1 Homeland Humanitarianism in Russia's War Against Ukraine: a Study of Four Ukrainian Diasporic Communities

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In 2015, a viral post circulated on Facebook: D, a 10-year-old American citizen of Ukrainian descent, ran a birthday fundraiser to purchase an automobile for the Ukrainian Army soldiers fighting off the Russian military occupation. Named in honor of its benefactor, the utility vehicle was deployed with the 30th Mechanized Brigade of the Ukrainian Ground Forces as part of the government-sanctioned Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in eastern Ukraine (Kholodov 2015). The fact that a minor citizen of a foreign country accomplished an informal deployment at an active military battlefront merits a critical inquiry into the changing patterns of socially and technologically mediated participation in war. These two digital images side by side – a boy with a handful of birthday cash and a soldier with a piece of cardboard – mediate an important dynamic that animates this chapter. Just like sociological imagination allows to connect individual biographies to broader social structures (Halavais 2015; Murthy 2012), mapping the communicative acts connecting people to remote wars may offer a glimpse into the patterns of socially mediated participation in remote events that hit close to home.

Social media have reconfigured the international relief landscape by opening discursive spaces for grassroots storytelling and activism. Bringing the images of distant suffering closer than ever before and affording an array of opportunities for framing, representing, sharing, and responding to crisis events, mobile and locative media have shifted the relationship between information, compassion, and capacity for action (Hoskins 2021). Making sense of humanitarianism merits an inquiry into the transformative role of media and communication technologies, particularly social media, in the provision of international relief (Boulianne et al. 2018). In most cases today, humanitarian efforts are profoundly mediatized: social technology platforms are integral in drawing public attention to distant human suffering, mobilizing supporters, setting up logistics, as well as documenting humanitarian acts "on the ground" (Murthy 2013). A wealth of textual and visual data, produced in the process of mediated communication among stakeholders, turn social media platforms

into an empirical point of entry into studying socially and technologically mediated participation in war.

Since the middle of the 20th century, networked communities living outside of their countries of origin have been known to engage in *homeland humanitarianism*, responding to crises in their countries of origin that might have otherwise been overlooked by international relief organizations (Brinkerhoff 2014). Migrant and refugee populations often become remote participants of homeland wars in their countries of resettlement, bringing a nuanced understanding of local needs and contexts and cultivating a shared sense of moral responsibility for those left behind. The communities mobilized around relief provision are highly heterogeneous: diversity within and across those groups, including patterns of relocation and settlement, sociodemographic characteristics, language, and national identity (Brinkerhoff 2014), make them an intricate object of inquiry, difficult to map along spatial, as well as temporal, lines. Moreover, the shifting repertoires of collective action, away from those mediated by traditional institutions, toward direct and highly personalized forms of engagement (Bennett & Segerberg 2012), merit a critical inquiry into the role social technology platforms play in affording remote engagement in global humanitarian relief.

This chapter presents an innovative contribution to studying *homeland humanitarianism* empirically by exploring socially mediated communication surrounding war at scale. The case of Ukrainians – one of the biggest communities in the world living outside of their country of origin (UWC 2020) – provides a rich context for studying this form of transnational mobilization: prior to the full-scale invasion, aside from the neighbouring countries of Russia[1] and Poland (2 million), a sizable proportion of Ukrainians have lived in Canada (1.5 million), the United States (1 million), and Israel (over 100,000 – Interfax-Ukraine: 2018). Since 2014, Ukraine has been the site of an ongoing war with Russia, which contributed to a humanitarian crisis within the communities surrounding the war zone in its eastern part. Focusing on public discursive representations of war on Facebook – the most frequently used social technology platform among Ukrainian users both at home and abroad at the time of data collection (Peled 2014) – this chapter asks: What are the patterns of remote participation in the first phase of Russia's war against Ukraine across platform-mediated communities abroad, and what role does homeland humanitarianism play therein? To answer this question, I visualize the semantic structure of discourses to map the war-related discussions (Bauman 2018; Voytiv 2020) that take place on social media.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. I begin by providing a theoretical background on humanitarianism in the context of wars, grounding the research question

1 The Ukrainian population living in Russia has been excluded from this analysis.

in literatures from media studies, migration studies, and the studies of humanitarian activism. Next, I contextualize the inquiry empirically by studying discursive representations of the Russian-Ukrainian war among the Ukrainian communities abroad on Facebook. Having set up the context in which this remote participation is embedded, I lay out a series of steps that lead to the construction of *semantic maps* – graphic representations of online discourses. Comparing patterns of homeland humanitarianism across imagined Ukrainian communities located across four countries, I then discuss the findings and their significance in the context of a socially mediated geopolitical landscape.

