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**Emotional geographies of activism
during the Donbas war in Ukraine**

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PhD

2019

Emotional geographies of activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine

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the requirements of the University of
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Abstract

The Euromaidan protests that swept Ukraine in the winter months of 2013 – 2014 marked the beginning of unprecedented crisis, including Russia’s annexation of Crimea and a start of the protracted armed conflict in the Donbas region. The classical geopolitical analysis that has dominated much of the literature on these events privileges certain apparently ‘bounded’ sites, geographical scales and bodies; while obscuring others and rendering them seemingly irrelevant to these sweeping changes. Inspired by a theoretical framework of feminist geopolitics that is sensitive to the ‘emotional turn’ within geography, this thesis redresses this imbalance by bringing sharply into focus the emotions of activists as an alternative spatialisation of the geopolitical. Bringing three distinct geographical literature sets into conversation (feminist geopolitics, emotional geographies, geographies of protest and activism), this thesis asks: *What emotional geographies are revealed by focusing on activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine, and how do these emotional geographies contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this geopolitical crisis?* To answer this question, this dissertation draws on empirical material collected during fifteen months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine (April 2015 – July 2016). This work traces connections between intimacy and geopolitics in the everyday lives of activists, demonstrating how these scales are interconnected through the emotional intensities of fear, anxiety, blame, and care.

Keywords: feminist geopolitics, emotional geographies, Euromaidan, Donbas, Ukraine.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee on the 7th September 2015.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is approximately 66 700 words.

Name: Inga Freimane

Signature:

Date: 13th August 2019

Glossary of terms and acronyms

- ATO** Acronym stands for *Anti-Terorystychna Operaciya* (Ukrainian ‘Анти-Терористична Операція’, anti-terrorist operation). *ATO* is the official term used by Ukrainian authorities to refer to the fight against *DNR* and *LNR* separatists in *Donbas*. *ATO* was officially announced in April 2014. Parts of Donetsk and Lughansk regions where the ‘hot’ war is taking place, as well as some parts of neighbouring Zaporizhye, Dnipro, and Kharkiv regions are considered as *zona ATO* (Ukrainian ‘зона АТО’, zone of *ATO*).
- DNR** Acronym stands for *Donetska Narodna Respublika* (Ukrainian ‘Донецька Народна Республіка’, Donetsk Peoples’ Republic), self-proclaimed in 2014 separatist republic currently controlling some parts of Donetsk region of Ukraine.
- Donbas** *Donbas* (Ukrainian ‘Донбас’) is the name of a historical, cultural and economic region in Eastern Ukraine. The name is a portmanteau formed from Donets Basin (Ukrainian ‘Донецький Басейн’), referring to the river Donets that flows through the region. In this work, *Donbas* is used to refer to territories that were captured by separatists and where fighting takes place.
- Euromaidan
Maidan** *Euromaidan* (Ukrainian ‘Евромайдан’) is a portmanteau formed from European Maidan. *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Ukrainian ‘Майдан Незалежності’, Independence Square), or shorter *Maidan* (Ukrainian ‘Майдан’, square) is the name of the square in Kyiv that was the main site of protests during the November 2013 – February 2014 revolution sparked when ex-president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. *Maidan* is also used to refer to the *Orange Revolution* (Ukrainian ‘Помаранчева Революція’) that took place ten years earlier, in 2004. *Euromaidan* refers to 2013 – 2014 protests. Another term frequently used to refer to the *Euromaidan* is the *Revolution of Dignity* (Ukrainian ‘Революція Гідності’).
- LNR** Acronym stands for *Lughanska Narodna Respublika* (Ukrainian ‘Луганська Народна Республіка’, Lughansk Peoples’ Republic), self-proclaimed in 2014 separatist republic currently controlling some parts of Lughansk region of Ukraine.
- Russian Spring** *Russian Spring* (Ukrainian ‘Російська Весна’) refers to pro-Russian protests and demonstrations that grew out of anti-Maidan protests in the spring of 2014 in Eastern, Central and Southern regions of Ukraine. The main objective of the *Russian Spring* was separation of some of the regions from Ukraine and their incorporation into Russia. Administrative and security forces buildings were captured by separatists, unconstitutional ‘referendums’ were organised, and the creation of the *DNR* and *LNR* was announced.
- Volonterka
Volonter
Volontery
Volonterstvo** Terms *volonterka* (Ukrainian ‘волонтерка’: fem., singular), *volonter* (Ukrainian ‘волонтер’: masc., singular), *volontery* (Ukrainian ‘волонтери’: plural) are associated with activists and protestors of the *Euromaidan*. Since the beginning of war in *Donbas*, the terms are often used to describe people helping the Ukrainian army and internally displaced persons. *Volonterstvo* (Ukrainian ‘волонтерство’) is the act or process of ‘volunteering’.

1. Introduction

1.1. Classical geopolitical perspective on Ukrainian crisis

This section outlines the dominant ways that the Euromaidan revolution and the Donbas war that sparked in its aftermath have been discussed in the media, in formal (inter)national political discussions, and in scholarly work focused on the Ukrainian crisis (e.g. Averre and Wolczuk 2015). I will show here how the classical geopolitics perspective privileges certain apparently ‘bounded’ sites, geographical scales and bodies; while obscuring others and rendering them seemingly unimportant for geopolitics. It is this ‘macro’ perspective of classical geopolitics that I set out to challenge in this thesis.

One type of widely circulated media image of the Euromaidan protests depicts the bird eye view of the enormous crowds of people gathered on the Maidan Square of Kyiv¹. The Euromaidan was the second revolution in Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union—ten years earlier, supporters of the oppositional leader occupied the Maidan Square to overturn the fraudulent presidential elections of 2004 (Khmelko and Pereguda 2014; Onuch 2015b; Popova 2015). The catalyst for the 2013 – 2014 Euromaidan was president Viktor Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU that had been in negotiation since 2007 (Pastore 2014: 4).

Whereas the initial group protesting Viktor Yanukovich’s last minute, single-handed decision to ‘choose’ Russian Customs Union over closer ties with the EU was small, the brutal beatings of the protestors by special forces on the night of the 30th November had radically changed Ukrainian citizens’ engagement with the Euromaidan (Shveda and Park 2016). In a space of one week the protestors’ number rocketed to reach more than one million people. The reasons for protests were re-articulated, now focusing not on the EU, but on corrupt and unlawful practices of the Ukrainian political elites – the Euromaidan became the ‘uprisings against authority’ (Cleary 2016: 16). From a spontaneous peaceful gathering of protestors, the revolution turned into permanent barricaded camp occupying the Maidan Square and surrounding administrative buildings (Anstybor 2015).

¹ For example, see Kyiv Post (in English) <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/stratfor-heeding-lessons-euromaidan-revolution.html>. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

During the Euromaidan, little attention was paid by media to the anti-Maidan gathered just up the street in Maryinski Park. The Euromaidan protestors were similarly dismissive of the anti-Maidan, viewing it as an organized gathering of people who were either paid to participate in the demonstrations or were in some way dependent upon authorities and had no choice but to be there (Stepnisky 2018). The real threat to the revolution was perceived to come not from the anti-Maidan but from the authorities who were determined – as became apparent at the end of February 2014 – to disperse the revolution even at human cost. More than one hundred protestors, posthumously called the *Heavenly Hundred* (Ukrainian ‘Небесна Сотня’) and awarded the title of Heroes of Ukraine by the post-Euromaidan president Petro Poroshenko², died during the Euromaidan, or the *Revolution of Dignity* (Ukrainian ‘Революція Гідності’).

Figure 1: Map representing ATO zone as of 14th March 2018³.



² Presidential Decree Nr. 69/2015 “On Honouring the Heroism of Participants of the Revolution of Dignity and Commemoration of Heroes of Heavenly Hundred” (in Ukrainian) <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/692015-18468>. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

³ Map downloaded from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence website. Available online at [http://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2018/03/14/briefing-of-col-dmytro-hutsulyak-ministry-of-defence-of-ukraine-spokesperson-on-ato-related-issues-\(video\)](http://www.mil.gov.ua/en/news/2018/03/14/briefing-of-col-dmytro-hutsulyak-ministry-of-defence-of-ukraine-spokesperson-on-ato-related-issues-(video)). [Accessed 30/10/2018]

While the victory of the Euromaidan in Kyiv was achieved when president Yanukovich fled Ukraine for Russia on the 22nd February 2014, elsewhere in the country events were just beginning to unfold. At the end of February 2014, the Crimean Peninsula was occupied by unmarked Russian troops⁴ literally overnight. The anti-Maidan protests turned into what became known as the *Russian Spring* (Ukrainian ‘Російська Весна’) – pro-Russian protests and demonstrations that took place in in the spring of 2014⁵ in Eastern, Central and Southern regions of Ukraine. The main objective of the *Russian Spring* was separation of some of the regions from Ukraine and their incorporation into Russia (Lankina and Watanabe 2017). During the *Russian Spring*, administrative and security forces buildings were captured by separatists in some of the cities of the Donbas region, including Donetsk and Lughansk (Wilson 2016). Unconstitutional ‘referendums’ were organised, and the creation of the *Donetska Narodna Respublika*, or *DNR*, (Ukrainian ‘Донецька Народна Республіка’, Donetsk Peoples’ Republic) and *Lughanska Narodna Respublika*, or *LNR*, (Ukrainian ‘Луганська Народна Республіка’, Lughansk Peoples’ Republic) was announced.

To regain control over Donbas territories, the post-Euromaidan pro-Western authorities in Kyiv announced the *Anti-Terrorystychna Operaciya*⁶ (for zone of ATO, see Figure 1). Until spring 2018, *ATO* was the official name used by Ukrainian authorities to refer to war against *DNR* and *LNR* separatists in Donbas⁷. By August 2014, the Ukrainian government stated that it had regained control of 65 towns and villages in Eastern Ukraine, including Kramatorsk and Slavyansk, that had been held by the armed groups (OHCHR 2014: 5). As a measure against Russia’s annexation of Crimea and support of actions threatening the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the EU introduced sanctions against Russia⁸; with uplifting of sanctions partially depending on fulfilment of the Minsk ceasefire agreements overseen by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe⁹. The ceasefire agreements were ineffective, and the war continues to this day.

⁴ For timeline of annexation (in English), see Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annexation_of_Crimea_by_the_Russian_Federation. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

⁵ For timeline of pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine (in English), see Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_pro-Russian_unrest_in_Ukraine. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

⁶ In Ukrainian ‘Анти-Терористична Операція’, anti-terrorist operation.

⁷ On the 30th April 2018, Anti-Terrorist Operation was renamed into Joint Forces Operation, signifying the change in conflict management, see UNIAN news (in English) <https://www.unian.info/war/10091279-ukraine-to-switch-from-anti-terrorist-operation-to-joint-forces-operation-on-april-30.html>. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

⁸ For a timeline of sanctions, see EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine (in English) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/>. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

⁹ For Briefing of the European Parliament on Minsk Protocol on the 12th February 2015 (in English), see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-Briefing-548991-Minsk-peace-summit-FINAL.pdf>. [Accessed 30/10/2018]

1.2. Intimate and emotional as alternative geopolitics

I chose the images of the bird eye view of the Euromaidan protests and the map of the *ATO* zone that framed the narrative of the preceding section purposefully and not accidentally. Such images can be seen as a metaphor of the apparently disembodied, emotionless and seemingly unbiased perspective from which classical geopolitics often approach extra-ordinary political events (see §2.2.1.). As the section above shows, the dominant ways of exploring the post-Euromaidan crisis in Ukraine are rooted in classical geopolitical tradition that privileges certain apparently ‘bounded’ and extra-ordinary sites (Maidan Square in Kyiv, zone of ATO in Donbas), geographical scales (national and international) and bodies (ex-president Yanukovych, leaders of the EU). These are considered as ‘proper’ politics – existing *only* in the formal arenas and institutions and practiced *only* by the political leaders inhabiting these arenas.

Drawing on feminist conceptualisation of ‘power’ (see §2.1.) and ‘intimacy-geopolitics’ (see §2.2.2.), I argue that in the process of defining what constitutes the ‘political’, classical geopolitical analyses obscure other sites (e.g. spaces of activism after the Euromaidan), geographical scales (the body, the everyday), and bodies (of activists, of citizens not involved in activism) from view; rendering them seemingly irrelevant to geopolitics. In contrast to this, feminist geopolitics research (see §2.2.) aims to redress such an imbalance by tracing how ‘the (imminently political) categories of public and private, global and local, formal and informal, ultimately blur, overlap and collapse into one another in the making of political life’ (Secor 2001: 193). Yet how is this relevant to research on activism in Ukraine?

As the title suggests, the scope of this thesis is delimited to spaces of activism. Here, activism is defined following Castree *et al* (2013) as the actions of a group of citizens, usually volunteers, who work together to try and redress what they consider to be an unfair or unjust situation. Activists are often at the forefront of social and political change, and hence it is important to understand how they negotiate the Donbas war in Ukraine. Notably, whereas studying activism falls under the label of a ‘proper’ political research in classical geopolitics (e.g. see Koopman 2015), the perspective I adopt in this thesis is radically different and reveals the *alternative* spatialisation of geopolitics by exploring the emotional dimensions of activism.

For a long time, emotions have been neglected in activism research and remained ‘an aspect of social movements about which we know almost nothing’ (Goodwin and Jasper 2004: viii; Gould 2004). Since the beginning of the recent ‘emotional turn’ in geography (see §2.1.2.), more studies focused on emotions and activism have been produced (e.g. Askins 2009; Bosco 2006, 2007; Brown and Pickerill 2009; Routledge 2012). That said, little to none (e.g. Stepnisky 2018) of these affective/emotional geographies (for definitions of emotions and affect, see §2.1.4.) of activism focused on the context of Ukraine. This thesis fills the gap.

Conceptually, I begin by asking how do Ukrainian activists feel about war in Donbas, what emotions circulate through spaces of activism, and how are emotions of activists managed (for full list of research questions, see §2.5.). While researching emotional geographies of activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine, I set to achieve two aims. On the one hand, I want to build an understanding of the emotional intensities experienced by Ukrainian activists – insights that have potential to provide valuable reflections on social processes at the time of war. On the other, I hope that bringing the empirical material from Ukraine into the conversation with the emotional geographies, feminist geopolitics and activism research in geography will generate new theoretical insights. To achieve these aims, in 2015 – 2016 I spent fifteen months gathering data through the multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine (see §3.). The following section briefly outlines how the empirical material collected in Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Vyshneve¹⁰ is distributed across the chapters.

¹⁰ Please note that this is a fictional name. For discussion of anonymity and the use of pseudonyms in this thesis, please see §3.7.2.

1.3. Chapter outline

The thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 of this thesis contains the literature review. Firstly, I examine how emotions have been researched in feminist politics, and how the recent ‘emotional turn’ is rooted in feminist thinking. Here, the concept of ‘power’ is defined. I then move on to explore emotions in feminist geopolitics, and how the everyday, intimate, and emotional experiences are framed by some researchers as an alternative geopolitics. Thirdly, the chapter discusses emotions in spaces of protest and activism. The conceptual foundations of this research project established, the literature review then focuses on what has been written about the Euromaidan protests and activism in Ukraine after the revolution to date. In the concluding section of the chapter, some of the gaps in literature are identified. The main and auxiliary research questions at the end of the chapter explain how these gaps are addressed in this thesis.

The following **Chapter 3** outlines the methods that were used in this research. In the first section of this chapter I am focused on how feminist epistemology informs this research project. I then move on to discussing the trajectory of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine, outlining what types of data were collected and how data was analysed upon the return from the field. I also review ethical protocols here. The final section of the chapter is dedicated to discussing my positionality vis-à-vis research participants, drawing out what partial perspectives and ‘situated gazes’ this work is a result of.

Chapters 4 is the first empirical chapter of this thesis. It analyses how the Donbas war in Ukraine is discursively produced and mediated by journalists-activists from Kharkiv. I focus here on some of the central themes in the post-Euromaidan pro-Ukrainian political project, while also discussing how territories, people, and histories are produced by this project. The chapter also elaborates on the emotional intensities associated with drawing the boundaries of who belongs and who does not belong to the post-Euromaidan Ukraine, namely blame and fear.

Following this, **Chapter 5** examines how spaces of activism are constituted through the physical and emotional labour of women from Kyiv as they weave camouflage nets for the Ukrainian army. I argue here that whereas spaces of activism are ‘bounded’ by certain

objects, emotions, and practices; they are also ‘porous’ and through the emotional work of activists are connected to the war zone in Donbas.

Chapter 6 continues to develop this theme by elaborating on Pain and Staeheli’s (2014) concept of intimacy. Here, I centre the story on one activist, Emma, revealing in-depth how her trajectory of activism was influenced by relations with intimate people: her family, soldiers she met in Donbas, and other activists. Moreover, the chapter looks at ruptured intimacy, and how it is connected to the complexes of geopolitical violence.

Continuing to look at how spaces of activism are connected to non-activist spaces in society, the empirical **Chapter 7** considers the challenges of professionalising grassroots activism in the context of war. Here, I argue that spaces of activism should not be considered in vacuum, and broader ‘local’ landscapes of power need to be taken into account. The empirical material discussed in this chapter was gathered from the organisation working with persons displaced from Donbas in the small town of Vyshneve in Kharkiv region, and also from two organisations in Kharkiv: the journalist hub that I also discuss in Chapter 4, and from the feminist organisations that I volunteered for throughout my time in the city.

The final **Chapter 8** summarises the research findings, discussing what contribution this thesis makes, and how the research could be developed further.

2. Literature review

This literature review sets out and defines the main concepts of this thesis, presenting different elements of geographical and area studies literature as they are related to the emotional geographies of activism in Ukraine during the Donbas war in Ukraine. The first three sub-chapters of this review are focused on how emotions are studied in feminist politics (see §2.1.), feminist geopolitics (see §2.2.), and activist research (see §2.3.). The fourth and the last sub-chapter of this literature review (see §2.4.) draws attention to the context of Ukraine. Here, literature on the Euromaidan protests that took place right before the start of armed conflict in Donbas is explored. Given that the Euromaidan protests can be considered as a beginning of the current political crisis in Ukraine, as well as aa ‘cradle’ of the activist organisations I worked with during the fieldwork, reviewing this literature is of paramount importance. I will also discuss how ‘civil society’ in Ukraine after the Euromaidan has been approached by researchers. The chapter concludes by outlining research questions at the heart of this thesis (see §2.5.).

2.1. Emotions in feminist politics

Since the beginning of the 2000s there has been a visible upsurge of interest in emotions in geography that included publication of monographs (Ahmed 2014 [2004]; Plamper 2015; Probyn 2005; Reddy 2001); collective volumes (Davidson *et al* 2005; Flam and King 2005; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Greco and Stenner 2009; Smith *et al* 2009); special issues of journals (Anderson and Smith 2001; Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2012; Davidson and Milligan 2004; Smith 2002); and even an introduction of the new journal of *Emotions, Space and Society* in 2008. The present sub-chapter explores this increased interest in emotions. Even more importantly, it questions why emotions have been neglected by geographers before the ‘emotional turn’.

To investigate the absence of emotions in social sciences, I draw on feminist conceptualisation of power as a force that permeates the fabric of the social body, its

everyday practices, discourses and knowledge (Foucault 1980: 101). I argue that the neglect of emotions in human geography is a direct result of gendered politics of research rooted in ‘residual cultural Cartesianism’ (Thrift 2004: 57-8), or Enlightenment thinking that discursive constructed reason as ‘proper’ for the scientific endeavour, whilst casting emotions as domain not worthy of (scientific) attention. Recent development of feminist theories in geography committed to study experiences of women – whose lives were often seen as ‘located’ far away from the heroic and extraordinary deeds in the domain of the everyday (Featherstone 1992: 160, 173-5) – redress the question of what constitutes ‘proper’ research objects of geographical analyses (McDowell 1992; Sharp 2007, 2009; Staeheli *et al* 2004).

Following this, the chapter looks at how emotions have been articulated in geography since the 2000s, and the new perspectives on such topics as health care, for example, that the study of emotions offers to geographers. I argue here that emotions should be seen as not only ‘located’ in the bodies of people, but also as cultural processes and relational flows that circulate in-between places and people. This chapter thus defines three central concepts at the heart of this study – ‘power’/‘politics’ (used interchangeable in this thesis), ‘emotions’ and ‘emotional geographies’ – and explains how these are rooted in feminist thought.

2.1.1. Power and knowledge

Feminist geography is rooted in the commitment to study power inequalities in societies and how unequally distributed power produced various ‘geometries of oppression’ (Valentine 2007). But what is power, and why does it matter for the study of gender? When exploring this question work of a historian of ideas Michel Foucault can be singled out, as it inspired cohorts of post-structural feminist researchers in the 1980s and thus laid lay foundation to feminist geographies today (on geography and post-structuralism see Doel 1999; Whatmore 2002). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault elaborates on the idea of discourse as a constellation of texts that through practice form systems of knowledge. According to Foucault, power relations in

society are never inseparable from the systems of knowledge, as particular way of knowing means particular ways of hierarchically *ordering* the world. This applies to gender too, as all societies have explicit or implicit rules and systems of knowledge that define what it means to be a women or a men, and how one should behave in their respective gendered role.

For Foucault, power is conceptualised as a force that has the ability to ‘structure the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault 1984: 428, in Wolf 1990: 586-7). Hence, power is relational and nonsubjective – not an attribute of certain agents or sites at a global scale, but rather a force permeating the fabric of the social body, its everyday practices, discourses and knowledge (Foucault 1980: 101; see also Allen 2002: 142; Kofman and Peake 1990). Importantly for feminists, such conceptualisation of power undermined the apparent ‘natural’ difference and opposition between women and men, and thus also women’s apparent inferiority. Instead, it shows how both categories are discursively produced in what some writers called “the economy of epistemic violence” (Spivak 1988). This is of paramount importance to feminist geographers who study how power relations are embedded in discursive creation of identities and everyday spaces (Castells 1983; Pile 1997).

Yet accepting that ideas, things, places, and people are constituted through discourses (cultural texts forming systems of knowledge), and that are simultaneously ascribed with greater or lesser significance leaves open the question about the role of people in these processes. Are people defined by discourses, or do they also have power to interpret, negotiate, and resist their positions? In other words, what about human agency? For Foucault, power as ubiquitous in the sense that it is constituted not just by ‘set of prohibitions upheld by the sword, but [through] an array of mechanisms that have the capacity to constitute subject’s very interests and identity’ (Gordon 2002: 125-6, see also Allen 2002: 135, Davies 1991: 46). Such conceptualisation seems to leave little scope for the possibilities to resist (Harrison 2006: 125).

Given that Foucault did not explicitly address the notion of agency in his writing, some commentators have suggested considering Hannah Arendt’s approach to agency. Whereas Arendt, similarly to Foucault, rejects the liberal idealist idea of humans as intrinsically autonomous, her analysis begins with consideration of human agency as freedom and ability to act: ‘without freedom, without the possibility to generate breaches

within structures, political life as such would be meaningless' (Arendt 1993: 146, in Gordon 2002: 135). Thus viewed, Arendt's 'agency' refutes the 'totalitarian' view of culture, because "the conditions of human existence can never 'explain' what we are or answer the question of who we are for the simple reason that they never condition us absolutely" (Isaac 1958: 11, in Gordon 2002: 135). Or, in other words:

"Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognise that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. It is freedom to recognise multiple readings such that no discursive practice, or positioning within it by powerful others, can capture and control one's identity" (Davies 1991: 51).

Thinking about discursive production of cultural categories (such as gender), it is thus important to consider human agency, and the role of people in sustaining and reproducing, but are also in resisting and subverting, certain cultural meanings and practices. Within the current work, consideration of how certain discourses are produced, sustained, negotiated and subverted in society is also important, as I focus on dominant discourses of war in Donbas, and explore how these discourses are negotiated by pro-Euromaidan Ukrainian activists. I am particularly interested in the emotionality of these processes. But before exploring this topics in the empirical chapters (see §4.), the following sections of the literature review explain how emotions and emotional geographies are defined in this thesis.

2.1.2. Emotions in Enlightenment thinking

While preceding section outlined how power is understood in feminist thought as forces that classify and hierarchically order social categories, the current section builds on this understanding by exploring how emotions are defined in feminist thought. The most important category of feminist analysis is gender. In the introduction to the *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, editors Alisson Jaggar and Susan Bordo (1992 [1989]) argue that gendered norms in 'the West' are directly related to the systems of knowledge that became dominant during the

Enlightenment, and that were strongly influenced by the thinking of the seventeenth century philosopher René Descartes. According to Jaggar and Bordo, six philosophical principles formed this foundation: the view of reality as external and independent of human understanding ('metaphysical realism', 'objectivism'), accessible to human understanding only through reason ('rationalism') sometimes working in conjunction with the senses ('empiricism'); that can be attained by solitary individuals rather than socially constituted members of historically changing groups ('methodological individualism') through the faculties of reason are potentially the same for all human beings, regardless of their culture, class, race or sex ('universalism'). These Cartesian principles had a profound impact on Enlightenment thinking and the articulation of what it means to be human in modern Western society and science (Dixon and Jones III: 2006: 44-5).

According to Jaggar and Bordo (1992), Cartesian epistemological assumptions are rooted in dualist ontologies that separate universal/particular, culture/nature, mind/body, reason/emotion, individual/collective (see also Davies 1991: 44). Moreover, the authors highlight that these philosophical taxonomies are *gendered* and cast the body 'notoriously and ubiquitously associated with the female, [...], as the chief enemy of objectivity' (Jaggar and Bordo 1992: 4). The question of how certain systems of knowledge developed through Cartesian philosophy compartmentalise some concepts, spheres of life, and bodies as 'masculine' and dominant while viewing 'other' as 'feminine' and inferior have occupied such prominent feminist thinkers as Simone de Beauvoir (1997 [1949]); Luce Irigaray (1985a [1974], 1985b [1977]); and Julia Kristeva (1995 [1993]). Unfortunately, discussion of these bodies of work is beyond the scope of this thesis.

It is important to stress, however, that Enlightenment thinking discursively constructed universalism, compartmentalization, and objectivity as male faculties of sense and reason that are 'proper' for the scientific endeavour; whilst casting their apparent opposition of particularism, relationality, and subjectivity as constituting the domain of unreasoning, female faculties driven by 'mere sensibility' (Dixon and Jones III: 2006: 45). Conducting feminist research means embracing feminist epistemology – bringing gender into forefront of enquiry and questioning what we know and how we know it, as well as how systems of knowledge that we are embedded in were established as dominant historically. For example, feminists questioned how the modern system of nation-states is rooted in

gendered epistemologies and the separation of reason from the ‘unruly flesh’ (Dixon 2015: 8-9).

In short, feminist research raises questions on what constitutes ‘proper’ research questions and methods in geography (McDowell 1992). Feminist researchers argue that, similarly to studies of gender, emotions should be considered as ‘proper’ object of social analysis. For example, writing at the beginning of 2000s, editors of the special issue focused on emotional geographies Kay Anderson and Susan Smith called to build the relevance of emotions into social sciences (2001). Whereas other commentators pointed to the fact that in human geography emotions do not constitute a shiny new ‘object’ of analysis and have always been implicit to the discipline (Bondi *et al* 2005), editors of the special issue hold that *explicitly* emotions have been neglected because of gendered politics of research that is rooted in what Nigel Thrift called ‘residual cultural Cartesianism’ (Thrift 2004: 57-8) discussed above. The following section explores how emotions are connected to other concepts in feminist analyses, most importantly the concept of embodiment and the everyday.

2.1.3. Emotions, embodiment and the everyday

Recognition of emotional dimension as important to social analysis is tightly connected to privileging the everyday as a prime arena of social and political life. Answering the question of where politics take place while the male/female dualism (discussed in the previous sections) is intact invariably leads to imagining political action as a male heroic individual who stands outside of the crowd and whose deeds are the stuff of history. Dismantling the male/female dualism means dismantling the strict opposition between the ‘everyday’ as mundane, taken-for-granted, common-sense routines which sustain and maintain the fabric of our daily lives; and the ‘heroic’ as encompassing extraordinary deeds, virtuosity, courage, endurance, and distinction (Featherstone 1992: 160, 173-5; Davies 1991: 51). Feminist research is committed to studying embodied and everyday experiences.

Let me turn now to the question of how the body is conceptualised in feminist thought. Foucault's work traced how the body was shaped, identified, classified, and regulated through the articulations of technoscientific discourses and practices across 'the West' – knowledges that are inseparable from power (Harrison 2006: 124). Pointing to the discursive production of the body, Foucault attempted to deconstruct the opposition between mind and body, challenging the view of the latter as biologically given, material, and imminent, clearly marking the boundaries between the 'inner' self and 'external' world. As a result, as Jaggar and Bordo show, "there emerge not *one* body but *many* bodies [...]: the body as a locus of social praxis, as cultural text, as social construction, [...] as the marker of union rather than a disjunction between the human and 'natural' world" (1992: 4, authors' emphasis). Since the mid-1990s, there has been an increased interest in feminist writing on the body, including such works as Butler (2006 [1990], 2011 [1993]), Butler and Parr (1999), Duncan (1996), Grosz (1994, 1995), Longhurst (2001), McDowell (1997), Nast and Pile (1998), Pile (1996), Price and Shildrick (1999).

One of the central concepts that came out of the feminist work of the 1990s is the concept of intersectionality important for this thesis too. The concept of intersectionality was developed by 'non-Western' feminists as a critique during the 'second wave' feminism, who argued that the workings of power are not universally experienced by women (Mahmood 2009; Mann 2013; Nagar *et al* 2002; Narayan 1992; Thomson 2002). While recognising that bodies are differently marked by sex, gender, class, religion, race, and other social markers, scholars of intersectionality argued that such different social positions cannot be considered as additive but rather as mutually constituting, because, ontologically, one cannot reduce social divisions such as race or gender into one another (Yuval-Davis 2006b, 2011). In other words, there is no separate abstract meaning of womanhood (and 'self') outside of other categories, because individuals are embodied and socially situated (Rose 1997). What this critique illustrated is that discourses do not 'simply write themselves directly onto bodies as if these bodies offer blank surfaces of equal topography' (Dowler and Sharp 2001: 169). This understanding is radically different from the Enlightenment conceptualisation of humans as 'universal', i.e. not differentiated by social markers or cultural makeup. According to feminist thinking, people are differently positioned in society, and they also have their 'situated gazes' understood as both knowledge and imagination embedded in but not necessarily determined by social positioning (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002). The empirical

chapters will explore how Ukrainian activists' 'situated gazes' are related to the way they understand, experience and feel about the Donbas war (see §4.5.).

To briefly return to the discussion of emotions and embodied and everyday experiences, the link between the conceptualisation of emotion and embodiment is important. As Davidson and Milligan (2004) suggest in the editorial of the special issue of *Social and Cultural Geography*, emotions capture the geographical imagination in much the same way as the previous decades saw an increased interest in the body. Body and emotions are also intertwined because body is considered to be the prime 'site' of emotions: 'our first and foremost most immediate and intimately felt geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*. Emotions, to be sure, take place within and around this closest of spatial scales' (Davidson and Milligan 2004: 523). As we move 'out' from the body, 'emotions are no less important but are arguably less obvious, less centrally placed' (Valentine 2001). The following section discusses conceptualisation of emotions as social category and not just feelings of 'individuals'.

2.1.4. Emotional geographies

When exploring emotionality of social processes, it is necessary to consider different readings of 'emotions' and 'affects' and characterised the beginning of the 'emotional turn' in geography. Conceptualising affect as the inter-personal, virtual, emergent and becoming, Thrift (2004) called for a move away from emotion towards the promising 'transhuman' notion of affect. This proposition was received sceptically by Deborah Thien. Following Elspeth Probyn's (2003) notion of 'spatial imperatives of subjectivity', Thien questioned which 'human' Thrift wants to move beyond, as – following feminist ontology – humans are not undifferentiated virtual people (Thien 2005: 450). She argues instead that emotions 'encompass' affects, that affects are 'the motion of emotion' (2005: 451; see also Askins 2009: 9). Thien's argument was in turn criticised by Anderson and Harrison (2006) who highlighted a pool of 'affective' literature particularly focused on performance and practice and the everyday life. As demonstrated in the section above,

the most distinctive characteristic of feminist work is the assumption of the embodied and socially positioned subject ‘predetermined upon notions of difference’ (Laketa 2016: 6) whose emotional experiences can be explored through grounded ethnographic work. Scholars of affect do not always share this ontological and methodological imperative.

Since the initial discussion regarding emotions and affect, rather distinct ways of viewing emotional and affective geographies have been developed (for overview see Anderson 2014a, 2014b; Gorton 2007; Parr 2014; Pile 2010). Affect is more frequently used by scholars of non-representational theory in geography in the work of such theorists as Ben Anderson (2014b), Brian Massumi (2002), and Nigel Thrift (2008) to mention just a few names. In non-representational theory, affect is defined as *a priori*, non-representable, pre-cognitive feature, relying on a particular Spinozan-Deleuzian notion of affect as ‘the capacity of bodies to affect other bodies and be affected by them’ (Lim 2010: 2398, in Laketa 2016: 4). Emotional geographies, on the other hand, saw development mainly through studies of illness and health. Whereas medical geographers have previously focused mostly on issues of accessibility and distribution, there has been a broader shift from medical to health geographies linked to the turn towards culture and interpretative approaches in human geography (Valentine 2001). It is during this ‘interpretative turn’ that emotions came to the forefront of health geographies. For example, I would like to illustrate how some researchers approached the topic of emotions by focusing on the work of Sara MacKian (2000, 2004) who over the course of several years researched and developed a model of the emotional experiences of sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

While conducting interviews with research participants, MacKian noted what spatial metaphors interviewees used in first hand descriptions of their everyday experiences of coping with illness. She then analysed these maps and developed a map representing three theoretical – subjective, social and physical – spaces/levels of these emotional experiences. What MacKian illustrates is that the same spaces and places can be experienced differently depending on the physical or emotional engagement with these spaces by the subject (see also Crooks and Chouinard 2006). In conceptualising research participants’ experiences, MacKian draws on the concept of ‘reflexive communities’ as theorised by Scott Lash. Following this notion, she argues that in order to understand how people make the everyday decisions they do, how they process information and

make sense of the world, researchers need to pay attention not only to the sources of information and how these are interpreted, but also to how such sources relate to each other in the world as it is experienced – ‘the underlying, unspoken, unconscious emotions and feelings and assumptions which support that cognitive process and the journey taken during it’ (Adam, Beck and van Loon 2000; in MacKian 2004: 615-6). Emotions thus can be understood as a way of experiencing and knowing the world. Importantly for my research, MacKian’s analysis does not see emotions as spontaneous reactions to particular situations, but as a long-term intellectualization and reflection on certain situations and encounters that allow people to make sense and articulate why they felt particular way (see also Askins 2009: 9). As described in Sara MacKian’s work, ‘emotions’ are often used in feminist research to delineate conscious reflection on the way one feels that affords verbal articulation.

As other researchers showed, health care settings often involve both physical and ‘emotional labour’ (for discussion of ‘emotional labour’, see §2.3.1.), and are also disproportionately depending upon the commitment of women (Conradson 2003: 451). When studying such practices of care as listening, feeding, changing clothes and administering medication, it becomes clear that emotions are located at the intersection and mediating between people, places and practices relating to health care (*ibid.*). Some researchers have argued that it is precisely because social relations are mediated by feelings and sensibility that studying emotions provides new geographical insights (Anderson and Smith 2001: 8, see also Bosco 2007: 546; Brown 2012: 20). For example, consider the studies of how mentally ill rural Highland dwellers are pushed to repress their feelings in the place and the cultural context where emotions are not to be displayed (Parr and Philo 2003; Parr *et al* 2005). These studies show that illness transgresses the boundaries of normal life and leaves the body infirm with its interiors and exteriors unbounded, permeable and ‘fluid’, i.e. intrinsically relational (Bondi *et al* 2005: 7; see also Pile and Thrift 1995). Editors of the collective volume *Emotional Geographies* thus argue for “non-objectifying view of emotions as relational flows, fluxes or currents, in-between people and places rather than ‘things’ or ‘objects’ to be studied or measured” (Bondi *et al* 2005: 3).

Moving onto the terrain of political geography, in the *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed (2014 [2004]) considers emotions as shaped by contact or encounter with

different objects (both with people but also objects and ideas). Emotions are impressions made on us by certain objects that trigger ‘affective forms of reorientation’ towards the object of encounter and encounter itself (2014: 8). Ahmed argues that it is through the encounter with emotive objects and feelings that such encounters produce, that social spaces are reshaped and bodies re-arranged (Ahmed 2004: 54, in Noble 2006: 252). The question of how emotions ‘stick’ and move us occupies a central place in Ahmed’s work, she refuses the view that emotions ‘reside’ within subjects or objects but views them as effects produced by the circulation of objects to which emotions ‘stick’. Transmission of emotions occurs through the circulation of such ‘sticky’ (saturated with affect) objects in what Ahmed calls the ‘affective economy’. It is therefore not as important what emotions are, what matters is what emotions do. I quote:

“Emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take shape of, contact with others. [...] the surfaces of bodies ‘surface’ as an effect of the impressions left by others. [...]. In suggesting that emotions create the very effect of an inside and an outside, I am not then simply claiming that emotions are psychological *and* social, individual *and* collective. [...]. Rather, I suggest that emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects, a process which suggests that the ‘objectivity’ of the psychic and social is an effect rather than a cause. In other words, emotions are not ‘in’ either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects” (Ahmed 2014: 10).

What such a relational approach refutes is viewing emotions as some independently existing substance. Here, it is necessary to stress that emotions are shaped, experienced and interpreted through ‘complexes and shared meanings that arise out of sets of relations among humans and non-humans in specific contexts’ (Bosco 2006: 346, Askins 2009: 9). This observation prompts me to ask in relation to activism in Ukraine: what kind of discourses and shared cultural meanings emotions of activists mediate and are mediated by? This question will be addressed in the thesis while exploring different vocabularies of war (see §4.2., §4.4.).

Some researchers have noted that the emotional processes are dynamic, because they are informed by the particular cultural norms and social discourses and hence they change through the course of history and vary geographically depending on cultural context (Lutz 1998; Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Reddy 2001; Rosaldo 1989 among

other). Emotions ‘move’ with bodies and selves across contexts and over space-time (Askins 2009: 9, Bondi *et al* 2005). Whereas the biological/chemical processes located in the body might be universal (for an overview of psychology’s approach to emotions see Barrett *et al* 2018), acknowledging common biology does not amount to the sameness of experience (Probyn 2005: 28). In short, emotions are a product of culture – *produced by* and also *productive of* social relations. Exploring emotional geographies is important as it provides insight into processes of meaning-making. Providing that emotions are an important dimension of social relations and practices, and that social relations and practices are (according to feminist researchers) inherently political, it is worth exploring connections between power/politics and emotions.

To sum up, this section sketched out the geographical understanding of emotions as dynamic modes of thinking and experiencing the world. At the same time, emotions are features of inter-subjective encounters (both with other people but also objects and ideas), and hence inherently moulded in the process that is culturally informed – *produced by* and also *productive of* social relations. As such, emotions as located and positional, mediating power relations. The following sub-chapter of the literature review builds upon these articulations in looking at the role of emotions in constituting of political spaces and subjectivities.

2.2. Emotions in feminist geopolitics

The preceding sub-chapter defined some of the foundational concepts at the core of this research: ‘power’, ‘emotions’, and ‘emotional geographies’. The present sub-chapter continues to explore these concepts by looking at how emotions are approached in feminist geopolitics.

Firstly, I outline some of the genealogies of feminist geopolitics. Echoing Anna Secor, I argue that ‘feminist approaches show how the (imminently political) categories of public and private, global and local, formal and informal, ultimately blur, overlap and collapse into one another in the making of political life’ (Secor 2001: 193). Such an ontology of

relationality highlights that the everyday should be considered as an alternative spatialisation of geopolitical. This thesis takes this call, and considers the everyday spaces of activism as a prime focus in analysing geopolitical crisis in Ukraine. Here, Rachel Pain's work on 'intimacy-geopolitics' (2015b) is of particular interest to my work.

Following Pain and Staeheli, I consider intimacy as a set of spatial relations stretching from proximate to distant, as a mode of interaction that stretches from personal to distant/global, and as a set of practices connecting that which is distant (2014: 345). I consider emotions as intimate and as a starting point of geopolitical analysis, because, as was shown earlier, the body is 'our first and foremost most immediate and intimately felt geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*, [the] closest of spatial scales' (Davidson and Milligan 2004: 523). In doing so, the present sub-chapter questions what focusing on emotional and intimate dimensions of activism during the Donbas war can reveal about the nature of the political crisis in Ukraine.

2.2.1. Everyday as *alternative* spatialisation of geopolitics

In the special issue of the *Space and Polity* focused on feminist geopolitics, editors Lorraine Dowler and Joanne Sharp (2001) noted that despite political geography's and feminist geography's concern with the subject matter of politics, there was still very little interaction between the two sub-disciplines. The current section explores synergies between feminist and political geographies, discussing what it means to conduct feminist geopolitical research. Particularly, I look into how feminist analytical and methodological commitment to the study the lives of women enriches our understanding of geopolitical processes. I argue that by focusing on embodied and material everyday practices (e.g. see Dixon 2015; Sharp 2007) feminist approach challenges the international relations arena *is the only* scale at which politics circulate (Kofman and Peake 1990), revealing instead the *alternative* spatialisation of geopolitics.

Feminist engagement with geopolitics grew out of dissatisfaction with the absence of women in international politics. In the famous monograph *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*

Cynthia Enloe (2000 [1989]) argues that women's experiences of politics – war, marriage, trade, travel, factory work – have often been portrayed as *not* political in classical international relations studies. While drawing attention to, among many other examples, the role that notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' play in mobilizing to sustain or challenge colonialist regimes in nationalist struggles, Enloe illustrates that writing women – as embodied acting agents as well as discursive representations – out of the analyses of international relations is analytically naïve, for such an approach conceals “a more realistic understanding of how international politics actually ‘work’” (Enloe 2000: 3-4). She thus argues that women are invisible in international politics not because women do not engage with politics, but because international politics have for centuries been considered as a 'masculine' sphere of life often defining women as objects rather than subjects of political processes (see also Stabile and Kumar 2005).

Similarly to feminist geopolitics, critical geopolitics also aim at challenging the taken-for-granted classical geopolitical knowledges by looking at how these knowledges are discursively produced (Dalby and Ó Tuathail 1996: 452). Critical geopolitical scholars recognise that 'the geographies of global politics are neither inevitable nor immutable, but were constructed culturally and sustained politically by the discourses and representational practices of statecraft' (Atkinson and Dodds 2000: 9-10). Moreover, scholars of critical geopolitics believed that production of geographical knowledge should be situated in the particular social, cultural, economic, and political contexts in which it originated (Livingston 1992, in Atkinson and Dodds 2000: 6; for examples, see Clarke *et al* 1996; Dalby 1996). Deconstructing cultural texts entailed deconstructing the apparently objective position of an author of the earlier classical geopolitical accounts as well, an author who played 'the God trick' of being simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in the text (Haraway 1988).

