and collective identity are influenced by several of the following factors or even all of them at a time: economic rationality, ideological preferences, identity, and credibility of legitimacy of one side or the other based on obviousness. At the same time, my analysis shows that different factors had different significance for bearers of different trajectories. In other words, different factors influenced formation of different key motivations that led people to one or another position. Below, I will first describe complexes of social conditions and biographical patterns that led to 'reactive' politicization in a more or less direct manner, and then move to more complicated and unconventional engagement stories, which will demonstrate how challenging the analysis of an eventful protest is.

The first motivation is inspired by the fear of possible economic difficulties, which might occur as a result of political turnaround following the victory of the Euromaidan and the rise to power of a new government or the experience of real economic difficulties resulting from it. When being interviewed most of our informants said that during the whole period of Ukraine's independence "the East fed the country," however, the way public money was

distributed was unfair because most of the resources were spent on central and western regions. They said that after the Euromaidan and the change of government economic situation in Khar'kiv had deteriorated or would deteriorate in the near future because of the severance of economic ties with Russia, possible deindustrialization, and dissolution of industrial empires, which used to function under the auspices of the clan of the former president Viktor Yanukovich. However, this economic motivation—fear of welfare diminishing or of unemployment—by no means always influenced engagement in the Anti-Maidan directly. The analysis shows that this motivation had the most powerful influence on people whose family members were employees of those enterprises that were directly reliant on their ties with Russian customers and people who were entering the labor market when the conflict began and had little chance of getting hired outside certain fields and enterprises. Usually, their ‘anti-Ukrainian’ and ‘pro-Russian’ identities reflected their positions in regional specialization of labor.

For instance, one of the informants said in his interview that despite critical attitude towards the former president Yanukovich, his father worked at an enterprise that belonged to the president's clan. As explained by our interviewee, although the enterprise managers were corrupt and greedy, they insured stability for his family. After spring 2014 this stability faltered and the young man joined the ‘Anti-Maidan’ protests.

In general, the trajectory of people coming from families, which are not that wealthy but whose family members have stable jobs at enterprises doing business with Russia is pretty typical among supporters of the Antimaidan in Kharkiv. After spring 2014 these enterprises might have been closed, moved to different regions, or, for example, because of the new political agenda and economic

policy, Russian companies might have stopped ordering certain goods from Kharkiv enterprises. That is what an Antimaidan activist who is a prospective student coming from a working-class family told us about economic hardships that her parents faced,

I: How would you define your family's income? Low? Moderate?

R: Before all that, before this revolution, my parents worked, well, contentedly. With no complications. And after all this started to happen, plants and large enterprises have begun to lay off. And since both a welder, and a non-destructive testing inspector are people connected with industry, taking this into account, it had a major influence on us. It's just that... there just was no work [...] because now many plants work four or three days a week and many people lose their jobs. It's just that plants have no new orders, have no money. It's just that their work stops, for example, because of problems with gas supply and electricity.

I: And these enterprises where your mother and father work, why are they not resuscitated?

R: Because there are no orders. Because most orders came from Russia. That is why, considering the fact that economic relations were suspended, all orders were canceled (Interview UK33).

Our informant hoped to get a steady job, maybe with the help of her parents. At the same time, she was volunteering in various initiatives and non-profit organizations and wanted to make 'communicating with people' her profession. That is why she planned to enter a pedagogical university. Due to difficulties related to finding a job, she depended heavily on her parents financially. The fact that they lost their jobs had a significant impact on her life: she lost the financial support, job prospects became less feasible (*"If even my*

parents don't have a job, what are the chances that I get one”), and obtaining a higher education became an unattainable luxury.

Often, being employed at an enterprise that have contracts with Russian companies strengthened the Russian linguistic identity. Our informant said:

I was moved [to join the Antimaidan] by only one thing: the fact that they touched Kharkiv's second regional language, meaning, Russian. Kharkiv was a Russian-speaking city from the very beginning. Because... well... Here, they only speak Ukrainian in regions maybe. And in the city, well, meeting a Ukrainian-speaking person is rare. And that is why, like, when they start saying, "Here's the deal, we prohibit using the Russian language, you will even think in Ukrainian"! ... we, Kharkiv people when we saw the way it all goes, said that this is not going to happen (InterviewUK33).

As a rule, people from this kind of families did not have a politicized Russian or imperial identity. Rather, they considered East Ukraine and Russia to be one single region that lives in harmony with the rest of Ukraine. Most of these people had ambiguous Russian-Ukrainian identities, in presence of which their regional identity was more visible. The same informant said in the interview,

Like, I don't distinguish Russia from Ukraine that much, because it's all the Soviet Union, which was, of course, these were Russia's achievements. But, of course, when they won the Olympics, well, of course I felt proud of Russia. That's right, so many of my acquaintances live in Russia, well done, of course! (Interview UK33).

And then, *"I consider myself to be a patriot of Khar'kiv. Just Khar'kiv. Because it is this city [that is important to me]" (Interview UK33).*

We can easily see the important role of the economic factor through the example of an Anti-Maidan activist who used to support the Euromaidan. A car assembler coming from a single-parent family, son of a shop assistant who makes five thousand hryvnias per month told us how he switched from the Euromaidan to the Anti-Maidan,

“I was actually a member of the Patriots of Ukraine group [...] we occupied the Regional State Administration building. Well, just occupied it and held it, and people would just walk around and be displeased ... with the fact that we occupied it, we were said to be fascists and Banderivtsi [...] and what happened next, well, people gathered around, the Anti-Maidan group, more and more people were coming. And... Well, that was it, they also occupied the Regional State Administration building and kicked us out.

Q.: And at what point did you... Initially you were together with the Euromaidan, and when did you change your mind and because of what?

A.: Well... I just gave it a thought... The EU, it's nice of course, and America helping us, but Russia, they are our fraternal people, and anyway, it's closer, Russia, well. Like, right now, at this moment many of my acquaintances work with, well, Russian enterprises, they sew stuff, I don't know, it's, like, some sort of business. I mean, like, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Crimea, well, maybe Poltava a tiny little bit, these are the regions that fed the entire Ukraine. And now, well, Western Ukraine, they say, we want to become Europe, but why they want it if we had pulled them for 20 years, and it's no one but us who can make this choice? That's what I think.

Q.: And initially you didn't see it this way?

A.: At first, I wanted Ukraine to be, well, like, undivided, but now you see yourself what kind of situation we have in the country: some

say, Russia, others say Europe. And what is Europe? All our enterprises will most likely get closed because we can't compete with them. And who will we become in Europe? Well, we will have to sweep backyards or something. I'm not fine with it. And Russia, I think, like, it might not be all apple pie but gasoline and gas will become cheaper. And what else... Well, and maybe plants will be built, most likely they will be, and there will be jobs. Well, and it's enough, because, well. Probably, they won't give us anything else" (Interview UK 36).

Here, the 'pro-Russian' position is a derivative from the idea of economic gain coming from trading with Russia. Just like in case of the previous informant, this young man had no strong Russian or Ukrainian identity, rather, his identity can be called Ukrainian-Russian, just like in the previous case:

"Q.: Do you consider yourself to be a Ukrainian?

A.: Probably yes. After all I was born here.

Q.: And what does being a Ukrainian mean to you?