Social Media and the Changing Nature of Homeland Humanitarianism

Over the past 50 years, humanitarianism has moved from the margins of the global geopolitical landscape toward its center, introducing powerful and significant actors in crisis events worldwide (Dromi 2020). Having fled wars and relocated from zones affected by wars and natural disasters, migrant communities have historically been known to organize around humanitarian relief, although these activities have rarely been the focus of scholarly research in the humanitarian space (Brinkerhoff 2014). In the present time, the stakes of remote involvement in humanitarian relief extend beyond the communities in crisis. Unsettling the distinctions between digital and physical, public and private, soldier and civilian, social technology platforms facilitate unprecedented opportunities for participatory war (Boichak/Hoskins 2022). The transformative role of media and communication technologies in the military domain – a process known as *digital war* (Hoskins/O'Loughlin 2010; Boichak 2021) – calls into question the stakes and the geopolitical consequences of such participation.

Defining the actors involved in homeland humanitarianism presents a number of challenges. First, those living outside of their countries of origin often come together as social networks rather than bounded communities or brick-and-mortar organizations (Bernal 2014; Sökefeld 2006). Moreover, the traditional triad of migrant-homeland-host country is not always a helpful referent to define belonging to those networked communities (Kok/Rogers 2016) – some individuals have migrated across several host countries as refugees prior to settlement, while for others the homeland no longer exists. Homeland humanitarianism is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to pin down to a single locale – these networked communities organize around issues of overlapping local, national, and transnational significance (Ibid.).

Defining homeland humanitarianism (or anything else, for that matter) as 'diasporic' is somewhat limiting and has been subject of controversy spanning the last decade of communication research in the field of transnational migration (see, e.g.

Koinova 2012; Ragazzi 2012). Among the features that characterize diasporas are their wide area of dispersion (one that includes two or more countries), and tangible and/or symbolic links to homeland, including engagement in efforts to mobilize support for the country of origin in moments of crisis (Brinkerhoff 2009). Yet importantly, one does not automatically become part of a diasporic community having migrated abroad: interest in homeland affairs and belonging necessarily comes with a collective identity communicated and enacted in the process of mobilization (Bauman 2018; Koinova 2012; Boichak/Kumar 2022; Ragazzi 2012), whether around a cause, an event, through their positionality within other networks, or interaction with institutional actors in the humanitarian space. For this reason, my use of homeland humanitarianism in this chapter is an epistemological choice that prioritizes mobilization around and remote participation in wars (Boichak/Hoskins 2022): in comparing patterns of such mobilization across platform-mediated communities, I do not aim to verify their individual membership in diaspora institutions and therefore do not label them as such. With that, a significant part of these communities' activities could be linked to and explained by literature in migration and diaspora studies, which I proceed to summarize below.

Like most social and cultural phenomena, homeland humanitarianism is anything but new. Studies in social movements (Berkowitz/Mügge 2014; Hess/Korf 2014; Ragazzi: 2012) have predominantly considered efforts among diasporic communities in lobbying their host governments and international humanitarian organizations in the time of crisis. The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the 2014 Israeli military offensive of Gaza, and the 2019 Turkish military operation in Syria were a few among the numerous events that sparked massive protests, in which diasporic groups were mobilizing around homeland wars across the world's capital cities (Voytiv 2020). These protests highlight the significant mobilizing potential that homeland wars have on migrant and diasporic communities worldwide – a process that has been amplified and accelerated with the use of mobile media, where the connection between the "war front" and the "home front" (Shapiro 2011) is made apparent and includes public spaces in the countries of residence, as well as platform-mediated spaces for grassroots storytelling and activism.