Yet whereas the new critical geopolitical approaches rendered visible the uneasy relations between knowledge production and power, they have been criticised by feminist scholars as failing to analyse power relations beyond textual interventions, thus catching critical geopolitics scholars in the very net of power that they endeavour to capture. As Dowler and Sharp note, by the 'increased emphasis on representation and identity, at the expense of some material aspects of the world around us [...] some of the important historical contexts for struggle have been hidden' (2001: 167). What distinguishes feminist geopolitics from critical geopolitics and postcolonial geographies (e.g. see Ahmed 2000;

Laurie and Calla 2004; McEwan 2003; Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Sharp 2013, 2014) is the commitment of the former to everyday and embodied experiences of political events and processes (McDowell 1992; Smith 2009: 200). Such an *alternative* spatialisation of geopolitics promises to open new insights. For example, Deborah Dixon – author of the *Feminist Geopolitics: Material States* – argues that:

“Feminist geopolitics [...] can illuminate all manner of practices – including representation – through which people become enrolled in a geopolitics. Practice, here, is very much taken to mean a (humanly) embodied activity; thus, practice through the medium of the body ‘grounds’ an otherwise abstract geopolitics. What is more, their body-aware arguments intimates, the singular, physical corporealities that adhere to such people, as well as their subjectivities, are usefully considered a complex, dynamic topography, belying any easy notion of gender, race, sexuality and so on as inscribed into passive flesh” (2015: 45).

As I will demonstrate in the following section, this complex and dynamic topography is further complicated by the consideration of emotions in the analysis of geopolitical processes. It is important to mention here that ethnographic method are well suited to research the complex embodied and emotional experiences of activism in Ukraine during the time of war (for a detailed discussion of methods employed by this thesis, see §3.).

2.2.2. Intimacy and emotions as a starting points of analysis

As outlined in the preceding section of this literature review, since the beginning of 2000s feminist political geographers focused on the ‘micro-scale’ of the body, home, community as sites of political domination and resistance (e.g. Staeheli *et al* 2004), thus demonstrating that sites of everyday and embodied experiences constitute the alternative spaces of geopolitical analysis. Later accounts of feminist geopolitics that developed through the writing of Deborah Dixon (2014, 2015) with Sallie Marston (2011); Jennifer Fluri (2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2014) with Amy Piedalue (2017); Jennifer Hyndman (2001, 2004, 2007, 2010); Vanessa Massaro and Jill Williams (2013, and in reverse order 2013); Joanne Sharp (2007, 2009, 2013); Rachel Pain (2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b) with Lynn Staeheli 2014; Sara Smith (2009, 2011, 2012, *et al* 2016); and Lynn

Staehele (2001, *et al* 2004) with Caroline Nagel (2013) to mention just the most prominent contributions, continued to focus on gendered experiences of politics, but also made important steps to theorise the scales at which politics operate in geographical thought (on scales in geography see Marston *et al* 2005; Herod and Wright 2002).

One of examples of how the question of scales is approached from feminist geopolitics is Anna Secor's (2001) exploration of how lower- and lower-middle-class urban women experience, interpret and engage with Islamist politics in Turkey. Secor explores how the 'informal' and 'lived politics' are enacted during the women visiting days (*gün*), where networks of mutual aid are built and informal political discussions reproducing civic values and political culture take place. According to the author, focus group women act politically in arenas that are not defined by Islamist/ secularist dichotomies; but are instead shaped by economic and social welfare practices. Secor (2001) argues that women act out their citizenship and affect the broader functioning of the Turkish polity and economy. Thus approaching Islamist politics, the author reveals a 'counter-geopolitics', or an alternative spatialisation, of lived politics in the city. She elaborates that 'feminist approaches show how the (imminently political) categories of public and private, global and local, formal and informal, ultimately blur, overlap and collapse into one another in the making of political life' (Secor 2001: 193).

Focus on relationality is characteristic of contemporary feminist research. To go briefly to Foucault, it has to be mentioned that studying power as permeating social relations, Foucault rejected the liberal idea of the pre-existing rational individual who exercises free will (Gordon 2002: 125). Instead, his philosophical writings reveal relationality in the study of social interactions that is consistent with feminists' arguments that meanings are *inter*-subjective and produced in the space of encounters *between* 'selves' (Bondi *et al* 2005; Butler 1988), and private and public lives are *inter*-connected (Anderson and Smith 2001: 8), and (as will be shown below) scales of politics are relational and *inter*-linked (Pain and Staehele 2014). Such an ontology of relationality has profound implications for articulating the 'body' and the 'emotions' that are at the heart of this analysis.

To return to Secor's (2001) account of Islamist politics, her use of the term 'counter-geopolitics' is important. On the one hand, this term can be viewed as a development of what Ó Tuathail (1996), speaking of Maggie O'Kane's reports on the war in Bosnia who wrote of the acts of people and the materiality of violence as an embodied and positioned

experience of war, called the ‘anti-geopolitical eye’. On the other hand, it can be viewed as a predecessor of Pain’s (2014b), and Pain and Staeheli’s (2014) ‘intimacy-geopolitics’. In the article on domestic violence in suburban Scottish homes, Pain (2015b) elaborates on the meaning and morphology of ‘intimacy-geopolitics’ as purposefully separated by a hyphen to signify connectedness and the non-hierarchical relationship between the two words. Intimacy, however, comes first in this neologism:

“This articulation does not position the intimate as affected, or dripped down upon, by larger (geopolitical) processes. It does not restrict itself to drawing parallels between international/ global on the one hand, and everyday/ intimate on the other. Instead, it takes the intimate as a starting point or building block from which analysis moves out, both methodologically and conceptually, and asks what insights does this inverted orientation offer?” (Pain 2015b: 64).

This work is a continuation of Pain’s previous accounts focused on connecting violence and what she calls ‘everyday terrorism’ (2014a). While inverting the relationship between intimate and geopolitical, Pain (2015b) explains how the tactics of violence experienced by domestic violence victims (e.g. shock and awe, cultural and psychological occupation) are the same tactics used in the ‘international’ ‘modern’ warfare. She thus attempts to move away from the convention of viewing domestic violence as something ‘private’ and unrelated to geopolitics (compare to Ahmed’s (2014) deconstruction of ‘private’ emotions); and challenge the invisibility of domestic violence vis-à-vis the ‘big’ violence of war, terrorism, international conflict that often receives a lot of social and media attention. In Pain’s account, military strategy is conceived as also-intimate; while domestic violence as also-political because of its warlike nature in ‘peacetime’. Whereas Pain’s account (2015b) can be critiqued for methodological inconsistency – mixing observations from grounded qualitative research on domestic violence with the apparently disembodied tactics of warfare – its focus on intimacy as a starting point of geopolitical analysis is highly innovative.

To clarify what is meant by intimacy, elsewhere Pain and Staeheli (2014) explain that intimacy consists of three intersecting sets of relations that work simultaneously rather than separately: 1) a set of spatial relations stretching from proximate to distant, e.g. household or the body; 2) as a mode of interaction that stretches from personal to distant/global, e.g. work on emotions highlighting how subjects reflect, resist or shape wider power relations; and 3) a set of practices applying to but also connecting that

which is distant, e.g. relations of care (2014: 345). In her analysis, Pain challenges the assumption of home as an inherently safe and secure space (see also Cassidy 2018). Following the call of feminist geopolitics to start geopolitical analysis from the realm of the intimate, this thesis focuses on emotions of activists in exploring the crisis that unfolded in Ukraine in 2014.

Questions of security and how processes occurring at international and national scales impact bodies on the ground has received a lot of attention in feminist geopolitics (Cassidy 2018, Dixon and Marston 2011; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Fluri 2009, 2011; Fluri and Piedalue 2017; Hyndman 2003, 2007; Hyndman and Mountz 2007; Jaggar 2002a, 2002b; Kallio and Häkli 2017; Massaro and Williams 2013; Mountz 2011; Smith 2009, *et al* 2009, 2011; Williams and Massaro 2013; Wemyss *et al* 2018). However, what Rachel Pain (2015b) argues is that ‘domestic’ and ‘geopolitical’ violences are ‘part of a single complex of violence because they operate through emotional and psychological registers that are as central to their effectiveness as incidents of direct physical harm’ (2015b: 64). Whereas some international relations scholars have also questioned how analysis of war as experienced – sensed, sensual, emotional, felt – would contribute to our understanding of violence (Sjoberg 2013:12; see also Sjoberg 2015; Sylvester 2012, 2013), the body of work focused on emotional geopolitics is relatively new. The following section outlines how emotional geopolitics have been approached by researchers to date, and what gaps still exist.

2.2.3. Emotional geopolitics

The previous sub-chapter focused on emotions in feminist politics defined emotions as simultaneously located in the body and as “relational flows, fluxes or currents, [located] in-between people and places” (Bondi *et al* 2005: 3). I also argued that because people reflect upon how they feel and have capacity to articulate their emotions, emotional geographies or emotional landscapes can be explored by social scientists. Bearing in mind Rachel Pain’s (2015b) observation that intimacy and emotions should be viewed as a starting point of geopolitical analysis, I continue to explore the relations between emotional and geopolitical here.

When talking about emotions and geopolitics, it is necessary to mention one of the seminal works in this field – Sara Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014 [2004]). By looking at various publicly available documents related to reconciliation with the stolen generation in Australia, response to international terrorism after the 9/11 attack, and asylum and immigration in the UK; Ahmed explores the role emotions play in shaping collective bodies. For example, while looking at the emotionality of texts/speech acts after the 9/11 terrorist attack, she argues that economy of fear is created where some bodies are constructed as fearsome and their mobility is restricted, despite the fact that anyone anywhere could be a terrorist (Ahmed 2014: 15). Hate and fear are thus used to create cohesive collectivities by imagining the ‘other’ who threatens to overtake our place, thus aligning some bodies inside the community through the repetition of words and signs that provoke emotional responses. In other words, emotions are seen in Sara Ahmed’s work ‘as a site of embodied meaning-making and social ordering, but even more importantly they are the process in which the very boundaries of individuals and communities are drawn and redrawn’ (Koivunen 2010: 14). Ahmed’s account powerfully demonstrates that not only politics *and* emotions but also politics *of* emotions should be considered.

In recent years, a number of works have appeared addressing the gap of grounded ethnographic research on emotions/affect and geopolitics. This work includes Katherine Brickell’s (2014) account of forced evictions and women’s activism in Cambodia; Kathryn Cassidy’s (2017) research on shame among small-scale cross-border traders in Ukrainian-Romanian borderlands; Sara Fregonese’s (2017) work on atmospheric urban geopolitics and conflict (de)scalation in Beirut; Sunčana Laketa’s (2016) research on the invisible border between two majority ethnic populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Elisabeth Militz and Carolin Schurr’s (2016) affective nationalism in Azerbaijan; Yael Navaro-Yashin’s (2012) exploration of subjectivity in the context of ruination and abjection in Northern Cyprus; and Jill Williams and Geoffrey Boyce’s (2013) research of how Arizona ranchers negotiate encounters with unauthorised migrants in the US/Mexico border region, among others. My research on political crisis in Ukraine that focuses on the emotional experiences of activists contributes to this growing body of research.

Central to all of these works is consideration of the role of emotions in the processes of bordering and establishing boundaries between different groups. For example, Sunčana Laketa's (2016) work explores how high school and college students experience and narrate fear and danger of the post-conflict ethnically segregated city of Mostar where identities are not always visually marked. According to the author, students' knowledge of the difference between 'our' and 'their' sides of the city is embodied and is viscerally felt through the senses of vision, taste, smell, touch and sound. Laketa follows Sara Ahmed's line of argument about how surfaces and boundaries are made in the process of encounter; and cautions against considering perception as based on some inherent properties of spaces and bodies (2016: 12-3). Rather, she argues that students' reactions are intimately entangled with the particular histories and ideologies that operate within society and within a city that can itself be considered as a 'sticky' object that engenders different affective intensities. In short, the author:

“... points to the ways that different lines of division and processes of bordering [...] are embodied through different affective intensities. As boundary making is central to geopolitical struggles, this work attests to the important role emotion and affect play in the very creation of those boundaries. Boundaries are not simply imprinted on places and bodies as rigid and fixed grids of difference, and the complex affective life is more than the question of how those fixed boundaries are managed and endured. Rather, the always-already affective borders highlight the fluid and versatile, indeed virtual qualities of boundaries themselves” (2016: 19).

This work is innovative because it aims to move beyond discussions of the discursive framings of geopolitical bodies. The latter approach can be illustrated by Judith Butler's (2009) *Frames of War* that points to how the cold rationality underpinning military interventions and certain ways of media representations feeds into the demonization of Muslims in the West, thus creating racialised hierarchies that determine whose lives and whose suffering is recognised and considered grievable by the West. Another notable example is Jennifer Hyndman's (2007) consideration of civilian casualties at the times of war where some bodies are 'counted' as more valuable than others because of the different 'meaning regimes' or 'moral orders' that these bodies belong to. This work is more characteristic of the affective geopolitics (for discussion on emotion and affect, see §2.1.4.) developed through this strand of research often focus on the media as a space where politics are enacted through the affective means (Anderson 2010; Carter and

McCormack 2006; Massumi 2002; Ó Tuathail 2003; Stabile and Kumar 2005; Warner 2014).

Arguably, Laketa's (2016) work brings out a more dynamic notion of the geopolitical that is grounded in corporeal, embodied and emotional experiences (see also Ó Tuathail 2010); thus showing how boundaries emerge through the encounters between spaces and bodies. The question of what kind of subjectivities and boundaries between groups are produced as a result of emotional work conducted by activists at the heart of this thesis.

To sum up, what the current sub-chapter illustrated is how emotions are connected to feminist geopolitics. I firstly focused on how feminist approaches consider the everyday and apparently *apolitical* sites as alternative spatialisation of geopolitics. Elaborating on Rachel Pain's (2015b) concept of intimacy-geopolitics, I then moved on to discussing feminist proposition to explore geographical scales as interconnected and non-hierarchical and interconnected that not only allows for incorporation of emotions into geopolitical analyses, but contends that intimacy and emotions should be considered as a starting point of geopolitical analysis. Finally, the sub-chapter explored recent work in the field of emotional geopolitics, and the role that emotions play in shaping the bodies of collectivities. What I would like to move onto now is exploration of how emotions have been approached in a particular arena of political life – protest and activism.

2.3. Emotions in activism

Arguably, there is no better place to discuss emotions than in relation to themes of social movements, protests and activism, as emotions permeate activism and are not incidental to it. Yet as the editors of the collective volume *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion* pointed out in 2004, emotions remained 'an aspect of social movements about which we know almost nothing' (Goodwin and Jasper 2004: viii). Similarly, Gould (2004) stated in her study of militant street AIDS activism in USA that the attention on emotions has the potential to generate new landscapes for social movement research beyond political process theory that focuses on the emergence and

decline of movements and theorises humans as purely rational and emotionless (for an overview of social movements in geography see Koopman 2015). Emotions are contextual, embodied, socially constructed, and relational (Askins 2009), and hence can provide insights into how activists make meaning of their ‘selves’, their work, and the world around.

Today, significant body of work concerning emotions and activism exists, and the aim of this sub-chapter is to provide an overview of this work. Gavin Brown and Jenny Pickerill suggested that there are three ways in which emotions have been considered in activism, with regards to: the role of emotions in motivating activism; the role of emotions in shaping the boundaries of activist identities; and the emotional aspects of ‘burn-out’ within activist networks (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 26). For the purposes of this review, I look at how emotions mobilise and sustain activism together, as both topics relate to the concept of ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 2012 [1983]) important for this thesis. The second part of this sub-chapter looks at emotions and activist identities, theme that is connected to professionalisation of activism that is important for this thesis.

2.3.1. Emotional labour in spaces of activism

This section explores emotionality of mobilising and sustaining activism while drawing on the concept of ‘emotional labour’ coined by a sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild. According to the Hochschild, carrying out emotion work means tailoring how one feels to what is appropriate on certain occasions, or, in other words, following the ‘feeling rules’ – social and often implicit guidelines on how one should feel in any given situation (Hochschild 2012: 50). By focusing on ‘labouring’ or ‘work’, the active management of emotions is stressed. Moreover, the author argues that in certain contexts feelings stop being private deep exchanges and, when enter the market, become ‘commoditised’ (Hochschild 1979: 277) in jobs that require face-to-face interactions with customers, e.g. during airplane stewards’ encounters with passengers. While describing these processes, Hochschild distinguishes between degrees of control that workers in private and private

sector (and their employers) can exercise over managed performance of emotions. Yet how is this important for studies of activism?

One of the studies that exemplifies how emotions mobilize political action is Fernando Bosco's (2007) research on two human rights networks in Argentina. Bosco's study pursues two goals. On the one hand, the author attempts to show how activists mobilize emotions and strategically perform 'emotional labour' to create feelings of proximity despite geographical distance. On the other, the author highlights how the 'framing of emotions' (re-interpreting them in order to create shared emotional templates and facilitate social cohesion) leads to the creation of new organisational geographies and expands movement's appeal to trans-local scale. Focusing on two organisations, the author argues that whereas *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* was initially based centrally and organized according to the physical proximity of the plaza (city square); *HIJOS* maintained more symbolic proximity on the Internet and was cemented by centralization of emotional experiences only after the movement became trans-national and managed to build a network of coalition activists.

Such divergent trajectories, according to Bosco, developed due to the different 'emotional framing' (compared to the concept of 'framing' Snow and Benford 1992) within each movement that in turn facilitated different connections between activists, and across their 'sites' of protest (see also Flam and King 2005). What Bosco's account also demonstrates is the dynamic nature of social movements that can be 'transforming as well as articulating values; and in the process, creating new and alternative structures of feeling' (Eyermann 2005: 42). This approach is interesting because it sketches out how emotions co-constitute places of activism, spaces of activism, and emotions and bodies of activists who are constantly negotiating the meaning of their protests, and hence engage in attempts to 'proximate' and 'shrink' geographical distance. The study also shows that this process of 'shrinking' space is not accidental, it is well thought through and employs emotions 'strategically'.

Discussion of emotional labour in spaces of activism is important not only in relation to mobilising political actions, but also when exploring such topics as sustaining activism. Sustainability of activism has often been discussed in relation to the notion of 'burn-out', which describes the state of mental and physical exhaustion brought about by over-work or trauma (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 28). Equally, it can be experienced as a

discontent with, for example, power relations within a group. Some scholars have argued that reflexivity can play a key role in sustaining activism. Reflexivity is defined here as practices ‘which emphasize active and critical reflection on our roles, experiences, assumptions and knowledge [conducted by a self that is not] disembodied, disembedded, cognitive, relational and autonomous’ (Gray 2008: 936, in Kay and Oldfield 2011: 1281). However, whereas activist might acknowledge some emotions, they might seem unable (or unwilling) to manage others (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 33).

Brown and Pickerill, for example, discuss autonomous social movements in the UK and argue that long-term activism can be sustained only by creating space for emotional reflexivity within activist spaces in order to prevent ‘burn-out’. Four spaces of emotions where activist approaches and practices that contribute to (emotional) sustainability that authors identify in this respect are: places, temporal, the self, and interpersonal. These spaces are ‘sites of negotiation and contestation through which individuals (and groups) understand and frame their emotions’ (2009: 28). Hence, it is important to note how the emotional geographies of protest and activism might be stretched to incorporate not only the body and the physical ‘sites’ of emotions but also these more ‘intangible’ spaces.

2.3.2. Emotions and activist identities

The second line of consideration of emotions in activism that I would like to focus on relates to activist identities. It is important to consider what kind of emotions are related to becoming an activist, when in life a person becomes involved in activism and what influence the age has on his/ her engagement as well as how emotions associated with activism change over the course of life (Fox 2001). Considering these questions of initial involvement in activism, it can be argued that ‘not only selves produce emotions, but also emotions produce selves’ (Askins 2009: 10). As I have outlined in the previous section, emotions are cultural phenomena and engaging in activism often means operating within specific ‘regimes of emotion’ (Smith 2002). Uncovering such meanings may also shed light on the particular social conditions that activists operate in.

Even more importantly, focusing on the identities of activists can provide valuable insight into spaces of activism, their inner dynamics and power relations. For example, Elizabeth Cole and Abigail Stewart investigated the relationship between activism and political identity among black and white women in the US. Finding that politicized self-identities are differently related to political participation across groups in their study, the authors suggest that ‘ideology itself may have a different relationship to political participation for black and white women’ (Cole and Stewart 1996: 137). In other words, the meaning and significance of political participation must always be mediated through identities and lived experiences that are bound to differ across gender, race, class, ethnicity and religion (Secor 2001: 194).

Some commentators noted that spaces of activism are often conceptualized as ‘singular’. This view is potentially reductionist as it conceives of activism space as one-dimensional, ‘*a singular entity marked by commonality [where] people are part of this group and this group alone. This often overlooks the complex types of activism people are involved in, and the multiple spaces they inhabit*’ (Wilkinson 2009: 37). Similarly, Jeffrey Juris and Alex Khasnabish argue that the accounts of transnational activism are sometimes overly romanticized, and it is ethnography that can reveal the inevitable, yet productive ‘friction’ (2013: 4). Such ‘friction’ is also present in places of activism on a smaller than transnational scale, because localities are often internally differentiated and not necessarily cohesive (Ettlinger 2003).

So, what enquiring into particular spaces/places of activism reveals is that there is no single collective identity or golden standard of activism that is employed in social movement mobilization. At times, as during direct action, activists do forge a collective identity inscribed through particular behaviours, language, dress, and practices (Della Porta and Diani 2006, Routledge 2012). But as much as facilitating belonging, it can equally separate those who are considered as ‘activist’ and those who are not, thus marginalizing some individuals even though they might be politically sympathetic (Bobel 2007). Attempts to discover such a collective identity, therefore, would limit the range of emotional experiences among the variety of individual activists marked by difference. Multiplicity of activism is one of important topics for this research too (see §6.5., §7.3.).

The multiplicity of spaces of activism is of relevance when considering queer activism where gendered selves are subject to certain ‘feeling rules’ (Hochschild 2012 [1983]) and power dynamics of such rules (Ahmed 2014); and where the personal lives of the activists are an integral part of their political engagements (Wilkinson 2009, on gendered experiences of volunteering, see also Cadesky *et al* 2019). So, in reality, activist identities ‘are complex, multi-layered and hybrid and there will always be definitional problems in their articulation’ (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 25). Because of this, some researchers call to move away from the limits of identity politics and towards the politics of affinity makes sense (Day 2005, McDonald 2002). Importantly, politics within spaces of activism – including definitions of who belongs and who does not, and what kind of emotions those belonging are expected to perform – may have a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of activists.

What these observations point to are the limitations of the notion of ‘collective identity’ popular in the 2000s (Goodwin *et al* 2001: 8-9, Polletta and Jasper 2001). For example, Wilkinson (2009) challenges the romantic accounts of spaces of activism as ‘emotional communities’ that are apparently homogeneous, and that apparently do not reproduce existing dominant hierarchies in society writ large. There is a debate on the necessity of the alignment of identities for movement mobilization – distinction between ‘doing activism’ and ‘being an activist’ – and whether activists need not unite under one collective identity to do something together (Bobel 2007). As Brown and Pickerill argue, if one can be an activist without identifying as such, then there is a need to look more closely at social movement actors’ praxis in order to understand ‘how participants emotionally experience their actions, how action is embodied, and how meaning is constructed out of those experiences and feelings’ (2009: 27). This thesis looks at practices of activism to uncover such meanings (see §5.).

2.3.3. Activism and professionalisation

Focusing on identities leads me to consider the different ways in which activists are engaged in activism, and ask the question of what constitutes activism? This question has conceptual as well as methodological implications, such as where and how to conduct fieldwork. Should I distinguish between ‘exceptional’ and ‘everyday’ forms of protest/activism? Horton and Kraftl (2009) argue that it is important to pay attention to the routinized performances and banal geographies of activism that go largely unnoticed in addition to the spectacular eruptions of protests that capture public attention. Stretching this line of thinking, they even introduce the term ‘implicit activism’ to draw attention to the small-scale, personal, quotidian and proceeding with little fanfare act of activism that often go unnoticed. In respect to unsettling the boundaries between rigidly defined ‘spaces of activism’ and everyday life apparently devoid of activism, Kye Askins’s (2014, 2015, 2016) work focused on ‘quiet politics of being together’ of befriending schemes in Newcastle is also important.

Equally important in researching emotional geographies of activism are questions related to different modalities of organised action – in what capacity, where, when and how people engage in activism. In recent years, a lot of attention has been paid to professionalisation and NGO-isation of activism – processes that are often discussed in connection to expanding neoliberalism (Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2011; Jenkins 2008). It is argued that within neoliberal paradigm, grassroots activists are increasingly forced to institutionalise their work in order to secure funding, which in turn imposes bureaucratisation of activism that some researchers have called ‘new managerialism’ (Townend *et al* 2002, in Jenkins 2005: 66 – 73). Within this bureaucratic culture, meeting targets, quantifying outcomes and measuring performance become central aspects of the NGO work, which in turn leads to development of experts versed in ‘donorspeak’ (*ibid.*). Moreover, researchers argue that this creates (‘expert’) hierarchies within the NGO sector, thus also producing certain types of subjectivities that simultaneously contest and are integral part of neoliberal development imperatives (Jenkins 2008).

Interestingly, when talking about professionalisation and how neoliberalism impacts activism, post-Soviet experiences are often neglected, perhaps, due to the fact that ‘post-

Soviet space’ does not fit easily into the imaginary geographies of the ‘global North’ and the ‘global South’. Discussion of post-Soviet ‘civil society’ is presented in the following sub-chapter of this literature review (see §2.4.2.), showing that more critical accounts examining power relation between donor organisations and ‘local’ NGOs (e.g. Vorbrugg 2015) appear with time. It is important to stress here, however, that the emotional dimensions of professionalisation of activism is rarely discussed (e.g. Griffiths 2015) in relation to both activism in the ‘global South’ and in ‘post-Soviet space’. This gap is addressed by the present thesis that questions what new and insights focus on emotions in processes of professionalisation can reveal.

2.4. Protest and activism in Ukraine: area studies

This last sub-chapter of the literature review looks at how activism in Ukraine has been considered to date. The sub-chapter is divided into two parts: the first exploring literature written in relation to the Euromaidan protests of 2013 – 2014, and the second part focused on ‘civil society’ in Ukraine since the Euromaidan. Providing this overview should show where the gaps in research are that this thesis can fill.

2.4.1. Euromaidan protests

This section of the literature review is concerned with the Euromaidan protests that took place between November 2013 and February 2014 in Ukraine. To begin, I would like to note that whereas this thesis is not focused on the Euromaidan *per se*, understanding the protests is of crucial importance here. The protests that took place in many cities of Ukraine, including the main protest site of the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Ukrainian ‘Майдан Незалежності’, Independence Square) in Kyiv, became – in the classic geopolitics parlance – the key geopolitical events that changed the course of Ukrainian

history. That is the pro-Russian power elites embodied by the ex-president Viktor Yanukovich were ousted from power, Crimea was annexed by Russia in March 2014, and war in the Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine began in April 2014. This context shapes activism in Ukraine. So, focusing on the emotions of activists as alternative spaces of power requires paying attention to how activists understand and negotiate these 'geopolitical' events.

Let me now turn to how the Euromaidan protests are discussed in the literature (for an overview of how the Euromaidan developed see Shveda and Park 2016; Zelinska 2017, 2018). Many contributions exploring the Euromaidan compare it with the Orange Revolution that took place ten years earlier (Gerasimov 2014; Hrytsak 2014; Khmelko and Pereguda 2014; Onuch 2015b; Popova 2015). Whereas both revolutions can be characterised as 'uprisings against authority' (Cleary 2016: 16); Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse (2016) highlight different dynamics of mobilisation of the Euromaidan that is at least partially related to the use of social media (Bohdanova 2014; Chaban *et al* 2017; Etnograficzna 2015; Onuch 2015a). Here, the spontaneous nature of the Euromaidan is contrasted with the Orange Revolution mainly organised by the oppositional leader Viktor Yushchenko and his supporters as a response to the fraudulent presidential elections of 2004. The diversity of the Euromaidan protestors can also be illustrated by the results of a survey conducted by the Democratic Initiatives of Ilko Kucheriv fund in collaboration with the Kiev International Institute of Sociology on the 3rd of February 2014. This survey is interesting as among other responses it compares various 'identity markers' of protestors during three different stages of the Euromaidan (see also Zelinska 2015 on who was protesting on the Euromaidan). Overall, out of 502 protestors interviewed during the third stage, only 3% stated that they were organised by a party, 13.3% stated that they were organised by an NGO or some movement, and 83.5% stated that they came by themselves (Kiev International Institute of Sociology 2014). These results highlight that the Euromaidan mobilised persons not necessarily affiliated to certain political camps.

The diversity of actors and the inability of party leaders to coordinate the revolution is notable (Collison 2017). Such politicians as Vitalii Klitschko, Oleh Tyahnybok, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and future president Petro Poroshenko were frequently appearing on the Euromaidan stage and also acted as negotiators with the Yanukovich regime; thus the Euromaidan protests cannot be characterised as one-party, one-leader revolution (Cleary

2016: 16). In fact, some researchers have noted that the space of the revolution was fragmented in the sense that different spaces carried different meanings. Whereas the main stage was associated with the political elite, the rest of the barricaded space was associated with the everyday and protestors that lived on the square (Otrishchenko 2015). The oppositional leaders nevertheless capitalised on Euromaidan in the sense that ousting Yanukovich's regime out of power provided them with an opportunity to come to power and effectively establish a pro-Western political project that protestors campaigned for.

The spontaneity and 'crowd-sourced' nature of the Euromaidan is well captured in Sergei Loznitsa's documentary called 'Maidan' (2014) in the scene of the *ad hoc* kitchen created in the Trade Unions' Building that shows stacks of home-made produce brought by the protestors and revolution's sympathisers. Jeffrey Stepnisky (2018) writes about the atmosphere of the revolution comparing the 'spontaneous', 'creative', and 'self-organising' feel of the Euromaidan to the pro-government anti-Maidan protests that were organised 'from above' and lacked the energy and spirit – protestors there were assigned roles and asked to hold premade signs. The author argues that:

“... active participation in spatial production, rather than passive absorption into predesigned political/aesthetic performances, is important to the development of community feeling and solidarity. Here, in addition to the creation of specific atmospheres, such as the festive or the peaceful, activities of daily life and performance had the effect of generating a broader atmosphere of communality and fellow-feeling” (Stepnisky 2018: 10).

Especially at the beginning of the protests, the Euromaidan has been described as an inclusive space open to difference in languages, religion, and ethnic identity of protestors (Arel 2018; Kulyk 2016, 2017, 2018; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2018; Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017; Van Der Laarse *et al* 2015; Wanner 2014; Zelinska 2015; Zhurzhenko 2014). For example, Olga Chupyra (2015) focuses on the involvement of Russian-speaking members of the Ukrainian population in the Euromaidan protests, arguing that people from all cultural backgrounds had united in opposition to the corruption of the Yanukovich government. She thus stresses how participation in protests contributed to a civic Ukrainian nation. Similarly, Zaharchenko (2016) demonstrates how Russophone Ukrainians supported the Euromaidan and the

independence of Ukraine, thus negating the stereotype that Ukraine is a country where geopolitical orientations of citizens are divided along the language lines.

Often, in illustrating the civic nature of the Euromaidan attention is drawn to the fact that among the first protestors who died in the Euromaidan – members of the so-called *Heavenly Hundred*, over one hundred protestors shot by the Yanukovich's security forces in an attempt to disperse the revolution – were Armenian-Ukrainian activist Serhiy Nigoyan and a citizen of Belarus Mikhail Zhyznevski. The members of the *Heavenly Hundred* were posthumously awarded the Hero of Ukraine title by the president Petro Poroshenko in November 2014. The focus on the inclusiveness of the Euromaidan is important because it relates to questions of nationalism and who belongs to the (post-Euromaidan) Ukrainian state, and who is considered to be a hero.

While talking about the Euromaidan as a space of inclusion/exclusion, it is important to consider the participation of the Ukrainian far-right as the 'self-defence' units during the revolution (see Ishchenko 2016; Likhachev 2015; Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014). Such units were formed at later stages of the protests as a militant defence against the violent assaults of pro-government forces. The use of physical violence as a means to advance 'civic' values has been questioned by scholars. Some researchers highlight that the solidarity of protestors was consolidated even more in resistance to state violence in the hottest phases of February 2014 (Popova 2015, Portnov 2015). For example, the editors of the special issue focused on the legacy of the Euromaidan note:

“Though only a small share of Euromaidan protestors resorted to violence against the police forces, they were largely tolerated by the peaceful majority. The use of violence did not split protestors; on the contrary, it solidified the protests and produced a new ethos. Burning tires and throwing Molotov cocktails were amongst the symbols of the protests. [...]. Research shows that radical far-right groups were the main collective agent engaging in physical violence, although scholars tend to disagree as to what role and weight they had in protests” (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 7).

Importantly, such groups became the focal point of many international media. In a detailed study of the Ukrainian far-right, Vyacheslav Likhachev (2015) highlights that the Euromaidan civil protests were accompanied by an intense informational campaign fuelled by Kremlin that portrayed protestors and political opposition as ultra-nationalist, extremist and xenophobic. Moreover, these mediated representations purported that such far-right organisations as All-Ukrainian Union *Svoboda* (Ukrainian 'Свобода',

Freedom) and a notorious fringe organisation called *Pravyi Sektor* (Ukrainian ‘Правий Сектор’, Right Sector) were major players in the protests. Whereas the far-right did take part in the Euromaidan, painting the whole of the Euromaidan as ultra-nationalist is grossly incorrect. What such representations attempted to achieve was the discrediting of the Euromaidan and new authorities that came to power as a result of the revolution. Russia used this rhetoric as a pretext for protecting the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine against the far-right radicals who came to power in Kyiv (Lankina and Watanabe 2017 on media as a military tool).

As Wilson notes, such representations were important not only in shaping the image of the Euromaidan abroad but also in how some Ukrainians in Eastern regions of the country perceived the revolution. According to one opinion poll conducted in March 2014, 60.5% of residents of Donbas stated that they perceived the main threat as posed by the *banderivsty* – radically-minded inhabitants of Western Ukraine (Wilson 2014: 643). Exploring such mediated geopolitics and how they exploit more deep-seated cultural stereotypes – such as discourses about *banderivsty* – has led some researchers to claim that current political crisis in Ukraine is part and parcel of Russia’s information war (Brusylovska 2015: 61).

Developing this topic, Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland (2014) explore the apparent enigma of ultranationalists’ participation in democratic pro-EU protests; arguing that the main reason for such participation was opposition to Russia’s neoimperialism. Signing the Association Agreement with the EU was seen by Ukrainian ultranationalists as moving the country out of the orbit of Russian influence (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014: 60). The authors further argue that the rise to prominence of *Svoboda* during the parliamentary elections of 2012 (winning of slightly more than 8% seats) can also be at least partially explained by voters thus registering discontent with the pro-Russian politics of Yanukovych. Writing in June 2014, authors questioned whether the far-right would stay marginal, as leaders of both organisations totalled less than 2% during the 25 May 2014 presidential elections (for work assessing the aftermaths of the Euromaidan see Bertelsen 2016; Minakov 2014, 2016; Stepanenko and Pylynskyi 2015).

Related to the mediated geopolitics debates, the inclusivity of the Euromaidan has also been challenged by gendered and queer perspectives on the revolution (Bisikalo 2017;

Channell-Justice 2017; Hoogland 2015; Khromeychuk 2015, 2018; Martsenyuk 2014, 2015; Martsenyuk and Troian 2018; Onuch and Martsenyuk 2014; Phillips 2014; Polegkyi 2016; Roßmann 2016; Sonevytsky 2016; WILPF 2014); as well as contribution on sexuality and the LGBT community (Helbig 2014; Martsenyuk 2016; Shevtsova 2017a, 2017b). For example, Olesya Khromeychuk (2015) notes that while female protestors were very diverse, they had limited visibility on the Euromaidan with most of the women activists remaining ‘silent and silenced’ – such silence can be attributed to gendered stereotypes in Ukrainian society that privileges the public sphere as the arena of men. In relation to the revolution, gendered stereotypes were routinely reinforced in media representations of the Euromaidan as a violent and glorious endeavour undertaken by men (on the role of media in framing and reflecting on revolution see Etling 2014; Dyczok 2015). As Sarah Phillips’s (2014) observes, within such context women were expected to perform ‘traditional’ roles as carers at the service of nation-building:

“The discourse of women as ‘mothers of the nation’ and of woman as the *Berehynia* (Ukrainian ‘Берегиня’, saviour, protector, keeper) of the revolution (i.e. the symbols of the Ukrainian ethnic identity and national culture) is a familiar part of the Ukrainian national narrative. As famously noted by Nina Yuval-Davis (1997), nationalism is a maternalist discourse associating women with symbolic and biological reproduction of the nation. The notion of women’s bodies in service to the nation (and more exactly, women’s internalization of this narrative) further reverberated in post-Maidan, post-Crimea-annexation initiatives such as Ukrainian women’s purported ‘sex strike’ against Russian men (Khazan 2014) and ‘personal ads’ appearing on Facebook from women who ‘want to have hero’s (i.e. Maidaner’s) children’ (Phillips 2014: 416).

Similarly, in the article with the telling title *We’re Not Just Sandwiches*, Emily Channell-Justice (2017) notes that the Euromaidan protests began as an outcry of indignation against the regime abuse of power when ex-president Yanukovich refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. The beginning of the revolution was thus fuelled by the idea of Ukraine as part of Europe. However, the protests gradually became more focused on establishing an idealised sovereign Ukrainian nation, with protestors increasingly drawing on historical narratives of militarised masculinity as supporting the nation (see also Bureychak and Petrenko 2015 on heroic masculinity). In this context, Ukrainian feminists did not manage to push through the more progressive gender agenda and were instead forced to participate either as supporters of men or in militarised self-defence squads that mirrored those created by men. Drawing on the work of earlier theorists, Channell-Justice argues that Ukrainian women on the Euromaidan

‘vernacularised’ feminism and women’s activism away from Europe onto more localised initiatives that other protestors could relate to.

In contrast to such critical perspectives, Tamara Martsenyuk (2015) highlights that women’s roles were not just supportive and that niches for “egalitarian participation” were established where women worked alongside men in fuelling the revolution. Such activities included peacekeeping missions, fighting on barricades, and administrative and legislative efforts. She thus argues that the space of protests was heterogeneous and allowed citizens to negotiate their roles and rights within the revolution. Martsenyuk’s approach can be seen as a resistive attempt to draw women into the canvas of the revolution.

This brings me to the last set of literature on the revolution related to the ‘values of the Euromaidan’ (e.g. Shestakovskij 2014; Sviatnenko and Vinogradov 2014; Trach 2016). Olga Burlyuk *et al* (2017) argue that the Euromaidan was distinct from other uprisings in Ukraine because it saw the emergence of new civil society concerned with such values as democracy, dignity, political rights and freedoms, as well as individual civic responsibility. As such, the Euromaidan should not be considered as a purely physical space, but as a space of values related to Ukrainian nation-building (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 3). As mentioned above, previous revolutions in Ukraine also focused on these values, but were mostly supported by the pro-Western sympathisers of political opposition. The Euromaidan has significantly increased the pool of people who thought that to achieve the ‘betterment’ of Ukraine westward rather than eastward direction should be taken.

The participation of a large number of people from diverse backgrounds united by such (political) aspirations resulted in the very special ‘aura’ of the Euromaidan that was clearly demarcating the ‘free territory of Maidan’ from the mundane and apparently corrupted exterior (Stepnisky 2018: 3). Some researchers have focused on both real and imagined landscapes of the Euromaidan and how different historical symbols and cultural narratives were re-articulated within the transformative space on the revolution (Grišinas 2018; Otrishchenko 2016; Sonevytsky 2016; Yurchuk 2014; Zaharchenko 2015), not least through the means of creative language practices (Antsybor 2015; Trach 2016; Zhabotinskaya 2015). These values were ‘sacralised’ through the death of the *Heavenly Hundred* (Antsybor 2015; Zorgdrager 2016).

Whereas some researchers focused on the affective atmosphere of the Euromaidan and how different ‘scenes’ or ‘stages’ were created through certain objects, aesthetics, smells either by ‘professional aesthetic labourers’ in order to produce desired atmosphere or through the course of communal practices (Stepnisky 2018), others have emphasised revolution’s emotional dimension. Particularly, an association of the colloquially called *Revolution of Dignity* with hope has been noted (Chebotariova 2016; Ryabchuk 2014). Among the strong impetus to protests was the feeling of injustice and anger towards Yanukovych’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. There was also a feeling of betrayed hope for a better future that the ex-president shattered, and that space of Euromaidan was ‘restoring’. The association of hope with Europe among the protestors is not accidental. As Orlova (2017) demonstrates, the idea of Europe and ‘European values’ was important throughout the protests (see also Horbyk 2017; Marples 2016; Zubko and Rovnyi 2015). I quote:

“Euromaidan was not only about foreign policy or European integration, but also the pursuit of a decent life in a fair country. The pursuit of a decent life was strongly linked to Europe as the embodiment of a series of features that Ukraine lacked, including democratic governance, rule of law, and economic development. The emergence of Europe as a signifier of protest aspirations was neither rapid nor coincidental. A complex political and cultural concept, Europe has historically been an important reference point in Ukrainian debates about national identity, with rival projects spawning competing representations” (Orlova 2017: 222).

Yet the aftermath of the Euromaidan shows that competing political projects were not going to let Ukraine slip into the idealised European embrace easily. Whereas the end of protests on the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* might have ended power struggles in Kyiv, the geopolitical crisis cascaded into other places of the country. Russia used unmarked army troops to literally overnight annex Crimea; the East (Donetsk, Lughansk, Kharkiv) and South (Odesa) of Ukraine saw the development of separatist movements supported by Yanukovych and sponsored by Russia (Wilson 2014), thus challenging the political regime change. The ensuing development of the civil society ‘born’ during the revolution thus takes place in this unparalleled moment in Ukrainian history – ‘state-building and democratisation in Ukraine occur alongside an armed conflict triggered by Russia’s annexation of Crimea and intervention in Donbas’ (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 3). The context of military conflict in many ways affects activism.

This observation prompts me to briefly return to the theoretical part of this literature review, where I discussed how the emotional geographies have been addressed in the activism literature focusing on the dynamics inside spaces of activism. A separate set of literature considered the role of emotions in geopolitics. Conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine and looking at how emotions operate both within spaces of activism and in the context of violent political crisis provides an opportunity to explore these two sets of literatures and bring them into conversation. In contrast to the Orange Revolution, after the Euromaidan many protestors continued to be engaged in activism and ‘filling in’ for the roles normally associated with state functions, such as procurement for the army and caring for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Many activists whom I met during the fieldwork were involved in the Euromaidan, and even those who were not engaged in activism at that time started to do so after the beginning of war in Donbas. Their reflections allow for exploration of dynamics, (dis)continuities and trans-temporality (Cassidy 2017) in emotional landscapes of activism. My contribution to the knowledge thus not only relates to developing theoretical approaches to the role of emotions in geopolitics, but also provides insights into the nature of the Ukrainian crisis. Let me now turn to the ways geopolitical accounts explore the post-Euromaidan crisis in Ukraine.

2.4.2. Activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan

I now turn to literature that has been written on activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan, identifying gaps in research that the theoretical framework of emotional feminist geopolitics discussed in the sections above can fill. However, before doing so, I briefly mention the dominant ways in which the geopolitical crisis developed after the Euromaidan has been addressed in the literature, including the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of war in Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine.