A.: Well, it's a nation. Well, I was born... It's just the Ukrainian nation. But Russians are our brothers as well, we are Slavic people. I just think that we shouldn't argue because of Europe that will give us nothing and America that will also give us nothing with its dollar.

Q.: And what do you think, what is the difference between Russians and Ukrainians? And between the Russian and the Ukrainian societies?

A.: I think there's pretty much no difference. We have a lot in common. Well, maybe it's just the language. Then again, many people in the East, they all speak both Ukrainian and Russian. And in the West... Western Ukraine, to me, they are spongers. Spongers

that we have taken care of for 20 years. And they gave nothing back”
(Interview UK 36)

When reading interviews with informants whose employment is deeply dependent on economic ties with Russia, we can observe the economic factor ‘in action’. Our informant, a former Ukrainian patriot and ‘supporter of United Ukraine’ appealed to the language of the East and the West, which does not seem to be habitual for him, when he realized how strong the negative influence from the Euromaidan can be for his future and the future of his family. The notion of the existing differences between the pro-European West and the pro-Russian East became part of his political outlook and acquired economic meaning in view of impending economic crisis. That is why he uses the ‘economic version’ of the discourse of ‘two Ukrainians’, which claims that “the East feeds the West”. As can be seen from the above, people whose families’ income depends directly of the country’s trade with Russia, were driven by economic rationality in the first place. This rationality was stronger than any other motives, which is proved by our informant’s ideological and political about-face in the view of a threat to his welfare.

Explaining politicization through subjective perception of objective economic changes also complies with other research made in this field. For instance, Yury Zhukov, an American sociologist conducted a quantity analysis of outbursts of violent actions in Donbass, which shows that the economic factor was much more substantial than the ethnic one in explaining people’s engagement in ‘militia’ in those towns of the region where certain enterprises were located (Zhukov, 2015). Zhukov writes, “Data from the first year of the Donbass conflict show that a municipality’s prewar employment mix is one of the strongest predictors of rebel activity. Where the opportunity costs of rebellion were low – like in machine-building

company towns especially exposed with trade shocks with Russia – the risk of rebellion was greater overall, separatist violence was more frequent, the Ukrainian government lost control earlier, and rebels were able to hold on to their territory for longer. Where the opportunity costs of rebellion were higher—such as in centers dominated by Ukraine’s relatively competitive metals industry—rebels had a much harder time establishing and maintaining control. Economic preferences are not the only determinants of conflict. Rebels were able to seize ground much quicker where Russian speakers were geographically concentrated. Yet the results of Bayesian Model Averaging show that the ‘language effect’ asserted itself mostly in areas where economic incentives for (or against) rebellion were weak—where the industrial labor force was smaller, and the population was less directly exposed to trade shocks. In municipalities where a larger share of the population was employed in Russia-dependent industries, cultural and linguistic factors proved far less salient.” (Zhukov, 2015: 32)

As for the motivation of politicization revealed through analysis of the Kharkiv Anti-Maidan participants’ life stories, I notionally call it ‘political’. Many informants said that they had joined the protest because it conformed with their values, beliefs, and ideology. However, these narratives often stated that concordance of people’s views and goals of the Anti-Maidan was retrospective. Indeed, as a rule, activists’ views were indefinite and vague, and goals of the movement were inconsistent and badly articulated. That being said, those informants who had had prior experience of being politically active could actually recognize their own views in the movement and join it because of this.

Some informants had had the experience of being politically active or just the experience of political evaluation of the key events of

Ukrainian political life, such as the Orange Revolution. They could be zealous supporters of the ‘pro-Russian’ path since 2004 when the opposition of ‘the West’ and ‘the East’ became an integral part of Ukrainian politics. I will not refer to these informants’ biographies because analyzing them does not present any serious challenges. The factor of political organizations that played a certain role both in the Anti-Maidan, and the separatist movement in the Donbass is far more interesting. A number of our informants, though there were not many of them, had been involved in activities of ‘pro-Russian’ organizations and many of them had been waiting for the moment when the question of the pro-Russian and the pro-West future of Ukraine would be put bluntly. The social conflict of 2014 became this moment. Many of these people were passionate about some sort of conspiratorial literature. One of our informants, a young activist and an admirer of Russian nationalists shared these memories about the beginning of the Anti-Maidan,

“At the end of September, there was a convention of leaders of several civic organizations, Kurginyan, it’s Essence of Time, [...] Union of Ukrainian Citizens, it’s from a branch of the Professional Union of Russian Citizens and Nikolai Starikov [...] Back then Yanukovich was upselling Ukraine’s European choice to the maximum, and we were deciding how we should act depending on the way it goes. In other words, basically, back then the Communist Party of Ukraine decided to organize a referendum in order to ask the people what path Ukraine wants to take. But they said it was against the law, they filed a lawsuit there, it was a very complicated case, and we decided to have another referendum [...] ‘for’ and ‘against’ entering the European Union” (Interview UK 37).

Step by step, this respondent was getting involved into activities of a political group that was basically funded by the Russian

organization Essence of Time, which later played a certain role in the Donbass conflict. He was not a political activist but he had a consistent stance on major problems of Ukrainian politics. Just like other representatives of this sort of organizations or groups in the cities and towns of South-Eastern Ukraine, he was waiting for the year 2004 to repeat in order to start taking part in the conflict of ‘the West’ and ‘the Russian civilization’. When he got to hear about the Euromaidan and the beginning of the Anti-Maidan, he, just like other ‘alerted theoreticians’, became engaged in political activities.

As a rule, this sort of politicized informants bore collective identities ingrained in some kind of political project of the future, usually a utopian image of a strong state. Often, this identity was Russian in one way or another. Yet, territorial, regional, and ideological dimensions of this identity could be different. For instance, our respondent calls himself ‘Russian’ but claims that in Russia itself ‘anti-Russian’ forces are in power. That is why he reproduces the imperial discourse of ‘marching to Kiev’ but leaves out the demand for Ukraine’s joining Russia from it,

“I consider myself Russian [...] [but] I, personally, don’t want to join Russia. Unfortunately, there, domestic politics is controlled by anti-Russian forces... and, of course, I don’t want to give such valuable lands away. After all, Novorossiia if it was the size of Ukraine, then the IMF agreement would be annulled, the debts would be annulled, meaning... basically, it’s what the Bolsheviks used to do, the great Lenin when he wouldn’t acknowledge the debts of the Tsar’s army. Of course, most people have negative attitude towards Lenin but the sheer fact that in case we win, there will be a complete reformation of the state structure, that’s for sure”
(Interview UK 37)

Finally, the third motivation is the trust based on obviousness. This means that people choose their position not based on economic rationality or values and ideological preferences, but as a result of facing certain evidences, ‘facts’, and experiences that seem to ‘speak for themselves’ in favor of one movement or another. It should be noted that, in general, under the conditions of ideological apathy and a feeble system of political representation, which are characteristic of many post-Soviet countries, the habitude of trusting one’s ‘own eyes’, ‘facts speaking for themselves’, and one’s personal experience in defiance of ‘deceitful’ political and ideological discourses is an important part of habitus for representatives of all kinds of social groups. As a rule, this ‘obviousness regime’ restrains people from collective actions because historically it was formed in opposition to ‘lies’ of the official Soviet politics. Yet, when public mobilization occurs, this factor can play an important role in politicization of people who used to be indifferent to politics. Naturally, the veracity of rightness of one position or another always plays a part. Often, it serves not as a motif of politicization, but rather as a supplementary condition confirming and legitimizing those views and beliefs that have already been formed. At the same time, under the conditions of ambiguity of these beliefs, credibility might play a key role, especially when it takes the form of a ‘moral shock’ (Jasper, 2011).