The concept of *conflict-generated diasporas* highlights the capacity of homeland wars to mobilize new and existing transnational communities around national identity and group membership – into humanitarian action (Bernal 2014; Féron/Lefort 2019; Voytiv 2020), although it is crucial to recognize the diversity with which various networks choose to maintain transnational ties with their homeland (Fischer 2018). Yet, studies on homeland humanitarianism to date have been heavily centered on institutional brokers, such as host country governments and international nongovernmental organizations (Berkowitz/Mügge 2014; Ragazzi 2012; Hess/Korf 2014). It is important to note that in homeland wars, the very process of mobilization happens through conflict *deterritorialization*, in which the meanings,

ideas, and values get discursively detached and symbolically transported from the remote homeland into the host country settings (Voytiv 2020).

The values that drive organized engagement in battlefield relief projects have also been subject to political controversies: peace activists often see those projects in contradiction to peacemaking missions and their disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration goals (Dromi 2020). Aside from documenting remittances (monetary flows to support family members back home) and exploring their effects on economic development of their country of origin (Brinkerhoff 2008; Orjuela 2008), or linking diasporic activism to international security threats (e.g. Féron/Lefort 2019), knowledge on patterns of homeland humanitarianism, as well as socially mediated participation in wars more broadly, remains anecdotal and scarce (e.g. Al-Rawi/Fahmy 2018; Boichak 2019).

Serving as conduits for humanitarian activism, social media accelerate humanitarian response timelines as information, including photos and eyewitness accounts, as well as resources and evacuation efforts, can be posted and shared synchronously as those efforts are unfolding. In platform-mediated spaces, news and requests for help might come from the victims and survivors of crisis directly, avoiding media organizations and other institutional intermediaries (Boulianne et al. 2018). Studies in platform-mediated humanitarianism provide evidence of a host of pro-social behaviours communities engage in when witnessing remote crises: from writing messages of support and sharing information to raising funds and participating in volunteer initiatives (Murthy 2013). The duration and extent of humanitarian response among the networked publics is driven by three groups of factors: feelings of patriotism and identity, concern for affected populations, and personal ties (Boulianne et al. 2018). These heterogeneous geographies, histories, and cultures of migration and belonging turn homeland humanitarianism into a complex object of empirical analysis. Next section helps contextualize this inquiry by situating it within public discourses among Ukrainian communities on Facebook, which allows to document and analyze the patterns and stakes of these actors' involvement in the transnational humanitarian landscape.

Background: Ukrainian Communities Abroad Prior to Russia's Full-Scale Invasion

In 2021, the Ukrainian World Congress estimated over 20 million Ukrainian persons residing outside the country who identified as Ukrainians either by means of citizenship, nationality, or ethnic origin – a figure that made Ukrainians living abroad among some of the largest diasporic groups in the world, even prior to the mass displacement due to the full-scale invasion (UWC 2020). Through multiple waves of migration, these groups have historically been vocal supporters of their homeland's

sovereignty and territorial integrity (Krasynska 2015) – yet, evidence on the patterns of their socially mediated participation in the ongoing homeland wars is only starting to emerge (see, e.g. Voytiv 2020), making this study one of the first to offer a systematic inquiry into the homeland humanitarianism among Ukrainians at scale.

The Revolution of Dignity, also known by the name of *Maidan*, has been a catalyst of transnational mobilization around homeland politics since its inception in November 2013. Ukrainians all over the world had been following updates on escalating events on Facebook, which started from learning about the fallout of the Association Agreement with the EU and continued by means of watching livestreams and photos of the peaceful protests that turned violent toward the end of November (Lokot/Boichak 2022). For many Ukrainians living in the U.S., Canada, and the EU, Facebook has been the communication tool of choice to seek out and connect with others in their proximity, as well as get involved in translating and disseminating information about the protest for a wider, English-speaking audience (Krasynska 2015). Platform-mediated personal connections were crucial in fostering trust and solidarity among Ukrainian activists who were coordinating protest activity in countries of residence, as well as raising funds to support protesters in their country of origin (Lokot 2021).

Diasporas have been a significant contributor to Ukraine's economic growth, annually remitting up to $10 million U.S. Dollars, which amounts up to 5% of the country's GDP (Krasynska 2015). However, as is the case in many other countries, remittances are only the tip of the iceberg of these actors' remote involvement in homeland politics: the range of transnational homeland activism is much broader and includes circulating petitions, raising funds, participating in protests, or liaising with host country governments and international organizations (Brinkerhoff: 2009). All of these kinds of remote participation have intensified in the events leading up to the Russian-Ukrainian war, ranging from framing and discursively representing the lived experiences of the protests, to more tangible humanitarian initiatives that delivered aid to the protesters in Ukraine (Krasynska 2015).