Whereas scholars from different fields (sociology, political scientists, gender theorists, history, geography, linguistics) were writing about the Euromaidan, the consequent events are often addressed mainly by international relations scholars. For example, editors of the special issue of the *Europe-Asia Studies*, Dered Averre and Kataryna

Wolczhuk (2016) focus on the causes and consequences of the crisis, highlighting that it marks a fundamental shift in security order in Europe to what they call post-post-Cold War Europe (2016: 551; see also Dunn and Bobick 2014; Gressel 2015). Contributions of the issue focus on the intersections between Ukraine's domestic politics, Ukraine's relations with Russia, and Russia's relations with Europe. Some examples of the themes include research on: political economy and trade sanctions imposed by the West on Russia (Connolly 2016; Romanova 2016) and Germany-Russia political and trade relations (Siddi 2016); EU neighbourhood policy (Haukkala 2016); Russia's motivation to interfere in Ukrainian affairs and the West's response to it (Averre 2016; Wilson 2014) and the Donbas conflict in the context of Moscow's security and conflict management (Davies 2016).

The reason why I go to such length at summarising what the special issue focuses on is linked to the desire to illustrate the range and the scope of the scholarship that most often adopts classical geopolitical macro-perspectives on political life, erasing the embodied and emotional experiences from view. As outlined in the preceding sections of the literature review, such approaches are criticised by feminist geopolitics that challenge what 'politics' mean. Importantly, while emotions such as indignation, feeling of solidarity, fear and hope have been considered by (a limited number of) researchers when talking about the Euromaidan revolution, the emotional dimension has been ignored in the studies of the post-Euromaidan crisis. Even though more critical and grounded accounts of the geopolitical crisis appear with time (see discussion below), they rarely address the topic of emotions. Equally, this is characteristic of research of civil society after the Euromaidan. This lack of detailed study of emotional geographies provides grounds for the present study.

Certainly, not all research on Ukrainian crisis compartmentalises politics as circulating just at national and global levels. Some of more recent contributions demonstrate sensitivity to themes and approaches characteristic of critical, feminist and postcolonial geopolitics. The explicit engagement with postcolonial critique is evident in Marco Puleri's (2017) consideration of the notion of hybridity as applied to border crossings between Ukrainian controlled territories and separatist territories in Donbas (see also Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017); Anna Fournier's (2017) exploration of how young people understand this boundary as mobile; and various contributions focusing on cultural productions and imaginaries of Novorossiia (O'Loughlin *et al* 2017; Laruelle

2017; Suslov 2017). An important body of work that this thesis also contributes to is focused on considerations of identities and politics of belonging at the times of war, including questions on why some Ukrainians support ideas of the so called ‘Russian world’ that separatists mobilise and draw upon (Biersack and O’Lear 2014; Clem 2018; Giuliano 2018; Kulyk 2017; O’Loughlin *et al* 2016; Portnov 2016; Sasse and Lackner 2018; Wilson 2016).

Yet few of these studies employ grounded methods to explore such themes and even fewer do so from the perspective of human geography, often relying on opinion polls and quantitative research to draw conclusions. Conducting the ethnographic research that my project employs provided an opportunity to explore these topics in more depth while taking spatial imperatives of social processes into account. Also, it has to be noted that whereas many studies focus on Donbas, thus ‘locating’ the war, a limited number of scholars (Stebelsky 2018) look at how war unfolds in other places in Ukraine. To reiterate, this points to the lack of geographical work on war in Ukraine that draws connections between different spaces of conflict. The aim of this thesis is to fill this gap by focusing on how activists in different parts of Ukraine experience war. On this note, let me turn now to activism in Ukraine after 2013.

First of all, some definitions are due. What this thesis frames as ‘activism’ – ‘the actions of a group of citizens, usually volunteers, who work together to try and redress what they consider to be unfair or unjust situation’ (Castree *et al* 2013, entry: ‘activism’) – is often discussed within the framework of ‘civil society’ in post-socialist societies of Central and Eastern Europe. The central stage of the debates about civil society in such countries as Ukraine is occupied with the considerations of the weakness/strength of civil society (Udovyk 2017), with the majority of ‘Western’ researchers arguing that post-communist civil societies are weak because levels of participation in civil society organisations concerned with issues of policy-making and governance remain low in comparison to the countries of Western Europe and North America (e.g. Howard 2003; see also focused on Ukraine EU report in Cleary 2016:16). Such normative perspectives on democratisation stem from the particular representations of the Soviet Union and its legacy.

The dominant narratives in public, policy and academia about the post-Soviet condition often highlight the legacy of mistrust among people, a generalised passivity and a lack of interest in politics – all described as ‘characteristic features of these societies’ (O’Dowd

and Dimitrovova 2011: 188, in Vorbrugg 2015: 144). For example, some researchers explain that during the Soviet times, political authorities and ‘lay society’ existed as two separate ‘layers’, each relying on their respective networks of cooperation and support; and that is why ‘lobbying’ and mediation of interest emanating from civil society did not occur (Ljubownikow *et al* 2013; see also Cheskin and March 2015). It is argued that oligarchic elites, or ‘financial-political groups’ (Minakov 2016), such as Yanukovych’s ‘family clan’ embody the Soviet practices of networking that accumulated wealth after the Soviet Union’s collapse through privatisation of state assets that often occurred with the help of criminal gangs. In such narratives, overcoming the Soviet legacy on the path to democratisation is seen as almost a ‘civilising’ task of Western democracies (Phillips 2008).

However, the events of the Euromaidan (and Revolution on the Granite of 1990, Orange Revolution of 2004, and many other less noticeable protests) revolting against corruption and abuse of power by authorities provide critique to observations about the ‘passivity’ of civil society. Focusing on the relations between civil society and state, Laura Cleary (2016) observes that after the Euromaidan new volunteering initiatives did not necessarily perform the ‘watchdog’ functions associated with civil society. Instead, the vast majority of initiatives behaved in a manner characteristic to conflict situations. After the outbreak of war in the spring of 2014, civil society initiatives redirected their activities: providing humanitarian assistance to people internally displaced by conflict, raising funds to support the military and their dependents, collecting and transporting food and clothes to the front and assisting the wounded in gaining access to medical and psychological treatments (Cleary 2016: 17). This leads Cleary to claim that civil society in Ukraine after 2013 is ‘hybrid’: rather than holding government to account and overseeing politicians and public officials, it in fact substitutes for the job of the ‘failing’ state (see also Gatskova and Gatskov 2016; Pishchikova and Ogryzko 2014; Shapovalova 2017). Examining the legacy of the Euromaidan, Olga Burlyuk *et al* (2017) argue that instead of conceptualising civil society as only existing in the formally established organisations, groups, and associations with registered participants, a broader definition should be adopted:

“[that is] inclusive of social movements, non-registered civic groups, local, small scale and online activism as a form of collective but also individual behaviour [because it] seems to reflect better the nature of civil societies in post-communist countries, as well as the changing nature of civil society in the 21st century more generally” (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 5).

Developing this thought, Krasynska and Martin (2017) conceptualise the formal/informal nature of civil society in relation to three case studies drawn from observations of and interviews with the Euromaidan protestors. They argue that in the socio-cultural context of Ukraine, civil society initiatives are usually conducted through informal and unofficial channels, especially when it comes to opposition to authorities. That being said, the informal channels developed during the Euromaidan exhibited elaborate internal structures: centralisation, bureaucratic and role-based structures, regimented and replicable processes, and coordinated multi-organisational strategies with supporting rules and regulations (Krasynska and Martin 2017: 422). They thus suggest that civil society in Ukraine may be able to affect change through both formal and informal mechanisms.

Returning to Anna Secor's (2001) conceptualisation of counter-geopolitics in relation to women's activities within both formal and informal urban political spaces, it can be argued that labelling some organisations and spaces as informal and, therefore, *apolitical* may in itself be seen as a political act. As I will elaborate in the empirical chapters, consideration of formality/informality is important for the present work too, as participants of this research came both from officially registered NGOs as well as 'informal' organisations. This thesis is focusing on 'spaces of activism' rather than 'spaces of civil society' partly in an attempt to avoid the dichotomous articulations of formal/informal, official/unofficial; and partly because it brings the post-Euromaidan activism in conversation to activist geographies outside of post-socialism. That said, questions of whether an organisation is registered on the ground are important, because it relates to how activist activities are funded/sustained that in different ways impacts the emotional landscapes of activism.

In a thought-provoking article on the work of a German political organisation in Kyiv whose main aim is to support and enhance processes of democratisation through political education and support of local nongovernmental groups, Alexander Vorbrugg (2015) researches how the representations of 'the post-Soviet' are constructed through the organisation's daily practices. I find many of his observations relevant for my research, particularly Vorbrugg's exploration of how the enactment of an idea of democratisation and civil society brings into being certain realities *and* statements about these realities, i.e. is related to questions of power and knowledge production. Vorbrugg argues that when the head of Kyiv office claims that the foundation's work promotes universal values

with the apparently *clear* ways to achieve these, thus contrasting the *clarity* of such values to the image of Ukrainian public political reality as opaque and ambiguous, notions of clarity become strategic stakes in and of themselves (Vorbrugg 2015: 142). Through such narratives, the foundation implies that it already knows what democracy means, and how civil society should get there. However, the author points out that ‘clear’ objectives are enacted by the organisation’s employees on the ground using strategies and methods, positioning and rhetoric, and defining the scope of certain claims that are open to contestation.

This observation of how apparently universal norms are enacted through local actors is important, because the organisation’s employees are particularly positioned in Ukrainian society and often mobilise both their activist and professional identities in pushing certain agenda’s forward, communicating particular stands on certain topics (such as LGBT rights) and, importantly, choosing what local organisations to sponsor. Links that the organisation’s employees forge with the ‘partner’ organisations that the foundation supports are in different ways mutually beneficial relations. That said, such relations are also mediated by certain power dynamics:

“Though the office thereby becomes a place where different political subjectivities and rationalities, or material and social resources, come together in various ways and are negotiated, unequal power relations and the foundation’s institutional status characterise this site. At the moment when partners and activists enter the space to debate and organise democratic matters *by crossing the office’s threshold*, or when the specific formats of action pushed forward are such that they require resources (such as contacts, infrastructure, and money) which strengthen the foundation’s strategic position within these partnerships, this becomes all the more evident” (Vorbrugg 2015: 144, author’s emphasis).

Questions of power are not only important in relation to who structures the playing field in ‘partner’ – foundation interactions, but also in how the foundation as a political actor forges alliances and collaborations, offering visibility and space for some political articulations and not for others. Focusing on issues of class and how the head of the foundation does not see it necessary to incorporate poor people into their activities and as ‘partners’, because ‘poor people are too concerned with their own existence’, Vorbrugg argues that participants of his research thus “diagnose a division between ‘the *actual*’ and ‘the *values* of civil society’ as separate spheres” (2015: 147). He further elaborates that such narratives of passivity disqualify dissatisfaction with the rising inequality and material losses which for many have accompanied the post-Soviet transformation,

portraying them as nostalgic sentimentalism. What this reveals is a remarkable contrast between the depiction of democratisation through civil society as universal and inclusive on the one hand, and the (dis)qualifying of people through identity markers as unfit for participation in the civil society project on the other (ibid.). This observation serves as one of the building blocks for my thesis.

As will be elaborated in the empirical chapters of my research, I found similar processes at hand in activist-journalists' attitudes towards the Internally Displaced Persons (for civic response to IDP crisis, see Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Uehling 2017), as well as in the narratives of one of the participants whose father serves in the separatists' army. What my research adds to the discussion of processes of exclusion/inclusion as related to class is the consideration of the emotional dimensions of such processes. Employing emotional feminist geopolitics means paying attention to the webs of relations that activists' lives are embedded in; and drawing a connection between the emotionality of the 'inside' of the spaces of activism as related to the 'outside' of the world of activism.

With regards to how 'inside' and 'outside' of activism are interrelated, the work of Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova (2017) focusing on journalists' activism is important. It also provides an interesting twist when read together with Kye Askins's (2009) article on being an academic-activist. The authors highlight that journalists' activism emerged as one of the major features of Ukraine's post-Euromaidan media landscape. Conducting interviews with 14 journalists (11 activists and 3 non-activists), Budivska and Orlova demonstrate how difficult it is for journalists to choose and to stay within the boundaries of their roles either as a professional journalists or as civic/political activists at the time of conflict. They argue that the violent context is saturated with a sense of urgency that leaves little time to reflect on the ethical implications of interventionist 'patriotic journalism' (Budivska and Orlova 2017: 150). The authors conclude that even though the participants of their research were aware of the journalistic standards (noting that not many Ukrainian journalists have degrees in journalism, and come mostly from a Philology background), they had difficulties in articulating those standards, and internalising and accepting such normative frameworks in practice (Budivska and Orlova 2017: 152). In the empirical chapters of this thesis, I elaborate on how the 'patriotic journalism' works on the ground in journalists' encounters with ambiguous views on war in Donbas, and what emotions circulate through such encounters. Interesting here are also

the divisions within spaces of journalism, and how professionally educated journalists claim authority over representations vis-à-vis the ‘self-taught’ journalists.

Questions about ‘patriotic journalism’ bring me to the last theme of this section – politics of belonging and divisions in Ukrainian society that were created and/or reinforced after 2013. While some scholars of the Euromaidan argued that the protest space erased dividing lines in Ukrainian society as one unified civic state and strengthened self-definition of Ukrainians infusing it with unprecedented pride (Poliukhovych 2014: ii); new dividing lines and also those that separated the Euromaidan from the anti-Maidan were created and exacerbated since the annexation of Crimea and the onset of the hybrid conflict in Donbas. For example, Tatiana Kyselova (2017), studying professionalisation among the mediators and facilitators (groups engaged in conflict resolution), notes that all research participants admitted the increasing polarisation and fragmentation of the Ukrainian society between discourses of peace and reconciliation on the one hand, and patriotism and fight against Russian aggression on the other. As an extreme example of such polarisation, Kyselova mentions that the communities of facilitators and mediators were accused of facilitating dialogue between Ukrainian and Russian civil society by members of several women’s NGOs because of facilitators and mediators apparent: ‘psychological disarmament of Ukrainians during the war, manipulation with the concepts and imposition of guilt and responsibility for the situation upon Ukrainians under the cover of women and human rights organisations, which are sponsored by international donors, international organisations or Russia’ (NGO statement, in Kyselova 2017: 131).

Similarly, Andreas Umland sees a hegemonic discourse of patriotism as the result of the Euromaidan and the war, arguing that due to the distinction between extreme nationalism and military patriotism, the latter should not be viewed as radically ethnocentric (Umland 2014, in Biermann *et al* 2014: 9). That said, Umland points to the troubling tendencies in some careers of ultra-nationalist politicians such as Andrei Biletsky that are developed directly as a result of military patriotism. Going back to Anton Shekhovtsov and Andreas Umland’s (2014) question of whether the far-right will survive after the Euromaidan, the situation of conflict sees consolidation of radical nationalist and far-right groups that call for ethnic and religious intolerance and engage in violent attacks against those who they see as enemies of the ‘traditional order’ or Ukraine’s statehood, including leftist groups, feminists, the LGBT community, different ethnic communities and refugees (Burlyuk *et*

al 2017: 8). So, while the Euromaidan attempted to be an inclusive movement, the current surge of patriotism challenges this inclusivity. Meanwhile, the ‘patriotic’ groups ignore the fact that the social values of the EU, frequently used as reference points during the revolution, is based on ideas of multiculturalism. Moreover, Olga Burlyuk *et al* argue that such a state of things might be perpetuated, as the armed conflict is being gradually ‘routinized’ through media, images, everyday practices and language, thus leading to ‘normalization’ of an otherwise *ab-normal* situation of violence, death, destruction and loss that might perpetuate the conflict further (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 10). All of these factors might become serious obstacles in building peace solutions. The longer the war lasts, the longer Ukrainian people live in the overall uncertain situation between war and peace, insecurity and stability.

In relation to violence, it has to be mentioned that not only the Euromaidan, but also war in general has to a certain extent been ‘crowdsourced’ (Hunter 2018). What Montana Hunter refers to when talking about ‘crowdsourced war’ are the volunteer battalions that were created after the Euromaidan, and mainly consisted of militant participants of the revolution. Such battalions have received a lot of academic attention (e.g. Käihkö 2018; Karagiannis 2016 on norms and emotions as mobilisation mechanisms; Malyarenko and Galbreath 2016; Malyarenko and Wolff 2018; Puglisi 2015a, 2015b; Umland 2016). Such battalions and radical groups play an ambiguous role in Ukraine, as on the one hand they mobilised to protect the territorial integrity of the country, but on the other, they are violators of human rights. So, whereas some commentators see them as a phenomenon of civil society that substituted for the ‘failing’ state at the beginning of the war; their ‘civility’ is certainly questionable.

In relation to conflicting perspectives, Ganna Bazilo and Giselle Bosse (2017) studied and compared bottom-up and top-down narratives of the conflict in Ukraine, finding that the two differ substantially. They note that a lot of emphasis in conflict resolution is placed on the actions of political or economic elites, such as government officials, political parties or oligarchs. As a result of this, research on the role of civil society as a relevant and legitimate actor in the Ukrainian conflict, specifically in processes of conflict resolution, is scarce. In what strikes in accord with feminist geopolitics approaches, Bazilo and Bosse argue that:

“[A]lthough the ‘local’ turn in peace and conflict studies was first introduced over two decades ago, the focus on local actors and civil society, localized rights or local identities has remained highly contested and is often ‘rebuffed as romantic, relativist or particularistic, anti-democratic’ or ‘anti-developmental’. In recent years, however, the critical research agenda that seeks to recognize the agency and significance of actors at the sub-state level has re-gained considerable momentum with the introduction of the notion of ‘everyday peace’” (Bazilo and Bosse 2017: 95).

Moving on to discuss the Ukrainian context, the authors highlight that whereas the top-down narratives of the conflict by states and international intergovernmental organizations tend to reconfirm the status quo or the (neo-) liberal economic approach to peace; the bottom-up narratives by local civil society organizations identify the lack of understanding between people as a key determinant affecting the conflict and emphasize the unity among communities, the deconstruction of negative images of the ‘other’ and the rebuilding of empathy as the leading goals of dialogue and reconciliation. This thesis adopts similar perspective on geopolitics ‘from below’, hoping that it can provide new insight into the conflict that are useful in building peace.

2.5. Research questions

To summarise the literature discussed above and to point towards gaps in the literature that the current work is addressing, it is necessary to highlight that the way this chapter was divided into ‘conceptual framework’ and ‘area perspectives’ is intentional. To date, little to no conversation exists between scholars of the Euromaidan protests (and post-Euromaidan activism) and geographers’ work on activism (one brief exception is Della Porta 2018: 676). The Euromaidan protests are most often examined by area studies scholars (see Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008 on discussion of ‘post-socialism’) who often adopt classical state-centric geopolitical traditions. Within such approaches, little attention is paid to emotionality in relation to Ukrainian crisis. Whereas some scholars have considered the importance of affective atmospheres and emotions such as hope during the Euromaidan (e.g. Stepnisky 2018), discussions of post-Euromaidan society rarely if ever consider emotional dimensions of activism or the current political crisis in Ukraine. To redress this, I argue that adopting a feminist geopolitics perspective offers new insights into the everyday, embodied and emotional experiences of activism during the current Donbas war in Ukraine. The main research question of this thesis is:

What emotional geographies are revealed by focusing on activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine, and how do these emotional geographies contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this geopolitical crisis?

This work strives to answer the main research question by focusing on smaller researcher questions that address the interrelated social and spatial dimensions of emotions associated with activism in Ukraine during the Donbas war. The auxiliary questions that this thesis addresses include the following. Each empirical chapter addresses a combination of these questions:

- *How do activists in Ukraine negotiate dominant discourses about Donbas war?*
- *How do activists in Ukraine feel about war in Donbas?*
- *What practices constitute spaces of activism in Ukraine?*
- *What emotions circulate through spaces of activism?*
- *How are activists’ emotions managed?*
- *In what ways are emotions of activists productive of social relations?*
- *In what ways are emotions of activists productive of geographies?*

3. Research methodology

3.1. Introduction to research methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology employed within the research. It consists of six sections: 1) a brief outline of the feminist epistemology that informs this research; 2) a description of how the multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork unfolded in Ukraine; 3) a more detailed discussion of the data gathered through fieldwork and how it was interpreted while in the field and analysed upon return to the university; 4) challenges of working in multiple languages; 5) the positionality of the researcher, and how it influenced the research encounters and ‘situated knowledge’ produced as a result; and lastly 6) detailed description of ethical protocols employed in research.

3.2. Feminist epistemology informing research

The present section provides a brief outline of feminist epistemology and suggests the ways in which it has informed the current research. Particularly, I consider how focusing on emotions as a research object, employing ethnography as research methodology, and choosing certain ways of presenting findings in the final text of this thesis, are rooted in feminist methods. I also discuss how a feminist commitment to enlarging the frames of analysis to incorporate the researcher reveal ethical questions of researching activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan.

So, what does feminist research encompass? Are there any specific feminist methods? And in what ways are such methods important for the present study? As outlined in the literature review chapter (see §2.1.), feminist engagement with political geography grew out of dissatisfaction with the absence of women and gender in political geography that deals with such apparently ‘masculine’ phenomena as nation-building, war, terrorism, and international conflict (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Sharp 2007, 2009). Feminists challenge what constitutes an appropriate research object in geography by focusing on

women and gender (McDowell 1992). The scope of the present study is not on women's activism *per se*, although certain practices associated with post-Euromaidan activism discussed in the empirical chapters are clearly gendered. The main research 'objects' of this work are emotions.

Similarly to the way women and gender had for a long time been marginalised in studies of 'Political' phenomena, so were emotions. Feminist researchers argue that such marginalisation is symptomatic of post-Enlightenment systems of knowledge production that "privilege the apparently 'masculine' detachment, objectivity and rationality over apparently 'feminine' engagement, subjectivity, passion and desire" (Anderson and Smith 2001: 7; Sharp 2009: 75-6; Thrift 2004: 57-8; Thien 2005: 450). As an alternative, a conceptualization of the world as holistic and relational has been proposed by some feminist philosophers, based on Spinozian rather than Cartesian philosophy (e.g. Braidotti 1991). These philosophical foundations highlight relationality in the study of social interactions: meanings as *inter*-subjective and produced in the space of encounters *between* 'selves' (Bondi *et al* 2005; Butler 1988), private and public life as *inter*-connected (Anderson and Smith 2001: 8), scales of politics as relational and *inter*-linked (Pain and Staeheli 2014).

In other words, researching emotions challenges the Cartesian dual oppositions (mind/body, rational/emotional, culture/nature) characteristic of 'modern' 'Western' (terms that need problematising) thinking and ordering of the world (Hetherington 1997, Latour 1993). It views bodies and 'selves' as plural – *not* universal but culturally specific, socially positional, mediated with power, and, last but not least, emotional (Ahmed 2014; Jaggar and Bordo 1989; Longhurst 1995, Lynch and Walsh 2009). Researching the ways in which emotions are relevant to politics offers new insights into political phenomena, meanwhile providing critique of the systems of knowledge production in academia, that – as the feminist argument goes – are inseparable from the historical and spatial context from which they emerge. Within feminist paradigm, 'politics' are defined as a 'struggle over dominant meanings' (Waylen 1996, in Secor 2001:193) that permeates all scales and spheres of social life.

Focusing on emotions not only challenges what constitutes the appropriate research object, but also has implications for the ways in which we obtain and represent data gathered through research. In geography, feminist critique of knowledge production was

developed alongside other post-structuralist approaches during the ‘cultural turn’ (Aitken and Valentine 2006: 339). According to this critique, to unveil the workings of power while studying social processes scholars ought to be aware of how power relations inherent in the research encounter are (re-)produced through scientific texts (Clifford 1986: 13). In critical political geography, this awareness led to the proliferation of studies deconstructing texts by questioning who is ‘writing the place’ (Pinder 2005).

From the feminist point of view, while studying power relation in society, it is of paramount importance to enlarge the frame and incorporate the figure of the researcher into the analysis; highlighting how, by whom, and out of what contexts knowledge claims are made (Pain 2004; Sprague 2016). The commitment to reflexivity that (at least partially) affords deconstructing representations is characteristic of humanistic geographies (e.g. Holloway and Hubbard 2001), post-colonial geographies (e.g. Blunt and McEwan 2002), as well as (auto)ethnographic writing in social anthropology (Foley 2002) more broadly. Reflecting on the positionality of the researcher is important for this research too. By reflecting on my positionality, I attempt to understand how particular meanings were articulated by research participants vis-à-vis my ‘self’ while in the field (see §3.6.). Focusing on positionality was also important while writing up the research, asking how to represent the research encounters and what writing techniques to use to make the author – my ‘self’ – visible.

Questions of authorship are directly connected to questions of epistemology, and how we know and represent the world (Duncan and Ley 1993). Many traditional ‘masculine’ ethnographies make ‘absolute’ claims about certain places and cultures, presenting apparently coherent and complete reality, thus assuming God-like position in the text (Haraway 1988). I tried to avoid making such universal claims in the text, and instead acknowledged my partial perspective that grew out of specific encounters in the field. Arguably, ethnographic fieldwork is the research method best positioned to illustrate how ‘messy’ human experiences are and how subjective our judgement about the world is (Cragg and Cook 2007). Thirty years ago, Clifford Geertz argued that it is important to understand that scientific texts are constructed out of experiences broadly biographical (Geertz 1988: 10). As other social theorists demonstrated, subjective judgement plays an equally important role in conducting research within disciplines firmly positioned in the positivist paradigm that produce apparently objective knowledge claims (Latour and Woolgar 1986).

In contrast to critical political geography that incorporated discourse and textual analyses as its main method of challenging representations, feminist geopolitics scholars assert that deconstructing the figure of the author and the discourses (re-)produced by texts is not enough, as such exclusively textual analysis leaves the embodied and the everyday experiences of inequality intact (Sharp 2007: 385). Some researchers suggest that employing qualitative grounded methods is consistent with a feminist epistemology that is based on the assumption of the embodied and socially positioned subject (McDowell 1992: 400; Davis and Craven 2016). Reflecting on the work of such feminist geopoliticians as Lorraine Dowler and Joanne Sharp, Deborah Dixon highlights that reflexive ethnography is an exciting methodological approach well suited to researching embodied geopolitical practices and everyday life (Dixon 2015:45).

This study used lengthy ethnographic fieldwork as a research method, generating in-depth qualitative data that is presented in the following two sections of the chapter. What I would like to stress here is that the emotional intensities discussed in the empirical chapters of this thesis were not somehow existing ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered by the researcher; but were articulated, expressed and felt by research participants and myself during the fieldwork encounters. The suggestion that emotions are part of inter-subjective encounters is not new (Bondi 2005; Crang and Cook 2007). Conceptualising emotions as existing *in-between* ‘selves’ (Davidson *et al* 2005) also resonates with Judith Butler’s work on the performativity of gender (Butler 1988) that considers how meanings and norms are articulated in-between people.

In the context of this research, I consider emotions not only as research ‘objects’, but also as inherent parts of the process of conducting research. I thus follow scholars who highlight that emotional engagement with the field often not only affects, but directs and informs the research process (Askins 2009; Kay and Oldfield 2011). Researching emotions using the grounded ethnographic method in post-Euromaidan Ukraine proved to be intellectually stimulating, methodologically challenging and at times emotionally exhausting. As one of the contributions in a special issue of the *Emotion, Space and Society* dedicated to emotional methodologies recognized, the traditional methods of data collection are often inadequate in the face of trauma and conflict where what is unspoken may be most revealing (Lund 2012, in Baillie Smith and Jenkins 2012: 76).

Researching emotions raised questions of what strategies to choose to convey emotional intensities in writing. A lot of space in the final text of the thesis is dedicated to contextualising the case studies, and longer quotes from conversations are favoured in order to demonstrate how meanings are always contextual and dynamic. This strategy is characteristic of ethnographic texts more broadly. For example, Philippe Bourgois's (1996) *In Search of Respect* is written almost exclusively through the quotes and conversations of/with crack dealers from El Barrio, allowing (at least partially) the voices of research participants to speak for themselves. At times, my reliance on interview material (such as the discussion of Emma's trajectory of activism, see §6.) borders oral history research methods by offering insights into key events in the participant's life.

This leads me to the final observation about the production of the text. The scope of this thesis is limited to spaces of activism in post-Euromaidan Ukraine, and power relations circulating through those spaces as observed during the ethnographic fieldwork (April 2015 – July 2016). The coming into being of the thesis, however, is a result of my engagement with another 'location' through which the research was sponsored, facilitated, supervised, regulated, assessed and in many other ways influenced both this thesis and my 'self'. To reiterate the seemingly obvious – stated on the cover page of this thesis yet often obscured in academic texts – this research project was first and foremost produced not in the field, but at Northumbria University at Newcastle in the United Kingdom.

As other researchers note, "it is important to understand that research on social relations *is made out of social relations* which develop within and between the multiple sites of researchers' 'expanded fields'" (Crang and Cook 2007: 9, authors' emphasis). Writing about my position as located between the two spaces of the university (and not only) in the United Kingdom and activist organisations (and not only) in Ukraine is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is certainly problematic and worth mentioning here, particularly because researching a country in war poses a number of difficult ethical concerns (for ethical processes, see §3.7.).

As discussed in the positionality section of the chapter (see §3.6.), Ukraine is a familiar and familial place to me – my mother comes from a small town of Horodok¹¹ in the

¹¹ All place names smaller than regional centres (such as Lviv, Kyiv and Kharkiv), names of research participants, and names of organisations have been concealed in the thesis in order to preserve confidentiality of research participants.

Khmelnyskyi region. I spent a lot of time in Horodok during my childhood and visited several times as an adult. My last albeit brief visit to Ukraine, including Lviv, was in the summer of 2013. Arriving to Ukraine in 2015, however, meant entering an altogether different space inflicted by fear and uncertainty. Upon arrival, I met many people who were applying for foreign visas to be able to leave the country should the war spread beyond Donbas. Young men were taken off the streets and drafted into the army. My ex-boyfriend Serezha who accompanied me during some periods of fieldwork was once checked by the armed military officers when getting off the train during one of the ‘waves of mobilisation’. One of my male relatives had been sent a conscription letter and was hiding from military service because he was convinced that he would simply become cannon fodder if drafted. There were stories in the news that when dead bodies of soldiers were sent home, the state did not always acknowledge that they had died in combat. *Volontery* rather than the state provided soldiers with food, shoes, socks, helmets – social phenomenon I explore in the literature review (see §2.4.) and one of empirical chapters (see §5.). The realisation of the enormous human ‘cost’ of war was truly horrifying.

Observing this situation and confronted with other problems in the field, I was asking myself questions about the neo-colonial nature of knowledge production – how do I understand this war? Why did I come here? For what purposes? How and by whom will this research be used? Needless to say, confronting these questions stretched far beyond the proforma questions raised by the university Ethical Committee about the informed consent of participants. Rather, they are concerned with where am I located in relation to these two ‘locations’, and how can I proceed with building meaningful and responsible relations both in the field, in the text and in an academic setting. These thoughts had such an overwhelming effect that during one month long break with family in Horodok, I was considering terminating my PhD altogether. Whilst in the end I decided to proceed with the research, these questions re-surfaced in the final stages of writing up the thesis. Selecting what to write about, what not to write about, and how to retain my moral integrity and emotional health in the process were among the biggest challenges in this research.

3.3. Multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine

The present study used ethnography as a research method. Ethnography is a qualitative social research method that has been used by social scientists for almost a century now (Bernard 2006: 345-7). The traditional ethnographies involve undertaking lengthy ethnographic fieldwork. In the introduction to the *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Clifford Geertz notes that ethnographers manage to persuade their audience of the validity of claims about different cultures because of their “capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly ‘been there’” (Geertz 1988: 4-5). In this sense, ethnography is a grounded method that is geared towards developing an understanding of the ‘local’ interpretations of certain cultural phenomena (Geertz 1973), while at the same time it is a carefully crafted text.

The traditional ethnographic fieldwork site was understood as a bounded ‘container’ of social relations located in a particular place. What constitutes the field has been challenged by the scholars of technology and globalisation sensitive to postcolonial critique in social sciences. Some researchers have argued that on the onset of the modern technological and globalised age, the ‘local’ can no longer be explored as detached from the ‘global’ processes (Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1995). This view of the single ‘bounded’ fieldwork site as obsolete also relates to the critique of representation that challenged earlier accounts and representation of other cultures in postcolonial contexts (Clifford 1988). Moreover, given that ethnography is a text, it is worth asking how localities are ‘produced’ rather than ‘found’ (Law and Urry 2004, in Crang and Cook 2007: 12-3).

In contrast to traditional approaches, multi-sited ethnography allows researchers to trace the connections and to explore relationships distributed across space. While reflecting on his study of foreign news correspondents, Ulf Hannerz argues that what different sites have in common in multi-sited projects is ‘that they draw on some problem, some formulation of a topic, which is significantly *translocal*, not to be confined within some single place’ (Hannerz 2003: 206, author’s emphasis). Hence employing multi-sited ethnography brings to light the relationships between sites that are as important as the relationships within them. Such a definition acknowledges that ‘the field’ is not only a

‘place’ or ‘location’, but also a ‘perspective’ (Falzon 2016). These observations are important for the present study too, as multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork was employed to explore spaces of activism in post-Euromaidan Ukraine.

To gather data for the present study, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in three different cities over a period of fifteen months (April 2015 – July 2016, including language training). Pursuing the perspective(s) of activists in different regions of Ukraine on the political crisis unfolding after the Euromaidan revolution is what directed my fieldwork. Here are the details of time spent in each fieldwork site, and names of key activist organisations I engaged with:

- 20/04/2015 – 04/08/2015 language training in Lviv and time spent in Horodok;
- 12/08/2015 – 09/12/2015 Kyiv, observations in *Camouflage Nets*;
- 10/12/2015 – 09/06/2016 Kharkiv, observations in *Feminist Hub*, *Kharkiv Media*;
- 10/06/2016 – 19/07/2016 Vyshneve, observations in *Displacement Relief*.

This outline of fieldwork sites and time spent in each city is very different to what was planned in the original research proposal. Before departing for fieldwork, I planned to spend one and a half months in Lviv to study Ukrainian language, and after that carry out dual-sited ethnographic research in Kyiv and a smaller town, provisionally planned in the Poltava region. I intended to explore the Euromaidan revolution that took place (mainly but not only) on the Maidan square in Kyiv, while using the theoretical frameworks of the emotional geographies.

However, by the time I arrived in Ukraine, not only had the Euromaidan protests ended, but Crimea had also been annexed by Russia and the armed conflict in Donbas (Donetsk and Lughansk regions) had begun. Driven by the imperative to conduct a study of contemporary events rather than focusing on history and memory of protests, I decided to focus on the activist organizations functioning at the time of my fieldwork to explore how pro-Ukrainian activists perceive and negotiate war in Donbas. While based in Kyiv, I was doing participant observation in an informal collective of women here called *Camouflage Nets* who – as the name suggests – were making camouflage nets for the Ukrainian army. I had not met any of the women before arriving to Kyiv, it was a common acquaintance from London who introduced me to them. After some time in Kyiv, I also felt an urge to move to the eastern regions of the country closer to the conflict zone. Given

the UK Foreign Office Travel Advice's prohibition¹² to travel to the Donetsk and Lughansk regions that Northumbria University followed, moving to Donbas was not possible.

In November 2015, I arranged a trip to Kharkiv together with Serezha and my Ukrainian friend Anna whom I met through studies in Estonia. During the trip, Anna introduced me to Jacob – a journalist who later became one of the key research participants and a gatekeeper to *Kharkiv Media*. Before the trip, many of my Kyiv acquaintances frowned upon my intentions to visit Kharkiv. According to them, Kharkiv embodies the Soviet greyness and monotony, i.e. was not a place that deserves visiting yet alone moving to; also, it was considered 'untrustworthy' by them because during the *Russian Spring* it was claimed by separatists. If anything, these comments encouraged rather than discouraged me from going to Kharkiv to explore an alternative articulation of the political crisis. During the trip, I became more aware of the history of the city as embedded in Russian imperial and Soviet projects much more firmly than Lviv or Kyiv. In addition to these 'theoretical' considerations, Jacob's kind offer to help with finding accommodation, made my decision to move to Kharkiv final. In December, Serezha and myself moved to Kharkiv – the city that became my key research site.

While in Kharkiv, I was conducting participant observation mainly in *Kharkiv Media* and *Feminist Hub* – a feminist awareness raising educational organisation whose director I met during the first trip to the city and who was keen to involve me in their activities. In addition to these more regular and consistent engagements, I often visited other formal and informal organisations that were created after the beginning of war in Donbas: a centre for soldiers passing through Kharkiv on the way to/from war zone, an informal collective of wives of soldiers, psychologists working with soldiers, various organisations helping Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The latter was particularly the interesting to me. On the one hand, I wanted to research displaced persons' experience of the conflict. More importantly, the pro-Ukrainian activists whom I worked with had a profoundly negative view of displaced persons, blaming them for insufficient support for the Euromaidan that apparently opened an opportunity for Russian proxies to take over regional administrations in Donetsk and Lughansk.

¹² Still valid as of 12/06/2018, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ukraine>.

Whereas I visited some IDP organisations in Kharkiv, I also wanted to move to a smaller town in the region in order to explore how these narratives about war and Euromaidan were being articulated between displaced persons and hosting communities. Moving to a smaller town seemed like a belated (but still important) rapprochement with the original plan of moving to a small town in Poltava region. So, I started looking for such place. At the end of April, during a trip to the town Kvitka in Kharkiv region with an activist promoting local cultural tourism, I met Marta – a displaced person from Donetsk who worked in the IDP centre in Vyshneve called here the *Displacement Relief*. Marta happened to be travelling on that day to Kvitka as well, and my companion arranged for her party to give us a lift. Like Jacob in Kharkiv during my first trip to the city, Marta became a key research participant and gatekeeper who introduced me to the *Displacement Relief*. Moreover, when I called her a month and a half after our accidental meeting, asking whether I could come to visit, she offered me to stay at her house with her and her teenage daughter Vera. I moved to Vyshneve in middle of June 2016 and stayed there for just over a month. My fieldwork was approaching the end, I felt that I was not learning much new information, and the heat of summer in the steppe environment was unbearable.

Whereas I described above the trajectories of moving between three fieldwork locations, it is also necessary to make a note in relation to other places in Ukraine that I do not focus on in the thesis, but that became formative experiences for my fieldwork. The first such place in Lviv, and the second is Horodok in the Khmelnytskyi region where my family is from. Only towards the end of the fieldwork I realised how important my experiences in Lviv and in Horodok had been.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I viewed Lviv mainly as a place of language training with a teacher from a local university. Because of the anxieties and moral dilemmas described above, and also a delay in transferring money to the teacher by Northumbria University, the language classes had to be put on hold. For a period of over a month I moved to Horodok to stay with my family. I am not including Horodok in the description of fieldwork primarily because I was not doing participant observation in an activist organisation there. That said, the experiences of my family certainly informed my own perspective on the conflict and are thus covered in the positionality section of this chapter (see §3.6.).

When I returned to Lviv for the second time to continue with language training, I accidentally bumped on the street into Vlad – an activist who was running informal youth organisation called here *Connected Youth*. The organisation hosted young people mostly arriving to Lviv for studies, exchange, or other purposes. I stayed in their hostel while in Lviv, sharing a room with Laura – a recent arts graduate who moved to Lviv after the annexation of Crimea. Throughout the fieldwork, whenever I travelled to Lviv, I stayed in their hostel. I also visited the organisation several times after the fieldwork was over. Whereas the *Connected Youth* did not have any clear focus – Vlad often repeated that the organisation was created to ‘bring the values of Euromaidan into society’ – many young people who were permanently living in the hostel were involved in the activities of their sister organisation called here *United Ukraine*.

In contrast to the informal *Connected Youth*, the *United Ukraine* was a well-organised officially registered organisation that, as part of their activity, was organising youth summer work camps in Donbas to help restore dwellings destroyed by war. Moreover, the *United Ukraine* was also working on setting up youth hubs first in two cities in Donbas that were among those captured by separatists at the beginning of war and later liberated by the Ukrainian army, and later in other locations in Ukraine. An important part of the organisation was promoting ‘patriotic values’ through such projects as painting murals in public spaces that consisted mostly of sayings by national Ukrainian writers and/or included paintings of Ukrainian national symbols and/or other ‘patriotic’ imagery. I visited their ‘branches’ twice, once while my ex-boyfriend Serezha who is an anarchist graffiti artist volunteered with them in the summer of 2016.

Overall, while seemingly fragmented, what the multi-sited fieldwork conducted in Ukraine demonstrates is that whereas social relations among activists in Ukraine might be sustained through, they are certainly not confined to, some ‘bounded’ place. Following the connections between organisations and research sites, as well as comparing them allowed for a more inductive and iterative approach that used empirical data to drive the theoretical framework of the research (O’Reilly 2012: 30; Schensul *et al* 1999: 1). On the ground, it meant interpreting the encounters in the process of doing fieldwork, and making mundane practical decisions whom to talk to and whom not to talk to, which events to attend and which not to attend, what places to visit and what places to not visit. In this sense, the apparent imbalance of time spent, and depth of relationships developed in each fieldwork site is a direct reflection of the flexibility of research.

What such a bent fieldwork trajectory revealed was the complexity of social reality in post-Euromaidan Ukraine and the regional differences in understanding and feeling about the Euromaidan and war. The change of the initially planned research trajectory and time allocation to different sites was influenced by, on the one hand, the development of the political situation on the ground; and on the other, a shift in theoretical focus while in the field. It is thus consistent with the trait characteristic of multi-sited ethnography, when research sites are selected ‘gradually and cumulatively, as new insights develop, as opportunities come into sight, and to some extent by chance’ (Hannerz 2003: 207). By pointing out how and through whom I was entering new ‘locations’ and gaining access, I intended to demonstrate how the snowballing network of contacts had developed during my fieldwork, and to illustrate the role chance acquaintances, trips and events played.

That being said, the majority of activists with whom I worked occupy a particular position within Ukrainian society – middle class people of different ages who live in big cities and have a firm ‘pro-Ukrainian’ position. Spaces of activism are very specific spaces within society, and have a lot of similarities across the country in relation to how political values and the emotions associated with them are embodied and reproduced through spaces of activism. Exploring these political values is at the core of the current work. It is also this focus that united the process of conducting research in organisations with such seemingly different profiles as raising awareness of gendered inequalities, making of news, and weaving camouflage nets for the army. It is further explored in the empirical chapters of the thesis.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

The section above discussed the trajectory of fieldwork that this research took. Ethnography is an overarching term that includes several research methods. This section focuses in more detail on what types of methods were used on the ground, what data they produced, and how this data was analysed upon departure from the field.

During the fieldwork, I was conducting participant observation in the four organisations listed in the section above. Participant observation is a research method that presupposes emersion in research participants' lives while remaining an observing outsider (O'Reilly 2012: 96). Given that my research was focused on activist organisations, I was striving to become involved and where possible volunteer in the organisation's activities.

For example, while doing participant observation in the *Camouflage Nets*, I was regularly attending daily meetings and was making nets and camouflage costumes together with the women. In the *Feminist Hub*, I volunteered to run a weekly film club over the course of three months. Where I was not able to participate in the activities of the organisation directly – such as *Kharkiv Media* where professional journalistic skills were required – I tried to run twice weekly English language classes and frequently attended public events organised by the centre. In a similar manner, work in *Displacement Relief* was strictly distributed among paid members of staff. However, I frequently visited the organisation, and managed to persuade the director to allow me to join the centre's trips to the villages – one of the ways specific packages of humanitarian aid were distributed among the displaced persons. In addition to the above, throughout the fieldwork, I attended a number of events organised or attended by research participants, and sometimes joined work and/or leisure trips both within and beyond research 'sites', such as a journalistic assignment trip to Kalynivka described in one of the empirical chapters (see §4).