The analysis I have conducted shows that the ‘motif of veracity’ plays the crucial role in politicization of those people whose socialization made choosing a position extremely difficult. These are those people who could have chosen both one position and the other. The fact that there were many of these people, if not the majority of them, among our informants makes analysis of these trajectories and this factor an overriding priority.

People who had not have any clear position regarding the Euromaidan and the rising conflict, for instance, those who saluted the anti-corruption agenda of the Maidan but opposed Ukrainian nationalism and the rise to power of politicians and oligarchs from the former elite, or those who believed both protests to be orchestrated and corrupted projects could have joined both movements, though maybe the odds were not equal. Approaching the explanation of the dynamics of their political choice and the subsequent transformation of their identities requires a detailed analysis of the coherence of their experience, in which the key role might have been played not by their ideological beliefs and values, not by economic motives but by the ‘veracity’ of rightness of one side or the other.

Below, I will show a fairly typical trajectory of ‘reactive’ politicization through the example of two biographies, one of an active participant of the Anti-Maidan, the other of a combatant of the separatist ‘militia’, both of them were not politically active, moreover, were not interested in politics before spring 2014.

In the interview with one of our informants who participated in the Kharkiv Anti-Maidan, one can notice all of the aforementioned motives causing reactive politicization, i.e. the economic, the language and identity, and the political factors. For instance, in his story he mentions the problem of deterioration of economic relations with Russia,

“at the moment, all of our plants just, I mean just Kharkiv, are Russia-oriented. Why are they out of work at the moment? Because right now an information war is taking place, an information blockade with Russia, that’s why they can’t do anything” (Interview UK 38)

However, nowhere in the interview does he say that this problem affected him personally. Moreover, he mentions that his income is moderate and his job is stable. He says that his native language is Russian but, at the same time, he has no distaste for the Ukrainian language and he is fluent in it,

“Q.: What language do you consider to be your mother tongue?”

A.: Russian, and I know Ukrainian but I don’t use it. I speak Russian.

Q.: And in school, did you study in Russian?”

A.: No, I attended a Ukrainian school” (Interview UK 39)

In the interview, he says that in general he supported the Yanukovych regime, however, his attitude towards the former president was critical,

“Q.: And would you support Yanukovych?”

A.: Well, I don’t want to say that I would support him but when he was in power at least it was peaceful and you knew that no one would kill you” (Interview UK 38)

In 2004, during the Orange Revolution, he, just like in 2014, held ‘pro-Russian’ views, however, he did not participate in the protests, *“I upheld the very same position but I didn’t go out to the square”* Moreover, he was always skeptical about the ‘big’ politics,

“None of the presidents... during my life... did something good for the country, none of them. They always made lots of pre-election promises striving to power but didn’t keep any of these promises” (Interview UK 38)

On the one hand, his social background seems typical for participants of the Anti-Maidan. On the other hand, typicality is often deceitful. We met people with similar background in camps of

the Khar'kiv and Odessa Euromaidan as well. At some point, he said something very telling,

“[before 2 May 2014] I wasn't sure about my position” A closer look at the interviews reveals that from across all social strata often doubted the rightness of both the Maidan and the Anti-Maidan. They had had doubts before something happened to them. The doubting ones often chose their position after they had suddenly faced violence or some sort of eloquent confirmation of the rightness of one movement and the criminality of the other. In an expert interview, the Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko argued that, in his opinion, Anti-Maidan could become much more popular movement acting as an opposition to the new political regime. However, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the Siege of Sloviansk by the group of the Russian military officer Igor Strelkov, and the referendum of spring 2014 made the Anti-Maidan ‘pro-Russian’ and ‘separatist’ in the eyes of many people who were not pleased with the new government. Eventually, they supported the Anti-Terrorist Operation and joined the patriotic consensus of the Euromaidan sympathizers. Videos and photographs of Russian military men in Crimea or people wearing masks assaulting state buildings in Sloviansk appeared to be a shocking and irrefutable evidence of the ‘Russian intervention’. At the same time, when facing evidences of ‘ultra-right violence’ or the ‘Ukrainian’s army war against the Donbass’, these very people could have chosen the opposite position. Our informant’s speech continued as follows,

“I used to have doubts concerning my position but after 2 May in Odessa, for me, there's no Ukraine anymore [...] when I saw that footage, some amateur video, I'm this kind of person, it's hard to make me cry but after that I was hysterical for two days, I was freaked out for two days. Because of all this horror [...] So, after,

like, this kind of events, like, I started to come, I started to take part in Anti-Maidan protests” (Interview UK 38)

In many of the interviews constructions directly linking the impression coming from what people actually saw and their decision to join the fight, such as “after that I started going to protests,” “after I had seen it, I decided to sign up for militia,” etc. point at the paramount role of the obviousness factor. Often, this obviousness was precipitated by the shock of violence. For instance, one of our informants, a combatant of a separatist battalion from Donetsk recalled the moment he decided to enroll in ‘militia’,

“In the evening [2 May] we came and saw [on a Youtube channel] this outrageous situation, and burnt faces, and some cameraman was walking on these corpses in the Professional Union building, and they were saying, there’s one more sep, and here’s one more. Well, shortly, these guys were already... totally inhuman [...] On the 3rd, M. called me asking if I am ready to come join the army... And on 4 May we did. I called this R., I called this S... they said yes right away... and starting from 4 May we’ve been... in the service” (Interview UK 39)

Going back to our Khar’kiv respondent, it should be noted that his encounter with the shock of violence, which made him join the Anti-Maidan, had a huge impact on his identity. Despite his pro-Russian feelings, from his interview we learn that before spring 2014 he had born a strong Ukrainian identity, however after 2 May and participation in the Anti-Maidan his identity underwent a 180-degree turn,

“I was always proud of the fact that I’m a Ukrainian, but not anymore, now I’m not proud of it. I had always, even when I had come to Russia, I had always said proudly that I was a Ukrainian.

And now it's disgusting to say that I'm a Ukrainian" (Interview UK 38)

As can be seen from above, one could think that 'pro-Russian' views of our informant have led him to the 'anti-Ukrainian' Anti-Maidan. However, a detailed analysis of the interview shows us an entirely different picture: in fact, he considered himself to be a Russian-speaking Ukrainian as opposed to 'Russians', however, as the result of the events of spring 2014 and his involvement in the Anti-Maidan, he stopped being a bearer of the Ukrainian national identity.

This sort of trajectory of politicization, which is wide spread among participants of the Anti-Maidan and the separatist movement, is even more prominent in the example of the combatant of one of the separatist battalions. One of our informants comes from a small Donbass town D. in Donetsk Oblast, he is a mineworker who came through the war and recently emigrated to Russia.