In their countries of residence, Ukrainians had organized a number of successful networked initiatives relying on social media, the most prominent of which were the Voices of Ukraine blog in Canada, Digital Maidan, the InfoCenter, and the Razom for Ukraine initiative (Krasynska 2015). Importantly, many participants of these initiatives admit to not having known each other personally or participating in diasporic events prior to Maidan – as one homeland activist recalls, "we don't know each other at all, and we are all strangers to each other, but we share the vision: to be a conduit … of the lived experiences of Ukrainians in Ukraine" (Krasynska 2015: 182). This example provides a valuable insight into the "digitally enabled action networks" which, despite having been originated and organized in online spaces, had also been enacted in more tangible ways to aid communities in crisis (Bennett/Segerberg 2012: 742–748). It is also suggestive of the changing dynamics of remote

mobilization around homeland wars, in which highly personalized and platform-mediated communication networks might be working alongside more traditional forms of organization (Livingston/Asmolov 2010), including in the humanitarian realm. As Krasynska contends, "Three short months of protests connected Ukrainians abroad on unprecedented levels, creating a new and vibrant digital society of individuals with a shared cause … [and] fostered a heightened sense of belonging and pride" (Krasynska 2015: 186).

Following the Maidan events and the annexation of Crimea, over a span of four years – between March 2014 and April 2018, the Russian occupation of Ukraine had been legally classified as the Anti-Terrorist operation (ATO). In April 2018, after over 10,000 Ukrainian military and civilian lives had been claimed by the war, the ATO was declared to be over and the war transitioned into a JFO (Joined Forces Operation) phase (Coffey 2018). These dates (March 2014 – April 2018) motivate setting the boundaries for historical data collection for this project. Throughout this time, transnational Ukrainian networks had been active in their efforts to urge the governments in their countries of residence to stand by the Budapest Memorandum provisions, which was in place to provide security assurances after Ukraine surrendered its nuclear weapon arsenal in 1994 (Sukhobokova 2015). After these efforts had proved insufficient to contain the Russian offensive, Ukrainian communities abroad shifted to advocating for imposing sanctions on the Russian Federation, as well as delivering direct humanitarian relief to the affected communities in Ukraine (Boichak 2017).

Razom for Ukraine initiative, which started as a Facebook group in the United States, was one of many prominent examples of homeland humanitarianism: they collected over $150,000 USD worth of humanitarian aid, which had been distributed among protesters in biggest Ukrainian cities where Maidan was taking place (Krasynska 2015). In Canada, Ukrainian communities were able to generate over $15 million CAD in donations throughout the duration of the ATO, which were also directed to fund large scale private humanitarian relief initiatives (MacKinnon 2015). These direct battlefront relief campaigns ran in parallel with organizations such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) lobbying the Canadian government for providing official military and humanitarian support for Ukraine's attempts to resist an impending occupation. To summarize, there is ample, yet unsystematic evidence reported in the news media of the Ukrainian transnational involvement in homeland humanitarianism involving both collective – those involving organizations and institutional intermediaries (Krasynska 2015; Sukhobokova 2015), as well as connective, bottom-up action networks (Boichak 2017). While the former – institutional actors – acted in official capacity predominantly through existing institutional channels, the latter – platform-mediated communities – often resorted to more direct, horizontal channels of aiding crisis-affected population,

civilians from the occupied territories, internally displaced persons, soldiers and their families, veterans, and children orphaned by the war (Boichak 2017).

Importantly, these instances of socially mediated activism were not only crucial drivers of humanitarianism among the Ukrainian migrants abroad – they were also key in facilitating strong interpersonal connections across the four generations, or "waves", of Ukrainian diaspora, between established migrant and diasporic institutions and Ukrainian activists "on the ground", as well as among Ukrainian communities worldwide (Krasynska 2015). With this in mind, this chapter aims to investigate homeland humanitarianism among the Ukrainian groups at scale to shed light on its increasing significance in the context of wars. To operationalize this, we turn to semantic mapping, combining computational and qualitative approaches to analyze the data from public discourses among four Ukrainian communities abroad that represent their socially mediated participation in wars.