All of these activities were recorded in my fieldwork diary, kept episodically before arrival in Kyiv, and more consistently thereafter. My fieldwork diary consisted of four hand-written A5 format notebooks, that at the end of fieldwork covered over 700 pages of text (see Figure 2). Different types of information were recorded, including the daily routines and 'rituals' of the organisations, what participants talked about during the meetings, how many people were attending particular events, spatial arrangements of locations, as well as my own thoughts about events of the day. Usually, I would write the diary entries in the evening, and would glue in some pieces of secondary material, such as: flyers, brochures, event programmes, maps, receipts, or notes made on odd pieces of paper into the diary. Other sources of secondary data, such as local newspapers, documents and books, were kept separately. Keeping the fieldwork diary was very important to reflect upon research encounters and themes emerging from fieldwork. Whenever I heard or saw something that I considered particularly important for research,

I would make a *nota bene* mark next to the entry. At the end of fieldwork, I scanned all the pages of fieldwork diary to have a digital version.

The other type of diary that I kept throughout the research was photographic. Along with a small notepad, a camera was among one of the key things always present in my pocket. Research participants usually did not consider it as a problem, and sometimes even asked me to share photos I took to use for their own purposes. In the course of the fieldwork, I collected over 10,000 photos. Such a large volume speaks to the frantic nature of my photographic endeavour, as during the events I tried to capture everything that caught my eye. For example, during an exhibition of children's painting on Europe Day in Horodok, I took over 50 photos of these paintings alone. Given that I did not have any specific methodology of what and how to photograph, and that the diary consists of a mixture of research-related and personal photos, I did not analyse these photos as 'research data'. That said, the photographic diary was invaluable in reconstructing fieldwork encounters while writing up.

In addition to conducting participant observation, I used interviews as a research method. Overall, I undertook twenty unstructured interviews. The interview length varied quite significantly, from 30 minutes to over 3 hours. The average length of interviews is 1 hour 40 minutes. The first two pilot interviews were carried out in Lviv on my first and second visit to the city. After that, I realised that there was a need for some time to better understand the situation on the ground in order to be able to ask more sensitive and meaningful questions.

While in Kyiv, I still did not feel comfortable enough to arrange interviews with members of *Camouflage Nets*. This might be due to the fact that I was meeting with members of the organisation in the evenings (and once during a celebration of organisation's 'birthday', and during the Independence Day when we went to watch the parade) when the making of the nets would take place in a room filled with people. It did not seem to be an appropriate environment to carry out interviews. Also, whereas members spoke in both Ukrainian and Russian languages between themselves, I wanted to practice Ukrainian and thought that this would demonstrate my solidarity with them. My mother-tongue is Russian, and because of the affinity of languages, I could understand the Ukrainian language very well. Formulating the ideas and having fluid conversation was not so easy though, as I would often stumble upon words and substitute Ukrainian with

Russian words, thus speaking in the mixed Ukrainian-Russian ‘dialect’ that is often referred to in Ukraine as *surzhyk*. I did ask questions, but the resulting conversations had a different dynamic from one-to-one interviewing and were more like a focus group discussion with the exception that I did not have a chance to record anything – my hands were literally tied tying knots.

The majority of interviews I undertook come from conversing with activists in Kharkiv and were carried out in Russian. This is an outcome of the time spent in this research site, and the depth of relationships that I developed over the course of the six months in the city. It also reflects my decision to conduct interviews after I had built a better understanding of the social reality on the ground, and the strategy to take interviews after developing trusting relationships with research participants. This was particularly important when talking about sensitive topics, such as research participant Emma’s family history.

Taking time also allowed me to think about the questions and to find background information relevant to particular interviews. All interviews were unstructured and focused on the themes that were of relevance to specific research participants. This strategy resulted in in-depth interviews in which research participants openly and in detail talked about their personal experiences and themes important to them, thus becoming one of the stepping stones in gradual building of trust and rapport between the researcher and research participants (Bernard 2006: ix). Yet such a nuanced approach also had its drawbacks, raising questions of how to analyse interviews focused sometimes on very different topics upon return to Newcastle.

The reason why I did not take any interviews in Vyshneve is also related to rapport – in the space of one month I did not feel that I managed to build sufficient trust with members of *Displacement Relief*, apart from my host Marta. The organisation was in a rather precarious position, juggling between not very sympathetic local authorities and international donors requiring strict accountability for the humanitarian aid the organisation was distributing – themes I explore in one of the empirical chapters (see §7.4.). This resulted in a hectic and stressful environment that I did not feel comfortable intervening in. Instead, I conversed informally about this with Marta on her experiences after she would return from work, and would make entries in my diary. I was also making notes after the trips to the villages. By this stage, however, I was rather fatigued by fieldwork, and was eager to return to the UK.

To turn now to data analysis, as mentioned in the section focused on fieldwork trajectory, broad research themes were developed in the process of gathering data. This process is similar to how Okely describes fieldwork that at the beginning adopts an open-ended approach to different types of information, and that gradually refines fieldwork materials out of which themes gradually emerge (Okely 2002). Here, the gathering of material is inseparable from continuing interpretation; as ideas, voices, and materials are discarded and fieldwork progresses.

In my research, where fieldwork developed following certain themes and where interviews were not conducted in all research sites, the fieldwork diary played a more important role than interview transcripts in data analysis. While thinking about themes I wanted to discuss in the final thesis, and patterns that emerged from fieldwork, after a preliminary reading of data I transcribed and analysed only those portions of interviews

directly related, or speaking to, the key events and themes. Because of the unstructured nature of the interviews taken with activists from different spheres, a lot of material was speaking about their sphere-specific experiences and was not always relevant to the theoretical focus. The process of refining the theoretical scope of the thesis and selecting exactly what material to use out of the ‘messy’ empirical data was another challenge of the project.

Interview transcripts were then analysed using ‘grounded theory’ that is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss 2008). In relation to data analysis, after preliminarily listening to all the interviews, I transcribed the portions of interviews that spoke to the recurring themes. I then did a close line-by-line reading of the transcripts, meanwhile labelling/coding the text. As more refined themes emerged, other cycles of coding were carried out, thus building up detailed analysis. Provisional larger quotes to be used in the final text were selected at this stage as well. Thus, I kept the ‘iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, used comparative methods, and kept interacting and being involved with data and emerging analysis’ (Charmaz 2014: 1).

Overall, the final text of the thesis was written after analysing a combination of sources of data using grounded theory: a fieldwork diary and a photographic diary that contained themes emerging during the encounters in the field, as well as analysis of interviews with research participants. It was by ‘reconfiguring this data, looking at it much more carefully and critically, and de- and recontextualizing different parts, I was able to see new themes and patterns in it’ (Crang and Cook 2007: 133). Employing these rigorous methods of data analysis ensured validity of the claims made in the thesis. However, the partiality of knowledge claims also has to be acknowledged, a theme I turn to while discussing how my positionality influenced research encounters and the data gathered throughout them. Before proceeding to discuss this, I would like to briefly mention challenges of working in multiple languages while conducting fieldwork and analysing data.

3.5. Challenges of working in multiple languages

Before proceeding to discuss the partiality of knowledge claims made in this thesis, and how such knowledge claims arose from my ‘situated gaze’ upon activism in Ukraine, I would like to briefly touch on the subject of language. In a following section, I explore how learning Ukrainian language allowed me to negotiate access to the field, as well as better navigate the ‘political’ meanings imbued in using Ukrainian and Russian languages in Ukraine after the Euromaidan (§4.2., §4.4., §6.5.). Here, I focus on ‘practical’ issues of language use, related to communication with research participants and translation practices undertaken in research.

Overall, learning Ukrainian language and communicating with research participants in their language on the day-to-day basis was not problematic for me. The knowledge of Russian (my mother-tongue) allowed me to have a good passive understanding of Ukrainian even before travelling to Ukraine. Upon arrival to the field, the level of proficiency in Ukrainian increased exponentially through one-to-one intensive language training in Lviv. So, already couple of months into the fieldwork I became relatively fluent in Ukrainian. Everyday communication with my research participants were conducted both in Russian and in Ukrainian, depending on what language participants preferred to use. My fieldwork diary was kept in Russian, and, when I recorded quotes of Ukrainian-speaking participants, in Ukrainian. In terms of data processing, I transcribed interviews in the language they were recorded in, translating chunks of text into English during the first and second cycles of analysis.

Within the project, the main challenges in terms of language use related not to everyday communication with participants, but to my lack of scientific vocabulary of human geography in ‘local’ languages. All my higher education qualifications were undertaken in the UK, and in terms of academic parlance, my preferred language is English. I rarely read scientific texts or converse about scientific topics in languages other than English. The ability to participate in everyday conversations in a language does not automatically ‘translate’ into knowledge of technical language(s), such as academic jargon. For me, the main challenge was not the issue many ‘Western’ researchers face when arriving in ‘the Rest’ of the world – developing proficiency in ‘local’ language. Research participants I worked with were well educated people who were curious about my research. In answering their queries, I oftentimes found myself struggling when ‘translating’ between

academic English and academic Ukrainian (and Russian) in searching for terminology for such concepts as ‘identity’ and ‘emotional geographies’.

Related to the latter point, I would like to note that ability to speak the language does not automatically translate into an in-depth understanding of discourses within which particular words acquire certain meanings. ‘Decoding’ such discourses and cultural messages takes more than a knowledge of words. A detailed discussion of how such two words as *boyeviki* and *opolchency* are used by pro-Euromaidan activists in Ukraine (see §4.2.) is just one example of deciphering cultural meanings that the ethnographic fieldwork was geared towards.

3.6. Positionality and research encounters

As outlined in the introductory section of this methodology, since the 1990s postcolonial and feminist scholars have persuasively argued that it is necessary to acknowledge power relations embedded in research encounters by drawing attention to the positionality of researcher. Positionality is often defined as characteristics of the researcher, such as age, class, ethnicity, religion; and/or other ‘the social and economic locations, which, at each historical moment, have particular implications vis-à-vis the grid of power relations in society’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 199-202). According to Nira Yuval-Davis, the ‘social locations’ that we occupy are never constructed along one power axis, and that is why adopting an intersectional approach is crucial. As living and embodied beings, our ‘social locations’ are constructed along multiple axes of difference that cannot be analysed as items that are ‘added up’ but rather, as co-constructing each other, because there is no separate concrete meaning of single social divisions (ibid.).

In other words, the research encounter is ‘an embodied activity that draws in our whole physical person, along with all its inescapable identities’ (Crang and Cook 2007: 9). Fieldwork is highly biographical and situated: ‘this ethnographer, in this time, in this place, with these informants, these commitments, and these experiences, a representative of a particular culture, a member of a certain class’ (Geertz 1988: 5). Acknowledging

one's position is important not only in understanding why the fieldwork unfolded the way it did and what factors influenced the researcher's relationships with the researched (e.g. Sharp 2004), but also what kind of 'partial perspectives' and 'situated knowledges' influenced the production of research outputs. This section explores my perspective on the Ukrainian crisis, conditioned by my positionality and specific geographies that my 'self' is embedded in, thus pointing to what perspectives this thesis grows out of.

The question of partial perspective in social research is important, because as scholars of society, all researchers occupy a somewhat 'in-between' position: located in society and at the same time looking at it from a distance (Rodman 1992). Nowhere is the discussion of 'in-betweenness' as prominent as in debates about 'home ethnographies' conducted by 'native' scholars. Some researchers argue that the perspective of the outsider is more privileged because of the 'ability to more easily read society's unconscious grammar, while others insist that the insider view is far superior because of familiarity to groups under study' (O'Reilly 2012: 98). Such a polarisation between a 'foreign' scholar apparently oblivious to given culture, and a 'native' scholar apparently possessing cultural affinity is problematic. Narayan suggests that it might be timely to set the dichotomous insider/outsider labels aside, and focus instead on the quality of relations with research participants, viewing them as 'subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas – people to whom we are bonded through the ties of reciprocity and who may even be critical of our professional enterprise' (Narayan 1993: 671-2). Such a proposition strikes a chord with how I conceptualised the relationships between my research participants, as equal interlocutors who, similarly to me, are trying to make sense of reality.

While I was ascribing certain identities and opinions to research participants, the *vice versa* process of identities and opinions being ascribed to me by research subjects was taking place. Exploring what identities are ascribed to the researcher by the members of the communities can be a fruitful exercise (Horowitz 1986: 411); as these are culturally embedded (Katz 2015) and draw on particular imagined geographies that research encounters are located in. The agency of both researchers and the researched to re-articulate and re-negotiate such identities should not be downplayed here.

For example, while describing his experiences as a white male person walking in the dark hours of night on the streets of inner city, Philippe Bourgois (1998) noted the limited 'repertoire' of how his being in this specific place and time could have been interpreted

by the onlookers. Yet it was up to him to negotiate those ‘scripts’ during the encounter – an activity which is always highly situational and depends on a myriad of factors: whom the researcher is talking to, when, where, under what circumstances. Similarly, during my fieldwork, whereas under some circumstances I would ‘perform’ certain ‘scripts’ that I intuitively felt were expected of me – such as during the visit to Vysoke University described below – at other times I engaged in lengthy discussions to clarify my position in relation to certain topics, such as during conversations in *Kharkiv Media* with Jacob about displaced persons from Donbas.

Stressing mutuality in research encounters does not mean painting a rosy picture of research devoid of uneasiness and conflict. As the moral dilemmas in the opening section of this chapter describe, facing the scale of human tragedy inflicted by war put my own ‘self’ into question, and set off the rather uncomfortable internal conversation: who am I, why am I here, and how can I proceed (or not proceed) with my research. This internal conversation conditioned by the geographies I am embedded in and my life experiences was influencing the way I interacted with the subjects of my research. More often than not, conversations and encounters with them were not easy, because participants’ views of conflict and possible ways of living and acting were often different from mine. That said, I do perceive the research encounters as a site for mutual construction of meaning and negotiation of power and social relations, rather than a process of mere ‘collecting data’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1997, in Bitsch 2018: 5).

The section below describes three distinct aspects of my positionality that were most important during my research. Following the fieldwork encounters, I define myself here as a: 1) Russian-speaking person from the Baltics; 2) with a provincial Ukrainian working class gaze; who is 3) not an activist.

3.6.1. Russian-speaker from the Baltics

In February 2016, the director of the *Feminist Hub* – an organisation I was volunteering for, asked if I could attend the all-Ukrainian feminist conference at Vysoke University in central Ukraine. There was no one from the organisation who could spare four days for the trip, and so I agreed to go. Upon arrival in Vysoke, I presented the recent activities of the centre and talked about the film club that I was running. After the presentation, an organiser of the event rushed to me and started to say how wonderful it is that I have joined their conference and that the following day another event that I should attend – a celebration of the university’s birthday – is going to take place. She then stormed out of the room, and after some time came back with a man who, as I understood, occupied some high position in the university. He too started asking me to join their celebration, pointing that one of the women from our conference Marina – assistant head of department from Pivnichne University – will also be there, and that I could travel with her from the hotel. I did not want to go, but after such insistence refusing seemed to be impolite.

The next day, Marina and myself arrived at the university and were escorted to a big conference room divided into two parts – a long table, and rows of chairs for the audience. Our guide pointed Marina to a chair in the audience, meanwhile pointing me to sit me at the table. I thought that this was a mistake – surely Marina is supposed to sit at the table, and I in the audience! The organiser, however, pointed me to the place at the table where a special badge with my name and the name of Northumbria University was placed. Only then did I realise why she was texting me the night before asking for these details. She also proudly stated that all of their event programs had to be speedily reprinted to incorporate my name!

With the exception of two ladies and myself, the table was occupied by men in suits. One by one, they were standing up, and giving a talk about the university: how many years they worked there, how rich the history of university is, what famous people came out of it, and what memorable events took place. Gradually, the ‘queue’ of presenters was approaching me. I felt confused – not only had I nothing to do with this university, I was also dressed in a pair of jeans and a bomber sweater a friend donated to me before I departed for fieldwork. The whole situation would have been rather comical, was I not desperately thinking of what to say.

When my turn came, I stood up and in Ukrainian started to introduce myself, apologizing for my lack of language proficiency, and explaining that I only recently started to learn the language. Suddenly, one of the suited men shouted: ‘If only Ukrainian people spoke as well in Ukrainian as you do!’. The audience erupted in applause.

I went on saying that I am from the Baltics and that I came to Ukraine to study the Euromaidan for my PhD in Britain, that I am very glad to be here, and that I congratulate them on this important occasion. The audience seemed satisfied. Finally, after everybody spoke and the grand symposium was concluded, I sighed in relief and was ready to leave the room. But this was not the end. As I was getting ready to leave the room, a cameraman who was filming the event approached me, and said that he had been ‘living’ in the Maidan Square for months, and that I should come to his office tomorrow, and he will share the video from this event with me, and will also show photos he made during the Euromaidan. The fact that he just met me did not seem to bother him at all, as I had managed to reproduce the ‘script’ of a ‘prestigious foreigner’ who is supporting Ukraine.

The example of my experiences at Vysoke University is, perhaps, extreme. But it is certainly not unique. Throughout my fieldwork in Ukraine, whenever I spoke to Ukrainians and mentioned that I am from the Baltics and am studying in the UK, the reaction was always very positive. The fact that, as a person from the Baltics, I was doing research in Ukraine and was willing to speak Ukrainian was almost exclusively read by my interlocutors as a token of support of and solidarity with Ukraine (and Euromaidan). Such reactions are rooted in the particular histories of the Baltic countries in the post-socialist space, how the political crisis in Ukraine reinvigorated these histories, and how Ukrainian people I talked to re-interpreted them.

In the Soviet Union, the Baltic countries (Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) were perceived as the most ‘developed’ ‘Western’ republics and were also viewed as the most nationalistic. Whereas Ukraine was not independent in the Interwar period, the Baltic states were. During the collapse of Soviet Union, the Baltic countries were among the first to declare independence, organising the ‘Baltic chain’ and ‘singing revolutions’. Right after the collapse, because of the strong anti-Soviet sentiments and fear of Russian invasion, Baltic countries promptly submitted accession documents to NATO and the European Union. Throughout the Euromaidan, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and beginning of war in Donbas, leaders of the Baltic states (particularly Lithuania) were

vocal supporters of Ukraine, and were pressing for EU sanctions against Russia. Thus, in the eyes of ‘patriotic’ Ukrainians, I was often seen as automatically supporting Euromaidan and Ukraine’s war with Russia, because I was the ‘embodiment’ of Baltics.

Let me now turn to discussing my positionality. I was born and grew up in the Baltics (Latvia and Lithuania); my parents are of mixed heritage. My mother is Ukrainian, and came to live in Latvia in the 1980s and my father was Latvian. Between themselves and with their children my parents spoke in Russian – a very common phenomenon among mixed heritage families made during the Soviet times. So, my mother tongue is Russian. Whereas during the Soviet times Russian was *lingua franca* and had preferential treatment, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the situation in ‘newly nationalising’ countries reversed.

As a child literally growing up in the ruins of the Soviet Union – a favourite past-time during my childhood was hanging around the building sites abandoned as a result of the collapse of Soviet Union – I experienced the language politics of ‘nationalising’ states *in situ*. The local school with the Russian language of instruction that I was attending, and that my mother taught in, in Riga was undergoing educational reform in the 1990s. My mother had to keep passing Latvian language exams in order to be able to continue teaching, as language policy right after the collapse was pursued with a certain zeal. She did not speak Latvian. Living in the Soviet Union and in a city where over forty percent of the population spoke Russian, she did not consider it necessary. In addition to difficulties with language, for more than ten years she was living with the non-citizen ‘alien’ passport issued by Latvian authorities (after refusing to take up Ukrainian citizenship – living in Latvia with Ukrainian citizenship would have been even more difficult).

Following my mother’s second marriage, we moved to Lithuania. I was ten years old. My mother started working in a factory sewing branded ‘Western’ clothes – before Lithuania joined the European Union, this was a very common enterprise in Vilnius region mostly run by German owners. The economic situation was generally not good, and for those who did not have language skills the job market was even poorer. A school with Russian as the language of instruction that I attended in Vilnius was undergoing educational reform as well. The reform consisted of closing down Russian language schools, because the number of people who wanted to educate their children in the language of the

‘occupier’ was rapidly decreasing, and also because many Russian-speaking couples were now sending their children to Lithuanian-language schools – it was thought more beneficial for children’s further education and career. Schools that were not closed down were gradually switched to following ‘quotas’ on the percentage of the curriculum that had to be taught in national language. During the secondary school exams, I took a Maths exam in Lithuanian, after twelve years of being taught Maths mostly in Russian.

My experience of nationalism in the Baltic states is very specific – it is now almost thirty years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the politics towards/of Russian-speakers have certainly changed over time. As a scholar of the region, I do understand why ‘national projects’ in the 1990s Baltics were so zealous, how these projects are embedded in the particular histories and geographies. I am also lucky, as my father’s side of the family is Latvian. I am able to listen to and empathise with ‘the other’ side of the story. However, my personal childhood and early adulthood experiences of ontological insecurity tied to a marginalised position in society had left me with a certain distaste for nationalism.

Whereas during the fleeting encounters such as at Vysoke University I would consciously reproduce the ‘scripts’ that were expected of me – ‘scripts’ assuming rather nationalistic position and sympathy for (as the dominant narrative goes) the Ukrainian struggle for independence from Russia (assumed inheritor of the Soviet Union) – in sustained interactions with research participants, a more nuanced picture came to the forefront. Most clearly, I voiced my critical perspective on the post-Euromaidan project of belonging during the discussions about displaced persons from Donbas in *Kharkiv Media*. I am not sure how such research participants as Emma and Jacob interpreted my views. At times, I had a feeling that they understood my position. At other times, I thought that they looked at me with suspicion – in the polarised environment of war my critical views might have been interpreted as being ‘pro-Russian’. To clarify, I do not support Russian intervention in Crimea and Donbas. But I also think that war in Donbas – often represented in dominant Ukrainian discourses as a Russian proxy war in Ukraine – has deep roots in Ukrainian society related to classed experiences of Soviet past and post-Soviet transformations.

3.6.2. With a provincial Ukrainian working class gaze

The majority of my research participants interpreted war in Donbas primarily as a Russian expansionist project, putting aside interpretations that certain groups in Ukrainian society could be genuinely dissatisfied with the collapse of Soviet Union and saw alignment with Russia as a symbolic ‘return to the past’ that would restore their status, pride and material wealth. Adopting the former interpretation of war in Donbas means framing it as an *inter*-national conflict; adopting the latter means framing war in Donbas as an *intra*-national conflict. What I would like to elaborate on here is how my provincial Ukrainian gaze upon the conflict played out in interactions with research participants. Whereas I will not describe my experiences from Horodok in the main part of the thesis, I thought it is important to reflect on them here.

As I mentioned earlier, my mother’s side of the family comes from a provincial Ukrainian town of Horodok, and has a working class gaze upon the current political crisis in Ukraine. At the beginning of fieldwork, I spent one month in Horodok. To me, Horodok is a familiar and familial place – during my childhood, I spent many summers there. It was usually my grandfather who was spending time with us. In addition to a full-time engineering job at local power plant, he was single-handedly building a house extension in the ‘village’ part of the city, and had a side job mending television sets. He was always busy doing something either in the flat or in the house, and my brother and myself were helping him. My childhood memories are filled with the bright sparks of a metal-cutting saw and the smell of soldering microchips for big analogue television sets. He passed away at the beginning of the 2000s. Several analogue television sets are still in my grandmother’s place – as a child of WW2, she never throws away anything. The large chipped wooden boxes of these sets are pushed towards the window and serve as plant stands. In front of them there now is a digital TV that my mother recently bought her. There is a tiny stool right in front of the television where she sits with her back hunched from old age (see Figure 3). She is almost deaf, and the volume of the television is always on maximum.

Figure 3: Photograph of my grandmother watching TV in her flat in Horodok (July 2016).



My grandmother's favourite show is the scandalous re-enactment of court cases; she also likes watching news and political programs. As the debating politicians shout at high volume at my grandmother, she mutters back lamentations and curses. Her monologues often go as follows: 'Bandits, *bendery*, grab-it-all! Stole everything, nothing is left! There were such factories, such manufacturing... And what now? Where is everything gone?' What grandmother talks about in these lamentations are her experiences of post-socialism. As a result of post-socialist 'transition', my grandmother lost rather than won.

She finds it hard to let go of the communist ideology she grew up and lived with most of her life. Viewed from the inside of this communist ideology, the post-socialist realities of Horodok are upsetting. There is an overall atmosphere of powerlessness and hopelessness similar to that described by Diana Blank in the *Fairytales of Cynicism in the 'Kingdom of Plastic Bags'* (2004). My cousins struggle to make a living in the precarious work environment, taking up seasonal vegetable picking jobs and jobs at building sites where their pay and terms of employment are at full discretion of their employers. After a period of evading the army, one of the cousins had enrolled in contractual military service primarily because of the lack of other options in life. If the motto of the communists was

‘we will build the new world’, in the eyes of my grandmother post-socialism brought to Horodok dismantling and disintegration.

My grandmother’s situated gaze sees the collapse of Soviet Union as a bad thing, because it was a collapse of a certain system of communist values that (more often on paper than in reality) privileged working class and afforded people from the working classes respectable if not affluent living. After the collapse of Soviet Union, the state assets were up-for-grabs, and those ‘entrepreneurs’ who managed to (legally and illegally) privatise previously state-owned assets grew into a new economic and political elite. It is at this elite that my grandmother directs her curses – untalented leaders who prefer lawlessness rather than law and who care about their purses more than people. Sometimes, she would say that it would have been better if Stalin was back.

These narratives of an unsatisfactory and insufficient present that my grandmother voiced are similar to narratives that were repeated by protestors during the Euromaidan. But whereas Euromaidan activists saw the association with Europe and rupture of ties with Russia as a way out of the present, my grandmother for whom ‘Europe’ is a rather abstract space filled with ‘bourgeoisie’ from communist textbooks, would rather go back to the Soviet Union. With the beginning of war, the situation in Horodok became even worse. My grandmother’s 1200 *hryvnia* pension (less than 40 GBP at the time of fieldwork) was devalued thrice.

Watching the impoverished existence of my family members from Horodok, who because of their working class position in society found it exceedingly hard to cope with the insufficient present, I felt sorry for them. I sympathised with their experience of losing as a result of the collapse of Soviet Union. Would I myself prefer to live in Soviet society, or the society offered by the neo-imperial-Russian-Soviet project? No. At the same time, judging from my own experiences of Lithuania’s accession to the European Union, I wondered what futures for my family in Horodok closer ties with Europe could bring. For the pro-Euromaidan activists whom I met during fieldwork and who came from bigger cities, had university education, and were of middle class; the ‘European future’ meant (like for me ten years ago) opportunities for travel and personal advancement. For members of my family, the more likely scenario was work at sewing factories and picking strawberries in ‘Europe’ instead of Odesa.

During the fieldwork encounters, drawing on the experiences of my family from Horodok in the conversations with research participants was, on the one hand, demonstrating that I am familiar with the social realities of provincial Ukrainian town. But these realities were not always recognised by my research participants. When I was in Kharkiv, one of my cousins came to visit, hoping perhaps that he could find a job in a big city. Because of his lack of social contacts, and lack of skills (computer skills, CV writing, searching and applying for jobs online) required for a search in the advertised job market, his attempt failed. When I was describing this situation to journalist Jacob, he raised the eyebrows and asked: ‘Is everything really *so* bad in Horodok?’

Even more importantly, drawing on the experiences of my family was sometimes perceived by research participants as subversive, because of the discourses of ‘life was better in the Soviet Union’ that such narratives implied. In the political climate where military conflict is taking place, and where separatists are justifying violence by drawing on (Russian-)Soviet projects of belonging specifically alluding to working class, pro-Euromaidan activists reactions is, perhaps, not surprising. Viewing the war in Donbas as classed was one of the points where research participants and I disagreed. In dominant discourses, people who were expressing positive views of the Soviet Union were often labelled by research participants as *vata* – a derogative term that is explained in the empirical chapters (see §4.4.). The *vata* people were blamed for the conflict in Donbas, and, by extension, for the death of Ukrainian soldiers.

Similarly to my position as a Russian-speaker from the Baltics, drawing on the experiences of the working class gaze upon post-socialist Ukraine provided me with the critical lens that was not always shared with my research participants. Yet at the same time, it also pointed to my status as an outsider, unable to fully comprehend the emotional intensity of war and the gravity of my words.

3.6.3. Not an activist

As described in one of the sections above, during the fieldwork I participated in activist organisations by volunteering for them: weaving nets, running a film club, joining journalists during their assignments. I was doing this for research purposes, as I do not think of myself as an activist. So, rather than the position of activist-academic described by Kye Askins (2009), I am an academic-activist. In fact, before moving to Kyiv and volunteering for *Camouflage Nets*, I was visiting a city in Western Ukraine with an acquaintance. There was a public event on the main square, and the similar organisation making camouflage nets had a frame in one of the corners of the square. The passers-by were invited to come and help members make a net. I was considering whether making nets for the army is something that I want to do, as it would mean compromising my pacifist position. But as the fieldwork progressed, I tossed such paralysing thoughts aside, and decided to do whatever my participants were doing.

The only way in which I feel I constituted acts of activism on my behalf was during the arts intervention that I organised with my ex-boyfriend Serezha in Kharkiv and Virshy in the Donetsk region. During the fieldwork, Serezha joined me on two legs of the journey – in Lviv and Kharkiv. At the time, we were thinking of publishing a small book consisting of his paintings and my poems. As we were leaving Kharkiv, one of the ways in which we wanted to say our goodbyes to the city and people we met was by printing the poems and paintings out, and hanging them as an ‘outdoor gallery’ somewhere in the city. Eventually, we found a picturesque street at the back of the synagogue to hang the artwork, and organised a small picnic there on the eve of our departure (see Figure 4).

After Kharkiv, Serezha intended to go back to his home town in Lithuania. Travelling through Lviv, he met some of the members of the *United Ukraine* and found out about their plans regarding summer camps in Donetsk region and that they were looking for an artist who could paint ‘patriotic’ murals in the town of Virshy. The town was one of the ‘trophy’ places that were captured by the separatists during the *Russian Spring*, and then liberated by the Ukrainian army. Serezha was interested in the idea and decided to volunteer for this task. Instead of ‘patriotic’ murals, however, he reproduced one of his paintings and one of my poems on a wall of the arch leading to the inner yard of a building in town centre. The poem he said was chosen by other *volontery* – he gave them the whole of my poem collection, and they chose one (see Figure 5). The presence of Serezha during

some periods of fieldwork has also influenced the way I was perceived by research participants. For example, one of research participants Darya once mentioned that when she first met Serezha and me, she thought that we are some kind of ‘travelling artists’ – an impression that Serezha’s eccentric behaviour probably contributed to.

To summarise this section of the chapter, I would like to draw on Sunčana Laketa’s reflections on how growing up in Bosnia has intricately positioned her in respect to research subjects: ‘although I was not able to circumvent the effects of my positionality, I was always mindful of them and attempted to stay alert to the pitfalls that are always present in such a complex research setting’ (2016: 23). I also feel intricately positioned in relation to research subjects and hope that by outlining my situated gazes upon social realities in post-Euromaidan Ukraine, I managed to illustrate some of the dimensions of these relationships, thus contributing to more transparency and rigorousness of research.

Figure 4: Photograph of back street of the synagogue where the art picnic was organised before departure from Kharkiv (May 2016, author's photo).



Figure 5: Photograph of the inner yard arch in Virshy where *volontery* from *United Ukraine* and Serezha painted the mural and the poem (June 2016, author's photo).



3.7. Ethical processes and protocols

This last section of the methodology chapter is focused on ethical processes and protocols embedded in the lifecycle of this research.

As a social anthropologist by training, I followed guidelines of the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (2012) – the world recognized ethics standard in Social Anthropology – while conducting this research. At the heart of these guidelines are considerations of safety and security of participants and the researcher’s duty of care not to harm or expose research subjects.

In addition to this, prior to departing for fieldwork I familiarised with the Northumbria University Research Ethics and Governance Handbook. An application was submitted to the University Ethics Committee (Research Ethics number RE-EE-14-141105-545a74f7ad4e6) that explained the aims of the research, the methods which would be adopted to obtain data, the provisions made for maintaining confidentiality of participants, and finally how the data would be handled. The approval was granted on the 7th September 2015.

The following section illustrates how the ethical guidelines and protocols mentioned above were approached in practice, particularly focusing on the processes of generating informed consent and managing the boundaries of research in the field. I will also describe how the data resultant from research was anonymised.

3.7.1. Generating informed consent

In the social sciences, informed consent means that prospective participants understand the purpose and processes of research, what potential risks participation bears, and how data arising from research and personal details of participants will be handled by the researcher (Wood 2006: 179). Armed with this knowledge, participants can then make an informed decision on whether to contribute to the research.

With regards to this project, to ensure that no deception is involved in research and participants are aware of how their personal data and insights will be handled, before departing for fieldwork I created two documents to be distributed to research participants: 'Participant Information Sheet' and 'Research Participant Consent Form' (see Appendix 3a and Appendix 4a). Among other provisions, these documents explained the aims of research, who the researcher was, how any personal data and quotes from participants were intended to be used in materials arising from research, as well as procedures to opt out or raise a complaint about the research should participants feel that their data was mishandled. During the language training in Lviv, both forms were translated into Ukrainian (see Appendix 3b and Appendix 4b).

It is necessary to note here that even though I created a written participant consent form prior to departing for fieldwork, I anticipated that verbal rather than written consent will be more appropriate for researching activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan, and indicated so in the application for university ethical approval. The political situation in Ukraine in 2015 was still not stable: it was not clear whether pro-Euromaidan authorities were going to stay in power or whether there would be a regime change. At the time, with pro-Euromaidan authorities in power, pro-Euromaidan activists whom I intended to work with represented the dominant voice in interpreting the Euromaidan protests, the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. Yet, the precarity of the situation meant that power elites in the country could change, and any minute activists could be cast into less favourable and even unsafe positions should their views be perceived as oppositional. Bearing this precarity in mind, when in the field I decided to seek informed verbal rather than written consent from research participants. Using verbal instead of written consent to limit potential identification of research participants in risky contexts is an approach often used in ethnographic work (e.g. Wood 2006: 380).

Let me explain how informed verbal consent was obtained in practice. One of the sections above (§3.3.) details how I got in touch and accessed activist organisations through adopting the snowballing method. Upon the first visit to an organisation, a contact person, or gatekeeper, would introduce me to other members of the group. I would explain who I am, what I am doing in Ukraine, and ask permission to observe and participate in organisation's activities. Before proceeding with participant observation, I would also have a conversation with a manager(s) of the organisation to obtain explicit authorisation

to stay and conduct research. Usually, during the second or the third visit to an organisation, I would bring with me the Ukrainian version of the ‘Participant Information Sheet’ that explained to participants that their personal information will be treated confidentially and all the personal identifiers of the participants will be removed from any publication or other materials (conference papers, book chapters) arising from research. Where research participants were not present during these initial encounters – such as in the case of Emma who joined *Kharkiv Media* after my arrival – I would have a later separate conversation where I explained who I am, what my research involves, and how any data will be processed.

It is important to note that during the fieldwork, daily interactions with the majority of research participants were conducted in Russian language, as this was participants’ preferred language of interaction. Despite this, I was aware that all research participants are bilingual and are fluent both in Russian and Ukrainian languages. I, therefore, did not consider it necessary to produce a separate ‘Participant Information Sheet’ for those participants whose mother tongue was Russian. All participants were free to take time to familiarise themselves with the information in the ‘Participant Information Sheet’ and to ask clarification questions.

Regarding the interviews, I decided to adopt a strategy of collecting interviews after spending some time in the organisation(s) (see §3.4.). This meant that when I approached a research participant(s) with a request to give an interview, a rapport had been established and we knew each other well. Such participant(s) would then already know about the research and would have had the opportunity to ask questions beforehand. When approached with a request to give an interview, participants’ consent to their insights being incorporated into research was sought additionally (particularly, in relation to the use of direct quotes from the interviews). It was explained again that their personal data will be de-identified and that they will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publication arising from research.. Participants who consented to interview were given the opportunity to agree to or decline audio recording.

In summary, the prime method of this study was ethnographic fieldwork, during which the researcher conducted participant observation in activist organisations, repeatedly engaging with participants over long periods of time. Upon entering an organisation, the researcher distributed written information about research to participants, and answered

any questions research participants had in detail, generating verbal informed consent from activists. Permissions to stay, to observe, and to participate in daily activities was also sought from manager(s) of organisation(s). The on-going and more implicit consent was negotiated between the participant and the researcher in the course of research. No explicit consent was sought during the meetings following the initial encounter(s), except for the occasions when participants were approached by the researcher with a request to give an interview. In these instances, the researcher repeated how data arising from the interview could be used, and how provisions of confidentiality would be followed. It was made clear that participants could withdraw from the project at any time.

Before proceeding to discuss how personal data was anonymised, I would like to point to one of the challenges in conducting ethnographic research that I faced. Ethnography is an immersive methodology that is geared towards developing an understanding of the ‘local’ interpretations of certain cultural phenomena (Geertz 1973). The in-depth knowledge about cultural phenomena is achieved through the ‘immersion’ of the researcher: spending extensive periods of time in the field and by developing good relations with research participants. During the fieldwork, I spent a lot of time with research participants not only in the organisations where they volunteered or worked, but also outside of the ‘explicit’ (i.e. organisational spaces where participants’ everyday activities took place) sites of activism.

Following connections between the ‘explicit’ spaces of activism and other spheres of activists’ lives eventually became one of the main foci of this research (see §6. for a discussion of how Emma’s activism is linked to spaces of family/home). What such an immersive approach meant was that I was ‘monitoring’ not only insights shared with me within the walls of particular activist organisation(s), but also while spending time with activists outside of immediate spaces of activism. As a result of this, in the thesis I trace connections between ‘activist’ and ‘non-activist’ spaces, arguing that activism permeated all aspects of participants’ lives. Such an approach allowed me to generate new insights about activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan.

Yet at the same time, observing participants outside of ‘explicit’ spaces of activism raised ethical concerns. For example, should I include Nika’s emotional outcry (described in §5.4.), or should I regard this as information confided in private to me in the capacity of a friend rather than a researcher? Where does the boundary between these two different

roles lay? And what are the ethical implications of including that conversation in the car with Nika? Regarding the boundaries of relationships in the field, I explain in one of the sections above that my approach to encounters with participants is informed by feminist and relativist epistemologies (see §3.2.). Such approaches if not dismantle, certainly challenge the apparent necessity to uphold conceptual boundaries between ‘the researcher’ and ‘the researched’. Instead, the research encounters are a site for mutual construction of meaning and negotiation of power and social relations, rather than a process of mere ‘collecting data’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1997, in Bitsch 2018: 5). As Jodie Taylor points, feminist ethnographers do not see establishing of close and empathetic relationships between the researcher and the observed, and personal investment in the research process and a degree of emotional attachment to the field and informants as ‘unprofessional’ (Taylor 2011: 4).

That said, I would like to reiterate that ethical considerations were at the forefront of any decision-making of what to include and what to leave out of this work. In practice, I considered whether the information is representative and is important for advancing the knowledge about activism in Ukraine, whether at the time of sharing the insights participants were aware that I was researching activism in Ukraine and that their insights might be included in research, whether research participants explicitly stated that they do not wish certain information to be shared, and whether the information could put research participants at risk. The latter consideration of safety and security of research participants was important throughout the research cycle, and strict protocols to safeguard data were followed. These are described in the following section.

3.7.2. Anonymity and the use of pseudonyms

It was an imperative part of the research process to ensure, as much as possible, the identity of the research participants was concealed and protected (their information was treated confidentially, all data collected from participants was securely stored, and any possibility of identification limited). Anonymising data and using pseudonyms were

among the control measures utilised to ensure protection of data and personal details of research participants. This section will explain how this was approached in practice.

As mentioned in the section above, personal data was only collected, recorded and processed by me with the explicit and voluntary verbal consent of the participants. Within the project, handwritten diary entries and interview records (audio files and written notes) can be counted as ‘raw’ data collected by research. While generating this data, I attempted to limit the level of detail that could potentially lead to identification of participants by purposefully not recording surnames, names of organisations, and other identification markers. Inevitably, however, this ‘raw’ data included personal potentially identifiable information. For instance, a participant might refer to their colleague by name in an interview, or mention a name of an organisation they work in. To mitigate potential risks of these records being revealed, both my handwritten diaries and laptop where audio recordings of interviews were stored in a safe space at all times.

While transcribing the interviews and extracts from the diaries, I assigned pseudonyms to all participants, and during the process of analysis referred to participants by pseudonyms. The key to pseudonyms was kept in a different location. Hence, in the process of analysis de-identified data was used. In addition to more ‘obvious’ personal identifiers being removed, on a case to case basis I considered what other information could potentially lead to identification of participants, or harmful consequences. For instance, while I describe the story of activist Emma (see §6.), it is important for research that Emma is not ethnically Ukrainian, and hence I include this information into the narrative. Revealing Emma’s ethnicity, however, could make her identifiable, and so I do not reveal these details.. I employed similar processes of judging what could be potentially harmful to research participants in other cases in the thesis in an attempt to mitigate potential negative consequences.

In addition to concealing data that could identify individuals, any names of organisations have been anonymised in the thesis to further limit the possibility of identifying individuals, and to mitigate other potential harm (e.g. impact on organisation’s relations with donors). Names or organisations that I conducted participant observation in are referred to in the text by the type of activism that they represent: *Camouflage Nets*, *Kharkiv Media*, etc. Names of donor organisations are entirely concealed.

In the final stages of analysis, after a consultation with my academic supervisors, it was decided to also anonymise some place names, in order to ensure activist organisation cannot be identified. The following approach to anonymising place names was taken. Large cities (such as Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv) are referred to in the thesis by their real names. I thought that identifying the organisation that I worked in amongst the large number of organisations that specialised in making camouflage nets that existed in Kyiv at the time of research would be difficult if not impossible. At the time of my fieldwork, at least four such organisations existed within the vicinity of the Maidan Square in Kyiv. Similarly, there are at least three media organisations similar to *Kharkiv Media* that operated in Kharkiv, and at least three organisations concerned with gender issues existed in the city.

It was decided that revealing the place names of smaller cities, however, could be potentially harmful to the individual participants, or the organisations they worked in. For instance, identifying a humanitarian displacement relief organisation in a small city in Kharkiv region could be easily accomplished, should the city be named. To avoid this, it was decided to conceal the real names of small cities by fictional name. Hence, the place names of Kalynivka, Chervone, and Vyshneve were invented. There were some exceptions to this approach though, as small-scale cities that did not directly relate to participants or organisation under analysis were referred to by their real names. For example, when I refer to the battles of Ilovaysk (§5.), the real name is used.

Overall, the research adopted three-tiered approach to anonymising data: 1) concealing personal names and other identification markers of research activists, 2) concealing names of organisations, and 3) concealing some place names. In consultation with research supervisors, it was decided that such an approach would significantly limit potential identification of research participants. Hence, the identity of research participants was protected, and potential harm mitigated. Lastly, upon submission of the thesis it was indicated that the thesis should be available only upon request through the British Library's EThoS database in the course of two years after the submission. This will provide time for changes in activist landscape in Ukraine to take place (e.g. closure of some and opening of other organisations, people changing places of living and working), ensuring the identity of activists is protected even further.