Unlike him, his father has always upheld pro-Ukrainian views,

"My father's position is... pro-Ukrainian... he sort of didn't get along with the Party of Regions, they kind of grabbed his assets, so he's... sort of... pro-Ukrainian... Me, well, I'm a person who has his own opinion"

Moreover, his father was a coordinator of the election campaign office of the leader of the Orange Revolution Viktor Yushchenko in the town of D.,

"During the last elections when Yanukovich became the president, my father was a member of... Yushchenko's election campaign team. He even coordinated this town, our small town D."

Just like my previous informants, in the interview he talks about economic inequality among Ukraine's regions,

“We work... but Ukraine’s budget, it’s a national budget, the budget allocation comes from Kiev... we pay our taxes and someone can afford not to work and gather mass protests of thousands... All of them there [in Western Ukraine] get their allowances and pensions”
(Interview UK 39)

At the same time, in his interview he does not say that the economic difficulties influenced his political leanings directly. He was always able to make enough money to support himself, his wife, and his children.

Our informant said that he had voted for the Party of Regions but was always skeptical about Yanukovych,

“I have never perceived Yanukovych... as a decent man.

Q.: Why not him?

A.: Because the Party of Regions is actually an organized crime group... and if in the 90s they were involved in direct racket, then later it just went under the name of ‘the Party of Regions’ ... you join this party, you pay a fee, and you’re all good. And if you don’t pay, it means that the tax office people will come and you’ll be in trouble”
(Interview UK 39)

Moreover, he recalled that he was always indifferent to politics,
“Actually, I’ve been nowhere near politics”

He has always felt like a Russian-speaking person but, at the same time, he was a bearer of the cosmopolite Donbass identity and considered himself to be a Ukrainian,

“My nationality is actually Ukrainian... but we have always communicated in Russian, we thought... in Russian

Q.: And, in general, in your everyday interactions with people, have you felt any difference between Russians and Ukrainians, the West and the East, the Donbass and the rest of Ukraine?

A.: No, no. In the 90s, first, many Armenians came... both Armenians and Azerbaijanis... we lived in peace... I had friends who were Chechens” (Interview UK 39)

Just like in the case of the previous informant, one might have thought that his background—his Russian-speaking identity, loyalty to the political environment formed under Yanukovich, and his notion of desirability of economic independence of the Donbass—led him to the separatist movement. However, a detailed analysis of his interview shows that, on the contrary, in the beginning of the war he was not sure who was right. Moreover, he trusted the Ukrainian media more,

“I wasn’t going to fight a war. Then again, most information I received mainly came from the Ukrainian territory, from these media saying that terrorists have come, Chechens are basically raping and robbing everyone and killing people. They spread fear like this, it was, like, well, it was hard not to believe... that Putin’s army slaughtered everyone in Donetsk” (Interview UK 39)

In other words, our informant could have become one of those sympathizers of the ‘pro-Russian’ choice who, bearing the Ukrainian identity at the same time, took the pro-Ukrainian side because of facing evidences of the Russian interference. However, a number of

events made him choose the opposite side. First, when he was driving his car on the central square of his town during the referendum organized by separatist forces, he saw that the majority of people voted for the separation from Ukraine:

“Initially... mass media, especially the Ukrainian ones, they stirred it all up... when... the referendum took place, I saw myself how many... people... the central square of the town and there were these tents of those who supported the referendum... the Donetsk People’s Republic; and on the same day another referendum took place there for Ukraine... in support of Ukraine. I saw, like, heaps of people coming... like 1 May... demonstration [to vote for the NPR] and this kind of trickle towards [the tent set up by pro-Ukrainian forces]”
(Interview UK 39)

Then his friends showed him videos, in which he saw the reality of war that, according to his own words, bore evidence of the criminality of the new Ukrainian government,

“And then my guys came back from Tula, they had some seasonal work there... my former neighbors, they were like, and have you seen this, and that, and this? I said no. Well, let’s watch it. We started checking it out, in Ukraine you can’t even open these links, see, like in this Youtube... about Sloviansk, about Kramatorsk... about houses riddled with bullets... and that’s what outraged me, why are they... deceiving me?” (Interview UK 39)

Then, in his native town that ended up being a part of the territory controlled by the Ukrainian government, he got beaten up by people whom he did not know and identified as government security forces

who had come from ‘the center’. Yet, he was not planning to join the war, instead, he was going to leave for Kharikiv where his wife and children were staying back then,

“Initially, I wasn’t planning to join the war, meaning, I went there to just close everything neatly, I just wanted to nail up my windows here and go to my family” (Interview UK 39)

However, an unforeseen event occurred in his life, and this event has completely transformed his trajectory. First, upon his arrival to Donetsk, he saw that people on ‘militia’s’ roadblocks were not Russian military officers or Chechen contractors but his old acquaintances, and then he visited a morgue a day after the Ukrainian army raked Donetsk with fire,

“An acquaintance of mine asked me to go pick his grandmother from a morgue... The things that I saw there... they turned me inside out... before that I had already spent something like seven days in Donetsk... I hadn’t seen any Chechens there, just my guys, when I was undergoing practical training in a mine, they worked on that site, and then they were standing on the roadblocks here, I talked to them... I didn’t see any tough mercenaries, I saw guys that I’d known for a long time... this information... my eyes began to open. And... after the morgue I got... completely blown away.

Q.: And what happened in the morgue?

A.: There were military officers there as well... wearing uniforms... But there were also lots of civilians, it was... a day after they raked a stop in the 18th Hospital. There were children there, and there were women, and... just people who laid there like logs, this way,

like they were stacked in a pile of wood. And this really blew me away somehow” (Interview UK 39)

Just like in the case of the previously mentioned informant and many other respondents, he made the decision to sign up for ‘militia’ after having faced an actual evidence of what he thought to be the Ukrainian army violence.

“I made the decision to go to war precisely because I saw how many people, well, not on the news, not on TV, but, like, in real life, how many people, common people, meaning, not... common women, well, meaning, it’s sure thing that she was no terrorist because she had no machinegun, because this woman was wearing regular clothes. And... Before that when I’d been studying in a medical school I’d attended autopsies but seeing this sort of things, I was just shocked.... I was running around, trying to make them take me somewhere, back then they wouldn’t, they said that... there were no vacancies... it took me a month to get to Motorola.

Q.: What did you do? Did you decide to join Motorola right away, or did you have any...?

A.: No, I... just went there like this, I had some, well, I saw some of my acquaintances there, on the roadblocks, I came up to the guys and I was like, that’s the thing, like, I don’t really have any experience, meaning, I’ve served in the army but it’s been somewhat like seventeen or sixteen years ago... in short, they sent me the squadron protecting the headquarters” (Interview UK 39)

As a result, his identity underwent a dramatic change; in his interview, he emphasized the fact that after that he considered

himself to be Ukrainian only by origin, just according to his passport data.

As can be seen from the above, despite the fact that there are several typical factors causing politicization, their influence on 'reactive' politicization was not always equally strong. On the contrary, the role of different factors and motives in people's deciding to join one of the movements varied depending on a range of socio-economic conditions of their existence and biographical patterns. In its turn, the biographical analysis has shown how complex the dynamics of people's engagement in the Anti-Maidan and the separatist movement is. Experience of 'obviousness', facing violence and evidences proving the verity of information, which conforms rightness of one of the confronting sides, could be much more important than economic, political, language, and other motives. Finally, collective identities strengthening people's commitment to the Anti-Maidan and the separatist movement were the effect, not the cause of politicization; but at the same time, different versions and meanings of these identities varied depending on people's experience preceding their engagement in a certain movement.