Method: Semantic Mapping

Data

Facebook frequently becomes a space for communities living abroad to articulate and sustain an identity vis-a-vis a connection to their homeland (Nuermaimaiti 2014). During the studied period (2014–2018), Facebook was the single most popular social media platform across the four countries that constitute the case study: Poland (Poushter 2017), Canada (Gruzd et al. 2018), United States (Smith/Anderson 2018), and Israel (Goldenberg 2015). Between 2014 and 2018, the platform has also played an increasingly prominent role among Ukrainians, both within the country, as well as overseas (Peled 2014). For these reasons, I chose the Facebook platform for this study as a point of entry into the mediated interactions among the Ukrainian communities in question.

I began data collection by associative snowballing groups on Facebook and narrowing down the pool in stages according to five pre-determined inclusion criteria: (1) the groups had to be public and allow all members to post and comment on posts, (2) identify as Ukrainian communities (according to their title and/or description), (3) be located in one of the studied countries; (4) exceed minimum thresholds of activity to produce a sufficient text corpus for analysis (100 members/1000 posts per group); and, finally, (5) be consistently active throughout the studied period (2014–2018) to ensure accuracy of comparison (which comprised the final sample of 16 groups used for this study). Despite the public status of the groups in question: five groups from each Canada, the United States, and Poland, and a single group from Israel, the data had been deidentified to mitigate the possible community-level risks for participants. I used the Netvizz application (Rieder 2013) to collect all text-

based posts and comments from the 16 groups over the period between 2014–2018, and then aggregated them by country – see Table 1.

Table 1: Sample descriptives

Country	Ukrainian population, mil	#Facebook groups	#members	# posts
CA Canada	1.5	5	24,509	38,903
US United States	1	5	24,434	32,135
PL Poland	2	5	42,574	65,035
IL Israel	0.1	1	10,744	30,539
TOTAL		**16**		**166,612**

Mapping Platform-Mediated Discourses

Being a formal method of analysis, computational approaches regained their prominence in studying platform-mediated communication due to a combination of two factors: on one hand, an unprecedented availability of unstructured textual data in the digital format, including social media, and on the other – the advancement of computational tools and algorithms that allow to discover structural patterns in large volumes of text (Lazer et al. 2009). Yet, scholars of culture point to potential difficulties with hermeneutics, i.e. interpretation of meaning that can be potentially uncovered with the help of these computational techniques (Edelmann/Mohr 2018). For this reason, combining computational and qualitative approaches to analyzing platform-mediated communication can help reconcile the tensions between quantitative and qualitative research traditions when studying online communication (Kok/Rogers 2016; Boichak/Kumar 2022; Moats/Borra 2018). One of such convergent approaches is the use of semantic maps – constellations of discursive constructs that have the affective potential to move people to action (Boichak 2023). Below, I operationalize a way to construct and interpret semantic maps in the context of the Ukrainian homeland humanitarianism.

Semantic maps are a computational technique that allows to build a network from terms that co-occur in a body of text – in this instance, a post or comment made by a user on Facebook. In semantic networks, nodes represent the nouns found in the text corpus, and edges indicate the frequency of their co-occurrence (Haythornthwaite/Gruzd 2007). This networked approach to text mining allows to detect and map topics – clusters of terms that co-occur in conversations (Kang et al. 2017; Lee/

Kim/Rosen 2009) among diasporic actors. Unlike traditional methods of topic modelling, semantic mapping does not remove words from the context – thus helping preserve the meaning embedded in the text (Hoffman et al. 2018). Perhaps, the most inspiring application of semantic network analysis to date has allowed Hoffman et al. to observe significant differences in semantic structures of the Conformist and Dissenting Bible, presenting semantic networks as formal, yet "aesthetically rich, deeply textured objects" (2018: 102) that provide for a sophisticated and nuanced analysis. Visualizing semantic structure of mediated communication may thus provide insights for understanding issues, identities, and contexts that drive socially mediated participation in wars, including the provision of humanitarian relief, in the digital age. With pragmatism and caution, mapping online discourses may be applied to studying various platform-mediated actors, albeit not without challenges unique to each object of inquiry.