3.8. Summary of research methodology

In summary, this chapter outlined the methodological reasoning used during the process of researching activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan. Particularly, it explained how feminist philosophical foundations informed the focus on emotions, rather than women or gender, as the main research object.

Researching emotions in activism at the time of war in Donbas posed an array of questions regarding representation. Firstly, these questions were concerned with how to convey participants feelings in written text – a response to which strategy of thorough contextualisation and use of longer quotes was chosen. Secondly, in the last section of the chapter I outlined how my positionality influenced the understanding of the current political situation in Ukraine that in turn informed my conduct while in the field. The aim of focusing on my positionality was twofold: to underline what partial perspective this research grows out of; and to highlight the reflexive nature of the ethnography that strives to adopt a critical distance in making knowledge claims.

The two middle sections of the chapter were concerned with the practicalities of multi-sited fieldwork in Ukraine, elaborating on the role of key research participants in directing the fieldwork trajectory and the initial ‘funneling’ of research themes. This inductive process of research produced a wealth of original empirical data that was further refined upon return to the university. Gathering and analysis of the new empirical data is one of the contributions to knowledge that this work makes. Three of the most important sources of data that were used in refining the observations made in the field include the fieldwork diary, the photographic diary, and the unstructured interviews with the research subjects. It is from these methods that the key themes and case studies discussed in the following empirical chapters emerged.

4. Emotional geopolitics of Donbas war

4.1. Introduction to chapter four

Since the annexation of Crimea and the start of war in Donbas in 2014, internal displacement became an important issue in Ukraine, as more than one and a half million people had to leave their homes in occupied/conflict territories¹³. This chapter elaborates on a trip to Kalynivka in Kharkiv region that journalist-intern Klara and Yaroslav from *Kharkiv Media* organised and that I joined in April 2016. Looking at how the internally displaced were adapting to new places was the main project Klara ran in the *Kharkiv Media*. She had already taken several interviews in Kharkiv and had now arranged a trip to a smaller town situated close to the administrative border with the Donetsk region where some internally displaced persons settled¹⁴. Drawing on the emotionality of journalists-activists' encounter with the IDPs and meanings articulated by journalists after the trip, this chapter explores the emotional geopolitics of the Donbas war, as revealed through spaces of activism in Kharkiv.

Particularly, the chapter is focused on how the Donbas war is negotiated and discursively produced by pro-Ukrainian activists, and through what means it is 'mediated'. In addition to this, the chapter asks how activists in Ukraine feel about the conflict, and in what ways are activists' emotions productive of social relations, geographies and histories. Here, complex politics of belonging in post-Euromaidan Ukraine are explored, and the 'vocabularies' of war that activists (and others) employ in their everyday, embodied and emotional, geopolitical encounters. While elaborating on these questions, I argue that delving into 'situated gazes' of pro-Ukrainian activists living in a city close to war zone (that narrowly escaped separatism) is crucial in understanding why the boundaries of belonging are so strictly upheld by them.

¹³ Since the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas many people in Ukraine became displaced. According to one of the first aggregated data sets from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, by the end of June 2014 estimate of 11 500 persons were displaced from Crimea, and 35 000 persons were displaced from the Donbas region (see Appendix 1). Whereas the number of displaced people from Crimea changed only slightly since the initial influx in spring 2014, in the first two years the number of IDPs from Donbas was steadily increasing. As of 29th October 2018, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine reported that there are 1 522 743 persons displaced from Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (Ministry of Social Policy 2018).

¹⁴ In comparison to other towns in Kharkiv region, not many IDPs moved to Kalynivka (for spatial patterns of resettlement, see Appendix 2). According to the Local Council, at the time of our interviews around 3000 people were registered as IDPs in the city, almost half of whom were pensioners, and one sixth were children, and four per cent were disabled (City Council, Kalynivka, April 2016).

4.2. Mediated war: who is fighting in Donbas?

On the train back from Kalynivka, journalist-intern Klara and Yaroslav from the *Kharkiv Media* were discussing interviews with the internally displaced persons whom we met on the day. Particularly notable was the first encounter with the displaced person Olha. Reflecting on her interview now, both journalists were angrily commenting – how could she imply that the Ukrainian army was responsible for shelling Chervone (town in Donetsk region she was from)? Klara and Yaroslav, as other pro-Ukrainian journalists-activists in *Kharkiv Media*, viewed the actions of the Ukrainian army in the Donbas war as defensive, holding the view that the war was started by pro-Russian separatists, was supported from Russia, and hence was the accountability of Russia. This understanding of the war can also be illustrated by a response from journalist Jacob who saw excerpts of an interview with Olha while Yaroslav was editing it in the office a couple of days after the trip. For Jacob, more important than looking at separate incidents of fighting is understanding the bigger picture of who started the war:

“Why were Ukrainian tanks driving in their direction when they were fleeing? Because the war had started, because there were no other means to stop this flywheel of war that was span with the colossal help of Russia. [...]. War started in Donbas and altogether in Ukraine not from wringing away Crimea. I even don't know when it started. It started from this rhetoric, from this rhetoric of hatred and portrayal of purely social protest [Euromaidan] as the radical far right *coup d'état*. It started from the moment when Russia clearly chose its position and started to say that these [Euromaidan protestors] are radicals, that these... well, that is – portraying purely social protest as a mutiny of ultra-Nazis” (Jacob, Kharkiv, April 2016).

In the passage above, Jacob suggests that the war started in Ukraine with Russia's misrepresentations of the Euromaidan as a far-right *coup d'état* (for scholarship on far-right during the Euromaidan see Ishchenko 2016; Likhachev 2015; Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014). According to pro-Ukrainian activists, at the start of the conflict the images of ‘nationalists from Western Ukraine who were going to exterminate Russophone Ukrainians’¹⁵ were used as one of the ways of mobilising people in Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine against the Euromaidan (see also Brusylovska 2015: 61 on information war; and Wilson 2014: 643). Often, fake propaganda stories were circulated in the

¹⁵ The most notorious fake story was about the fake news about the crucifixion of a small boy on the main square of Slavyansk, Ukraine. For details on this fake story, please see The Moscow Times <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/state-run-news-station-accused-of-making-up-child-crucifixion-37289>. [Accessed 29/10/2018]

Russian media to achieve this aim of depicting the Ukrainian military and Ukrainians more broadly as monstrous murderers and *banderivtsy*¹⁶. While I will go on to explain this in more detail below (see §4.5.), the aim of countering such media images was what brought journalists-activists from *Kharkiv Media* together in the spring of 2014. Grassroots activism was pivotal to the creation of *Kharkiv Media*, as such, I conceptualise the space of the organisation as an activist space (see §this chapter and §7.3. for more detailed discussion).

Focusing on how journalists-activists were reacting on Olha's words during the interview, how they reflected upon the trip afterwards, and how the interview was represented by them when published through their own outlet, I argue that mediation of Donbas war is extremely important. Yet I approach 'mediation' in its broader sense. On the one hand, I examine how pro-Ukrainian activists interpret Russian media representations and how they simultaneously mediate the war themselves through *Kharkiv Media*. On the other, I expand the meaning of the word 'mediate', and look at how war is 'mediated' by: activists' 'situated gazes' rooted in intersectional positionality; cultural meanings and discourses (the 'vocabularies' of war); and by emotional intensities that come to the fore when activists encounter the 'other' readings of the conflict (such as that voiced by some IDPs in Kalynivka).

To go back to the question of who is fighting in Donbas, the discussion of Russia's involvement in the *Russian Spring*¹⁷ and war was at the core of many conversations I had with pro-Ukrainian activists. Given that Russia does not recognize that it is fighting in Ukraine (for types of evidence of Russian troops in Ukraine see Clem 2017), pro-Ukrainian activists often refer to war in Donbas as hybrid¹⁸, thus stressing that war is unannounced and that other methods, such as information war and propaganda, are used alongside fighting. For example, while talking about events of the *Russian Spring* in

¹⁶ The term *banderivtsy* is referring to one of the leaders of Ukrainian nationalist movement Stepan Bandera who was fighting for independent Ukraine and collaborated with Nazi authorities against the Soviets. This term was often used during the Soviet times to refer to people from Western Ukraine and particularly Lviv who were opposing incorporation into the Soviet Union into the late 1950s. Whereas before the current war Stepan Bandera was considered a national 'hero' only in Western Ukraine and more 'nationally-minded' circles in other regions, the ideology of nationalism and processes of *dekomunizaciya* saw one of the streets of Kyiv renamed in his honour. Policies of *dekomunizaciya* (Ukrainian 'декомунізація', de-communisation) refers to set of four laws adopted by the Parliament of Ukraine on the 9th April 2015 regarding official memory politics of the Soviet regime, the WW2, and fighters for independence of Ukraine in 20th century. According to the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, as a result of *dekomunizaciya* 32 cities, 955 settlements, 25 *rayons* and 51 493 streets were renamed; and 2 389 monuments of totalitarian regime were taken down, including 1 320 Lenins. Infographic available at <http://www.memory.gov.ua/sites/default/files/userupload/decomun-2016.jpg> [accessed 03/09/2018].

¹⁷ *Russian Spring* (Ukrainian 'Російська Весна') refers to pro-Russian protests and demonstrations that grew out of anti-Maidam protests in the spring of 2014 in Eastern, Central and Southern regions of Ukraine. The main objective of the *Russian Spring* was separation of some of the regions from Ukraine and their incorporation into Russia. Administrative and security forces buildings were captured by separatists, unconstitutional 'referendums' were organised, and the creation of the *DNR* and *LNR* was announced.

¹⁸ *Hybridna vijna* (Ukrainian 'гібридна війна').

Kharkiv, activists from the *Kharkiv Media* repeatedly stressed that during the ‘hottest’ events the city was flooded with busses with Russian number plates and *titushki*¹⁹ who were storming public buildings. This, however, was never mentioned in Russian media. As Jacob pointed out, not many of those men were caught or tried in court, because at the time many key positions in the security forces of Ukraine were taken by pro-Russian officials who were supporting Yanukovych and/or separatists:

“Why not a single person was caught with Russian passport? Those who were taken – all were locals! Only once or twice others were caught. Why so? Because at that moment all key positions in enforcement agencies – in *SBU*²⁰, in prosecutor’s office, in *miliciya*²¹... but first of all in *SBU* were taken by ‘placed’ people, ‘placed’ people who were, to put it mildly, loyal to Russia. [...]. Who was hanging the [Russian] flag on [Kharkiv] regional administration? A guy from Moscow. But he was not caught, he left without a problem! And how many guys like him were here? There are photos when this *Motorola*²² who is now fighting in Donbas was here. There are also, not such a long time ago Girkin²³ said that he was here in spring. What are we talking about? What other evidence does one need? That they were not caught by hand? Well, excuse me, that is why this is hybrid war!” (Jacob, Kharkiv, April 2016).

In this context of the unannounced war, attempts to prove that war in Donbas is Russia’s proxy war in Ukraine was important not only for pro-Ukrainian activists, but also to post-Euromaidan authorities in Kyiv who replaced pro-Russian president Yanukovych. According to the master-narrative of the post-Euromaidan Ukrainian authorities, war in Donbas was fought between Ukraine and Russia, it was not a civil war²⁴. This message is reinforced in the securitization speeches of the post-Euromaidan president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko that label Russia as ‘aggressor’ and ‘enemy’ – not only for illegally annexing Crimea but also for sponsoring pro-Russian separatists in Donbas (Voshchevska 2015: 25-33).

During my fieldwork, these dominant narratives about war in Donbas were also often represented in public spaces in different cities in Ukraine. For example, around the time of the Independence Day of Ukraine (celebrating the 1991 Declaration of Independence

¹⁹ Term *titushki* (Ukrainian ‘тітушки’) originated after the name of Vadim Titushko – young man who was part of the group of attacking Euromaidan protestors and journalists in May 2013, and was later tried in court. During the *Euromaidan*, the term *titushki* was used to refer to young men that were covertly hired to instigating violent clashes with *Euromaidan* protestors.

²⁰ *SBU* (in Ukrainian, the abbreviation ‘СБУ’ stands for ‘Служба Безпеки України’) is the Security Service of Ukraine.

²¹ Name of police prior to reform.

²² *Motorola* was a *nom de guerre* of Arsen Pavlov – pro-Russian leader fighting against Ukrainian forces in Donbas war.

²³ Igor Girkin, born Igor Strelkov, is one of the key players in Russian annexation of Crimea and the organiser of separatist *DNR* militant groups in Donbas.

²⁴ The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine also published a list of servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces who took part in combat actions in Ukraine. Please see <http://gur.mil.gov.ua/en/content/russia-cambatants-suspected-of-committing-war-crimes.html>. [Accessed 29/10/2018]

from Soviet Union) in August 2015 an exhibition with over a dozen large format posters was arranged on the Maidan Square in Kyiv where the Euromaidan protests took place year and a half earlier. These posters included photos of passports of Russian soldiers who fought for the *DNR/LNR*²⁵ that were captured or killed during the war, thus illustrating to the public of Kyiv the presence of Russian military in Donbas. The fact that pro-Ukrainian activists-journalists' views of war in Donbas is consistent with post-Euromaidan Ukrainian authorities views on war in Donbas is important, as it points to the fact that the 'situated gaze' of journalists is reflecting the dominant Ukrainian master narrative about the war in Donbas. As interviews in Kalynivka showed, such views are not the only interpretation of who is fighting in Donbas. It is important to note here that it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail Olha's 'situated gaze' upon the conflict.

To return to the discussion of war, such representations as exhibition of photos of Russian passports on the main square of Kyiv, and the (emotional) responses that such exhibition was designed to trigger were not questioned by pro-Ukrainian activists. The propagandistic mechanisms that such images employed were 'invisible' to pro-Ukrainian activists, as – I would like to argue – such images conveyed the 'right' interpretation of the conflict, that war in Donbas is Russia's proxy war in Ukraine. What this points to is that while Russian propaganda and misrepresentations are made visible by the activists, mechanisms of mobilising certain feelings by Ukrainian authorities/media/subjects were 'translucent' and 'invisible'. Here, a story of another activist-journalist from *Kharkiv Media* Emma about the 'referendum' on whether inhabitants of Mariupol want to join *DNR* (that were organised during the *Russian Spring* in the city) is representative of how pro-Ukrainian activists question Russian media representations.

The events that Emma describes took place just after the 9th May 2014, in the 'heat' of the *Russian Spring* in Mariupol – the city in the Donetsk region where she is from. This day is a national holiday in Ukraine celebrating Victory Day of WW2. Usually, a parade or meeting would be organised. In 2014, because of the growing unrest in Ukraine, the meeting was cancelled (bearing in mind that the Russian neo-imperial project that sees

²⁵ Acronym *DNR* stands for *Donetska Narodna Respublika* (Ukrainian 'Донецька Народна Республіка', Donetsk Peoples' Republic), self-proclaimed in 2014 separatist republic currently controlling some parts of Donetsk region of Ukraine. Similarly to this, acronym *LNR* stands for *Lughanska Narodna Respublika* (Ukrainian 'Луганська Народна Республіка', Lughansk Peoples' Republic), self-proclaimed in 2014 separatist republic currently controlling some parts of Lughansk region of Ukraine. This thesis refers to fighting by *DNR* and *LNR* against Ukrainian army as the Donbas war.

Ukraine as part of Russian ‘empire’ heavily draws on the ideology of the Soviet Union). A group of, at the time not yet banned, Communist Party of Ukraine organised their own meeting anyway. At the same time, some of the administrative buildings were captured by pro-Russian separatists. In order to liberate the buildings, Ukrainian tanks entered the city, driving through the main street where the communist meetings were taking place. In the chaos that ensued, some people were hurt. These events took place two days before the ‘referendum’ on whether inhabitants of Mariupol want to join *DNR*. Describing these events, Emma argued that the Communist Party meetings were purposefully organised at the same time as separatists’ capturing of administrative assets, and that the ensuing chaos was also purposefully designed to induce local people to turn against the Ukrainian military:

“If you are following, you can understand that all these events were tailored in such a way so that as many people would come to the ‘referendum’. These events were organized purposefully. And at the same time, a lot of information started to appear that ‘Ukrainian military shot away peaceful meeting’. Although it was not like that. A lot of twisted information, propaganda, some fake videos and photos framed in a ‘convenient’ way. Altogether, they induced people against Ukrainian power totally, against Ukraine, against Ukrainian military” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

Drawing on her experience as a journalist, Emma also commented on how the ‘referendum’ was represented in the media. She highlighted that around half a million people live in Mariupol, and at the time of the ‘referendum’ only four polling stations were opened in the city. Emma contemplated that even if only one fifth of the total city’s population came to vote, every polling station would have very long queues. This image was picked up by pro-Russian media, who argued that the whole city was rushing to vote for the *DNR*. Importantly, when describing the *DNR* ‘referendum’ in Mariupol, Emma implicitly questions the validity of another ‘referendum’ that took place in Crimea in March 2014. During the Crimean status ‘referendum’, the local population was questioned whether they would like to join Russia because the Crimean authorities claimed that Euromaidan revolution that ousted president Yanukovich out of power was not legitimate. In the passage above, journalist-activist Emma actively resists such ‘other’ representations of the Euromaidan and war in Donbas.

Importantly, different cultural meanings and discourses associated with war in Donbas are mediated through language and particular ‘vocabularies’ of war were created since

the Euromaidan. Certain words are utilised by certain political projects to discursively construct the meanings of war. For example, when describing their displacement, some IDPs in Kalynivka used the word *opolchenye*²⁶ to talk about *DNR* and *LNR* separatists. I discussed the trip to Kalynivka with Emma who has moved out of Mariupol during the *Russian Spring* because she thought that the city was being ‘handed over’ to Russia in the same way Crimea was. Although Emma, therefore, can also be considered as an internally displaced person (displaced because of her political position), Emma does not position herself as such, possibly because of the stigma attached to being an IDP. While talking about the *Russian Spring* in Mariupol, Emma repeatedly referred to *DNR* and *LNR* separatists as *boyeviki*²⁷. Throughout my fieldwork, different people referred to *DNR* and *LNR* separatists as either *boyeviki* or *opolchency*, and I was using both terms interchangeably. Yet while talking to Emma I noticed that she was uneasy about my loose terminology. She also specified that if I was to use her words, I should say *boyeviki* rather than *opolchency*. Given such insistence, I asked Emma to clarify the meaning she puts into these words. Emma elaborated:

“It is not correct to call these people [separatists] *opolchency*. The word ‘opolchency’ refers to people who revolt against authorities, against political system. But these people were capturing cities, were capturing administrations – these were not peaceful protests. They revolted not against the authorities, they revolted against the country [rus. ‘страны’ – country, state]. These are two different things – authorities and country. That is why it is correct to call them *boyeviki*. [...] Authorities change. Country does not change, country is one and the same. Country is is I don’t know – people, cities, history, culture, architecture, traditions. But authorities are simply people, they are here today, in three years [they are gone] ...” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

For *Kharkiv Media* activists, military conflict in Donbas is a not civil war within Ukraine, and separatists from Donbas are not righteous combatants who attempt to restore the power of Yanukovich by fighting illegitimate post-Euromaidan authorities in Kyiv. On the contrary, for pro-Ukrainian activists like Emma, the legitimacy of *Euromaidan* revolution does not raise any questions. From Emma’s point of view, among other things, president Yanukovich abused his powers by ordering the killing of protestors on Maidan Square in Kyiv in February 2014. Moreover, since Yanukovich fled the country three legitimate all-Ukrainian (presidential, parliamentary and local)

²⁶ *Opolcheniye/ opolchency* (Ukrainian ‘ополченці’, Russian ‘ополченцы’) literally means insurgents, revoltors, protestors, local defence volunteers.

²⁷ *Boyeviki* (Ukrainian ‘бойовики’, Russian ‘боевики’) literally means combatants, terrorists, guerrilla, hitmen.

elections took place standing for the fact that the current authorities are legitimately elected. Because of this, the post-Euromaidan pro-Ukrainian authorities are viewed by Emma as undoubtedly legitimate. For Emma, not the actions of Euromaidan protestors but the actions of separatists whom she calls *boyeviki* are viewed as unlawful:

“There is a country, it cannot be divided into pieces like that. Well, I don’t know, for me this is an absurd situation. When you just like that wake up and say: ‘Well, I don’t like something in this country, and I will detach my city, my region, and will live separately from now on’. Well, I don’t understand this, I can’t get my head round this. So I even, when it all was happening, I even did not take it seriously at first, all this *Russian Spring*, these very first, first beginnings. And I was joking that if they are detaching, I also detach from everyone and will join, for instance, Switzerland” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

Interpreting Emma’s words, she explains that the actions of the pro-Russian separatists are illegal because they breach the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state, similar to the way Russia breached the territorial integrity of Ukraine by annexing Crimea. For Emma such breaking of a country ‘into pieces’ is seen as absurd, unthinkable and arbitrary – hence her example of detaching and becoming a part of some ‘random’ place (Switzerland). As seen from the quote where Emma talks about the difference between *boyeviki* and *opolchency*, she draws on discourses of states as unchanging, in contrast to authorities that could be dispensed of. The discourse of the state as primordial and unchanging, with history that can be traced to the olden days, is characteristic of nationalist political projects. Perhaps ironically, drawing on this discourse Emma ‘forgets’ that the current state of Ukraine came into being in her lifetime, after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. In contrast to the pro-Ukrainian political project, the separatist political project does not view breaching the sovereignty of Ukraine as problematic. On the contrary, it is discursively challenging the very creation of the independent Ukrainian state by drawing on Soviet and Russian imperial master narratives, particularly the glorification of WW2 as a victory over Nazism. In such narratives, Ukrainian fighters for independence (both historical during the WW2, and during the current Donbas war) are portrayed as nationalist radicals by employing the Soviet discourses about *banderivtsy* (see footnote 16 and §6.4.). Hence, not only new discourses of war are created, but also other older discourses are ‘recycled’ during the current war and infused with new meanings.

To sum up, there is a multiplicity of interpretations of who is fighting in Donbas war in Ukraine, and the media plays a key role in representing the conflict. Within this multiplicity, pro-Ukrainian activists in Kharkiv have particular ‘situated gazes’ upon the conflict that coincide with the discourses emanating from the post-Euromaidan authorities in Kyiv. Importantly, the Ukrainian post-Euromaidan political project discursively construct the meanings of war in Donbas through the use of distinct ‘vocabularies’. These ‘vocabularies’ are used by people in everyday life, thus mediating the war through language and cultural meanings. Employing particular terms, such as *boyeviki* or *opolcheniye/opolchency*, in everyday conversations signals one’s attitude and ‘situated gaze’ upon the war. As I will argue in the following section, the meanings of war are articulated in the space of encounter (on geographies of encounter, see Wilson 2017) between people and belonging to certain political projects is thus ‘performed’ in everyday life. Exploring the Donbas war as everyday geopolitics (embodied encounters between people occurring in everyday life) is one of the theoretical and methodological contributions that this thesis makes. In scholarship concerning the Euromaidan and post-Euromaidan Ukraine, a lot of attention is dedicated to questions of identity in, for example, exploring the causes of war (e.g. Wilson 2016). Often, such accounts assume that identities are predetermined, as already existing on the ground; and hence such methods as opinion polls and statistics are used to explore questions related to identities. By drawing on the ethnographic material of journalists’ reflection upon the trip to Kalynivka, I argue that geopolitics are not only embodied and emotional but are also dynamic and set in motion in the space of encounters between people.

4.3. Politics of belonging during the Donbas war

What I will argue here is that not only do different political projects discursively construct meanings of war differently, but that they also ‘frame’ different political subjectivities by utilising certain politics of belonging. Here, politics of belonging are defined as the way ‘specific political projects aim at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in

very particular ways' (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). The topic of discursive construction of subjectivities is not new and has been discussed by several scholars of feminist geopolitics. For example, Judith Butler's (2009) *Frames of War* points to how the cold rationality underpinning military interventions, alongside certain ways of media representations, feeds into the demonization of Muslims in the West, this creates racialised hierarchies that determine whose lives and suffering is recognised and considered grievable by the West. Another notable example is Jennifer Hyndman's (2007) consideration of civilian casualties at the times of war where some bodies are 'counted' as more valuable than others because of the different 'meaning regimes' or 'moral orders' that these bodies belong to.

This section explores how activists with patriotic pro-Ukrainian positions discursively construct who belongs and who does not belong to the post-Euromaidan Ukrainian state. Recent contributions to research on Ukrainian crisis demonstrate sensitivity to themes and approaches characteristic of critical, feminist and postcolonial geopolitics. The explicit engagement with postcolonial critique is evident in Marco Puleri's (2017) consideration of the notion of hybridity as applied to border crossings between Ukrainian controlled territories and separatist territories in Donbas (see also Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017); Anna Fournier's (2017) exploration of how young people understand this boundary as mobile; and various contributions focusing on cultural productions and imaginaries of Novorossiia (O'Loughlin *et al* 2017; Laruelle 2017; Suslov 2017). An important body of work that this thesis also contributes to is focused on considerations of identities and politics of belonging at the times of war, including questions on why some Ukrainians support ideas of the so called 'Russian world' that separatists mobilise and draw upon (Biersack and O'Lear 2014; Clem 2018; Giuliano 2018; Kulyk 2017; O'Loughlin *et al* 2016; Portnov 2016; Sasse and Lackner 2018; Wilson 2016). Yet none of this work is focused specifically on spaces of activism – a gap that this thesis addresses.

Drawing on the ethnographic material collected during the trip to Kalynivka (journalists-activists' reactions upon encounters with some of the IDPs and how these interviews/encounters were later represented by *Kharkiv Media*), I explore how certain subjectivities, geographies and histories are produced by activists through pro-Ukrainian politics of belonging. To proceed, at the beginning of the interview organised by journalist-activist Klara, the displaced person Olha made a remark that just before the

start of war because of the already heated atmosphere in her hometown, her pregnant daughter with family decided to leave Chervone and temporarily migrate to Russia.

4.3.1. Olha: internally displaced from Donbas

At first, Klara did not pay attention to this remark, and continued questioning Olha about her move to Kalynivka, what kind of support she received upon arrival, what problems she faced and whether she managed to find a job, asking what her dreams were. Looking at how the internally displaced persons had adapted to new places two years after the start of war was the main project journalist-intern Klara ran in the *Kharkiv Media*. These questions were designed by Klara to uncover the ‘success’ of the adaptation. Yet towards the end of the interview, Klara returned to Olha’s remark about moving to Russia. The rest of the conversation, also the significant part of all other interviews collected during that day, was focused on how IDPs understand war in Donbas and what their views of Russia and the separatist republics of *DNR* and *LNR* are. Whereas some IDPs reproduced views on Donbas similar to Klara’s, Olha did not. Klara seemed to get progressively more irritated with Olha’s answers, continuing to enquire:

“Your children were in Moscow. What is your attitude to Moscow, to Russia now after all of these events? [...] So, you think that shelling that happened was not from Russian side? Your political, so to say, your political opinion is very interesting in relation to this whole situation. [...] Who was doing this [shelling]? [...] And what is your attitude after that towards Ukraine and Ukrainians? [...] Does not it disturb you that Chervone in essence is already *DNR*, yes, it is Russia? This is already not Ukraine?” (Klara, Kalynivka, April 2016)

These questions are clearly not about adaptation, the theme that Klara chose for the trip to Kalynivka, and were focused instead on uncovering how the IDP interprets who is fighting in Donbas and who is responsible for the war. These questions were so important for Klara, she continued to press even though Olha resisted answering. When Olha mentioned that she is homesick and would like to return to Chervone, Klara exploded, “Does not it disturb you that Chervone in essence is already *DNR*, yes, it is Russia? This is already not Ukraine?” For Klara, Chervone was the enemy territory, and she could not

understand how one might want to visit such territories, let alone return there to live. What this points to is how Klara produces not only the subjectivity of Olha, but also the territory of Donbas as enemy territory.

Klara's reaction is characteristic of many activists I met during the fieldwork. Since the beginning of the conflict, visiting *DNR*, *LNR*, Crimea or Russia is seen as unacceptable by pro-Ukrainian activists. This can be illustrated by the story of Darya who in the summer of 2016 was offered by a friend to go for a holiday to Crimea. Darya has a pro-Ukrainian position, and during the interview with me mentioned that she would not like to live under the authority of Russia. Yet at the same time, she finds it difficult to negotiate the current conflict, because she lived in Russia for several years and has friends there. For Darya, war with Russia is very painful because it ruptures important relations. When she returned from Crimea to Kharkiv, even her closest friends, pro-Ukrainian activists whom she knew for many years, despised her for the trip. They did not want to talk to her about it or hear about what was happening in Crimea at the time. As she put it, "they said that by spending time and money in Crimea, I am contributing to the 'thrift-box of evil'" (Darya, Kharkiv, June 2016).

What activist Darya did in her trip to Crimea, and what IDP Olha indicated as not problematic, was violating the social rules about visiting 'enemy territories'. Such actions and intentions were seen by pro-Ukrainian activists as morally corrupt (e.g. what the phrase 'thrift-box of evil' points to). Similar to Klara's position, living under the authority of *DNR/LNR* was considered unacceptable for Emma, a journalist from *Kharkiv Media* who was internally displaced from Mariupol. Emma decided to move out of Mariupol almost straight after the separatists' organised 'referendum'. For Klara, IDP Olha not only failed to assign responsibility for the current war to Russia, but has also failed to 'correctly' produce the geographies of the current conflict by defining Chervone as the 'enemy' territory.

I would like to argue here that the Donbas war re-defines certain territories while simultaneously drawing on geo-historical imaginaries of Ukraine. Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine is a mining region where a lot of heavy industry was built during the 19th and 20th centuries. In the Soviet Union, the aesthetics of industry and the working class were discursively praised. Nowadays, other places are perceived as being progressive, interesting, and desirable. For example, Emma thinks of Lviv as a place where educated,

well-travelled and rounded people live. As one activist said to me – ‘Lviv is considered as Europe within Ukraine’ (for representation of ‘Europe’ in Ukraine see Horbyk 2017; Orlova 2017; Zubko and Rovnyi 2015). During the interview, Emma highlighted that she wanted to move to Lviv even before the war started, and the *Russian Spring* provided impetus for such a move. Interestingly, in the passage below Emma stresses that people from Eastern Ukraine do not travel as often as people from Western Ukraine. I am not sure whether this is factually true, but what Emma’s remark points to is that she sees travelling to Europe as an eye-opening and educational experience, whereas travelling to Russia is not. She says:

“There is a big difference between Lviv and Mariupol. Ah, Mariupol is such an industrial city of workers. Tomorrow everybody needs to go to work, and that’s why, I don’t know, at eight o’clock in the evening, at nine o’clock in the evening it is empty and dark on the streets. Because tomorrow at five in the morning everybody needs to go to their shift at the factory. [...]. Well, that is, the work day, the shifts start very early in the morning. So. There are very few cultural events, some opportunities for development, and from professional point of view too, and as for personality, and all the rest. Very few. Surrounding – there you meet fewer people with whom you can talk about some interesting, and serious, and important topics. This majority, this majority of residents are the working class. We talked about this before. In Lviv it is different. This is more some kind of cultural capital, more *intelligentsya*. Again, it is closer to Europe. If, for example, in Lviv, well, I judge approximately, this is for comparison... 10 per cent of people had been abroad, yes, then in Lviv 80 per cent had been. That is, they saw, how life could be different, they have, well, what to compare with and for what to strive for. So, these kind of things I liked” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

With regards to Olha’s daughter’s decision to move to Russia, it is necessary to stress that the pragmatic decisions that people make in everyday life of where to move are often geopolitical. Within the system of coordinates of pro-Ukrainian activists, the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine are the highest political values. Yet these are also tied to personal well-being and prosperity. For example, closer association with the EU means that middle-class people, such as Emma or Klara, can travel visa-free for tourism, academic purposes and NGO exchanges. These opportunities, however, might be less meaningful for people like Olha whose social and economic capitals are more related to ties with Russia. Moving to Russia for work is a common practice for people from Eastern Ukraine. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, no hard border was implemented between Ukraine and Russia, and Ukrainian people would need only their ‘inner’ passport to go to Russia (in contrast to lengthier and more expensive process of getting the ‘foreign’

passport). The relaxed border control resulted in many Ukrainian's moving to Russia for work. Towards the end of my fieldwork I spent one month in a small town of Vyshneve that was considered by *Kharkiv Media* activists as politically 'ambiguous'. On the border with the Donetsk region, the city centre was plastered with billboards and posters about work in Russia and transportation to/from Russia, reflecting how commonplace this practice is. What my fieldwork in Ukraine showed is that middle class pro-Ukrainian activists were not always aware of the classed positionality of IDPs from Donbas (I touch upon classed identities in my methodology, see §3.6.2.).

What angered Klara even more during the interview in Kalynivka was Olha's comment that she does not consider Russians as enemies. It was around this phrase that the published version²⁸ of Olha's interview was also organised. In the edited version of the interview, certain parts of Olha's story were highlighted (horrors of war, story of displacement, that she does not consider Russians as enemies) while others were omitted by journalists (her positionality and familial connections to Russia, as well as a story of how the Ukrainian army was shelling Chervone). What the published version of Olha's interview did was discursively producing Olha as a separatist who fails to blame Russia for destruction brought by war. Here, I would like to argue that the way Olha's pre-war positionality influenced her experience of displacement (e.g. witnessing shelling) was not considered by journalists from *Kharkiv Media* as important. Instead, in the journalists' view, irrespective of who Olha was, she should have clearly expressed loyalty to Ukrainian post-Euromaidan political project by blaming Russia. Interestingly, researchers of internal displacement in Ukraine highlight that in contrast to the Crimean Tatars (internally displaced from Crimea) whose strong opposition to the Russian annexation of Crimea played the crucial role in the decision to move (Mikheieva and Sereda 2014: 6), the majority of IDPs who settled along the border of Donetsk and Lughansk regions moved because of military actions and shelling that posed direct threat to their lives. They either could not afford to move to other places in Ukraine, or hoped to go back as soon as military actions were over (Woroneicka-Krzyzanowska and Palaguta 2016: 32). As I demonstrate below by discussing the story of Amira, these reasons for moving and experiences of displacement (e.g. time when an IDP decided to move) are directly related to post-Euromaidan pro-Ukrainian politics of belonging.

²⁸ Please note that details about the publicly available version of the interview have been purposefully not included here to protect confidentiality of *Kharkiv Media* (for the discussion of confidentiality strategies employed in this thesis, see §3.7.2.).

4.3.2. Amira: internally displaced from Crimea

I met cultural activist Amira in Lviv on the 18th May 2015 – the commemoration of the 1944 deportations. On the day, the crowd gathered in a square on Liberty Avenue in Lviv between the monument to Taras Shevchenko (Ukrainian ‘poet of the nation’), a tent collecting donations and provisions for soldiers fighting on Ukrainian side in Donbas, and a car brought from Donbas and flecked with bullet holes. A couple of days after the commemoration meeting, we met in the flat that Amira was sharing with a university lecturer from Lviv. Amira cooked traditional Tatar food – pilau with dried fruits, and we talked about the story of her family and what 2014 annexation meant for her.

In contrast to Olha’s story, the predominant discourse in relation to Crimean Tatars in the post-Euromaidan is that they are strongly opposed to Russia’s annexation of Crimea because they see Russia as an inheritor and continuation of the Soviet Union and its atrocities. Mainly, this relates to the deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea in 1944 – the defining narrative of identity and collective memory of Crimean Tatars. Back then, Crimean Tatars were accused by the Soviet authorities of collaboration with Nazi forces during the three year WW2 occupation of the peninsula. As Greta Uehling writes, the mass deportations of Crimean Tatars had little to do with collaboration and were in fact ‘part of a larger and more complex foreign policy in line with Stalin’s geopolitical strategy to secure the southern border and expand into Turkey. The Crimean Tatars, who had ethnic ties in Turkey, were viewed as potentially sabotaging that plan’ (Uehling 2004: 3). Consequently, between the 18th and 20th of May 1944 approximately 191 000 Crimean Tatars were *en masse* deported from Crimea, mostly to Uzbekistan.

Amira was born in Uzbekistan in the 1960s to Crimean Tatar parents who were teenagers at the time of the deportation. In 2005, Amira returned to Crimea, and eventually managed to buy a plot of land in one of the compact settlements for Crimean Tatars near Simferopol. She would have liked to build a house on the southern shore where her father was from but could not do so. In 2010, she brought her mother to Crimea. However, Russia’s annexation shattered her dreams of a peaceful life in the new house. For her, as for many other Crimean Tatars who mainly settled in Lviv after the annexation, Crimea was now a home lost twice – in 1944 and 2014, and both times because of Soviet/ Russian interference. It was because of the resistance to Russian rule on the peninsula that

Crimean Tatars embraced the position that Crimea is Ukrainian territory and is illegitimately annexed by Russia. Amira also embraced this position, and clearly articulated it during our talk:

“Also, we were joking, that is ‘joking’ in quotation marks, that when the annexation happened, it came out that the biggest Ukrainians were Crimean Tatars. Not Ukrainians, not Russians, but Crimean Tatars. Because only Crimean Tatars were demonstrating with Ukrainian flags and were chanting... I myself was on all of the demonstrations. During March and April, it was the most horrible time. I was there. And we were going to all meetings, to all demonstrations, to all. And were shouting there till hoarseness in the throat, that Crimea is with Ukraine” (Amira, Lviv, May 2015).

It is clear from this quote how Amira is discursively constructing the new political identity that associates Crimean Tatars with the sovereign state of Ukraine in the face of the common enemy – Russia. Such alignment of political identities was re-produced in popular culture during the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest. The history of the deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea was translated into a song ‘1944’ performed by Crimean Tatar singer Jamala who represented Ukraine. The lyrics of the song read: ‘When strangers are coming// They come to your house// They kill you all// And say// We’re not guilty// Not guilty’²⁹. Among other things, Jamala’s victory at the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest shows how politics transcend the formal political arena into, in this case, popular culture.

Overall, the annexation of Crimea opened the discursive space for discussing Soviet atrocities in wider society. Here, the role of Ukrainian leaders and people in committing atrocities is distanced and blame for the historical injustices is put on Russia. Within this space, Crimean Tatars occupy a very important place as victims of the atrocities of Soviet regime that are loyal to independent and sovereign Ukraine. As Amira noted during the interview, the perception of Crimean Tatar internally displaced persons in Lviv is positive, despite religious and cultural differences. Moreover, whereas prior to the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of war in Donbas that accelerated policies of *dekomunizaciya* in Ukraine, master narratives about the Soviet past were rather ambiguous and the voice of Crimean Tatars about the atrocities of the Soviet regime was not clearly heard. After the annexation, the deportation of Crimean Tatars is often used

²⁹ Song lyrics are available online at <https://genius.com/Jamala-1944-lyrics>. [Accessed 14/10/2018]

as a ‘showcase’ of the brutality of totalitarianism, including Jamala’s performance. During the interview, Amira stressed that despite all horrors, the annexation of Crimea also benefitted Crimean Tatars because it provided visibility to the ethnic group that hitherto was marginalised in the Ukrainian public sphere.

What sections above focused on internal displacement of Olha from Donbas and internal displacement of Amira from Crimea demonstrated is how important pre-war positionality of IDPs is. Whereas Olha (according to *Kharkiv Media* journalists) failed to discursively produce her hometown as an enemy territory and Russians as her enemies, pro-Ukrainian cultural activist Amira’s positionality as a victim of historical Soviet atrocities was ‘automatically’ distancing her from Russia (‘inheritor’ of the Soviet Union). This demonstrates the complexity of politics of belonging in Ukraine since the beginning of war in Donbas. Importantly, the way one understands war and ‘performs’ geopolitics also has concrete effects on, for example, the availability of help. To me, this became clear during a visit to one of the villages that was caught in the crossfire at the beginning of the conflict with activists from the *United Ukraine* from Lviv, who help to rebuild houses during their summer camps. The pro-Ukrainian activists’ decision of whom to help and whom not to help was based precisely on considerations of whether a person has strong pro-Ukrainian views. Arguably, the grievances associated with who receives help and who does not further entrench divisions in Ukrainian society (on the polarisation of Ukrainian society since the beginning of war, see Kyselova 2017). The following section discusses how emotions are embedded in this process of producing subjectivities, territories, and histories.

4.4. The algorithms of blame

I argue here that politics of belonging are mediated by emotions. I explore how blame is central to the post-Euromaidan project of belonging that by utilising blame to ‘others’ any ‘selves’ who fail to ‘perform’ loyalty to Ukraine. The process that I call here the ‘algorithm of blame’ consists of following: in order to ‘perform’ one’s belonging to Ukraine, one has to blame the ‘other’ (Russia, *DNR*, *LNR*) for waging war in Donbas; if

one fails to do so, one is in turn blamed and ‘othered’ for being a separatist. This ‘algorithm of blame’ can be illustrated by Klara’s reaction to Olha’s views discussed above. Here, I also look at the processes of ‘othering’ and blaming as revealed through the ‘vocabularies’ of war. In preceding sections, terms such as *boyeviki* and *opolchency* were discussed, I will now introduce one more word to the ‘vocabulary’ of war – *vata/vatnik*.

While discussing the role of emotions that circulate through spaces of activism in performing boundaries of belonging, I follow the work of Sunčana Laketa (2016). Laketa’s research looks at how high school and college students experience and narrate fear and danger of the post-conflict ethnically segregated city of Mostar where identities are not always visually marked. Importantly for my study, Laketa follows Ahmed’s line of argument about how surfaces and boundaries are made in the process of encounter that cautions against considering perception as based on some inherent properties of spaces and bodies. I quote:

“[D]ifferent lines of division and processes of bordering [...] are embodied through different affective intensities. As boundary making is central to geopolitical struggles, this work attests to the important role emotion and affect play in the very creation of those boundaries. Boundaries are not simply imprinted on places and bodies as rigid and fixed grids of difference, and the complex affective life is more than the question of how those fixed boundaries are managed and endured. Rather, the always-already affective borders highlight the fluid and versatile, indeed virtual qualities of boundaries themselves” (Laketa 2016: 19).

Importantly, Laketa’s (2016) work moves beyond discussions of the discursive framings of geopolitical bodies by bringing out a more dynamic notion of the geopolitical that is grounded in corporeal, embodied and emotional experiences; thus, showing how boundaries emerge through the encounters between spaces and bodies. Here, the geopolitics are seen not as already existing, but as dynamic and set in motion by emotions in the space of everyday encounters where emotions are viewed as ‘relational flows, fluxes or currents, in-between people and places’ (Bondi *et al* 2005: 3).

So far in this section, I have discussed how journalists from *Kharkiv Media* interpreted internally displaced person’s Olha understanding of war in Donbas. Now, I will draw focus on the particular mechanisms of ‘othering’ used by the pro-Ukrainian activists to construct boundaries of belonging. I argue that emotions of blame and fear are central to

this boundary-making. During the interviews in Kalynivka, Klara was pressuring Olha to answer who is fighting in Donbas, and what Olha's views about Russians and Ukrainians are. The fact that Klara asks Olha, "And what is your attitude after that towards Ukraine and Ukrainians?" is interesting. By asking this question, Klara discursively distances Olha from Ukraine. She considers Olha as an 'other' who does not belong to the Ukrainian state because of her understanding of the war that journalists interpret as separatist. For Klara, Olha fails to reproduce dominant discourses about the war in Donbas, and hence 'perform' her belonging to Ukraine by blaming Russia for the conflict. I would like to argue here that emotions of blame are central to the articulation of the current conflict.