Conclusion

I showed that Euromaidan although mobilized many people from various regions at the same time reinforced identity conflicts. However, I do not claim that the protest totally failed to unite and integrate the society. It contributed to a formation of a civic nationalism and civic identity. Moreover, protesters deliberately wanted to overcome ethno-cultural and linguistic stereotypes that hindered a civic identity construction. But the discourse they

opposed to these stereotypes was often based on the rhetoric of authenticity that, paradoxically, reinforced stereotypization after the authentic moment passed. Thus, the “eventful protest” did not become a “transformative event”. Indeed, although Euromaidan integrated many citizens from the Eastern regions into the new nationalistic identity, it failed to change the very dominant symbolic structure that opposes Ukrainian patriots to people who live in Eastern regions, especially in Donbass. The cause of this failure lies in the fact that neither civil society nor the state managed to extend the eventful identity beyond the event itself. As a result, while the war is going on in Donbass, a hidden civil conflict continues in other Eastern regions. As sociologist Nikolay Mitrokhin, radically pro-Ukrainian author, argues in the report based on his empirical research conducted in the Eastern regions of Ukraine, “the majority of the citizens [in Odessa, Khar’kiv and Dnepropetrovsk] did not support the ‘Revolution of dignity’ as much as the elites in these cities did. However, the annexation of Crimea as well as Russia’s participation in the conflict in the East were not supported by locals too. These actions, alternatively, caused the opposite effect and inspired pro-Ukrainian mood that allowed the new elites to gain some popular support during the summer of 2014. This support allowed them to suppress the separatists but did not provide a popular support of their economic and political reforms <...> There are many people in Odessa who support pro-Russian clandestine movements <...> ordinary people and intellectuals with pro-Russian sympathies are numerous in Khar’kiv”. Mitrokhin concludes that pro-Russian preferences in the Eastern Ukraine can lead to unrest and civic conflicts in near future (Mitrokhin, 2015: 38).

Dynamics of eventful identity alone cannot explain the outcomes of Euromaidan. However, Russian and Ukrainian elites’ behavior

alone cannot explain them as well. One needs to consider various structural, contingent and processual factors to explain why the civic conflict and then the war emerged in Ukraine after the protest.

Indeed, the fact that the separatist movement and then the war emerged in Donbass not in other Eastern regions can be explained neither by a specific “Donbass identity” nor by the Putin’s Russia interference. These factors could play the role (and they did) but the key factor was the loss of administrative control over Donbass state and military institutions. As Dominique Arell and Jessie Driscoll argue “contra the claims of anarchic chaos in the Russian media, there was no real state failure in Ukraine. Political order persevered. The regime, not the state, collapsed. The exception was Donbas. The evidence strongly suggests that a predominantly local insurgency faced no practical opposition from security organs in this region, after the long-standing regional political and economic elites lost their authority as a result of the collapse of the Donetsk-dominated Party of Regions at the country’s center. The disintegration of the regime in Kyïv paralyzed state institutions in the Donbas. While the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 resulted from Russia’s military takeover of existing state institutions on the peninsula, the Donbas insurgency, from the outset in April 2014, was intent on building parallel institutions. The record suggests that the expectation of a Russian intervention in Eastern Ukraine in the wake of Crimea emboldened insurgents, but this expectation cannot explain why the state was much weaker in Donbas than elsewhere” (Arel and Driscoll, 2016). In the same way, one should understand that the fact that the new political elite together with the oligarchs managed to discipline local authorities in Odessa, Khar’kiv, Dnepropetrovsk and other Eastern cities except Donbass (see, for instance, Portnov, 2016) determined the victory of Euromaidan over Antimaidan in these regions despite the fact that Euromaidan was unpopular there.

However, we can fully explain these outcomes only if take into account dynamics of popular protest. Both separatist leaders in Donbass and pro-Ukrainian forces leaders in Odessa and Khar'kiv needed popular support to achieve their goals. That is why my analysis of protest engagement contributes to understanding of what happened in Ukraine after Euromaidan.

But how to explain the failure of civic nationalism transition from Euromaidan to the East of the country? My answer is very banal. Although Euromaidan was as a popular uprising was the moment of empowerment, and of new solidarities, identities and cultural meanings emergence, it failed to establish any kind of constituent power (see, for instance, Kalyvas, 2005). On the one hand, so-called 'leaders of Maidan' were the opposition politicians from the elite who considered the protest as an instrument of taking power. On the other hand, the majority of protesters as our research showed, did not want to touch 'big politics' (Zhuravlev, 2014). Oligarch Petro Poroshenko, ex-Foreign Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, ex-Prime Minister Oleksandr Turchinov and many others were much more powerful and organized than atomized and politically naïve protesters.

Not surprisingly, the new elite was not interested in democratization of the political system. As Oleksandr Fisun argues, "2016-2017 reconfiguration of Ukraine's political system yielded a semi-managed democracy. It marked the end of the post-Euromaidan divided rule system of 2014-2016, with an intense expansion of presidential control over key political institutions and the dismissal of Yatsenyuk as an independent power player. Poroshenko demonstrated apt usage of both formal and informal levers of patronal presidentialism to harness an effective coalition <...> The new model has four main features: consolidation of power by President Petro Poroshenko, formation of a pro-presidential coalition

in parliament, integration of former president Viktor Yanukovych's oligarchic representatives, and a rise in the importance of sub-national politics. This political system confirms the end of the post-Euromaidan era of political diversity" (Fisun, 2017). As well as Euromaidan itself, its symbolic and cultural inventions were instrumentalized by the ruling class. The label of a unified civic nation was used by politicians for gaining legitimacy during the war. The new government needed far-right movements who were ready to transform themselves into para-military battalions since the army was in a sad state. That is why they provided them with some resources, however, controlling them and keeping them away from big politics. The new government relied on nationalistic propaganda in order to mobilize popular support at the moment of economic crisis. Finally, both Ukrainian propaganda and Russia's interference in Ukraine helped to attribute "pro-Russian" image to any oppositional political initiative.

That is why initially republican inclusive national identity was transformed into a xenophobic one. Analysis of the two interviews taken by our colleagues from the Center for Social and Labor Research (Kyiv) with the activists of Euromaidan who were the leaders of self-organized initiatives within the movement allow to analyze the mechanism of political alienation of self-organized initiatives.

The first informant is a sport coach from L'viv. He has been a volunteer who organized the sport club where he trained children from needy families. At the same time, he has been working as a journalist. During the protests, he regularly went to Kyiv with his friends, veterans of the Afghan war. They organized their own self-defense unit within the protest camp. In the interview, he opposed their team to the leaders of Euromaidan:

“When we came for the second time to Kyiv, political parties already played the main role in Maidan. They did not need us, because we were not any party members and they could not control us. It was quite obvious ... people came to Maidan and saw that these political forces controlled everything”.