In order to compare structural discursive patterns among the Ukrainian communities based in different countries, my method involved three steps. First, I combined all posts and comments from groups within the same country into a single database. Despite some obvious limitations, particularly methodological nationalism, in which nation-states are essentialized and reified as units of analysis (Adamson 2016), this approach allowed to make structural comparison among the communicatively constructed Ukrainian networks within the four nation-states in question. I will return to discussing methodological nationalism and its epistemological implications in the discussion section.

The second step involved translation of conversations into the English language using Google services. This was a necessary step, as the sixteen groups included in the sample communicated in six languages (English, Ukrainian, Polish, French, Russian, and Hebrew). This step has to be performed with caution, and the limitations of this approach are presented in the discussion section, as well. The third step involved using VosViewer software (van Eck/Waltman 2011) to generate semantic networks of the topics discussed within the groups. To visualize the text corpus, I imported it into VosViewer in the English language, using the option of binary counting, which allows for each term to only be counted once regardless of the number of times it appears in a certain post/comment; next, I set the minimum number occurrences of each term at 50 and the relevance criteria at 100%, so not to exclude important general terms that might point to the issues of interest. Simply put, the semantic networks show words that have been co-present in at least 50 messages within the platform-mediated conversations in each of the four countries in the sample.

The final step involved validation: being proficient in five out of the six languages spoke among the Ukrainian communities, once the maps have been generated, I went back to the original dataset and validated the messages that contained the key terms present in each cluster of the semantic networks, to make sure that the topics were represented correctly. Despite undertaking this crucial validation step, it is

important to recognize language as a challenge in visualizing discursive representations. Socially and culturally diverse communities often speak a mixture of languages: depending on their location, these groups might contain posts in the language of their members' country of residence, as well as their native language(s), which might include various transliteration techniques, often non-formalized (as is the case with Romanised Arabic). Such linguistic and stylistic diversity presents a set of obstacles in mapping diasporic discourses. For the cases presented in this study, I was initially sceptical that Google services would be able to adequately translate the text corpus from multiple languages into English. Although Google translate services have improved over the years, the sentence structure in the translated messages was still not perfect. Yet, given that the words were used in the aggregate, to produce semantic networks in order to identify the structure of discourse, automatic translation was suitable for this task – otherwise, visualizing separate semantic maps would have been more challenging and not suitable for comparison across the samples. Admittedly, inability to apply this method to analyze text messages with a shorter length is a limitation – wherefore, this method should be applied with caution for studying political discourses on other platforms (and, in languages other than Slavic).

Findings and Analysis

Figures 1–5 below show the structure of discourses for each of the four Ukrainian communities. The resulting maps allow to explore each semantic network qualitatively using VosViewer's graphic user interface. In this instance, clusters of interconnected nouns constitute topics, and finding messages with indicated terms in the dataset allows to selectively validate each of the topics discussed among the group members.

These visualizations yield a series of insights regarding the similarities and differences in the patterns of remote participation in local communities, as well as homeland politics, among the groups in question. As seen from the maps above, the issues that drove participation among Ukrainians in Poland were substantially different from those mobilizing their Canadian, American, and Israeli counterparts. Importantly, while discussions about Ukraine were clearly central among Ukrainian communities in North America and in Israel, Ukrainians in Poland were discussing both Ukraine and their country of residence. The Ukrainian Polish communities appeared to have uniformly prioritized integration within the host state within their participation on the Facebook platform (*Figures 1–5*).

Analyzing each semantic network separately allows to see overlapping clusters of words that represent certain topics within the platform-mediated discourses. This illustrates the advantage of semantic networks over other supervised and unsuper-