For Jacob who discussed the interview with me, Olha was unable to grasp the conflict holistically and with sufficient historical depth because, according to him, she is narrow-minded and uneducated, and by being *vatnik*. Often, the mechanisms of 'othering' employed by the pro-Ukrainian activists involves calling people whom they consider as supporting separatism *vata* or *vatnik*. Emma explained to me that literally the word *vatnik* comes from the word *vata* meaning 'cotton' in Russian language; *vatnik* means a quilted coat supposedly worn in the northern and coldest regions of Russia. While talking about a teacher who during Emma's school years was admiring cities in Western Ukraine and organizing children's excursions there, Emma mentioned that 'after the *Russian Spring* she became such a terrible *vatnik*' (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016). Jacob provided a more exhaustive definition of *vata*:

"Well, people who are preaching Soviet ideology are called *vata*. They also preach the ideology of contemporary Russia, support actions of Russian government, that support Russia's imperial ambitions, they justify, justify violence, they justify war crimes of Soviet Union and Russia. [...]. As a rule they are narrow-minded, as a rule they are poorly educated, as a rule they are petty bourgeoisie in the worst sense of this word, they do not understand what are... that is, do not know what are human values, values of society. And they exist in a peculiar world. They do not see into history, their information field, as a rule, consists of third-rate informational slops, they could be easily 'zombified' and manipulated..." (Jacob, Kharkiv, April 2016).

The derogative terms such as *vatnik* are used not only in relation to IDPs from Donbas who are seen as supporting Russia in the war in Donbas, but to all people who are seen to betray the values and sovereignty of an independent Ukraine irrespective of where they live. Such terms, in addition to other terms such as *opolchenye* and *boyeviki* discussed

above, and other such as *volontery* discussed in the following chapters (see §6.5.) form the large vocabulary of war that is by now firmly entrenched in Ukrainian society and is used in everyday conversations (see Zhabotinskaya 2015 on vocabulary of Maidan). Often, pro-Ukrainian activists explain why some Ukrainian citizens have pro-Russian views by drawing attention to the influence of Russian propaganda. For example, Emma commented about her home town of Mariupol:

“This is a Russian-speaking region, it is for many of them difficult to watch Ukrainian news, many because of their laziness don’t want to strain their brain and understand, learn Ukrainian, attempt to understand Ukrainian. They, it is easier for them to watch Russian news. And they draw conclusions from some Russian news and from how it was broadcasted, for example, events on Maidan...” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

Such a view of Donbas residents as docile bodies who watch Russian TV, are under the spell of Russian propaganda, and who deeply believe in Soviet ideology was common among the pro-Ukrainian activists. Words to describe such people included being ‘indoctrinated’ and ‘zombified’, as Jacob’s quote above demonstrates. I argue here that such words are used as mechanisms of ‘othering’ people with different political views. What this demonstrates is how central blame is, following Laketa (2016) and Ahmed (2014), for ‘making the surfaces’ of geopolitical bodies. In the following section, I discuss how not only blame is central to making of geopolitics, but also fear.

Before moving on, however, I would like to make a remark about language politics in Ukraine. While some activists whose mother-tongue is Russian switched to speaking Ukrainian to signify their belonging to the Ukrainian state after the start of the conflict, others have resisted articulating belonging in terms of language. For example, Jacob from *Kharkiv Media* mentioned during the interview that it would be a great asset to have Russian as a second language in Ukraine, but that this is impossible while Russia is in its current state, with current leadership next door to Ukraine, because in such a geopolitical situation language can always be used as a pretext to ‘claim’ people and territories. Unfortunately, full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this thesis.

4.5. Fear and anxiety: resisting separatism

Preceding sections of this chapter focused on how pro-Ukrainian journalists-activists understand the war in Donbas, how their interpretations produce certain politics of belonging that are mediated by the emotional intensities of blame. Here, I would like to continue this conversation by questioning why activists from Kharkiv are upholding the boundaries of belonging so strictly. By elaborating on this, I would like to bring to the fore some of the objects I encountered upon arrival to *Kharkiv Media*. During one of the first visits to the activist's office, among the rich amounts of objects speaking of journalists' patriotism, I noticed three posters taped to the glass door by the entrance (see Figure 6). One of the posters had an infographic of the distance between Donetsk and Kharkiv (290 kilometres), stating that this distance can be covered in 6 hours by tank, in 4 hours by car, in 7 minutes by fighter jet SU-27, and in 150 seconds by missile 'Iskander'. Between the two cities was a photo of ruined Donetsk airport (one of the main battlefields during the Donbas war), and above it was the inscription 'War is closer than you think'. The poster also had a hotline for the *SBU* (Security Forces of Ukraine).

What this poster speaks to is the closeness of war to spaces of activism (see §5. for discussion of how activists proximate war). I would like to argue here that the closeness of war is important to activists from *Kharkiv Media* not only because of the geographical proximity to Donetsk, but because Kharkiv itself narrowly escaped becoming a separatist republic during the *Russian Spring*. At the time, in several cities in Eastern Ukraine local and regional administrations as well as security forces buildings were captured by separatists who opposed post-Euromaidan authorities in Kyiv. Kharkiv was one of the cities that separatists claimed. However, unlike in Donetsk and Lughansk, these attempts failed. It was during this time that journalists working in different media outlets (who later consolidated into *Kharkiv Media*) came together to decide what they could do to counter mainstream media representations of Kharkiv as supporting separatism (Stefanie, Kharkiv, February 2016). For several months, journalists engaged in grassroots activism: capturing news without affiliation to any existing media organisation, using their own equipment and streaming journalistic material directly to Youtube. At the time, it was not clear whether Kharkiv would remain a part of Ukraine, or whether it would be captured by separatists. Engaging in activism was one of the ways of showing one's pro-Ukrainian position. Members of the *Kharkiv Media* were often found in the heat of events. The

editor of the hub Stefanie, recalling the events, was so agitated that red marks appeared on her neck while talking to me. She recalled how scary it was – many people in Kharkiv even had ‘emergency suitcases’, ready to leave should military actions spread to the city.

Figure 6: Patriotic posters in the office of *Kharkiv Media* (April 2016).



These experiences of resisting separatism and living in a city close to a war zone are similar to those described by Halyna Budivska and Dariya Orlova (2017), where journalists with patriotic views working in a violent context saturated with a sense of urgency ‘blend’ activist and professional identities. I argue that because of journalists’ engagement in activism and their contribution to saving the city from separatism that escalated into full-scale war in neighbouring regions, patriotic pro-Ukrainian journalists from the *Kharkiv Media* hold very strong political opinions, particularly towards people with ‘ambiguous’ and/or pro-Russian understanding of the conflict. As stories of *Kharkiv Media* activists who lived through the *Russian Spring* in the city demonstrate, their very activism started off with fear and anxiety associated with potentiality of becoming a part of an illegitimate semi-state, such as *DNR* or *LNR*, or a part of Russia. It is because of this fear that they adopt such a stronghold position in relation to current war. As will be demonstrated in relation to other example, many activists in Ukraine were motivated by the urgency of war and felt that ‘doing nothing is not an option’ (see §5.4.).

4.6. Conclusion of chapter four

One of the aims of this introductory empirical chapter was to provide the reader with an in-depth knowledge on how pro-Ukrainian activists understand and negotiate war in Donbas. The main axis along which the discussion of the discursive production of war in Donbas was centred was a trip to Kalynivka in April 2016 that journalists invited me to join. During this trip, many interviews with the internally displaced persons from Donbas were conducted by journalist-intern Klara and Yaroslav. In this chapter, I focused on one interview with the internally displaced person Olha, exploring journalists' reactions to Olha's interpretation of war during the interview and after the trip, as well as how it was represented when published through *Khrakiv Media* outlet. This material was also supplemented by discussing politics of belonging in relation to activist and IDP Amira from Crimea. This chapter not only unpacked some of the central themes along which the post-Euromaidan pro-Ukrainian political project is constructed (discussed also by such authors as Fournier 2017 Puleri 2017; Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017; Wilson 2016), but also what politics of belonging are mobilised.

Here, I defined politics of belonging as the way 'specific political projects aim at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways' (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). In this chapter, Ukrainian activists are demonstrated to be the 'agents' of this political project executing the 'classification' of who belongs and who does not belong to the Ukrainian state. I argued that pro-Ukrainian activists are in the position of power during the current conflict, as their 'situated gazes' coincide with the political imaginaries of Donbas war of the post-Euromaidan Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv. Within these discourses, Russia and pro-Russian *DNR* and *LNR* separatists are claimed to be responsible for war in Donbas (in relation to how 'local' power elites are blamed, see §7.2.). While recounting these discourses, activists also frequently mentioned the role of media and Russian (mis)representation of the Euromaidan and war as fuelling the conflict. Importantly, when IDPs like Olha failed to reproduce such narratives and construct particular territories, subjectivities and histories as 'enemies', she was labelled by the activists as separatist (and hence responsible for the conflict) – the process that I called here the 'algorithms of blame'.

With regards to the linguistic dimension of this war, the chapter showed how certain readings of separatists as either *opolchency* or *boyeviki* fighting in Donbas are imbued with meaning and are embedded in different political projects. So, the mechanisms of blame unpacked in this chapter were set in motion by particular ‘vocabularies’ of war that helped activists to ‘other’ certain people as not belonging. This observation furthered the understanding of the Donbas war as mediated by activists’ professional practice of journalist, by their ‘situated gazes’, by their emotions, and by the ‘vocabularies’ they used. Here, following feminist geopolitics arguments (e.g. Hyndman 2007; Secor 2001; Laketa 2016 among others), geopolitics were discussed as lived out in everyday lives, as embodied, and as emotional. Deconstructing journalists’ encounter with the ‘other’, I refuted the view of identities as predetermined and assumed, showing instead how geopolitical subjects and surfaces are set in motions in the space in-between people and vis-à-vis the interlocutor. This is an important finding of this thesis, and I would like to continue exploring this theme in the future.

Lastly, the chapter looked at how the activists’ stronghold position with regards to separatist and/or ‘ambiguous’ views on the current conflict was rooted in their ‘situated gazes’ of living in a city closely (geographically and emotionally) to war. Here, I argued that activists’ experiences of resisting separatism during the *Russian Spring* (when it was still not clear how the situation will develop in the country and in their city), putting their lives at risk, and feeling the seemingly unending fear and anxiety associated with the start of war continued to influence their work during the time of my fieldwork. I therefore established that emotions are not fleeting and are deeply rooted in activists’ lives.

5. Emotional geographies of camouflage nets

5.1. Introduction to chapter five

Since the beginning of war in Donbas, making camouflage nets for the Ukrainian army became one of the popular types of grassroots activism or – as called in Ukrainian – *volonterstvo*³⁰. This chapter explores how camouflage nets are made by women *volontery* in one of the organisations located in Kyiv. There are three questions that this chapter addresses: *What practices constitute spaces of activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine? What emotions circulate through spaces of activism? How are activists' emotions managed?*

Following Bosco's (2007) account on human rights network in Argentine, I argue that activists of the *Camouflage Nets* perform 'emotional labour' to make war proximate, thus 'shrinking' geographical distance. Camouflage nets and other objects circulating between apparent 'spaces of peace' in Kyiv and 'spaces of war' in Donbas become, to use Sarah Ahmed's term (2014), 'sticky' with care. Women imbue camouflage nets with cultural meanings and emotions associated with desire to protect soldiers fighting in the war. By looking at how women *volontery* are engaged in activist practices of making camouflage nets and the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 2012) of caring for soldiers and sustaining activism, certain emotional geographies of activism during the time of war are revealed.

³⁰ Terms *volonterka* (Ukrainian 'волонтерка': fem., singular), *volonter* (Ukrainian 'волонтер': masc., singular), *volontery* (Ukrainian 'волонтери': plural) are associated with activists and protestors of the *Euromaidan*. Since the beginning of war in *Donbas*, the terms are often used to describe people helping the Ukrainian army and internally displaced persons. *Volonterstvo* (Ukrainian 'волонтерство') is the act or process of 'volunteering'.

5.2. ‘Binding’ practices and objects

I met Nika in the Maidan Square. As we were walking towards the place where she alongside other two women run a workshop for making camouflage nets for the army, Nika warned me not to be scared as we walk in. We approached what seemed like an abandoned building with graffiti on the walls, and via a staircase descended into the basement. It was strange to find this building with layers of plaster coming off the walls just around the corner from the Maidan. It was even stranger to see Nika – a well-groomed lady working in beauty industry – step into this abandoned building. Nika explained that the house is on an architectural heritage list but that it belongs to some oligarch who would like to demolish it and build a new tall glass building on this sought after spot in central Kyiv. Because of the protracted legal disputes, the building has been neither demolished nor renovated and is gradually decaying. Nika also proudly stated that during the militant stages of the Euromaidan that her husband also took part in, the basement of the building where they are now working used to be one of the places where Molotov cocktails were prepared by the protestors.

As soon as we entered the workshop room, Nika introduced me to four ladies who were already there. It was still early and not everybody had arrived. That day twelve women came to make nets. In contrast to the shabby staircase, the room looked rather cosy. In the middle of the room stood two large wooden frames of about 2 metres high and 6 metres long that ladies were working on. In the far left corner there were two smaller frames for *kikimoras*³¹ – individual camouflage costumes that soldiers use for scouting (see Figure 8). On the back wall opposite the entrance there were two Ukrainian flags, photos of women and soldiers with the nets, as well as a poster-size sheet of paper with the name of the organisation – *Camouflage Nets* – handwritten in bold letters atop the list of nets and *kikimoras* made since the creation of the organisation in January 2015. Right by the entrance was a coffee table with snacks.

Nika explained to me what to do. It was the second time I had made a camouflage net, the first was a month earlier during a trip to a town in Lviv region. On the day of my trip to the provincial town in Western Ukraine, public holiday celebrations were taking place in one of the town squares. In the corner of the square local activists brought the frames

³¹ In Slavic mythology, *kikimora* (Ukrainian ‘kikimopa’) is a creature that lives in a house.

and supplies so that people attending the celebrations could contribute to making a net (see Figure 8). Since the beginning of war in Donbas, making camouflage nets became one of the popular types of grassroots activism or – as called in Ukrainian – *volonterstvo*. As Mariana, Nika’s best friend and one of the ‘managers’ of the organisation, explained to me during one of the first visits, the nets are custom made because there are not many options available in retail, and those that are available are very expensive and/or of poor quality. In the months following my initial visit to *Camouflage Nets* at the beginning of August 2016, I frequently came to the basement, helping to make nets and *kikimoras*, and observing women’s daily work routines and occasional celebrations.

One of the things that struck me about work of *Camouflage Nets* was how customised the process of making nets was. To make a camouflage net, long strips of shredded cotton fabric are woven through the large squares of a fishing net tossed over a wooden frame. The fabric that the women used was hand-dyed by some members in their homes. The nets are made according to season, and so the fabric has to be dyed accordingly: in white during the winter months, when the snow starts to melt in grey and brown to match the colour of bare soil, to green in summer, and green and brown in autumn. Because the fabric is hand-dyed and could stain fingers, gloves and overalls are used during work. Usually, old bedding fabric outsourced from friends and family or bought in charity shops was used – material that is well-disposed to colour. Once during my stay, Nadya – Mariana’s sister and the third ‘manager’ of the *Camouflage Nets* – also brought in huge bags of khaki coloured strips of fabric. As Nadya explained, these were leftovers donated by a factory sewing military uniforms.

In addition to the special colouring techniques, every woman had a distinctive way of weaving the strips of fabric through the nets, something members of the *Camouflage Nets* called the ‘handwriting’. Because of the distinctive ‘handwriting’ of each weaver, women could tell who was making particular segments of the net. So, the nets made by different organisations and even individual weavers are potentially identifiable; and one of the older activists (all women were over thirty five years old) whom everybody called ‘*pani*³² Vanda’ once commented that whenever she watches TV and there are news reports from the *ATO*, she looks out for the camouflage nets caught on camera to see if these are made by members of the *Camouflage Nets*. What this remark points to is the way *volontery*

³² A formal and/or very polite way to address a woman in Ukrainian language.

working in *Camouflage Nets* experience war in Donbas as a proximate and intimate – war is not something that happens hundreds of kilometres away but rather something that is confronted every working day in the basement of the abandoned building in central Kyiv. Here, a short theoretical digression is due.

In the article about the affective atmosphere of the Euromaidan, Jeffrey Stepnisky (2018) writes that different spaces of the revolution were created, or ‘staged’ through certain objects, aesthetics, and smells. Other researchers noted that burning tires and throwing Molotov cocktails were amongst the symbols of the protests (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 7). During the fieldwork in Ukraine, I encountered objects associated with the Euromaidan, such as tires and helmets, brought into spaces of activism to mark the connection with the revolution. According to the same logic, many spaces of activism were ‘bounded’ by objects associated with war – bomb shards, Ukrainian flags from sites of battles, and soldiers’ chevrons among other things. I would like to argue here that in ‘showcasing’ these objects of war, *volontery* achieved two aims: they mark and ‘bind’ spaces of activism as belonging to a particular political project thus appropriating space; and they ‘proximate’ war, similarly to the way the poster(s) in *Kharkiv Media* are meant to remind the visitors that war goes on and that it is close (see §4.5.). I would like to relate this point to Bosco’s account (2007) of how human rights network in Argentine perform ‘emotional labour’ to create feelings of proximity despite geographical distance, arguing that activists of the *Camouflage Nets* similarly perform ‘emotional labour’ to make war geographically more proximate.

What Bosco (2007) does not comment on in his account is the role of objects in aiding particular ‘templates’ of feeling. In case of activists in Ukraine, objects are often used to appropriate and mark space, thus also creating particular emotional intensities. For example, here is how Emma whose story will be discussed in the following chapter (§6.) described her first visit to *Kharkiv Media*:

“There were no vacancies in Lviv that were related to ATO [war zone], this was such a period when I was totally focused on this. Simply I lived only with this. And just at this moment I came across *Kharkiv Media*, where there is such... I remember opening the doors, coming inside and – here are the shards, here is a flag of the ‘Right Sector’, here is Ukrainian flag, all these things. I think ‘God, this is ideal place!’ In its spirit, in themes, in people who work here. We are somehow on the same wave, I understood that this is ideal place” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

What Emma is doing in recounting the objects that she encountered in *Kharkiv Media* is ‘reading’ the discourses encapsulated in objects and interpreting that since these objects are in this particular place, it is an ideal place for her to write articles about the *ATO*. To go back to the *Camouflage Nets* and *pani Vanda*’s remark; due to the very nature of the work and the presence of particular objects – camouflage nets and costumes made for the Ukrainian army – the basement in Kyiv where *volontery* work is very close to war, it has a heterotopic quality that is distorting geographical distance. Here, war is experienced intimately, and it is part of the everyday life for women making nets.

As I rather quickly discovered, my ‘handwriting’ was not very even. Because I seemed unable to figure out how to weave the strip of fabric through the net so that it makes a nice pattern without odd blank spots in the middle, I focused on preparing materials and making parts of *kikimora* costumes. In contrast to the cotton fabric used for making the nets; large brown hessian coffee, chicory or spice sacks were used as raw material for *kikimoras*. The sacks were usually bought in a market and then also dyed according to season. It was the end of summer, and Nika pointed that leaves are already turning yellow, and I should put more brown threads in, leaving only small islands of green.

The technique of making *kikimoras* was different from that of nets. The sacks were cut up into squares, and then threads of each square untangled. The length threads were kept as a raw material for the costume (see Figure 8), and shorter width threads were thrown away. In doing this, overalls were especially handy, as it was very dusty work. I had to put extra blanket on my knees to protect clothing from the intrusive and itchy hessian hair. After preparing the raw material, individual threads are tied using a cow hitch knot at the intersection of small-square nets tossed over a small frame of about one metre squared. These small-square nets were custom made by another group of *volontery* on order. When separate parts of the costume – legs, arms, body and hood – were completed, they were sewn together by Nataly who was the best at doing this particular aspect of the work.

Figure 7: Photograph of weaving a camouflage net in Lviv region (August 2015).



Figure 8: Photograph of *kikimora* costume (*left*), and hessian threads used for making *kikimoras* (*right*) (August 2015, photos by *Camouflage Nets*).



5.3. Care ‘in-between the threads’

As you may imagine, the work involved in weaving the nets and making *kikimoras* is very monotonous and time consuming. Usually, *volontery* would start to gather around 4pm, and would stay until about 8pm every day except for weekends. And yet on many days I recorded in my diary that time went by very quickly. The main reason why time was passing quickly was because of the monotonous nature of the work and the place where the work was occurring – one room where everybody could hear each other – offered a perfect space for conversations. Everybody was arriving at different times, and when a new arrival appeared through the doors, women welcomed them. If the ‘regulars’ arrived, some members inquired how their day was, and asked for updates on certain events of their lives. It was clear that through working together, women got to know each other very well. If a new arrival was somebody whom ‘core’ *volontery* have not seen for a while, questions on where they have been and what happened since they last saw them followed. The atmosphere in the basement was truly welcoming, something energetic and cheerful ‘managers’ – Nika, Mariana and Nadya – particularly contributed to.

In addition to discussing minute details of ‘personal’ lives, while weaving camouflage nets women often talked about ‘Politics’. In August, the most discussed event was the parade for the Independence Day of Ukraine – whether and how it should be organised. Whereas some members considered it inappropriate to organise celebration at the time of war and that all resources should be directed to support the army, others felt that celebrations are necessary to pay respect to soldiers and to demonstrate what and whom soldiers are fighting for. These discussions were tainted by anger and sorrow towards the pompous parade of the previous year when units of military equipment were brought to Kyiv at a time when the battles for Ilovaysk – the bloodiest battles where hundreds of soldiers and civilians died – were taking place near Donetsk. Other topics included language politics, relations with relatives and friends in Russia, the bridge that is being built on Kerch channel that would connect Crimea with Russia, how long prime minister Arsenyi Yatsenyuk will be in power, and when and how the war will end. Similarly to the way Anna Secor (2001) described how during informal visiting days women re-produce Turkish polity, women *volontery* from *Camouflage Nets* re-produced Ukrainian state through these daily conversations.

The sociality of *Camouflage Nets* was also reinforced through daily sharing of food, celebrations of accomplished work and ‘birthdays’ of the organisation, as well as the creation of rituals specific to the organisation. On a daily basis, many women came to the basement straight after work, and in a big city such as Kyiv not everybody could make it home to have dinner before arriving. So, everybody was bringing snacks, home-grown vegetables and pickles, home-baked puddings, and sometimes home-made liquors for others to try. Whenever a home produce received particular acclaim, the recipe was written down into a special folder. During the six month ‘birthday’ of the organisation that we celebrated with a barbeque, Nika and Mariana rejoicingly presented typed-up ‘*Camouflage Nets Recipes*’ to every member.

In addition to recipes, the folder also contained two versions of the ‘anthem’ of the *Camouflage Nets* that we all sang after several rounds of drinks accompanied by speeches to *volontery*, to victory and to hands so that they would not hurt after weaving. In an interesting twist of cultural re-production, one version of the ‘anthem’ was sang to the melody of the WW2 song called ‘Smuglyanka’ that was featured in a popular 1973 Soviet movie ‘Only old men are going to battle’. The original lyrics of the song told the story of a young man who meets a dark-haired Moldovan girl, aka ‘smuglyanka’, by a maple tree. The girl turns out to be a Moldovan partisan and persuades the man to join partisans. While re-cycling the melody, members of the *Camouflage Nets* created new lyrics telling the story of contemporary war in Donbas, including the lines:

*“We, the dearest ones, are together with you,
And in our hearts there is a yearning
That bullets will not touch you.*

...

*We are the battalion of volontery
With the distinctive ‘handwriting’.*

...

*We will hide you in the forest, in the field,
Amidst the stones and grass.
The secrets of protection were passed down to us
By Mother-Intercessor.
We have woven our faith and hope
In-between the threads.
So that soldiers
Would return alive.”*

The reference to Mother-Intercessor (Ukrainian ‘Мати-Покрова’, *Maty-Pokrova*) in the ‘anthem’ of the *Camouflage Nets* is particularly interesting, as it speaks to the process of *dekomunizaciya* that started in Ukraine in 2014. The Intercession of the Theotokos, or as called in Ukrainian *Pokrova Presvyatoyi Bogorodyci* (Ukrainian ‘Покрова Пресвятої Богородиці’) is a holiday celebrated in Eastern Christianity on the 14th October. Because the Mother of God was believed to be the protector of Cossacks, prior to 2014 the 14th October was celebrated in Ukraine as a Day of Ukrainian Cossacks (Ukrainian ‘День Українського Козацтва’). Since the beginning of war in Donbas, the holiday was introduced into the national holiday calendar as a Defender of Ukraine Day (Ukrainian ‘День захисника України’) in ‘replacement’ of the Soviet holiday of the 23rd February – the Day of the Defender of Fatherland (Ukrainian ‘День захисника Вітчизни’). In the address to the Parliament on the 14th October 2014, post-Euromaidan president Petro Poroshenko directly linked the cancellation of the celebration of the Soviet Day of the Defender of Fatherland and the creation of a new Ukrainian holiday by stating that ‘the day celebrating the military of another country will not, finally, be celebrated in Ukraine’³³. By referring to the Mother-Intercessor in their ‘anthem’, members of the *Camouflage Nets* thus express their support for the new holiday honouring soldiers who defend Ukraine. Ironically, perhaps, while new words were created for the ‘anthem’, the melody of ‘Smuglianka’ – melody of the popular Soviet song – remained the same. It could be argued that such ‘layering’ of cultural texts is characteristic of the policy of *dekomunizaciya* more generally. Unfortunately, this topic is beyond the scope of the thesis, and has to be addressed elsewhere.

But even more important than stating their attitude regarding the introduction of new state holiday, the ‘anthem’ encapsulates how women *volontery* from the *Camouflage Nets* understand their own work. In Ukrainian language, the word *pokrova* (Ukrainian ‘покрова’, cover) that is used to refer to the Intercession of the Theotokos literally means ‘cover’, since the holiday takes place after the harvest is collected and the first snow ‘covers’ the fields. Members of the *Camouflage Nets* reinterpret the meaning of ‘covering’ to refer to the literal function performed by their nets – covering and hiding soldiers from the enemy. By referring to the ‘secrets of protection’ passed down to them – members of the *Camouflage Nets* – by the Theotokos, what women *volontery* imply is

³³ For video of the presidential address in Ukrainian, see <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezident-vstanoviv-14-zhovtnya-dnem-zahisnika-ukrayini-33855>.

that in addition to an actual layer of fabric they ‘cover’ soldiers with a layer of ‘invisible’ protection that is woven in-between the threads; protection that is woven by faith and hope that soldiers will return from war alive. The lines of the ‘anthem’ speak to the deeply touching way of thinking about their work that involves not only monotonous and painstakingly detailed ‘physical’ labour but also emotional labour of caring.

I argue that the nets and *kikimora* costumes that members of the *Camouflage Nets* weave become, to use Sarah Ahmed’s (2014) term, ‘sticky’ with care that is circulated between the basement in central Kyiv and the Ukrainian soldiers’ camps in Donbas. This point can be illustrated by looking at how nets and *kikimoras* are packed by *volontery* before sending to soldiers. One day I came to the basement to find that two extra-large nets and one *kikimora* costume had to be finished before the end of the day, so that Mariana could pass them to certain battalion through *volontery* from Rivne who were travelling that day through Kyiv to the *ATO* zone. Nataly was already finishing sewing the parts of *kikimora* together. When she finished, another *volonterka* Olesya said that she would like to try the costume on. She dressed up, and we went to the courtyard to take some pictures. Olesya proudly posed with a mock Kalashnikov rifle.

When we returned to the basement and started packing the nets, I noticed that there was an envelope that *pani* Vanda had put into the bag with *kikimora*. Looking inside the envelope, I found the emblem of the *Camouflage Nets* with the diminutive version of the name Anya – ‘Anyuta’ – written on the back of it. Nika explained that all *kikimoras* are given names, and this one is called ‘Anyuta’ in an honour of one of the ‘core’ members of *Camouflage Nets*. So, the *kikimora* that a soldier will use for scouting was called in Anya’s honour. Other names that Nika recalled were ‘Pavlusha’ because the net was finished on St Paul’s day, and ‘Angel’ because the lady who was trying *kikimora* on while taking pictures was joking that she is flying, flapping the fluffy hessian arms that looked like wings. Inside the envelop, there was also a small sewn angel, and some postcards with the prayer. On the blank side of postcards *pani* Vanda who bought them in metro wrote in capital letters with pink highlighter a message directed to a soldier who will take a postcard ‘ПОВЕРТАЙСЯ ЖИВИМ’ (in Ukrainian, ‘come back alive’). While I was reading the prayer, *pani* Vanda commented that ‘in the trenches, there are no atheists’. It was through these objects that care was circulating between ‘spaces of peace’ and ‘spaces of war’.

5.4. Emotional labour to sustain *volonterstvo*

In addition to conversations about ‘personal’ lives and ‘politics’, women of *Camouflage Nets* often talked about work – what kind of nets and *kikimoras* have been ordered by which soldiers or battalions, where and how to outsource raw materials, how many nets they have made so far. Orders for nets and *kikimoras* could be ‘placed’ by any member of the *Camouflage Nets*, since every woman had a relative or friend fighting in Donbas. Usually, the logistics of shipping the nets were arranged by the ‘managers’ who through their work had developed an extensive network of contacts with *volontery* from Kyiv and other cities. The day after the two extra-large nets and ‘Anyuta’ were sent off, Mariana, responsible for the shipping, came to the basement a little later than usual. As soon as Mariana entered the room, she took out her phone and started reading a message she received from the soldiers whom the nets were sent to: ‘When we were leaving, in a rush forgot even food, but your nets took with us’. Everybody cheered – the message from the soldiers was a recognition of the importance of women’s work.

Messages of gratitude received from soldiers were as important in sustaining women’s activism as emotional labour performed by the ‘managers’ of the *Camouflage Nets* to create the welcoming atmosphere that prised every member. While working alongside *volontery* I noted that women from the *Camouflage Nets* show unprecedented commitment by dedicating 3 – 4 hours every working day on top of their responsibilities at work and in their families. I noted in my diary that *volonterstvo* in contemporary Ukraine is not the same as ‘volunteering’ that one does in spare time when ‘at peace’: the time commitment, the amount of labour put into work and the emotional toll that it carries is far greater. This thought was written down after one conversation with Nika.

One day Nika was giving me a lift home, and as we approached the place where she was dropping me off, she pulled the car to a sidewalk. For some time we sat in the car talking about the Euromaidan, her and her husband’s participation in the revolution, and how it ‘welded’ their own relationship and relationship with their children by leaving all unimportant arguments aside. We also talked about the war in Donbas and the *Camouflage Nets*. Nika noted that over time the number of people who came to make nets has decreased, and admitted that she is also suffering from ‘burn-out’ and is very tired. Yet at the same time, she felt that it is impossible to stop because the war continues, and

‘doing nothing is not an option’ (see §4.5. for similar narrative by Kharkiv Media journalists and §6.3. for similar narrative by Emma). Showing me photos of friends who were fighting in Donbas, she said ‘and this guy lost one of his arms’. While talking, Nika was looking straight ahead, and periodically was wiping off tears. She said that because of the Euromaidan and war, the past year and a half had been an ‘emotional rollercoaster’ for her, but she is trying to stay calmer and worry less now, just because carrying on the same emotional intensity over such a long period of time is beyond human capability. I have not seen Nika in tears before; usually she was joking and making other members laugh. What the conversation in the car revealed was how much ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 2012) she puts into managing her own feelings, and, as one of the ‘managers’ of *Camouflage Nets*, the feelings of others.

5.5. Conclusions of chapter five

This chapter focused on popular type of activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine – making camouflage nets for the soldiers. The chapter set out to explore practices existing in spaces of activism, and emotions that circulate through these spaces.

Through conducting ethnographic fieldwork and engaging in the process of making camouflage nets myself, I found out how customised and laborious this process was: outsourcing materials, dyeing fabric, preparing raw threads, and weaving nets and costumes required a lot of time and resources. Nets made by women *volonterly* were then named, imbued with meaning, and sent to soldiers fighting in Donbas. Moreover, the chapter showed how spaces of activism are ‘bound’ by other objects associated with war – bomb shards, Ukrainian flags from sites of battles, and soldiers’ chevrons among other things. Following Bosco (2007), I argued that ‘showcasing’ these objects of war, *volonterly* achieved two aims: marking and appropriating space as Ukrainian, and ‘proximating’ war. These observations led me to question where war is located, and whether classical geopolitical bird-eye-view perspective on war as geographically contained in Donbas region is accurate. Contrary to such view, this research showed how

women activists intimately faced war every day in a Kyiv basement where their organisation was located. What this pointed to was the importance of looking at the relationality between ‘spaces of peace’ and ‘space of war’, and how these are co-constitutive.

With regards to emotionality of activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine, the chapter explored how camouflage nets and other objects women send to soldiers were imbued with cultural meanings of caring often framed in religious terms. To use women’s own words, they weaved faith and hope into the camouflage nets to protect soldiers from enemies. Following Sarah Ahmed’s (2014) term, I thus viewed camouflage nets as ‘sticky’ with care. I argued that the emotionality of making camouflage nets, alongside practices and objects existing in spaces of activism, is ‘binding’ these spaces together as distinct spaces in society, while also simultaneously also making such spaces ‘porous’ and connected to other geographies and people.

Lastly, one of the important findings of this chapter is that spaces of activism are saturated with the emotional labour, defined here following Hochschild (2012) as emotion work of tailoring or managing one’s feelings. During the fieldwork, many activists commented on the fact that because there is war in Donbas, ‘doing nothing is not an option’. Also, many activists continued to engage in activism even though they were severely fatigued and ‘burnt out’. I argue that activists thus self-censored their emotions (and emotions of other activists) to enable them to continue working in a context imbued with urgency (of war) and responsibility (towards soldiers fighting for Ukraine). Unfortunately, discussion of moral responsibility is beyond the scope of this thesis.

6. Emma's story: activism as intimacy-geopolitics

6.1. Introduction to chapter six

This chapter is written based on an in-depth story of Emma – journalist and activist whom I met during the fieldwork in Kharkiv. Following feminist call to consider intimacy as a starting point of geopolitical analysis (Pain 2015b), the chapter looks at Emma's trajectory of becoming an activist, and how this journey is embedded in relations with her family members, with other *volontery*, and with Ukrainian soldiers she meets during the trips to *ATO*. I define these relations as intimate, following the definition of intimacy as a set of three intersecting relations: 1) a set of spatial relations stretching from proximate to distant, e.g. household or the body; 2) as a mode of interaction that stretches from personal to distant/global, e.g. work on emotions highlighting how subjects reflect, resist or shape wider power relations; and 3) a set of practices applying to but also connecting that which is distant, e.g. relations of care (Pain and Staeheli 2014: 345).

While tracing how intimate relations are key to activism, what practices constitute activism, and how emotions circulate through these relations and practices (see also §5.); I argue that emotions are political in the sense that they produce particular subjectivities and 'feeling rules' or 'regimes of emotions' (Smith 2002). As a result of such 'feeling rules', while some new intimate connections are created, others are ruptured. This point is illustrated when talking about Emma's relations with her father who is serving in *DNR* (i.e. enemy) army. The chapter concludes by discussing how different sets of violences (domestic violence, violence of war, historical violence) are interlinked.

6.2. Trajectory of becoming an activist

In March 2016 I went to a book presentation together with Emma, one of the journalists from the *Kharkiv Media*. This was the second book presentation about war that I attended that week. In the hallway of one of the Kharkiv universities where the event was taking place we bumped into Kira, manager of the *Kharkiv Media*. Kira said the presentation had already started and that she went out because they were playing ‘Plyve kacha’³⁴, and she did not want to cry. We purchased a copy of the book and went in. The stage was decorated with camouflage nets, and the author in military uniform read excerpts from the book, sometimes asking fellow soldiers from his battalion who were the main protagonists in the book to come on stage. The assembly hall was full. In comparison to the other book presentation that was organised as a press conference, this event felt like a solemn celebration, and paying of respect to, soldiers defending Ukraine. After the presentation, Emma went down to get her copy of the book signed, and I followed. I was confused in the crowd, and Emma was pointing me to people whom the book should get signed by. I was impressed by how many soldiers and *volontery* Emma knew.

A couple of weeks after the book presentation, in an interview, Emma explained to me that she got engaged in *volonterstvo* through Rita. During the Euromaidan in Mariupol, although supporting the *Revolution of Dignity*, Emma did not participate in protests, and was following events online. During the *Russian Spring*, she wanted to get involved by sending letters of support to Ukrainian soldiers stationed near Mariupol – an initiative she found out about through the VKontakte social network. She suggested to some of her friends to write letters, but no one from her social network seemed to be interested, and Emma did not do it at the end. When she moved to Lviv, Emma found out that her editor Rita was *volonterka* for the army. Whereas Emma had met some *volontery* before, she did not know whether they could be trusted. With Rita it was different, because everything was happening in front of Emma’s eyes. So, from time to time Emma would give Rita some money towards soldiers’ needs, buy some small items such as yellow and blue – the colours of Ukrainian flag – ribbons that soldiers used to mark themselves, or sign cards for them.

³⁴ Song associated with the funeral of the heroes of *Heavenly Hundred* – protestors killed during the Euromaidan.

The scale of Emma's engagement had changed significantly a couple of months after moving to Lviv. In August 2014 there was an intense shelling near Mariupol. Whereas by this time Emma had moved out of the city, her mother and aunt stayed in Mariupol. Emma was extremely worried about them, was constantly checking news on the internet and phoning them, trying to make sense of what is happening and how intensive the shelling is. She had hysteria and could not work, and was about to set off and travel to Mariupol herself. The editor Rita was trying to calm Emma down, persuading her not to travel right away, as it could be dangerous. Finally, they reached an agreement that Emma could travel in couple of weeks' time.

While travelling to Mariupol at the beginning of September, Emma decided to do some journalistic material about soldiers. The media hub where she worked in Lviv did not include writing new material in her responsibilities, but Emma wanted to do this anyway. Because she did not have clear idea of what to write about, Emma called a *volonterka* from Mariupol whose contact details were provided by one of her acquaintances. The lady proposed writing about one of the newly-formed voluntary battalions and promised to get Emma in touch with them. Upon arrival, Emma came to one of the spaces that was provided to local *volontery* by one of Mariupol businessman and that served as a warehouse of various items sent to soldiers: food, clothes, camouflage nets, and medicine. A *volonterka* Emma got in touch with had arranged for Emma and one of the soldiers to meet there.

The whole day Emma spent with the soldier Dmytro who came to pick her up and drive her to show around the base where the battalion was stationed. The battalion consisted of men mostly in their twenties and thirties from different parts of Ukraine. Dmytro was significantly older and was local – from Donetsk region. Recounting that first trip, Emma recalled how unaccustomed she was to army life, feeling uncomfortable sitting next to a Kalashnikov rifle that lay on the back seat of the car Dmytro came in and refusing to eat with soldiers despite being very hungry because of the stories of lack of provisioning to the army. Yet irrespective of this, Emma was impressed with the people she met and the atmosphere in the battalion, not least because of the courteous behaviour of soldiers towards her. But the biggest impression, however, was left by Dmytro:

“That is, before I saw these soldiers, and all of these stories, only on television, so that... And here I met with a person, real, alive, and we talked... My first experience – whole day long I spent with this Dmytro. First time I saw, you know, how such an uncle that whole way was making me laugh, telling me something, some stories, communicative, nice, kind. And when the talk came to Ilovaysk, this was one month after the Ilovaysk, and he cries. He tells me, how they were leaving the Ilovaysk, how they were losing guys there, how it all happened, and I, well, I look into his eyes, and I see that his eyes are full of tears. He understands this, and like ‘Oh, why should I overload you’. And starts to joke again, you know, so... This is such a brevity in a person, when he does not want to show this weakness of his, despite that this weakness – it is not a weakness, it is a normal reaction. I don’t know, he impressed me a lot. [...]. And I came back with a turned-over conscience” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

After returning to Lviv, Emma was so full of emotions and impressions she wanted to share them with someone. During the trip, Emma kept in touch with Rita because of work, and it was Rita who Emma called upon return. Emma knew that Rita was a *volonterka* from the first days of war, was often travelling to *ATO* zone, and so could understand and relate to Emma’s experience. This sharing of common experiences became the binding moment in Emma’s and Rita’s friendship. As their relationship grew closer, so did Emma’s engagement in activism. As a *volonterka* helping to procure the Ukrainian army, Rita had many tasks and responsibilities. Emma offered her help and was taking over some of the organisational responsibilities: picking up and dropping off parcels, posting documents, and helping to sort items that Rita was delivering to battalions. During the interview, Emma stressed the tremendous amount of work that comprises *volonterstvo* by recalling the night of packing in preparation for one of Rita’s trips:

“This was at night, she was travelling to several bases, needed to bring military boots to several bases. And this happened at night, we were in her house, packing these military boots. We had to put special soles inside these boots, at first they needed to be sorted by size, because they arrived from abroad and were all mixed together. They needed to be sorted, laces had to be put in all of them, and then the soles. At first to sort according to sizes, then to order separately – this box for this brigade, they need five pairs of these sizes, two pairs of these sizes, three pairs of these sizes. All of this needed to be sorted. Seriously. We started, probably, at six in the evening, and till six in the morning were doing this... There were a lot of boots! In addition to boots there were various things, some kind of... cigarettes, these hand heaters the chemical ones, foodstuff, ribbons, cards with wishes, letters, children’s drawings. That is, all of these things needed to be unpacked and packed again. [...]. According to ‘lists of needs’, all of these things had to be packed into different boxes. Because there would be no time to sort things on the spot.” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

So, what influenced Emma's engagement in activism was moving to a new place and working alongside *volonterka* Rita that provided her with the opportunity to contribute. An important incentive to engage in *volonterstvo* was provided by personal contact with soldiers, and particularly Dmytro, whom she met during the first trip. As Emma mentioned during the interview, whereas during the first trip she bought some things for soldiers out of politeness and not to come empty-handed, during the second trip in October 2014 she brought many more things specifically for the soldiers she met a month earlier, including one kilo of sweets in yellow and blue 'patriotic' wraps, expensive Lvivian coffee, and honey in single-serving sticks that soldiers used during the scouting missions when they ran out of food. It was during the second visit that Dmytro told Emma that he was going to pick up his family who remained in separatists-controlled territories.