He told how the leaders prevented any kind of autonomous collective action:

“The revolutionary headquarter was located in the Trade Union building. It was headed by our three political parties. We came and suggested we could defend journalists and they went against us ... It was when the assaults on journalists started ... I remember the press-conference was about to start ... We asked: please, make an announcement that there are people here who are ready to defend journalists ... They did not. During another press-conference I asked to make an announcement and they did not again ... They never did it”.

He also recalled that they wanted to block Berkut special police in the Ukrainian House building where the policemen were waiting for order to start an attack on protesters. The protesters from the self-defense Euromaidan units made the decision to put some snow near the entrance and to cover it with water and then to besiege the building and to start negotiations on releasing of political prisoners. However, the leaders of Euromaidan did not allow them to do it and finally escaped the policemen. In fact, he told several stories during the interview on how their initiatives were blocked by the heads of Euromaidan.

As many other respondents, he spoke about overcoming of regional cleavages at the moment of Euromaidan. He recalled that the policemen in civilian clothes tried to provoke ethnic conflicts between Euromaidan activists from Donbass and from Western Ukraine in order to split the unified movement. He said that *“the*

conflict between East and West was constructed superficially". However, when talked about Antimaidan movement, i. e. about political opponents of Euromaidan, he referred to the stigmatizing images: *"the base of Antimaidan was Ukrainian East <...> they were sportsmen, criminals, drug addicts"*. Then he said: *"The East of the country ... they are mostly Russian-speaking people ... they were taken there from Russia and therefore they have Russian identity"*.

The second informant is one of the leaders of the right wing 'Right sector' from Western Ukraine. He several times told about autonomous political initiatives they wanted to organize: *"We organized meetings, worked with people, published leaflets ..."*. He recalled that after the murder of one of their leaders organized by the new Ministry of Internal Affairs they had to stop political activity and to perform military tasks:

"after the annexation and S. murder we started doing other things ... we started defending Ukraine and its territorial integrity ... we had to withdraw from political struggle".

Again, as many other informants, he, on the one hand, asserted the unity of the civic nation:

"Maidan unified the country ... Now we don't say ... we don't use these terms banderovites, easterners, russkies ... I never saw as many Ukrainian flags in Western Ukraine as in Dnepropetrovsk, Nikolaev, Mariupol...".

At the same time, when talked about the war he stigmatized the East: *"All people knew that the most of criminals were in Luhansk and Donetsk"*

Chapter VII. General conclusions

Microsociology alone cannot explain the structural outcomes of both Russian and Ukrainian protests. Indeed, dynamics of engagement, collective identities, and vocabularies of motivation neither cause mobilization nor determine the structural effects of protests and uprisings. However, research into the dynamics of collective action allows us to see whether micro-processes of mobilization contribute to structural change or, alternatively, serve as a tool of social reproduction or both. At the same time, elites cannot achieve any transformations of social and political structures or a preservation of the status quo without mass support. That is why it is crucial to study the dynamics of collective action at the micro level. Finally, structural conditions and factors reveal themselves in perceptions and practices of persons and groups. In other words, structural factors become visible when we study the micro-dynamics of collective action. However, one should place this micro-analysis into the broader context, both social and theoretical, in order to make conclusions about structural change. In this final part of my thesis, I will reflect on what the comparison of two cases tells us about post-Soviet protests and sociological theory.

Events

My conclusions allow for the theoretical and political significance of events and eventfulness to be reconsidered. The empirical research I have conducted has allowed me to reveal the ambiguity of eventful temporality. In social theory, eventfulness is considered both in terms of durable social change and as a momentous break

with routines of daily life. In fact, protest events have been characterized by both. In cases considered by many researchers, routine breaches are accumulated within the duration of a structural transformation. However, my research has shown that these two eventful temporalities need to be considered separately. Such a separation will allow us to better understand why some present-day eventful protests do not lead to significant social change.

After May 1968, political philosophies of events began to consider eventfulness as a source of political novelty, new paradigms of thinking and acting, and social transformations (Badiou, 2001; de Certeau, 1997). At the same time, my research has shown that eventful temporalities and eventful experiences can be considered as contributing not only to social changes, but also to the alienation of people from social transformations and to the reproduction of dominant social and political orders. Ukrainian but also Russian protesters turned out to be alienated from the products of their political activity and from “big” post-protest politics in general not by means of a false consciousness, but through the illusion that an eventful experience itself brought a social change. Thus, the eventful temporality of an extraordinary break with the routine can itself be an instrument of protesters’ isolation in a singular time and space. This time of eventful protest is present-oriented. Theorist Sergey Prozorov claims that the “sterility of the present is an uneventful timelessness” (Prozorov, 2008: 213). The author means that the “timeless now” of depoliticization is uneventful because it cannot produce a political change. However, Kevin McDonald, describing contemporary social movements, alternatively interrelates presentism and eventfulness: “The temporal pressure associated with actions produces a sense of urgency that is central to the culture of activism, and to forms of action constructed in terms of ‘the event’”, characterized by the “the imperative of immediacy, the utopia of

instant exchange and simultaneity” (McDonald, 2010: 119). Could it be that eventfulness of contemporary protests contributes to their political unproductiveness? Francesca Polletta in her famous book on the American protests of 1960s writes that in the activists’ narratives, eventful protests were depicted as a “fever”. However, this was a strategic step. The author claims: “Why do activists so often describe protest as sprung from the head of Zeus, ignoring or downright denying the planning that preceded it? Why do they cast themselves not as strategic actors but as swept up by forces over which they have no control? Activists tell stories for strategic reasons [...]. For American activists during much of the last century, one of the thorniest challenges was to avoid charges of communist influence. Representing protest as homegrown and spur-of-the-moment was a way to deflect claims that it was controlled by ‘outsiders,’ which meant Communists [...] when students described the sit-ins as ‘spontaneous,’ and as ‘exploding,’ ‘welling up,’ and ‘like a fever,’ they captured the indefinable moment when a group of separate individuals became a collective actor” (Polletta, 2006: 34). But what if loss of control and “like a fever” in some of the present-day protests is becoming not a strategic narrative but a true logic behind the eventful temporality of collective action? Indeed, my research shows that both Ukrainian and Russian elites have gained from the fact the protests turned out to be limited by the “eventful” and “authentic” public sphere. French sociologist Jan-Louis Fabiani touches on this problem in his analysis of the recent big protest events, for example, Occupy Wall Street in the U. S. and the “Arab Spring” in Northern Africa. The author raises the following questions: “is the event always doomed to express its irreducible singularity or its ephemeral character and end swiftly in disenchantment? Or is it, on the contrary, able to propel a new form of democracy as distinct from the aggiornamento of an exhausted

democratic system or praise of the riot as the midwife of political novelty?” (Fabiani, 2013). However, as I have shown, both protests tended to spread beyond their time and space. My research has revealed that pragmatic and cultural factors facilitated as well as hindered the expansion of the eventful protests outside singular events.

Cultural and pragmatic factors

Social change happens when an eventful mobilization meets material environments, cultural mechanisms of a transmission of subjectivities, routine practices of collective action that allow to sustain, reproduce, and spread eventful collective action to a wider social context. That is why an integration of the cultural and pragmatic approach together with a combination of meso- and micro-levels of a study are fruitful for an analysis of eventful social change.

In the Russian case, the protest mobilization produced the eventful experience of togetherness that contrasted with previous experience of a-politicism and therefore was very inspiring. This experience became self-valuable and formed the desire to sustain and reproduce the “unity” of all the protesters regardless of their ideological preferences or social interests. The crisis of the movement, at the same time, led to the “transplantation” of the protest solidarities into a local level. The networks of election observers translated eventful collective action into a routine practice of observation at the polling stations. The fact that electoral neighborhoods in Russia coincided with city districts was crucial for the emergence of the new local activism. The observers became urban militants and municipal deputies. Spatial structure of electoral

units facilitated formation of the neighbor “branches” of the “For fair elections” movement. At the same time, the legitimacy and commonness of the very “genre” of local activism spurred the observers to initiate local activist groups. In turn, the materiality of courtyards, trees, benches, and so on, made local collective action concrete, rooted in familiar spaces, convincing, and, therefore, legitimate and attractive for local people. Finally, the increased repressions of the nationwide opposition made local collective action strategically important.

In the Ukrainian case, the transformation of the pro-European protest into a popular uprising against the government resonated with the public mood because many were dissatisfied with Yanukovich’s predatory regime. This transformation led to the mobilization of thousands of protesters, including the opponents of closer integration with the European Union. The emergence of the Maidan camps in different cities inspired a feeling of unity and those involved cherished the belief that a civic nation had already formed, democratization was coming, and civil society had emerged throughout the whole country in the course of the protests. However, a “transition” of the new civic nation to the Eastern regions of the country was hindered by the emergent civil conflict as well as Russian interference in Ukraine. Paradoxically, the strong belief in a country’s unification that was based on personal eventful experience, finally, made Euromaidan enclosed within the singular time and space of the protest. It also made Maidan seem hostile to outside audiences. This hostility allowed the Antimaidan movement, separatists, and Russia to develop the violent conflict in the country. At the same time, the new Ukrainian government counted on this mix of the “European values” discourse and an aggressive nationalistic ideology together with neoliberal policies. The authorities, instead of implementing integration policies, started

anti-terrorist operations. In other words, the illusion of nationwide unity that emerged during the Euromaidan paradoxically facilitated the exclusion of the opponents from the national community as well as promoted the spread of nationalism and xenophobia. I have shown the role played by eventful collective emotions and experiences, “challenging” narratives and ideological taxonomic cognitive schemes in the formation of the “politics of authenticity”. This politics, in turn, being initially “open to all” then gathered popular support for aggressive political and military steps in the name of Euromaidan. The polarization and violent conflict did not only reproduce the symbolic oppositions between Russian and Ukrainian and Eastern and Western, making the new nationalism xenophobic. They also blocked the emergence of a nationwide protest movement that could manage to change the social and political orders in Ukraine. As a result, based on the revolutionary legitimacy produced by the masses, the new authorities reasserted authoritarianism, exclusive Ukrainian nationalism and a neopatrimonial corrupt state (Ishchenko, 2018; Minakov, 2018; Fisun, 2017). Thus, I considered some cultural and pragmatic factors, mechanisms and environments that facilitated and hindered eventful social change. In the final section, I will analyze some structural factors that impacted the both protests’ outcomes. As Francesca Polletta claims, “The mix of structural and cultural processes that produce new identities and interests should be thrown into sharp relief” (Polletta, 2006: 5).

Structural factors

In her book on narrativity and movements, Francesca Polletta argues that considering cultural processes we should not leave aside structural factors. On the one hand, the author claims, “the task [...]

is to grasp not only how culture shapes interests and identities but the structural conditions in which it has more or less independent force in doing so” (Polletta, 2006: 5). On the other hand, Polletta insists that the “culturally and socially privileged” have much more power than the unprivileged to produce authoritative and influential meanings, interpretations and effects of narratives and discourses in general (Polletta, 2006: 16).

In my opinion, the comparison of the two cases reveals the importance of structural factors that influence how much influential the other factors, cultural and pragmatic, are. It does not mean that “social structures” ontologically dominate cultural and pragmatic ones. It means that in societies in which movements are weak and are still not able to accumulate political power, some structural circumstances are crucial. At the same time, the huge inequalities between rank-and-file protesters, “opposition leaders”, and political elites and oligarchs make “challenging” discourses of protesters vulnerable to be “colonized” by the official rhetoric.

In the Russian case, I examined how the event widespread to new social contexts and produced social change, while within the Ukrainian case I showed the circumstances and processes that hindered an expansion of the event and blocked social transformations. I revealed some mechanisms of post-protest social change and social reproduction. On the one hand, I explored the integration of “apolitical” activism and “oppositional” politics that was produced by the daily practices of collective action devoted to both “small deeds” and political campaigns. I showed that this integration changed the apolitical culture of urban activism in Russia. On the other hand, I analyzed the re-politicization of regional divisions in Ukraine that were driven by protest mobilization, within which inclusive nationalism had been becoming the exclusive form because of the illusion of a plebiscitary all-national mobilization. In

other words, I showed “how” social changes are produced or stop short. However, the question “why” remains open.

I believe that the Russian case looks more “successful” because the social changes within it occurred at a local level, while the social reproduction I revealed within the Ukrainian case happened at a national level. In my opinion, post-Soviet countries are the part of the global tendency within which grassroots social change is more achievable at the local than at the national level.

Famous theoretician Frank Ankersmit argues: “political scientists recently discovered that local bureaucracies tend to be unexpectedly responsive to [local issues] and to react in a creative way to how problems are perceived by the people involved. So this kind of relatively local and isolated problem had best be left to the interplay of direct democracy [...]. And on a larger, or even national scale one might think of issues [...] politicized and polarized by tactless political handlings” (Ankersmit, 2002: 116). The author then claims that local activism is more effective because it is based on the principle of direct democracy while participation in a “big” politics requires political representation: “representation is a procedure we will rely upon if we wish to put things into their wider context [...] direct democracy may be the most sensible way to deal with political problems that can more or less be isolated from a wider context” (ibid.). Indeed, as I have shown, the Euromaidan mobilization was characterized by the refusal of political representation. That is why, I believe, the paramilitary activities of the “volunteer battalions” as well as post-Euromaidan local activism that I do not touch upon here turned out to be much more successful than the “big” political projects of the movement. The Euromaidan itself as a form of grassroots mobilization lacked the political self-determination as well as communication on strategic choices among rank-and-file protesters. In a sense, the mobilization was initially plebiscitary and,

in this sense, “direct”. Ankersmit claims that nowadays, politics is characterized by the inequality of democratic power between national and local politics: “Our contemporary democracies, both Anglo-Saxon and continental, could all be said to have become plebiscitary democracies [...] Though it must be added that this movement toward plebiscitary democracy on the national level is to a certain extent counteracted by a movement toward variants of direct democracy on the local level. In this way a polarization can be observed in our contemporary democracies: they tend to become less democratic on the national scale but more sensitive to pressure by the people on the local level” (ibid.: 123). In her research on local activism, American sociologist Nina Eliasoph claims that local collective actions, even if they look selfish, are in fact inspired by the democratic ideal. However, as ordinary people are alienated from democracy on the national level, they act “close to home”:

The idea of cultural work [behind local activism] seriously acknowledges people's sense of political powerlessness. While politicians all over the globe extoll the virtues of voluntary associations like the ones portrayed here—treating them as a panacea for all social ills, from lack of trust, to crime, to poverty, to economic inefficiency—this article shows how hidden obstructions to citizens' communication can fuel this prevalent language of political disconnection. In an imperfect world [local activists] responded dexterously and creatively to powerlessness; [their] response lacked different aspects of the democratic ideal. But all retained some aspect of it. I can put this even more strongly: the effort at retaining some aspect of it included an implicit recognition of its failings. The effort at retaining a faith that the world makes sense, is just and democratic, included acknowledgment of the ways in which the world does not make sense, is not just, not democratic (Eliasoph, 1997: 640).