6.3. Intimacy of war: almost family

In addition to working together and engagement in *volonterstvo*, Emma's and Rita's friendship was consolidated through mutual support and worrying about people they cared about. Emma was mostly worried about her mother and aunt – intense warfare continued near Mariupol throughout the end of 2014 and into the beginning of 2015. Whereas the intensity of warfare near Mariupol significantly decreased by the time I met Emma in January 2016 in Kharkiv, several times I overheard Emma on the phone to her mother with her opening question being 'Is it calm? No shelling?' Despite the fact that Emma met soldiers from Mariupol only a couple of times, because of the importance of these new relations, Emma was also worried about Dmytro. In December 2014, Emma found out from *volonterka* from Mariupol that Dmytro went to pick up his family and disappeared. For a long time, Emma did not know what happened to him. Both Dmytro and his brother were in the 'black lists' of separatists as local men fighting against *DNR*. Emma commented that there was not a day when she was not thinking about Dmytro, where he is and how he is doing. Pointing to the rapid intimacy of war, while recalling how she received news about him, Emma commented that this was the happiest day of her life:

“It is about Dmytro I told you that he was captured. [...]. Well, he was released and... God, this was the happiest day for me, when my phone rang, some unidentified number was calling. I answer, say ‘Hello.’ And a male voice from the phone ‘I was told that you will be happy to hear me.’ And I don’t recognize. I say, well, say ‘And who is it?’ ‘How, like, you even didn’t recognize me? This is Dmytro.’ I am ‘Oh, my god, Dmytro, this is you! So what, well, how are you, how, what?’ This was just such a moment of the absolute happiness, before that the *volonterka*, this lady from Mariupol told me that Dmytro was released, that he is going home. And this was such a moment ‘Oh! Wow! At last! God, and how?! What a happiness!’ I was running and telling everyone, that this this is such a happiness. And here, here he is calling me, and I hear his voice!” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

Similarly to the way Rita supported Emma during the scariest moments of war when it was not clear what is happening in Mariupol, Emma supported Rita worrying about Petro. Rita met Petro during one of the trips to *ATO* delivering parcels to soldiers. That particular time, she was given a lift by *Avtomaidan*³⁵ activists. They were driving into the zone where fighting was taking place. Reaching the zone of *ATO*, the activists got scared and decided to turn back. Rita, on the other hand, decided to deliver the parcels she was bringing for soldiers anyway. So, the activists just dropped her off with boxes in the middle of nowhere, and Rita had to call one of commanders she knew was stationed nearby. Three soldiers arrived to pick her up, among whom was Petro. They brought Rita to their base and helped to deliver the parcels. As a thank you, Rita gave Petro a gift – the *tryzub*³⁶ necklace that she was wearing. After leaving, Rita asked the commander for Petro’s phone number so they can keep in touch. At some point, Petro was sent to fight in Donetsk airport where some of the hottest battles were taking place. Emma recalled that she was spending sleepless nights together with Rita, worrying about Petro and checking on him. Eventually, Petro was demobilised from the army, and Rita and Petro got married in autumn 2015. Reflecting the friendship that had developed between Rita and Emma, during the wedding Emma was Rita’s maid of honour.

It was Petro and his fellow soldiers who were the main protagonists in the book the presentation of which Emma and myself attended in Kharkiv. Besides soldiers, some of the Kharkiv *volontery* who similarly to Rita were helping to procure soldiers also attended the book presentation. Emma introduced me to one of the ladies whom she referred to as ‘mother Lena’ – a nickname that other *volontery* and soldiers used to call Lena. Emma

³⁵ Protestors that participated in the Euromaidan and used car to, among other actions, patrol the areas, deliver things and drive people to and from the square.

³⁶ Ukrainian ‘тризуб’ – trident, symbol depicted on the coat of arms of Ukraine.

and Lena first met during Rita's wedding. When Emma found out that she was travelling to Kharkiv for an internship in *Kharkiv Media*, Rita suggested contacting 'mother Lena' to help find accommodation. Instead of helping to find accommodation, Lena proposed Emma to stay with her. Emma was reluctant to accept, but given that the internship was only one month (before Emma became permanently employed at *Kharkiv Media*), finding something for such a short period of time would be difficult. During the interview, Emma reflected that Lena really was like a mother during Emma's stay – caring, cooking food and worrying if Emma was late to come home.

“I lived that month at hers, and she really is like a mother. To the point that when in the morning I am getting ready for work, she is like ‘And did you eat?’ ‘Well’, I am saying, ‘I will eat at work, will buy some coffee.’ ‘No, I cooked something, eat.’ ‘Well, I am already late, don’t have time.’ In the evening I come from work, still in the hall taking shoes off, she straight away ‘So, let’s eat, I already cooked such and such and such, it is still hot, or like it needs heating up, let’s eat.’ There was some day when I was out late with girls and wasn’t looking at time. And her phone ran out of charge and she could not call me, and she was worried, said that was worried. I come home, and she is like ‘God, finally you came, I already wanted to call Rita so that she calls you and finds out where you are.’ Because she had two phones, and my number was only in one of them, the one that run out of charge.” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016)

Similarly to the way Emma engaged in *volonterstvo* while working alongside Rita, during the time she stayed at Lena's house she was trying to help where she could. For instance, Lena was looking after two soldiers who were in the hospital and who required a special diet. When Lena did not have time to travel to the hospital, Emma was bringing the soldiers specially cooked meals, and spending time with them. As Emma explained “because she was doing this, and I lived at her place, I couldn't just simply ‘freeze out’, and not do anything” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

So far, I have discussed Emma's trajectory of becoming an activist, and how this journey is embedded in caring relations with her relatives who stayed in Mariupol after the beginning of war in Donbas, with *volontery* Rita and Lena, and with soldiers whom Emma met during the trips to *ATO* zone. All of these people shared similar pro-Ukrainian outlook on the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas, an outlook that I focused on in the previous chapter of the thesis. Other relations that are important for Emma's engagement in *volonterstvo* are with her father, characterised not by care but by the lack of it.

6.4. Complexes of violence and ruptured intimacy

By the time Emma moved to Kharkiv, I had been living there for three months. We became close acquaintances and frequently met during the *Kharkiv Media* press-conferences and ‘offline’ days when I was just popping into the office to see how things are going. On one occasion, Emma asked what I was doing in Kharkiv, and I explained that I am on fieldwork for my doctoral project, and among other things am interested in family relations and the disconnections that war creates. To this Emma replied, ‘Then, you should talk to me’. She explained that her father is serving in *DNR*, and that I can take an interview with her about it. I was shocked by what Emma said, because I knew that she is writing journalist articles about the Ukrainian army and had a strong pro-Ukrainian position. The fact that her father was fighting in *DNR* meant that he is fighting on ‘the other’ side. I was also surprised that Emma wanted to talk about this. Emma said that she had already given an interview about her father to one of the journalists, and does not mind talking about it.

According to Emma, the relationship with her father George had always been characterised by conflict. Firstly, there was a contradiction as George was persuading Emma to excel in studies and career, yet when Emma grew up as an independent thinker he was dissatisfied when she disagreed with him, pointing out that she should subscribe to patriarchal norms and respect the opinion of men for otherwise she would not be able to find a husband. Also, their ideological outlook was very different. When describing her father, Emma used the word *prosyaknutyi* (Ukrainian ‘просякнутий’) to point to how he was ‘saturated’ with everything Soviet. This word comes from the verb *prosyakaty* (Ukrainian ‘просякати’) and is usually used to describe how some materials are ‘saturated’ with liquids. The closest meaning in English would be ‘saturated’, ‘absorbed’ or ‘impregnated’. Describing her father in this way, Emma implied that Soviet ideology was not just some ‘outer shell’ of his personality, but that it was a core part of his identity, views that came ‘from within’. She remarked that when she was twenty years old, she found out that in his youth her father was even considered for a position in *KGB*³⁷. Emma, on the other hand, shared her mother’s less ‘nostalgic’ views on Soviet past, not least because Emma’s mother’s parents lost wealth and land during the state’s policy of

³⁷ KGB stands for Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (rus. ‘Комитет Государственной Безопасности’) – the main security agency in Soviet Union from 1954 – 1991.

*raskulachivaniye*³⁸ and also because of her own experience with the double standards characteristic of life in the Soviet Union. Because of these conflicts, Emma's relationship with her father had eroded to the point that after her teenage years her father would not communicate to Emma directly, and when he wanted to say something to her he would usually pass it on through her mother.

For several years prior to the Euromaidan, he had not been living at home either, and was permanently staying at the summer house of one of their wealthier relatives where he worked as a watchman. Emma's father is also an alcoholic. Emma recalled that while he was still living at home her mother and herself had to leave the house sometimes for weeks in a row because of his drinking bouts. When George came home one day and asked Emma's mother to pack some of his things, including an old Communist Party ID, while stating that he is going to join *opolcheniye*; Emma had already left Mariupol. Since then, he called Emma's mother only couple of times. Emma did not know where he was or what he was doing except that he was in some fire and had severe burns. His sister went to see him in a hospital in Donetsk. Emma never talked to him since he left for the *DNR*. During the last call that he made to Emma's mother, more than half a year before my interview with Emma, he said that he was following Emma's publications and did not understand why she was writing about the Ukrainian soldiers as heroes and why she despised the *DNR*. When I asked whether Emma would communicate with him after the end of war in Donbas, she replied:

³⁸ *Raskulachivaniye* (rus. 'раскулачивание') was a state policy and campaign carried by *bolsheviks* during the 1930s – 1950s where the wealth, land, and stock of wealthy peasants was appropriated by the state.

“Will I communicate with him? Well, in addition to all of the pre-war grudges and the rest of it, there is another point – I don’t know, what was he doing there. I don’t know what is ‘on’ him. Maybe, he was killing people. Well, I don’t know, right. But I know that among the soldiers whom I met, there are such unbelievable guys, that I don’t know, I am grateful to the destiny, to god and I don’t know to whom, that I even spoke to them for five minutes. Because there are people, about whom I was very worried. [...]. As I said, I was there, I saw these people, I know families that, people that gave away health, gave away everything what they had to help guys. Well, I don’t know, to me, to me this weights more on the scales than him. Well... I don’t want to communicate with him. [...]. Here even Lena, you spoke with Lena, yes? She calls everyone who does something for the army ‘patriots’. But here the point is not even in patriotism, for me the point here is in common sense. Those guys that are in *ATO*, they know what for they went there, and why and what for and whom for. They understand that they defend... they did not attack anyone, they did not demand or ask for anything from anyone. They came out to defend their families, their, well, their land. And where did he go? Well, I would like to... well, what for, where, why he went there? With what aim? He is not even Ukrainian! Not Russian, not Ukrainian, in this situation he should have stayed away. At all not react. That is why I don’t think that I will be able to somehow contact with him when all of this ends” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

As is clear from the passage above, Emma draws on her intimate relations with *volontery* and soldiers, and her experiences of *volonterstvo* to underline that these people are doing the right thing – they are defending their families and their land from the external enemy. To Emma, this is common sense. In contrast to that, several times during the interview Emma said that she does not understand why her father enrolled in the *DNR* army. Importantly, she stresses that because he is not ethnic Ukrainian, he should not have ‘taken sides’. This statement is contradictory, as both of Emma’s parents are not ethnically Ukrainian, and she is also not ethnic Ukrainian. However, Emma does not question her own engagement in *volonterstvo* and patriotic journalism as related to her ethnic identity. Most importantly, however, while reflecting on what would happen should her father return home, Emma mentioned that the house where her mother lives is officially registered in George’s name. Should he return, they would lose the house. Emma stated that because of this, ‘I would be the first to call *SBU* and turn him in should he return’ (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016), thus ‘disowning’ him. It seemed during the interview, that the most painful moment for Emma was that in leaving for the *DNR*, her father had in a way betrayed his family by leaving to fight for what she thinks is an empty cause for unclear reasons.

To sum up, what this points to is that not only is Emma's activism embedded in various relations with intimate others, the relations and practices that reproduce these relations are also mediated by emotions: caring and worrying towards those who share similar outlooks on war in Donbas, and despising and feeling bitter towards those who fight on the other side. The emotions relating to how activists understand war in Donbas are also enmeshed in moral judgement.

6.5. The golden standard of *volonterstvo*

Emma's trajectory of becoming an activist is connected to her relations with *volonterky* Rita and Lena. Interestingly, while reflecting on her engagement in activism, Emma resisted calling herself *volonterka*. For Emma, such people as Rita and Lena have contributed significantly more than herself to the cause. Such 'hierarchy' of activism is related to the discursive production of *volonterstvo* during the Euromaidan and with the start of war in Donbas. As one of the activists I met pointed out, before the Euromaidan, mostly people collecting money in metro for health needs of particular individuals were called *volonterky*. During the Euromaidan, the meaning of the word had significantly changed to define selfless and not corrupted people contributing to the revolution. Here is how Emma frames her activism:

“So about the *volonterstvo*, yes. Well, this is at all, to be honest, I don't count this [my activism] as *volonterstvo*. I tell everyone that I am such a helper of *volonterky*, a friend of *volonterky*. Well, because I know many people that, well, are *volonterky*, they have done so much, so that what I did, well, this is not *volonterstvo*, well, this is a normal reaction of any citizen of the country who understands that, well, that at this moment help is needed here. That is why it is only relatively *volonterstvo*” (Emma, Kharkiv, April 2016).

Meaning ascribed to *volonterstvo* is cultural. In one of the preceding chapters, I discussed how photos of Russian passports belonging to soldiers fighting in Donbas were exhibited on the Maidan square in Kyiv (see §4.2.). The same space was later used to exhibit large-scale portraits of *volonterky*. Whereas before the Euromaidan, the International Day of

Volunteer was not widely celebrated in Ukraine, with the onset of war it became an important day. Moreover, the new post-Euromaidan authorities embraced this discourse by distributing awards to people who contribute to procurement of the army and help internally displaced. The ladies from *Camouflage Nets* had also received state awards. Perhaps, it is because *volonterstvo* had become the ‘golden standard of activism’ (Bobel 2007; Della Porta and Diani 2006) that Emma humbly resists calling herself *volonterka*. As I will explore in the following chapter, whereas the term is resisted by some activists who think that they have not done enough, portraying themselves as *volontery* or *aktyvisty* (Ukrainian ‘активісти’, activists) is also used by some activists to resist the ‘emotional labour’ (see §7.3.).

6.6. Conclusions of chapter six

Following the call of feminist geopolitics scholars to invert the relations between intimacy and geopolitics and to consider intimate as a starting point of geopolitical analysis (Pain 2015b), this chapter was focused on a story of activist Emma whom I met in Kharkiv in 2015. Within this chapter, intimacy is conceptualised as a set of three intersecting relations: 1) a set of spatial relations stretching from proximate to distant, e.g. household or the body; 2) as a mode of interaction that stretches from personal to distant/global, e.g. work on emotions highlighting how subjects reflect, resist or shape wider power relations; and 3) a set of practices applying to but also connecting that which is distant, e.g. relations of care (Pain and Staeheli 2014: 345).

The chapter explores how Emma’s trajectory of activism is influenced by different sets of intimacies: proximity to ‘patriotic’ activists and spaces of activism, proximity to war zone and to soldiers. For Emma, spaces of war become so familiar that she feels ‘at home’ at war (e.g. in her observation about getting used to arms and sleeping with the gun under her pillow showed). At the same time, urgency of war and intensified emotionalities (e.g. worry and care for intimate others) ‘bond’ Emma with other activists in what feels as ‘almost family’. Reinforcing these relations, familial terms (e.g. ‘uncle’ and ‘mother’) are used to describe Emma’s new-found connections.

Another finding addressed in this chapter was activist identities. Emma does not define herself *volonterka*, but as ‘a friend of *volonter*’. What this shows is how much weight is given to term *volonterstvo* in society. As one of the activists I met pointed out, before the Euromaidan, mostly people collecting money in metro for health needs of particular individuals were called *volonter*. During the Euromaidan, the meaning of the word had significantly changed to define selfless and not corrupted people contributing to the revolution. *Volonterstvo* thus becomes the ‘golden standard’ of activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine. Emma feels that in comparison to other activists she has not done enough, and hence does not deserve this honourable title. These hierarchies of activism show that spaces of activism and activist identities are ‘complex, multi-layered and hybrid’ (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 25, Wilkinson 2009: 37). Here, the word *volonterstvo* and the cultural meaning ascribed to it, can be understood as a new vocabulary of war (see also chapter *boyeviki* and *opolchency*).

To go back to discussion of intimacy-geopolitics, the chapter also focused on ruptures in intimacy created by or deepened by the violence of war. Many activists whom I met during the fieldwork described how because of war and different positions with regards to war, connections with their friends and family have been broken. The first empirical chapter of this thesis looked at particular subjectivities of pro-Ukrainian activists and their ‘situated gazes’ upon the current conflict (see chapter). Emma’s story discussed how relations with her father have been broken when he went to serve into the *DNR* (i.e. enemy’s) army. For Emma, being an activist means caring for Ukrainian soldiers (for the discussion of practices of care, see §5.3.), and this care is excluding the possibility of care towards what in geopolitical terms is defined as ‘an enemy’, i.e. her father. This material shows how social movements can be ‘transforming as well as articulating values; and in the process, creating new and alternative structures of feeling’ (Bosco 2007, in Eyermann 2005: 42). The ‘feeling rules’ or ‘regimes of emotions’ (Smith 2002) associated with being a pro-Ukrainian activist do not leave Emma any other choice but to break relations with her father. What this shows is the importance of politics *of* emotions, and how not only (activist) ‘selves’ produce emotions, but also emotions produce ‘selves’ (Ahmed 2014).

Importantly, Emma explains that the relations with her father have always been tense, as she did not relate to his grievances about the collapse of Soviet Union. When talking about her father, Emma characterises him as “‘saturated’ with everything Soviet”.

Moreover, these relations were characterised by domestic violence, or what Rachel Pain calls ‘everyday terrorism’ (2014a). Emma’s father George was an alcoholic, and when he entered into drinking bouts, Emma and her mother had to flee their home to escape his violence. What this story reveals in the interconnection between different apparently separate sets of violences (domestic violence, violence of war), that I have argued can be understood within broader sets of ‘historical’ violences: creation and collapse of the Soviet Union, losses that people experienced as a result of both intimately-geopolitical processes. What this demonstrates is that violences are dynamic and are ‘historical’, often occurring simultaneously in the domain of the intimate everyday life, and in public arena. By focusing on these processes, this thesis contributes to development of feminist geopolitics theory.

7. Professionalisation and landscapes of power

7.1. Introduction to chapter seven

The central stage of the debates about democracy in post-Soviet countries is occupied by the considerations of the weakness/strength of ‘civil society’ (Udovyk 2017). Thriving ‘civil society’ is seen as an indicator that the country is ‘democratising’ – moving towards democracy and neoliberalism. The case of post-Euromaidan Ukraine is interesting in relation to these discussions, as many grassroots organisations that sprung up in the aftermath of the Euromaidan revolution not only acted as ‘watchdogs of democracy’ (Puglisi 2015a), but also ‘filled in’ such responsibilities of the state as procuring the army or helping the internally displaced (Cleary 2016: 17; see also Gatskova and Gatskov 2016; Pishchikova and Ogryzko 2014; Shapovalova 2017).

Employing feminist conceptualisation of scales of politics as relational and interlinked (Pain and Staeheli 2014), I trace how spaces of activism are connected to ‘local’ landscapes of power. Such an approach challenges viewing the landscapes of power in Ukraine as consisting of two discrete ‘layers’ of state and people with an unbridgeable gap in-between (on post-Soviet oligarchic elites, see Cheskin and March 2015). I begin the chapter with activists’ attitude towards ‘local’ political elites that also reproduces such narratives about *vlada* (Ukrainian ‘влада’, power, people in power) and *narod* (Ukrainian ‘народ’, people, population). In this chapter, complexity challenging such binary conceptualisation of activism is revealed.

I focus on daily ‘banal’ geographies of activism and emotions circulating through spaces of activism (Horton and Kraftl 2009). What is revealed through tracing the emotionality of these ‘banal’ geographies is the ‘invisible’ yet highly important role of international donors in Kharkiv and in Vyshneve. I discuss how the culture of ‘new managerialism’ (Townend *et al* 2002, in Jenkins 2005: 66 – 73) in NGOs formed after the Euromaidan is affecting the daily work of organisations, and the emotional toll that pressures to meet targets, account for goods, and broader professionalisation create. Central to this discussion is the question of what kind of subjectivities and geographies are produced as a result. What is revealed through the discussion of NGOs relations with ‘local’ elite, donors, and other NGOs is a complex landscape of activism in Ukraine during the Donbas war.

7.2. *Vlada, narod, and corrupted 'local' elites*

When talking to research participants about the pre-conditions of the Euromaidan, many highlighted that whereas the catalyst of the revolution was ex-president Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU, the initial group of protestors was small. It was after the special forces employed brutal physical force on the night of the 30th November 2013 to disperse protestors that many more people took to the streets – a week after the beatings, more than one million people took to the streets of Kyiv. During this new stage of the revolution, the reasons for protests were re-articulated, now focusing not on the Association Agreement and ties with the EU, but on the unlawful and arbitrary practices of the Ukrainian political elites. Elaborating on this, research participants often stressed that the *vlada* had for years been neglecting the needs of the *narod*; thus portraying the two 'layers' of society as existing separately and with an unbridgeable gap in-between (on post-Soviet oligarchic elites, see Cheskin and March 2015; Ljubownikow *et al* 2013; Minakov 2016).

One of the characteristic features of the Ukrainian arena of formal politics is citizens' distrust towards politicians and political institutions. For example, during one of the media related events I attended in Kyiv, all-Ukrainian sociological research consisting of interviews with 2000 people stated that 90% of interviewees are biased or mildly biased towards *vlada*³⁹. Among the main reasons for the revolution that my participants recounted was the gross economic and legal corruption of the elites who in the pursuit of financial gain have erased the wellbeing and social security of 'ordinary citizens' from their working agenda. For example, recalling the events that preceded the Euromaidan, activist Jacob pointed out that one of the most violent and outrageous events took place in July 2013 when two policemen gang-raped 29 year old Iryna Krashkova in the urban-type settlement of Vradyivka in the Mykolayiv region⁴⁰. Jacob stressed that in a country where the law enforcement agencies were dysfunctional to such a degree, and were also under the direct control of politicians, the only option people had to express their outrage was taking to the streets:

³⁹ Details of research (in Ukrainian) can be found here <https://www.slideshare.net/ssuser04d377/ss-53533571>. [Accessed 25/10/2018]

⁴⁰ For EuroNews report of protests in Vradyivka see <http://newsvideo.su/video/1961109>. [Accessed 25/10/2018]

“We simply got fed up with things that are happening in the country, and there was no other way to express our discontent. What else could we do? Only take to the streets. I am talking about the protests half a year before the Euromaidan, during the Vradiyivka events. What else could we do? We want to live in a different country, where politicians will understand that they are just hired personnel whose job is to make life more comfortable. Being a politician now – it is not a job. How much are members of Parliament earning? 420 people, 5 million *hryvnias*, everyone in the Rada is a millionaire! Yanukovych fled, but all other faggots just dressed into different colours.” (Jacob, Kharkiv, April 2016).

In Kharkiv, research participants Darya – a ‘professional’ activist who, in contrast to the majority of activists I met, was engaged in activism many years before the Euromaidan – explained that there were several serious confrontations between local activists and local authorities in the years preceding the *Revolution of Dignity*. One such conflict centred around the building of the Myronosytska church in the Victory Park in central Kharkiv. Recalling the protests that she participated in, Darya stressed that what infuriated local activists was the way local authorities handled the issue of constructing a church in the heart of the city without consulting the public. The decision-making process was also not transparent, and meetings with residents of the houses located on the rim of the park were held behind the closed doors of the City Council. When activists attempted to get in, the city mayor’s bodyguards behaved aggressively towards them, while the mayor Hennadiy Kernes said that activists’ arms should be broken. According to Darya, because of no external support, local residents were pressured into accepting the construction of the church. Meanwhile in the park, a group of local architects attempted to organize an exhibition of cardboard figures of walking people that they called ‘The Last Walk’ to ‘commemorate’ the green space that was about to be, if not completely destroyed, significantly downsized to accommodate the grandiose church (sponsored by Russian businessmen). Even though the architects-activists had permission from the City Council to organise the exhibition, it was obstructed on the ground by *miliciya*⁴¹ who claimed something was wrong with the papers.

For Darya, this case of managing the public space of the city without any consideration of the inhabitants’ opinions is representative of the authorities’ broader disregard of *narod*. Members of the *Kharkiv Media* often recounted other examples, for instance,

⁴¹ *Miliciya* (Ukrainian ‘міліція’) name of the police force in Soviet Union, and in Ukraine until 2015 when the reform took place and the force was renamed into *policija* (Ukrainian ‘поліція’, police).

Kernes's decision to reconstruct the Park Horkoho that included building an extremely expensive amusement park. Because there was not enough money in the city budget, a loan was taken from a Russian bank, 'pawning' Kharkiv metro as a guarantee. Activists were furious of how such a crucial part of the city's infrastructure could be 'pawned' for building a lavish entertainment park. Just as Myronosytska church was constructed in central Kharkiv, local inhabitants were not consulted in the process of Park Horkoho's reconstruction. These are just two examples out of a long list of regeneration projects that were accomplished in the city during Kernes's rule, projects that, as members of the *Kharkiv Media* argued, involved 'laundering' huge sums of money.

In addition to highlighting corruption, Kharkiv activists also stressed that local political elites are not burdened by (moral) principles – the political career of Kharkiv mayor Hennadiy Kernes was often cited as an exemplary case of this. Kernes was elected as a mayor in the local elections of 2010 and was a member of the *Partiya Regioniv* (Ukrainian 'Партія Регіонів', Party of the Regions) at the time headed by pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. As my participants highlighted, during the Euromaidan in Kyiv, Kernes was opposing the revolution and sending *titushki* to disrupt the Euromaidan (see §4.2.). The main events unfolded in Kharkiv not during the Euromaidan, but after the revolution during the *Russian Spring* – when separatists opposing post-Euromaidan authorities in Kyiv were attempting to capture administrative and security forces buildings in the city. Kharkiv became a 'buffer zone' between new pro-Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv and pro-Russian separatists in Donbas.

As activists of the *Kharkiv Media* explained, during the *Russian Spring* Hennadiy Kernes did not explicitly state his loyalty to the pro-Russian separatists but was supporting separatists in ways characteristic of his subtle manner: opposing the demolition of the monument to Lenin that pro-Euromaidan activists insisted on, and attending public meetings wearing the orange and black Ribbon of St George (symbol of remembrance of WW2 in Soviet Union, that was seen as representing loyalty to Russia during the Euromaidan). In April 2014, there was an attempt on Kernes's life, and he left the city for a period to undergo health treatment in Israel. When Kernes returned, his political loyalties had 'switched', and he became a vocal supporter of the post-Euromaidan president Petro Poroshenko. Perhaps, it is in relation to politicians like Kernes who were loyal to Yanukovich before the Euromaidan, but when the revolution 'won' they

switched to being exemplar blue and yellow (colours of Ukrainian flag) ‘patriots’⁴², that Jacob is referring to in the preceding quote about ‘faggots just dressed into different colours’.

Interestingly, whereas many members of the Yanukovich’s team were removed from their positions either in the direct aftermath of the Euromaidan and/or during the local election in the autumn of 2015; Kernes got re-elected for the position of mayor. At the time of local elections, I was in Kyiv, and vividly remember how the pro-Ukrainian *volontery* from the *Camouflage Nets* were commenting on Kernes’s victory. Appalled with the results, women were posting on their feeds in social media ‘Kharkiv, how could you do this?’ As I found out later, activists from *Kharkiv Media* felt the same way, disappointed with the meagre 38% turnout during the elections with the majority, as *Kharkiv Media* activists put it, “‘bought’ by Kernes’s promises to build more benches in the city” (Kira, Kharkiv, March 2016).

Overall, *Kharkiv Media* activists had profoundly negative attitude towards authorities – both of national and of local level. Whereas some of the national post-Euromaidan authorities had a pro-European orientation and were, therefore, perceived better by activists (while still criticised for corruption and abuse of power), politicians like Kernes who simply ‘changed the colours’ after the Euromaidan were openly despised by *Kharkiv Media* activists. The following section explains how activists’ attitudes towards local authorities influences the way international donor aid is received and perceived by activists.

⁴² E.g. see Kyiv Post article about Kernes <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/kharkivs-kernes-justifies-his-180-degree-political-turn-by-saying-he-was-prisoner-of-yanukovich-system-338568.html>. [Accessed 21/10/2018]

7.3. The ‘invisible’ donors

During an event dedicated to the two year anniversary of the *Kharkiv Media*, the opening pronouncement of the manager Kira was: ‘Everybody in Kharkiv is asking, whom do we belong to? Who owns us? I’ve already heard three different versions. Because of this, I want to, first of all, start by telling you who we are, what we do, who is responsible for what. It is very important for us that you know this’ (Kira, Kharkiv, February 2016). As she made this statement, Kira was smiling. She found the rumours about the secret *Kharkiv Media* owners amusing. It was also clear that Kira was proud to announce to a small group of Kharkiv activists who were invited to attend the event that the organisation she was running was independent.

What Kira meant by independence is that *Kharkiv Media* did not belong to any oligarch or politician, and hence did not push forward biased media content. Her statement can also be viewed as a continuation of the Euromaidan tendency to resist co-working with political elites (Cleary 2016; Collison 2017). Interestingly, whereas negating the links with Ukrainian oligarchs was crucial for Kira, the international donor organisation that supported *Kharkiv Media* was not mentioned until somebody from the audience enquired about this aspect of the organisation’s work. I would like to suggest that Kira did not draw attention to the international donor that provided grants to *Kharkiv Media* not because this information was in any way ‘classified’, but rather that she simply did not consider it important. In contrast to oligarch-owned media resources, grants from the international donors were not seen by Kira as compromising professional standards of journalism. On the contrary, ‘partnership’ with the international donor provided the team of journalists she was leading with opportunities to attend workshops and training, learn more about the profession, and collaborate on projects with similar media hubs from post-Soviet countries that their donors also sponsored.

What her speech also illustrates is the way, as the manager of the NGO organisation created upon the foundation of grassroots activism of the Kharkiv Euromaidan, Kira understands and discursively produces the landscape of power that influences the work of her organisation. Whereas relations with some political forces (Ukrainian oligarchs, political elites) are brought into the spotlight while simultaneously ‘distanced’, others (international donors) remain in the background of attention and are not problematised. For Kira, as for other members of the *Kharkiv Media*, the way donors shaped activism

seemed to be ‘invisible’. Contrary to activists’ view, my observations spoke of different ways in which the international donors shaped the everyday work of the organisation. In revealing the landscapes of power impacting the work of NGO organisations, I draw on Vorbrugg’s (2015) thought-provoking article on the work of a German political organisation in Kyiv that explores power landscapes and subjectivities that the organisation is embedded in.

To develop this point, I firstly need to outline how Kira’s and her team’s activism changed over time. During the Euromaidan in Kharkiv, journalists later consolidated into the *Kharkiv Media* engaged in grassroots activism without affiliation to any existing organisation, and hence were not accountable to anyone outside of their own group and did not need to have strict working routines. After meeting their future donors during a media event in another city, the team decided to establish a registered NGO and to become a professional media hub. In most of the team were professional journalists and had ample working experience. However, creating and running an NGO was a new experience for all of them (only one person of the initial *Kharkiv Media* team was a ‘professional’ activist).

At least partially due to inexperience in running an NGO, working routines in the *Kharkiv Media* were poorly organised and rather chaotic: it was not clear who was responsible for some of the organisation’s tasks, some tasks were accomplished last minute, ‘personal’ relations between the journalists (some members were friends before starting to work together, some were relatives) got in the way of work. Arguments were frequently heard in the office. When Emma, a journalist whose trajectory of activism was discussed in the previous chapter (see §6.) came to work in *Kharkiv Media* from one of the national media outlets, where responsibilities were clearly distributed and strict work routines established, one of the first impressions she shared with me was that the *Kharkiv Media* team was very welcoming and provided her with a creative freedom she did not have before, yet also pointed out that working there was hard because of the daily friction (Emma, Kharkiv, March 2016). To sum up, whereas the donor organisation provided grassroots activists with resources (grants covered buying equipment, renting office space, paying salaries), this support also posed challenges of ‘professionalising’ activism – something members of *Kharkiv Media* clearly struggled with.

In addition to being instrumental in the very creation of *Kharkiv Media* as an NGO (similarly to the way *Displacement Relief* as an NGO was established with the help of international organisations), the international donor influenced the work of the organisation in other ways as well. Most importantly, this influence concerned allocation of the budget (e.g. deciding how many people were on the payroll); monitoring activity of the organisation (e.g. through reports outlining how many people different activities of *Kharkiv Media* reached); and influencing the development strategy of the organisation (e.g. approving or disapproving activities planned). I realised the extent of this influence when helping Kira translate into English reports she needed to submit to donors. In the reports, among other information Kira outlined what has been accomplished to date as well as what types of media content the organisation was planning to produce in the future.

The need to produce new types of content and to demonstrate that the organisation reached a large number of people was critically important for *Kharkiv Media*, as future grants depended on how varied and popular the content the organisation produced was. On the ground, this meant that the *Kharkiv Media* team was taking more new projects on, making the already busy days busier, and poorly organised work even more chaotic. Some of these processes were described by Jacob while he elaborated on whether, from his point of view, *Kharkiv Media* had a chance of ‘surviving’ the challenges that it was facing:

“Honestly, there is too much personal stuff here, things are not organised properly – it hinders the smoothness of work. When we attended the workshop with the donors, were talking to Ricardo and Samantha, there were moments when they could raise voice or lose their temper, but they just calmly carried on. And here? Intemperance, no tolerance towards each other, inaptitude to comment on each other’s work. Too many emotions, for reasons and for no reasons! [...] I am really tired, the atmosphere is truly intense. Loads of work, no time to do anything else. This is not right. All of these things [lists projects *Kharkiv Media* works on] with so little staff. We should just get more staff to lighten the load. There are too many projects! And work is not systematic. I think the last grant we received foresees Social Media Marketing (SMM) position. But Kira is saying now that we will all ‘do a little bit’ of SMM’ing. What does it mean ‘do a little bit’? If we all ‘do a little bit’, the result will also be ‘a little bit’. [...]. If we manage to use the chance provided to us by the donors, *Kharkiv Media* will grow to become a modern media resource. But if we continue working the way we do now... [...]. I am not sure whether it’s necessary to sit and keep saying all the time that all of this means more than work. What for? We work to present to Kharkivians information from a different angle. But dying here over this aim is not necessary!” (Jacob, Kharkiv, April 2016)

Jacob's quote is important in several respects. While commenting on frequent arguments in *Kharkiv Media*, he compares the 'intemperance and inaptitude to comment on each other's work' of his colleagues with the way their donors managed to keep calm in conflictual situations during the workshop the team attended. For Jacob, the difference between the two ways of communication illustrated the 'professionalism' of the donors that the *Kharkiv Media's* team lacked. Such a perception of the international donors as already knowing how to work and how to communicate reminds me of Alexander Vorbrugg's (2015) observation that the German political foundation's staff through drawing on certain representations of Ukrainian public sphere implied that they *already* know what democracy is. In a similar vein, Jacob implies that the donors *already* know what professionalism is, whereas the Kharkiv Media team has *not yet* learned how to behave professionally. I often heard such normative discursive production of 'civilised Europe' as opposed to 'uncivil Ukraine' throughout my fieldwork, from activists and non-activists alike.

Ironically, when elaborating on why the atmosphere in the *Kharkiv Media* is intense, Jacob drew attention to the fact that work in the organisation is poorly organised, 'there is too much personal stuff', 'too many emotions' among activists; without noticing how the internal work of the organisation is a direct result of the grant requirements to produce more content and the imperative to reach more audiences. Bearing this observation in mind, I would like to argue that the accountability to donors is at the heart of *Kharkiv Media's* everyday work in the same way as it is at the heart of everyday work of the *Displacement Relief* in Vyshneve (see §7.4.). Before moving on to this discussion however, a couple of important remarks are necessary.

The first observation that I would like to make elaborates on Jacob's last quote, relating to the way he juxtaposes 'professionalism' with 'activism'. Jacob would like to see work in the *Kharkiv Media* as a job that is accomplished in a professional manner: systematic and organised accomplishment of certain tasks (providing Kharkivians with news) with the responsibilities clearly distributed among the staff (not 'doing a little bit' of everything). In contrast to such an 'ideal', Jacob felt that daily work in the *Kharkiv Media* was too saturated with emotions and activism, something his phrase 'is it necessary to sit here and keep saying all the time that all of this means *more than work*' points to.

Jacob thus resisted activism and the emotional labour that it required (caring *too much* about something that could be viewed as ‘just a job’), implicitly drawing a distinction between his own and his colleagues’ position. Here, it is important to note that Jacob came to work in the *Kharkiv Media* when it was already established as an NGO. Jacob did not participate in Kharkiv Euromaidan. At several times in our conversations, Jacob mentioned that during the *Russian Spring* he was paralysed by fear and mostly spent time at home, glued to the screen of the computer. Jacob therefore did not share the same binding experiences of grassroots activism and efforts to oppose separatism (see §4.) with his colleagues; that in turn influenced his understanding of what aims of the *Kharkiv Media* are, and how the organisation should proceed to achieve its aims.

Here, Jacob’s and Emma’s self-definitions of activism can be compared. Whereas Emma resisted being called *volonterka* because she felt that she had not done enough in comparison to other *volontery* (see §6.5.), Jacob did not engage in procurement of the army or helping the IDPs, and so could not call himself *volonter*. He also resisted being called *aktyvist*. To make a note on terminology, throughout this thesis I use the term ‘activism’ as a theoretical concept that follows Castree *et al* (2013) definition of activism as the actions of a group of citizens, usually volunteers, who work together to try and redress what they consider to be an unfair or unjust situation. In Ukraine, the word *aktyvist* (Ukrainian ‘активіст’: sing., masc.; activist) pronounced and written very similar to ‘activist’ has a very specific meaning. Elsewhere in the interview, Jacob said that he does not think of himself as an *aktyvist* and that the word *aktyvist* does not have a very good reputation. Whereas he did not elaborate, I would like to suggest that such a reputation was ‘acquired’ by the word because some persons/groups in Kharkiv self-defining as *aktyvisty* periodically engaged in militant actions, such as attacking participants of the ‘Anti-Crisis Forum’⁴³ in April 2018. In other words, in Kharkiv (and Ukraine more generally) *aktyvism* implies not only striving to redress injustices (in the sense I use this word throughout the thesis), but also doing so militantly. So, when I was asking Jacob whether he thinks of himself as an activist, he was replying that he does not think of himself as an *aktyvist* (in the militant sense of the word). Instead, and similarly to many activists I had met in Ukraine throughout the fieldwork, Jacob called himself a *person with an active civil position* (Ukrainian ‘людина з активною громадянською позицією’). So, spaces of activism in post-Euromaidan Ukraine are complex: there are many ways in which

⁴³ For a news report covering this incident, please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajuB-sXtknY>. [Accessed 24/10/2018]

activists interpret their engagement with redressing social injustices and self-define their engagement (*volonter(-ka)*, *aktyvist(-ka)*, *person with active civil position*), sometimes resisting activism ‘from within’.

To sum up, this section discussed challenges that the *Kharkiv Media* team faced in the process of professionalising grassroots activism. Importantly, whereas the accountability to donors played a central role in how many and what kind of projects the *Kharkiv Media* NGO run, and hence how intensive the working days were; the way donors structured the everyday work of the organisation was ‘invisible’ to activists. In the opening paragraph of this section, I demonstrated that for the manager of the *Kharkiv Media*, Kira, political elites rather than international donors were in the spotlight of attention. Highlighting that the organisation is not owned by some oligarch or political force was very important for Kira. I argue that the importance of distancing of the organisation from ‘local’ political elites comes from the profoundly negative perception of local politicians. This theme is elaborated further in the following section, where I discuss how poverty and precarity affects ‘local’ landscapes of activism by drawing on the example of *Displacement Relief* from Vyshneve.

7.4. Precarity and aid in Vyshneve

While conducting participant observation in the *Kharkiv Media* and the *Feminist Hub* in Kharkiv, I met many activists who were helping internally displaced persons from Donbas. Because of the visibility of activism associated with relieving displacement in the city, I visited several centres helping Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and took interviews with members of Kharkiv grassroots organisations that were created as a response to humanitarian crisis at the onset of war in Donbas, as well as members of international humanitarian organisations that established field offices in Kharkiv and had ‘local partners’ across the region. Towards the end of the fieldwork, I had collected some material related to internal displacement, and the next step dictated by the inductive nature of fieldwork was to find an IDP organisation where I could conduct participant

observation. I started looking for a small-scale site in Kharkiv region, aiming to explore stories of IDPs, their relations with ‘hosting’ communities, and the work of IDP organisations that were created ‘from scratch’ – displacement was a new phenomenon in Ukraine. During one of the trips to the region I accidentally met Marta – a displaced person herself who was working in the *Displacement Relief* in Vyshneve. Marta agreed to introduce me to the organisation and kindly offered to host me in the house she was renting. And so, for the last month of fieldwork I stayed in Vyshneve.

Similarly to the *Kharkiv Media*, work in the *Displacement Relief* was distributed among the paid staff who were: meeting visitors in the centre, helping IDPs to fill in aid beneficiary forms recording their personal circumstances and listing particular needs, distributing aid, keeping accounts, organising events and workshops, running educational activities and children’s day centres, travelling to the villages to collect information about the new *pereselency*⁴⁴ while distributing aid to individuals who could not come to Vyshneve. The organisation worked as a local distribution ‘partner’ with different international foreign aid organisations, and at the time when I was there the most common goods distributed to IDPs consisted of nappies for small children and backpacks equipped with stationary distributed to (grand)parents of school age children.

Because of the short time spent in Vyshneve, my engagement with the *Displacement Relief* was not as deep as with organisations in Kharkiv. In addition to this, while the manager Kira from the *Kharkiv Media* received me well, and with time even trusted me with translation into English and editing of reports submitted to their donors, the manager of the *Displacement Relief* Asya was less trusting, asking me to bring documents confirming who I was and what exactly I was doing in Vyshneve during our first meeting. Also, there was no particular task I could volunteer for in the organisation, and so I was mostly coming to the centre with Marta or popping in in the evenings to pick Marta up, sometimes attending workshops organised by the centre, and on two occasions joining the team travelling to the villages.

In the morning of one of the days when the ‘mobile team’ was travelling to the villages, Marta and I came to the organisation to find the accountant Tanya in agitated mood. Nervously, Tanya explained that the day before a lady called Hanya came to the centre asking for aid. Hanya had two school age children and was entitled to two backpacks

⁴⁴ *Pereselency* (Ukrainian ‘переселенці’) colloquial way Internally Displaced Persons are called in Ukraine, literally means ‘resettlers’.

from one of the distribution programs. Gleb who was responsible for checking whether IDPs were registered in the database was away on a lunch break and Hanya did not have time to wait. Hanya said that she is not registered with the centre, and Tanya helped her to fill in all the necessary paper forms, handed over two backpacks, taking a photo of the recipient with goods – one of the ways to prove to international donors that goods are distributed to real people.

When Gleb returned from lunch break and started entering the information collected by Tanya into the database that the *Displacement Relief* shared with other IDP organisations in Kharkiv region, it appeared that Hanya had already received the same two backpacks in another regional office. Tanya was panicking – every single item had to be accounted for, and the two missing backpacks was a cause of an earful from Asya who was in a state of permanent worry over the goods. They tried to call the phone number Hanya provided, but there was no answer. After some time of discussing what to do, it was decided to travel to the village where Hanya lived in an attempt to retrieve the backpacks. Inconveniently, the route planned earlier had to be modified, but there were other recipients in the same and neighbouring villages that the team could distribute ‘food boxes’ provided by another international donor to, and so it was agreed this was the best solution.

Travelling to the villages that were located quite far away from Vyshneve in the unforgiving heat of the summer via badly maintained roads was not easy. On the way to Hanya’s village we visited two other villages, meeting IDPs whom the team already knew and asking whether there are any new *pereselency*. By the time we reached our destination we were quite tired. Luckily, Hanya was at home, and came to the front garden to talk to us. She did not invite us in and was talking over the fence. It was clear from the way she talked to Marta that she was unpleasantly surprised to see members of the *Displacement Relief* arriving at her doorstep.

Marta explained the situation to Hanya, pointing that she should have indicated that she had already received backpacks when she was in the office, as one person cannot receive the same kind of aid twice. Hanya pretended that she did not understand why so, complaining and arguing at the same time. Finally, she agreed to return the extra backpacks, disappearing inside the house. When she returned and handed over two backpacks to Marta, Marta opened them to see if all stationary was inside. The backpacks were empty. Hanya started to make excuses, that she had already unpacked everything

and would not know where to look for all the items. Marta proposed to her to ‘trade’ the missing stationary for the extra ‘food box’ that we had brought. Hanya asked what was inside the ‘food box’. Marta invited her to come to the car and look for herself. Hanya come out of her courtyard, and looking inside the trunk of the car examined the contents of the ‘food box’: pasta, sugar, flour, grain and other dry and canned food stuff. Unsatisfied, she replied that it is not enough, and she would rather sell the backpacks for 200 *hryvnias*⁴⁵ each and buy more things.

Marta was losing her patience, arguing with Hanya and at the same time calling Asya to negotiate the ‘deal’: “We have backpacks, but no stationary, would it be ok to take back backpacks without the stationary? Should we give her the food box? She does not want the ‘food box’, is there anything else we can offer her?” The decision of deal or no deal was not at the discretion of the team, it had to be approved by Asya. Asya was also losing her patience, finally telling Marta to just return the backpacks to Hanya, as it seemed impossible to reach any agreements. Marta, by now red from anger, handed the empty backpacks back to Hanya, and skipping polite goodbyes we drove off.

The incident of chasing and bargaining over two backpacks with Hanya was not isolated. On another occasion Asya phoned Marta in the evening, saying that Tanya and herself were doing inventory of stock in the warehouse, and some things were missing. Over the phone, Asya interrogated Marta about the missing goods. Marta replied that she does not know anything about them. The next day when we came to the centre, Tanya complained that the night before they were counting and re-counting all the items in the warehouse until 9 o’clock at night. Asya was getting increasingly worried and was phoning all members of the *Displacement Relief*. In the round of late night calls, it appeared that the car that travelled that day to the villages broke down upon return to Vyshneve, and driver Serhyi could not bring goods that did not get distributed during the trip back to the office. So, the goods that Asya were looking for were not missing, they were sitting in the trunk of the broken car. Commenting on the situation, Tanya said that after the crises that Asya enacted over the goods, her hands would start to shake when distributing aid as she was worried that she would make a mistake.

On one hand, what these incidents illustrate are the dire material conditions that IDPs who fled from Donbas face, ready to visit different IDP centres, lie to receive the same

⁴⁵ At the time of fieldwork, the exchange rate was approximately 36 Ukrainian *hryvnia* to 1 pound sterling.

aid twice to be able to sell things for extra cash. Unfortunately, focusing on the difficulties that displaced persons face is beyond the scope of this thesis. Importantly here, I would like to highlight that the incidents illustrate the emotional intensities endemic to distribution of aid in Vyshneve. Complying to the strict international donors' rules of distributing goods and the financial responsibility that it entailed created a lot of pressure on members of the *Displacement Relief*, with a climate of distrust exacerbated by Asya's off work calls, interrogations and shouting. Sharing a house with Marta provided me with insights into the 'backstage' of activism that I had only glimpsed upon in other organisations prior to moving to Vyshneve. The scandals at work clearly stressed Marta – in addition to meeting, listening to and empathising with the stories of other IDPs on a daily basis which was difficult and emotionally draining work – and she was struggling to cope with the stress. This had a direct impact on Marta's health – she was stress eating, and since spring she gained over 10 kilos of extra weight. While disappointed and offended by Asya's behaviour, Marta was also trying to excuse Asya, explaining to me that one of the reasons for such neurotic and aggressive behaviour was the precarious position that the organisation is in – juggling between the hostile local authorities and regimenting international donors.

Whereas the support of international donors provided the organisation with freedom from local authorities in running the centre, it also created problems on the ground. Marta explained there was fierce competition among the local NGOs, and there were incidents when internally displaced persons 'hired' by other organisations were coming to the *Displacement Relief* looking for something that could compromise the work of the centre. When one such person was 'discovered', he threatened to blow up the organisation. After this threat, a heavy metal door was installed on the entrance to the centre, and members of the *Displacement Relief* became even more meticulous in distributing the aid. Perhaps, it was because of these incidents that Asya was initially suspicious of my arrival at the organisation, requesting that I provide documents outlining what I was doing in Vyshneve.

A conversation with Yurko – a relative of Asya who was often visiting the organisation – further explained the heated climate in the organisation. One day, Marta and I were going for a lunch, and Yurko decided to join us. He had witnessed how the organisation was created at the beginning of conflict by re-distributing 'excess' clothes and food that were sent to soldiers stationed in the city among the IDPs who started to arrive to

Vyshneve. Gradually, various humanitarian missions found out about the existence of the *ad hoc* IDP centre created by Asya and started to ‘partner’ with this grassroots organisation. As more aid arrived, the team working in the organisation grew and also started to ‘partner’ with one of the larger IDP organisations from Kharkiv. By the time I arrived to Vyshneve, the *Displacement Relief* became permanent quarters, or ‘regional office’, of this larger organisation. Recalling the creation of the organisation, Yurko also commented on how local authorities attempted to pressure Asya into participating in corrupt schemes that would ‘redirect’ some of the aid to be ‘laundered’:

“The local authorities were coming, were trying to ‘take the organisation under their wing’. But they left the same path they came. Right from the beginning I told Asya to register everything legally, according to law. So she did. And what can they tell her now? Nothing, there is nothing they can do. The local authorities are not helping, but most importantly is that they would not interfere. Were trying to interfere. [...]. What kind of interests are they pursuing? Financial flows are going past them. Last year, in 2015, it was weighty year when high volumes of humanitarian assistance were coming, the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015. Through the centre, I mean through our centre alone, more than three million passed in the space of a couple of months. Can you imagine what would happen to this assistance if local authorities received it? This aid would disappear, nobody would see any of it!” (Yurko, June 2016)

Yurko’s words explained why local authorities were unsympathetic if not openly hostile towards the *Displacement Relief*, as refusing to participate in the corrupt schemes of ‘redirecting’ the aid exacerbated a rift between Asya and local politicians. Particularly, there was one influential politician whom Asya used to work for prior to the war in Donbas. Asya left that employment when she was accused by the politician of stealing company’s goods. The legal dispute concluded with a ruling in favour of the politician, and Asya was unfairly assigned a huge fine. The corruption of politicians and direct links between political elites and law enforcement agencies is a phenomenon not unique to Vyshneve. The epitome of corruption in Ukraine is embodied by the ex-president Viktor Yanukovich whose Mezhyhyria residence (that Euromaidan activists turned into the ‘museum of corruption’⁴⁶ after the ex-president fled the country) exhibited the unthinkable in kitsch and luxury. In Vyshneve, there was also the ideological conflict – Asya and members of the *Displacement Relief* had a strong pro-Ukrainian stance, whereas many of local politicians were suspected of separatism. Despite the important role that

⁴⁶ Some of the photos of Mezhyhyria can be found here <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10656023/In-pictures-Inside-the-palace-Yanukovich-didnt-want-Ukraine-to-see.html?frame=2834866>. [Accessed 21/10/2018]

the *Displacement Relief* was accomplishing in helping the IDPs, none of the local bureaucrats or representatives of the Department of Social Security (whose office was located just across the road from the *Displacement Relief*) had ever visited the organisation.

Overall, this section demonstrated the complex interplay between different powers that impact on the work of a newly established NGO organisation situated in a provincial Ukrainian town closely to Donbas region that helps people internally displaced by war. This chapter demonstrated how precarious position of fleeing war forced some IDPs to rely on resources of international aid that was sometimes sought in dishonest ways. On the other hand, because of the complex dynamics of relations with donors and local elites rooted in pre-war relationships and conflicts, there was a feeling that the organisation was constantly on close watch. As a manager of the organisation, Asya felt that providing the slightest doubt that the organisation was doing something not according to law meant corrupt local elites and rival NGOs would be able to quickly capitalise on any mistake. These feelings, associated with the precarious position of the organisation, directly ‘cascaded’ into the everyday work of organisation in the form of frequent conflicts, shouting and accusations. Furthermore, such conflicts ‘spilled over’ into the ‘personal’ lives of activists impacting on their emotional and physical health.

7.5. ‘Traitors’ by association

This section looks at how ‘local’ landscapes of power are further complicated when considering relations between different NGOs and their ‘situated gazes’ upon ‘local’ elites. An important event (details concealed for reasons of confidentiality) was taking place in the *Feminist Hub* at the beginning of 2016. To disseminate the news about the event, a director of the organisation Sofiya contacted *Kharkiv Media* asking whether she could organise a press-conference in their centre. On the day of the event, the press conference was arranged for the morning, after which all of the guests were invited to come to the office of the *Feminist Hub* to celebrate the occasion. Sofiya invited many people, including representatives of feminist organisations from other cities in Ukraine.

On the morning of the day, I attended the press conference, and with other guests moved to the *Feminist Hub* afterwards. The event had a ceremonial feel. Guests, among whom was a bureaucrat from Kharkiv City Council, were delivering celebratory speeches, congratulating Sofiya on the achievement. I was surprised not to see any *Kharkiv Media* journalists in the audience, as I knew they were also invited.

A couple of days after the event, I went to the office of *Kharkiv Media* in the evening to run a conversational English language class with the journalists – one of the ways I was volunteering in the organisation. I sat next to Jacob, waiting for other journalists to finish their work and join us. Jacob looked at me with a strange smile and asked ‘So, you are volunteering with the *Feminist Hub* now, huh?’ I replied positively, explaining that I am interested in the topic and hope to find out more about Ukrainian society through this theme, although as an academic-feminist I was also a little irritated with the way things were done. Jacob replied: ‘Well yes, as with Lyubov Bohata! Why did Sofiya invite her?! This is such a servility!’ Lyubov Bohata was a bureaucrat whom I saw during the *Feminist Hub*’s event. Meanwhile, other journalists who were already by the table, pointed out to Jacob that ‘servility’ is, perhaps, too strong a word. At the same time, they agreed with Jacob that inviting Lyubov Bohata to the event was not a good idea.

As was explained to me, Bohata was a member of Kharkiv City Council and was known to be a close ally of the mayor Hennadiy Kernes. Given the strong pro-Ukrainian position of the journalists-activists (see §4.) and their attitude towards authorities more generally and Kernes in particular (see §7.2.), their reaction to the presence of someone from Kernes’s team attending the event is not surprising. As I understood, it was because of Bohata’s presence in the *Feminist Hub* that members of the *Kharkiv Media* decided not to attend – being in the same room with her was unacceptable for journalists. They also said that they are not very likely to have warm relations with Sofiya from now on, as her reputation has been ‘stained’ by connections with Kharkiv authorities.

This conflict occupied my attention for long time during the fieldwork in Kharkiv. I could not understand at the time such strong repulsion towards the bureaucrat by the journalists. While volunteering both in the *Feminist Hub* and the *Kharkiv Media*, I periodically raised the topic, determined to understand the arguments from both sides. The occasion presented itself after couple of months. I was talking to Nina – a girlfriend of one of the journalists from the *Kharkiv Media* who was also an activist – and somehow the name of

Bohata came up during the conversation. Just as the journalists, Nina was sceptical of the *Feminist Hub*. She explained to me that Bohata had been involved in several scandals of ‘laundering’ money allocated to local NGOs by one of the international donors. She reasoned that ‘being friends’ with bureaucrats like Bohata casts a shade over the organisations, because it could mean that the NGO is participating in the corrupt schemes as well. As an activist herself, Nina pointed out that the work of civil society should be geared towards making some aspects of social life better. When any NGO participates in the ‘laundering’ schemes, it ‘stains’ the reputation not only of that particular organisation, but of the whole NGO sector. Maintaining an impeccable reputation was very important, both to win trust of the audiences and also in applying for foreign donor grants. So, as Nina stressed, it is because the *Kharkiv Media* team did not want to ‘stain’ their reputation that they kept a long distance from the bureaucrat.

Nina’s explanation made *Kharkiv Media*’s position clear to me, and I now wanted to hear Sofiya’s perspective on it. The same day that I spoke with Nina, I participated in some event that Sofiya also attended. After the event, we walked together to the office of the *Feminist Hub*. I had mentioned *Kharkiv Media*’s reaction to Bohata’s presence in the *Feminist Hub* before, and while walking with her now decided to ask to elaborate on her point of view. Answering my question of why she invited Bohata to the event, Sofiya said that she had known Lyubov Bohata for many years, from the time that Sofiya herself worked in one of the local institutions. According to Sofiya, throughout their acquaintance, Bohata had always supported Sofiya’s feminist initiatives – something that Sofiya valued very much in the patriarchal Ukrainian environment where the feminist cause was not popular to say the least. Whereas she had heard of the scandals Bohata was involved with, she pointed out that she does not know whether they are true or not; and breaking the strategic connection she had to someone in the City Council because of these rumours would be unwise. For Sofiya, inviting Bohata to the event was an attempt to raise the profile of the organisation, as the involvement of a local bureaucrat could attract media attention. Elaborating further, she pointed out that after the Euromaidan, the political orientation of a person became one of the most divisive in human relations, but that she did not want to choose between her position as a Ukrainian patriot and as a feminist – something that she felt *Kharkiv Media* journalist were indirectly pressing her to do. This, however, made Sofiya and the organisation she was running in the eyes of a *Kharkiv Media* activist a ‘traitor’ by association (with pro-Russian bureaucrat).

To sum up, this section outlined how relations with a concrete bureaucrat in Kharkiv shaped not only the work of one organisation (*Feminist Hub*), but also how the organisation was viewed by other members of the civil society (*Kharkiv Media*) because of this connection. The process of negotiating relations with a representative of the local City Council was influenced by certain place-specific histories (*Russian Spring* in Kharkiv, Kernes's political career) *and* also culture-specific norms (patriarchy, prejudice towards a feminist organisation); thus illustrating how activism is embedded in 'local' meanings and norms. Following the 'traces' of journalists' emotions (protest against cooperation with corrupt local authorities, desire not to 'stain' the name of the organisation) has led me to discovering a more nuanced picture of the relations between the NGOs, as well as what (sometimes conflicting) values and moral orders condition these relations on the ground.

7.6. Conclusions of chapter seven

This chapter explored how two registered NGO organisations – *Kharkiv Media* in Kharkiv and *Displacement Relief* in Vyshneve – created during the Euromaidan and at the beginning of war in Donbas are positioned within wider landscapes of power, particularly in relation to local politicians and international donors. I argued that instead of a state-centric view of NGOs as a 'middle layer' positioned *between* society and state, a more nuanced approach is needed that takes into consideration different enabling and constraining forces that shape activism in particular places. In doing so, I followed a feminist geopolitics approach to power as circulating through geographical scales as relational and interconnected (Secor 2001; Pain 2015b; Pain and Staeheli 2014). What this approach revealed was complex and emotional landscapes of activism within these two 'local' places.

What becomes apparent when discussing such complex landscapes of activism in a context of conflict between the *Kharkiv Media* and the *Feminist Hub*, is that positionality 'vis-à-vis the grid of power relations in society' (Yuval-Davis 2006a: 199-202) and

‘situated gazes’ of different activist organisations within one locality is immensely important. Whereas the manager of Feminist Hub Sofiya explicitly states her position as a pro-Ukrainian activist, her association with local bureaucrat sympathetic to feminist cause but meddled in NGO money laundering scandals and unclear political position ‘stains’ *Feminist Hub*. I show in the chapter how such strict reputational stakes are connected to precarious position NGO organisations are in – there is a strong competition for resources and for trust of audiences. The importance of ‘personal’ relations with local authorities was also shown in relation to the *Displacement Relief* located in Vyshneve – a small town where people know each other, where the environment is less anonymous, and where pre-war ‘personal’ relations play an important role in shaping activism. Despite the differences between organisations, however, all three NGOs discussed here face similar ‘professionalisation’ challenges characteristic of organisations built upon foundations of grassroots activism. Emotional labour performed by activists in facing these challenges is also tightly linked to power relations that members of the organisations are embedded in.

One of the central findings of tracing ‘banal’ geographies of activism (Horton and Kraftl 2009) was the discovery of the importance of international donors that were ‘invisible’ to activists consumed with discursively distancing their organisations from ‘local’ power elites. Following Alexander Vorbrugg (2015), I discussed power imbalances between ‘local’ organisations and international donors, with the latter playing crucial role in everyday running of organisations. The landscape of activism in Ukraine after the Euromaidan is rather unique, many grassroots organisations were created to ‘fill in’ the space of the dysfunctional state such as provisioning for the army and helping people displaced by war. Gradually, these organisations started to professionalise (e.g. see Kyselova 2017). The chapter explored the emotionality of processes of professionalisation. Given many activists inexperience in running NGO organisations, strict accountability rules and performance monitoring measures often led to conflictual situations in NGOs, bearing a heavy emotional toll on activists many of whom were already on the verge of emotional breakdown because of the urgency, uncertainty and fear associated with living in the country inflicted by war. Processes of professionalisation thus contributed to creating fragile subjectivities of activists. I exemplified this process by showing how activist Jacob is resisting being labelled as *aktyvist* or *volonter*, and wants to position his work at Kharkiv Media as ‘just a job’.

8. Conclusions

I opened this thesis with the discussion of how classical geopolitical research dealt with the Ukrainian crisis unfolding since the Euromaidan. Drawing on the empirical material collected during the fifteen months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine (April 2015 – July 2016), in this thesis I questioned what using an emotional geographies approach can contribute to our understanding of this geopolitical crisis. Here, I bring together some of the key findings that were discussed in individual chapters, pointing to the original contribution that this work makes and paving avenues for future research.

The first empirical chapter began with unpacking how different bodies are framed by the post-Euromaidan pro-Ukrainian political project. Here, the politics of belonging were defined as the way ‘specific political projects aim at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very particular ways’ (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197). In the wider feminist geopolitical literature, such a topic is not new. For example, Judith Butler’s (2009) *Frames of War* points to how the cold rationality underpinning military interventions and certain ways of media representations, feeds into the demonization of Muslims in the West, thus creating racialised hierarchies that determine whose lives and whose suffering are recognised and considered grievable. Another notable example is Jennifer Hyndman’s (2007) consideration of civilian casualties at the times of war where some bodies are ‘counted’ as more valuable than others because of the different ‘meaning regimes’ or ‘moral orders’ that these bodies belong to.

In the context of Ukraine, different aspects of ‘framing’ geopolitical bodies have also been addressed by researchers sensitive to the feminist and post-colonial critique in geography (e.g. Fournier 2017 Puleri 2017; Törnquist-Plewa and Yurchuk 2017; Wilson 2016). Yet, this thesis also brings new insights, tracing how such emotions as blame (e.g. in assigning responsibility for war and destruction it brought discussed in §4.4.), fear (e.g. embodied experiences of participating in violence clashed during the Russian Spring in Kharkiv discussed in §4.5.), and anxiety (e.g. of becoming a part of unrecognised political entity under Russian authority covered in §4.2.) are central to the politics of belonging in post-Euromaidan Ukraine. Whereas similar analysis has been undertaken in relation to other places and geopolitical processes (e.g. Laketa 2016), in relation to the context of

Ukraine, and even more specifically in examining spaces of activism, such an analysis is novel.

Continuing the exploration of emotions, the subsequent empirical chapter focused on the spaces of grassroots activism where the camouflage nets for the Ukrainian army are made (see §5.). Here, I highlighted that blame, fear and anxiety discussed in the preceding chapter exist simultaneously with care in spaces of activism. Particularly, I demonstrated how different objects were ‘sticky’ (Ahmed 2014) with care and circulated between apparently disparate spaces of peace and spaces of war. I argued that these objects are ascribed with meaning by women activists and thus accomplished a task of ‘proximating’ war and ‘shinking’ geographical distance between the basement in Kyiv (where nets are made) and trenches in Donbas (where soldiers use these nets). This observation brings feeds back on the map of the *ATO* zone that opened this thesis (see Figure 1), showing how inadequate the representations of war as located *only* in Donbas region are.

Both chapter five and chapter six demonstrated that the processes of caring are of paramount importance to activists, as the urgency of war fosters rapid intimacy between people (e.g. described in Emma’s story about soldier Dmytro, see §6.3.). Yet, as war in Donbas creates intimacy through care, it also ruptures connections between people who find themselves standing on different sides of the political divide (e.g. journalists and IDP Olha, see §4.4.). Consequently, I argued that the violence of war can be linked to pre-war violences (historical, domestic), and that emotions surfacing during the time of war are building upon the emotional intensities of the past (e.g. in the story of Emma and her father, see §6.4.). While exploring the story of Emma, for example, I found that by being part of pro-Ukrainian activism and caring for soldiers, she falls into particular ‘regimes’ of feeling (see §6.4.). This process is similar to the ‘algorithms of blame’ described in relation to journalists-activists’ encounter with the internally displaced Olha. While caring for Ukraine (desire to ensure the territorial integrity of the country, not to break the country into pieces, see §4.2.) pro-Ukrainian activists distance the ‘ambiguous’ territories, histories, and people (see §4.3. and §4.4.). Conceptualising how emotions mediate war and violence, I build upon the work of Rachel Pain (2015b). I extend Pain’s argument about the ‘intimacy-geopolitics’ as interrelated and non-hierarchical by highlighting how ‘domestic’ and ‘geopolitical’ violences overlap within the everyday life of one activist – Emma (see §6.4.).

In terms of methodological contributions, it was during the fieldwork that I realised that intimate spaces of inter-personal relations are extremely important when researching emotional intensities of activism. Therefore, although this thesis employed what may appear as a fragmented trajectory of fieldwork (see §3.3.), it is clear in retrospect that I in fact followed important emotional and conceptual threads. I thus re-defined the field as not only ‘place’ or ‘location’, but also a ‘perspective’ (Falzon 2016). Moreover, what this observation reinforces is the importance of following the ‘gut’ feeling when doing ethnographic research and appreciating the role of emotions in directing the fieldwork and in shaping knowledges produced (Woon 2013: 31). Whereas I have addressed my ‘situated gazes’ with regards to research subjects in this thesis (§3.6.), a detailed discussion of the emotionality of doing fieldwork in Ukraine at the time of war needs to be written elsewhere.

The final empirical chapter demonstrated how the already complex emotional landscapes of activism encompassing fear, blame, and care are further intensified through processes of professionalising grassroots activism (see §7.). By exploring the stressful environments of the displacement relief in Vyshneve (see §7.4.) and the journalist hub in Kharkiv (see §7.3.), I have shown how spaces of activism undergoing professionalisation are put under immense pressure by the processes and systems of neoliberal bureaucratisation of activism in international aid. Moreover, this chapter illustrated that spaces of activism do not exist in a vacuum and are embedded in complex landscapes of power relations – with seemingly ‘invisible’ donors (§7.3. and §7.4.), with ‘local’ power elites (§7.2. and §7.5.), and with other third sector organisations (§7.5.). As the example of the *Feminist Hub* has shown, not all activists and organisations with a pro-Ukrainian outlook are equally positioned in relations to grids of power. Positionality of organisations and activists’ ‘situated gazes’ influence not only the availability of resources in a fiercely competitive and precarious context, but also the importance to uphold one’s reputation by dissociating with corrupted pre-Euromaidan ‘local’ elites.

It is important to mention that the stress associated with being an activist during the time of war was very high and often had corporeal manifestations (e.g. Marta stress eating and gaining weight because of work, see §7.4.; other activists seeking psychological help). Among the interesting findings of this thesis, was how the paid work of activism compares to performing ‘emotional labour’ in order to sustain grassroots activism. For example, as I set out in the final empirical chapter, while discussing stress and chaos at

work, Jacob resisted being called activist and wanted instead to just ‘do the job’ (see §7.3.). Importantly, being a paid member of staff at *Kharkiv Media* undergoing professionalisation required a lot of ‘emotional labour’ of proximating war and caring. What Jacob was doing by saying that he just wanted to ‘do the job’ was in fact resisting the emotional intensities of activism. Grassroots activists, on the other hand, were engaged in equally demanding ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 2012) of managing one’s own and others’ emotions, as the outpouring of emotions by Nika in the car and out of site of activism has demonstrated (see §5.4.). As a ‘manager’ of *Camouflage Nets*, however, Nika wanted to ensure that a strong sense of community is ‘binding’ activists and motivates their labour-intensive work. Hence, she managed her own emotions not to reveal how ‘burnt out’ and emotionally depleted she felt.

I would like to highlight here that the complex emotional and geopolitical processes described in this thesis are also very culture-specific, are wrapped in cultural norms and linguistic practices (e.g. with regards to the former, consider gendered activism of the *Camouflage Nets* vis-à-vis Sarah Phillips’s work (2008, 2014)). In relation to linguistic practices, throughout the thesis I have explored how such ‘vocabularies’ of war as *opolchency* and *boyeviki* (see §4.2.), *vata* (§4.4.), *volonter* (§6.5.) are embedded in the ‘affective economies’ (Ahmed 2014) of war. My research has found that since the beginning of the war in Donbas, these ‘vocabularies’ have acquired stable meanings among activists. These findings confirm Burlyuk’s *et al* observation that the armed conflict is being gradually ‘routinized’ through media, images, everyday practices and language, thus leading to ‘normalization’ of an otherwise *ab-normal* situation of violence, death, destruction and loss (Burlyuk *et al* 2017: 10).

So, to answer the second part of the research question raised by this thesis – *What emotional geographies are revealed by focusing on activism during the Donbas war in Ukraine, and how do these emotional geographies contribute to a more nuanced understanding of this geopolitical crisis?* – I would like to suggest that building an understanding of the embodied and emotional experiences of war contributes to ‘deeper’ insights into how people make meaning of Donbas war. As the recent special issue on Ukrainian crisis has shown, researchers of the current conflict continue to get to grips with such topics as identity and ethnicity (Onuch *et al* 2018). Shifting the conversation towards the discussion of the emotionality and the politics of belonging (see §4., §5., and §6.) provides a fresh perspective on the Ukrainian crisis by raising the question of what

do these geopolitical processes of war *do*, i.e. what kind of subjectivities, territories, and histories are produced as a result of war. Such insights should prove useful in academia and beyond, for example, in peace building initiatives that try to ‘patch up’ societies fractured by war.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that there were many additional themes that could not make it to this thesis through the need for focus and clarity. I hope that future research will investigate these, considering for example: how dynamic geopolitical understandings are formulated in the encounter between different ‘situated gazes’; how morality and religiosity are integral to emotional geographies of activism in Ukraine; and how meanings and emotions circulate through similar profile activism in different cities.

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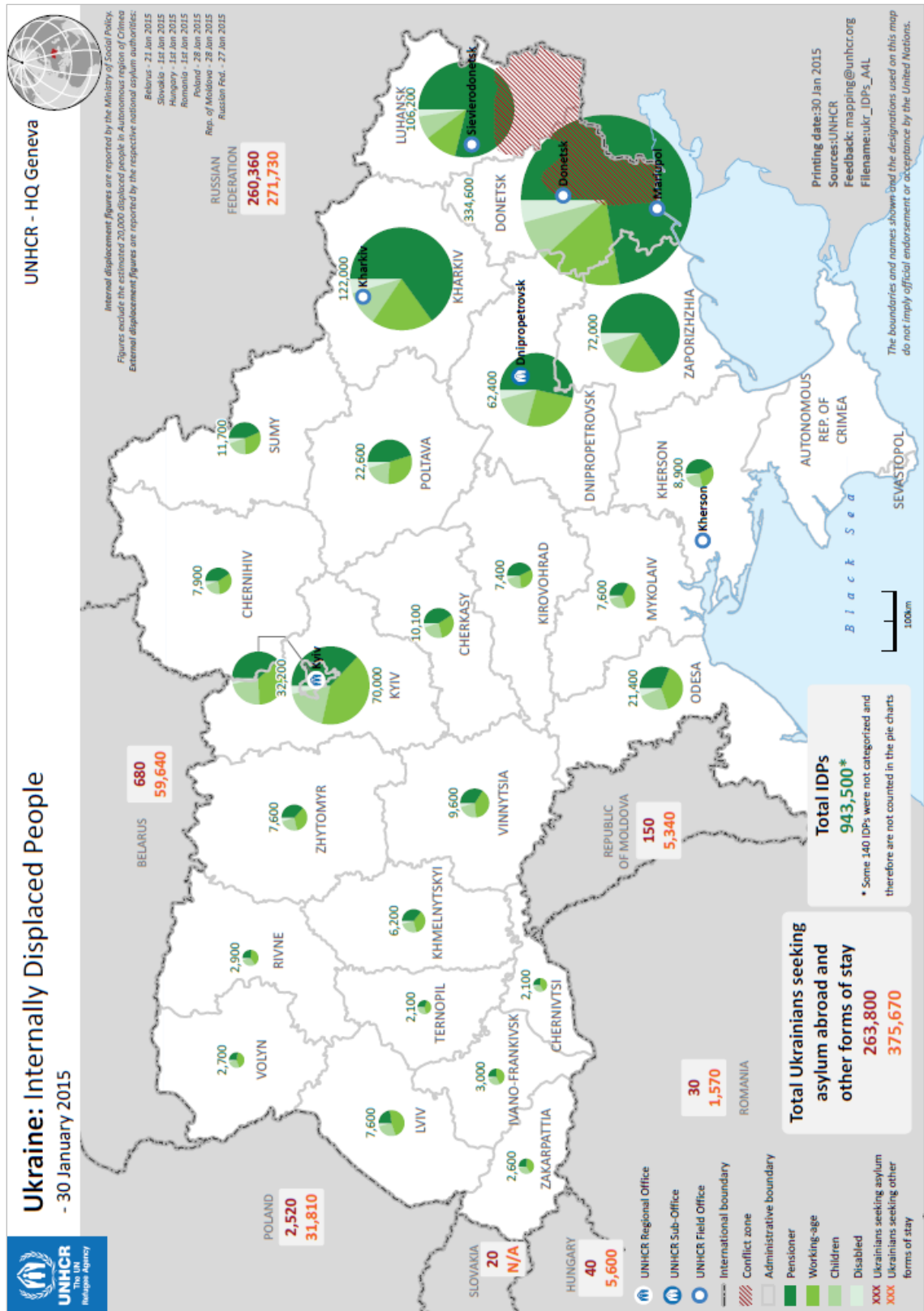
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Appendix 2: Map of population displacement in Ukraine as of 30 January 2015 (UNHCR 2015a)



Appendix 3a: Participant Information Sheet in English

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Title of Project: Emotional Geographies of Protest and Activism in Contemporary Ukraine

Researcher:

Inga Freimane, PhD student in Geography, Faculty of Engineering and Environment at the University of Northumbria, contact at inga.freimane@northumbria.ac.uk or by phone _____, or my Ukrainian phone number _____.

Invitation paragraph:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to conduct ethnographic research of recent protests/ activism in Ukraine. More specifically, it focuses on the meanings/ feelings of people who participate in these events, and the geographical aspect of various emotions associated with such protests/ activism.

Why have I been chosen?

Your participation will be appreciated, because it will provide an insight into why people decided to participate in protests/ activism associated with such events as *Euromaidan*, and how they perceived it. So, you will contribute to the better understanding of the protests/ activism in contemporary Ukraine from a grounded ethnographic perspective.

Do I have to participate?

Participation in research is completely voluntary, and does not entail any monetary or other reward. You are free to withdraw from project at any time.

What will happen to me if I take part?

There are several ways you can participate. Firstly you can participate in an interview, which is around 60 minutes long and requires answering of some questions based around your participation in protests/ activism, and how you perceived and felt about them/it. Given that you will need some time to read information about the research and might have some questions regarding it, it might take more time. The overall time of your participation will be around one to two hours per interview. You can participate in a series of interviews. Upon your choice, interviews will/ will not be recorded by dictaphone. It will be at the time and place convenient to you, and can be conducted over coffee, while walking through the city, or at your home. The interview questions are very simple and do not require any prior preparation. However, the conversation might involve talking about sensitive issues, such as violence or loss you or those close to you experienced during the past months. You are free stop the conversation at any time and not to continue if it causes emotional distress to you.

There are other ways you can participate too. If you are a member of activist groups at the moment, you could invite me to join your group and introduce me to other members of the

group. I may conduct participant observation in your organization which will involve me observing and participating in the everyday activities of your group and taking notes about them. I might have some questions to you about such activities. Other than that, no specific effort will be required on your behalf.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your personal information will not be disclosed to anyone at any time. However, the research might get published as a journal article, conference paper, or a book. The research might get published in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, including Ukraine. Where it will occur, your name will be concealed by pseudonym and all the personal identification details will be removed. This will be done for each interview, and the transcripts of interviews will be kept on a separate USB stick and protected by password. However, the direct extracts from our conversation might be included and for ethical reasons, your signature or verbal consent will be required to prove to agree to participate.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final version is going to be my PhD thesis, and I can provide a copy of it upon request. As mentioned above, the results of the research study may also be used to write journal articles, conference papers, or a book. You can request the information about publications arising from research and a copy of such publications at any time. Data arising from research will be kept for the life-time of the project, normally about 5 years. After this period, data will be destroyed according to the regulations of the University of Northumbria.

Who is funding the research?

The research is not funded by any external bodies. All of the expenses are covered myself from the scholarship I receive at my study program and the fieldwork funds provided by the university.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study is reviewed by Department of Geography, Faculty of Engineering and Environment Research Ethics Committee at the University of Northumbria.

Contact for Further Information:

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research, or feel that your personal information has been handled inappropriately, you can contact my supervisors Dr Kathryn Cassidy at kathryn.cassidy@northumbria.ac.uk (in Ukrainian, Russian, English languages) and/or Dr John Clayton john.clayton@northumbria.ac.uk (in English language).

Appendix 3b: Participant Information Sheet in Ukrainian

ІНФОРМАЦІЙНИЙ ЛИСТОК ДЛЯ УЧАСНИКА
ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ



Назва/тема дослідження: Емоційні географії протесту і активізму в сучасній Україні

Дослідник/ науковець:

Інга Фреймане, аспірант географії, факультет інженерної справи та довкілля в університеті Норфумбрії, контактні дані: inga.freimane@northumbria.ac.uk або за тел. _____ (Велика Британія), або _____ (Україна).

Запрошення для участі у дослідженні:

Вас запрошено для участі у науковому дослідженні. Перш, ніж ви погодитесь, важливо, щоб ви знали, чому відбувається це дослідження і які теми воно охоплює. Будь-ласка, уважно прочитайте наступну інформацію та, якщо бажаєте, обговоріть її з кимось. Запитайте мене, якщо щось незрозуміло або бажаєте отримати більше інформації. Подумайте, чи ви хочете брати участь у цьому дослідженні, чи ні. Дякую, що ви це прочитали.

Яка мета цього дослідження?

Мета цієї праці – провести етнографічне дослідження нещодавніх протестів/ волонтерської діяльності в Україні. Конкретніше, воно зосереджується на враженнях/ думках/ почуттях людей, котрі брали участь у цих подіях, а також на географічному аспекті різноманітних емоцій, що асоціюються з протестами і волонтерською діяльністю.

Чому вибрали мене?

Ваша участь є важливою, тому що вона допоможе зрозуміти, чому люди вирішили брати участь у протестах або волонтерській роботі, пов'язаними із такими подіями, як Євромайдан, і як вони сприймали ці події. Таким чином, ви зробите внесок у краще розуміння такого явища, як протести і волонтерство у сучасній Україні з етнографічної перспективи та точки зору простих людей.

Чи я повинен/повинна брати участь?

Участь у проекті є цілком добровільною і не винагороджується матеріально або будь-яким іншим способом. Ви можете залишити проект в будь-який час.

Що мені доведеться робити, якщо я братиму участь?

Є кілька способів вашої участі у проекті. По-перше, ви можете взяти участь в інтерв'ю, яке триватиме приблизно 60 хвилин і де вам треба буде відповісти на деякі запитання щодо вашої участі у протестах/ волонтерстві, та ваші враження/ думки/ почуття у цей час. Враховуючи, що вам потрібно буде прочитати інформацію про дослідження і що у вас можуть виникнути запитання, можливо, вам знадобиться додатковий час. Таким чином, загальний час вашої участі в інтерв'ю складатиме приблизно від однієї до двох годин. Ви можете взяти участь у кількох інтерв'ю (серії інтерв'ю). Згідно з вашим рішенням, інтерв'ю буде/ не буде записано на диктофон. Воно відбуватиметься у зручний для вас час і у зручному для вас місці, наприклад за кавою, прогулюючись містом, або у вас вдома. Питання інтерв'ю є дуже прості і не вимагають попередньої підготовки. Однак, розмова може стосуватися делікатних речей, таких як насилля або втрата, котру ви або хтось із ваших близьких пережили протягом останнього часу. Ви вільні припинити розмову у будь-який час, якщо вона стає вам неприємною.

Ви також можете взяти участь у проєкті іншим шляхом. Якщо ви є членом волонтерських груп або громадських організацій, ви можете запросити мене до своєї групи і познайомити з іншими учасниками. Я можу виконати т.зв. «включене спостереження» – спостерігатиму і братиму безпосередню участь у щоденній роботі вашої групи та вестиму записи. У мене можуть виникнути кілька додаткових запитань до вас про вашу діяльність. Окрім цього, нічого особливого вам робити не доведеться.

Чи моя участь у проєкті залишиться конфіденційною?

Вашу особисту інформацію не буде розголошено нікому ніколи за жодних обставин. Однак, дослідження може бути опубліковане у вигляді наукової статті, тез для конференції, або книжки. Його можуть надрукувати як у Великій Британії, так і за її межами, включаючи Україну. У цьому випадку, ваше справжнє ім'я буде замінено псевдонімом і усі особисті деталі, котрі можуть вас ідентифікувати, будуть вилучені. Це буде зроблено для кожного інтерв'ю, а записи інтерв'ю зберігатимуться на окремій USB флешці і захищатимуться паролем. Однак, уривки з нашої розмови можуть бути включені в публікацію, тому, з етичних міркувань, потрібна ваша письмова або усна згода на участь у проєкті.

Що станеться з результатами дослідження?

Результатом дослідження має бути моя кандидатська дисертація, і на прохання, я можу надати її примірник. Як згадувалося раніше, результати дослідження також можуть бути використані для написання наукових статей, тез для конференцій, або книжки. Ви можете попросити інформацію про публікації, пов'язані із дослідженням і копії цих публікацій у будь-який час. Дані цього дослідження зберігатимуться протягом усього часу існування проєкту – як правило, приблизно п'ять років. Після цього періоду дані буде знищено згідно із правилами університету Норфумбрії.

Хто фінансує дослідження?

Дослідження не фінансується жодними зовнішніми організаціями. Усі витрати покриваються мною особисто із моєї аспірантської стипендії та коштами для проведення польового дослідження із фондів університету.

Контактні дані для отримання додаткової інформації:

Якщо у вас виникли деякі питання у процесі дослідження, або ви відчуваєте, що ваша особиста інформація була використана неналежним чином, ви можете повідомити про це моїм керівникам доктору наук Катрін Кассіді kathryn.cassidy@northumbria.ac.uk (українською, російською, англійською мовами) і/або доктору наук Джону Клейтону john.clayton@northumbria.ac.uk (англійською мовою).

Appendix 4a: Consent Form in English



Faculty of Engineering and Environment
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of participant	
Organisation	
Researcher's name	Inga Freimane
Title of research project/dissertation	'The Emotional Geographies of Protest and Activism in Contemporary Ukraine'
Programme of study	PhD Geography
Supervisor's name	Dr Kathryn Cassidy, Dr John Clayton

Brief description of nature of research and involvement of participant:
The present research is focused on protests/ activism that took place in Ukraine since November 2013. Particularly, the study is interested in various meanings/ feelings of people who participated in such protests/ activism. The research involves one year ethnographic study in Kiev and Poltava region.

Involvement of participant (to be completed by hand):

Standard statement of participant* consent (please tick as appropriate)

I confirm that:
I have been briefed about this research project and its purpose and agree to participate*

I have discussed any requirement for anonymity or confidentiality with the researcher**

I agree to being audio recorded/filmed/photographed ***

* Participants under the age of 18 normally require parental consent to be involved in research.
*** Delete as appropriate

****Specific requirements for anonymity, confidentiality, data storage, retention and destruction**

All the personal information about the participant is confidential and will not be released to anyone at any time. Participants are going to be referred to by pseudonym in any publications arising from research, all identification markers are going to be removed. The main research output will be in the form of researcher's PhD and may also include academic articles, book chapters, etc.; published in United Kingdom and elsewhere, including Ukraine. The direct quotes from the interviews may be used. Personal data is going to be stored securely by the researcher on a separate USB stick and protected by password. Data will be retained for the life-time of the project, and destroyed according to the University of Northumbria regulations.

Signed **Date**

Standard statement by researcher
I have provided information about the research to the research participant and believe that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature
Date

Appendix 4b: Consent Form in Ukrainian



Факультет інженерної справи і довідкля
ЗГОДА НА УЧАСТЬ У ДОСЛІДЖЕННІ

Ім'я учасника	
Організація	
Ім'я дослідника	Інга Фреймане
Назва дослідження	«Емоційні географії протесту і активізму в сучасній Україні»
Навчальна програма	Аспірантура по спеціальності географія
Імена наукових керівників	Д-р Катрина Кассіді, д-р Джон Клейтон

Короткий опис суті дослідження та залучення учасника:

Дане дослідження присвячене протестам/ волонтерській діяльності в Україні з початку листопада 2013 року. Конкретніше, воно зосереджується на враженнях/ думках/ почуттях людей, котрі брали участь у цих подіях. Проект включає в себе однорічне етнографічне дослідження у Києві і Полтавській області.

Залучення учасника (заповнюється вручну):

Інформована згода учасника (позначте відповідні клітинки)

Я підтверджую, що:

Я ознайомлений (-а) з темою та метою проекту та погоджуюся брати у ньому участь*

Я обговорив питання дотримання анонімності та конфіденційності із дослідником**

Я погоджуюся на аудіо/відео запис/ фотографування ***

* Учасникам молодшим 18 років потрібен дозвіл від батьків на участь у проекті.

*** Закресліть непотрібне

**Особливі вимоги щодо анонімності, конфіденційності, умов і часу зберігання даних, а також їх

знищення Уся особиста інформація про учасника є конфіденційною та не поширюватиметься нікому ніколи жодним чином. Справжнє ім'я учасника буде замінене псевдонімом у будь-якій публікації пов'язаній із дослідженням; усі ознаки, за якими можна ідентифікувати людину, будуть вилучені. Головним результатом дослідження буде кандидатська дисертація; також це можуть бути наукові статті, тези конференцій або розділи книжки тощо, опубліковані у Великій Британії та за її межами, включаючи Україну. Можуть бути використані прямі цитати з інтерв'ю. Особисті дані зберігатимуться дослідником на окремій USB флешці і захищатимуться паролем. Дані цього дослідження зберігатимуться протягом усього часу існування проекту і будуть знищені згідно із правилами університету Норфумбрії.

Підпис Дата

Заява дослідника

Я надала учаснику усю необхідну інформацію про дослідження і вважаю, що учасник розуміє, що це дослідження містить.

Підпис дослідника

Дата