The author criticizes the powerlessness of ordinary people who having tried to save democracy, shorten their radius of action: “The irony in the United States is that while community-minded volunteers, empathetic social service workers, and debate-oriented “humanists” try hard to avoid talking about the common good, free marketeers and religious fundamentalists use the language of obligation, solidarity, and the common good to advocate private schooling, private health care, private charity instead of welfare [...] When the public spirit evaporates from so many others’ public discourse, these are the loudest ‘public-spirited’ voices left in public: the voices that call for citizens to abandon public decision-making and abandon public self-reflection (and abandon the common good as well)” (ibid.: 639).

In my research, I have shown these asymmetries in process. Considering two similar—to a certain extent—uprisings, I have shown how much more difficult it was to convert the energy of Euromaidan into a process of systemic change for the social and political order, and how effective local collective action, inspired by the protests, turned out to be in Russia. In other words, studying the cultural and pragmatic dimensions of eventful collective action, I have revealed the mechanisms that make democracy possible at the local level and the obstacles that alienate ordinary people from participation in democratic politics at the national level.

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The list of the interviews

The Russian cases

Interview RU1: March, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born in 1982, higher education, historian, protest participant

Interview RU2: April, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born in 1981, higher education, businessman, member of Civic Association

Interview RU3: February, 2012, St. Petersburg, female, born in 1974, higher education, protest participant

Interview RU4: February, 2012, St. Petersburg, female, born in 1990, incomplete higher education, student, protest participant

Interview RU5 December, 2011, Moscow, male, born 1989, a student, protest participant

Interview RU6 December, 2011, Moscow, female, born 1990, the profession is unknown, protest participant

Interview RU7: February, 2012, St. Petersburg, female, born in 1987, higher education, host of a radio music program, protest participant

Interview RU8: February, 2012, Moscow, male, born 1988, higher education, software developer, protest participant

Interview RU9: October, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born 1980, higher education, accountant, protest participant

Interview RU10: February, 2012, Paris, female, born 1957, higher education, journalist, protest participant

Interview RU11: October, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born 1982, higher education, a university lecturer, protest participant

Interview RU12: October, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born 1987, higher education, a student, protest participant

Interview RU13: October, 2012, St. Petersburg, female, born 1982, higher education, a cultural worker, protest participant

Interview RU14: January, 2013, Moscow, female, born 1995, incomplete higher education, student, member of Headquarter

Interview RU15: April, 2012, St. Petersburg, female, born 1983, higher education, lawyer, member of Civic Association

Interview RU16: February, 2012, Moscow, male, born 1984, higher education, programmer, protest participant

Interview RU17: January, 2013, Moscow, male, born 1986, higher education, a journalist, member of Headquarter

Interview RU18: April, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born 1989, higher education, unemployed, member of Civic Association

Interview RU19: May, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born 1996, pupil, member of Civic Association

Interview RU20: September, 2015, Moscow, male, born 1979, member of Civic Community

Interview RU21: May, 2012, St. Petersburg, male, born 1969, higher education, businessman, member of Civic Association

Interview RU22: November, 2015, Moscow, male, born 1988, higher education, engineer, member of People's Council

Interview RU23: September, 2015, Moscow, male, born 1980, higher education, lawyer, member of Public Council

Interview RU25: February, 2013, Moscow, male, born 1984, higher education, physicist, member of Headquarter

Interview RU26: November, 2013, Moscow, male, born 1975, vocational training, businessman, member of Headquarter

Interview RU27: November, 2013, Moscow, male, born 1982, vocational training, programmer, member of People's Council

Interview RU28: September, 2015, Moscow, female, born 1981, higher education, economist, member of Public Council

Interview RU29: September, 2015, Moscow, male, born 1964, higher education, doctor, member of Public Council

Interview RU30: June, 2012, Moscow, female

Interview RU31: September, 2013, Moscow, male, born 1987, higher education, an engineer, member of Headquarter

Interview RU32: December, 2015, Moscow, male, born 1966, higher education, an urbanist, member of Headquarter

Interview RU33: September, 2014, St. Petersburg, female, born in 1981, incomplete higher education, a journalist, member of Civic Association

The Ukrainian cases

Interview UK1: July, 2014, Kyiv, female, born 1984, higher education, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK2: July, 2014, Kyiv, male, born 1979, higher education, a journalist, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK3: July, 2014, Khar'kiv, male, born 1987, higher education, a businessman, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK4: July, 2014, Kyiv, female, born 1992, incomplete higher education, a student, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK5: July, 2014, Odessa, female, born 1988, higher education, the advisor of the rector in the university, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK6: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1985, higher education, unemployed, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK7: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1990, higher education, an architect, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK8: July, 2014, Kiev, female, born 1988, incomplete higher education, a secretary, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK9: July, 2014, Kiev, female, born 1987, higher education, a journalist, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK10: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1989, higher education, a businessman, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK11: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1990, higher education, employee of a transportation company, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK12: July, 2014, Kiev, female, born 1997, pupil, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK13: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1989, higher education in international relations, a businessman

Interview UK14: July, 2014, Kiev, female, born 1985, higher education, a psychologist and a cultural worker in museum

Interview UK15: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1979, higher education, a schoolteacher, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK16: the ex-commander of one of the battalions that took part in ATO

Interview UK18: July, 2014, Odessa, female, born 1983, higher education, a manager, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK19: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1990, incomplete higher education, a student, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK20: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1972, secondary education, a gatekeeper, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK21: July, 2014, Kiev, male, born 1990, higher education, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK22: July, 2014, Kiev, female, born in 1988, incomplete higher education, a student, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK23: July, 2014, Odessa, male, born 1991, incomplete higher education, a student, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK24: July, 2014, Odessa, female, born 1953, higher education, retired, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK25: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1984, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK26: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1992, incomplete higher education, a student, bookmaker, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK27: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, incomplete higher education, salesmen at the market, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK28: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1990, incomplete higher education a student, freelancer, Euromaidan participant

Interview UK29: July, 2014, Kharkiv, female, born 1962, higher education, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK30: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1988, higher education, a courier, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK31: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1961, higher education, businessman, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK32: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1978, secondary education, a worker, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK33: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1997, a high school student, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK36: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1993, a car assembler coming from a single-parent family, son of a shop assistant, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK37: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, born 1992, incomplete higher education, book-maker, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK38: July, 2014, Kharkiv, male, the date of born is unknown, secondary professional education, a cook, Antimaidan participant

Interview UK39: July, 2016, Donetsk, male, born 1976, higher education, a worker, a combatant in a separatist battalion