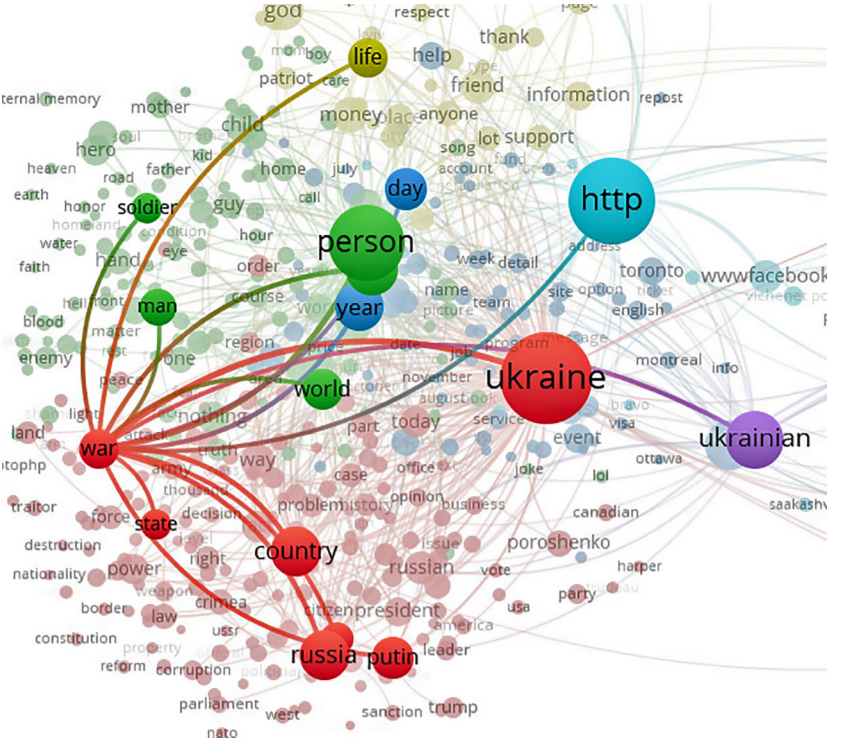
vised approaches to topic modelling, many of which involve a forced categorization of words into one of the non-overlapping categories. Semantic networks, on the other hand, help contextualize these terms among the others, with which they co-occur in a message. After I validated the topics, I made a decision to merge the clusters that represented the same topic and colour-code them consistently to make the maps comparable across communities. On these maps, clusters that represent discourses around homeland politics are coloured in red, green represents war-related discourses, yellow stands for homeland humanitarianism, blue represents a range of local integration efforts, and purple and turquoise each represent hyperlinking behaviours within Facebook, as well as to content on other platforms, respectively. Below, we will consider the Canadian semantic map in more detail.

The map for Ukrainians in Canada had 473 terms grouped into 6 clusters, each representing a topic with some words that overlapped more than one topic. Qualitative analysis of the clusters shows that the socially mediated participation with regard to Ukraine revolved around three sets of issues. The first theme (shown in red colour on *Figure* 1) is Ukrainian politics, broadly conceived: speakers discussed topics such as bureaucracy and corruption, presidential politics, as well as meaningful events such as the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent sanctions against Russia (*Figure 1*).

Crucially, the third theme was focused on the grassroots crowdfunding efforts to provide humanitarian relief to aid communities in crisis. As I explored elsewhere (Boichak 2019), Facebook was instrumental in facilitating horizontal connections among the Ukrainian Canadians and local Ukrainian beneficiaries, including veterans, children orphaned by the war, and civilians who lost their livelihoods due to the ongoing war. In this set of messages, we can see help being offered and requested; oftentimes, the beneficiaries would go as far as provide their credit card information to make the fundraising process faster and easier. Visual representation of discourses around homeland humanitarianism is shown in yellow (*Figures 1* and 2).

The cluster shown in dark blue represents efforts in soliciting housing and employment. Such evidence of attempts at local integration foregrounds the 'local' component of socially mediated participation in the Ukrainian communities. The remaining two clusters indicated group engagement in cross-platform activities: hyperlinked content connecting the Facebook community to other platforms is shown in light blue, and the links to other Facebook pages are shown in purple (*Figure* 2).

Figure 1: This semantic network shows the structure of discussion around Ukraine among the Ukrainians in Canada (n=473).



The second participatory war pattern among Ukrainian Canadians had to do with depictions of violence and atrocities in eastern Ukraine, as well as praising the heroic deeds of the soldiers defending the Ukrainian battlefront (shown in green on *Figure 1*).

The U.S.-based groups exhibited a slightly different structure of discourse compared to their Canadian counterparts: in the former, homeland humanitarianism had notably richer discursive representations, whereas the latter group appeared to focus predominantly on Ukrainian politics (red cluster in *Figure 3*) with less attention to the war (green cluster) and humanitarianism (yellow cluster). Importantly, in this instance cluster size does not represent the scale or significance of a particular topic, but rather – the depth of the topic through the breadth of discursive constructs which represent it in conversations among group members.

Figure 2: This semantic network shows two clusters that indicate linking behaviours within and outside of Facebook (Ukrainians in Canada, n=473).

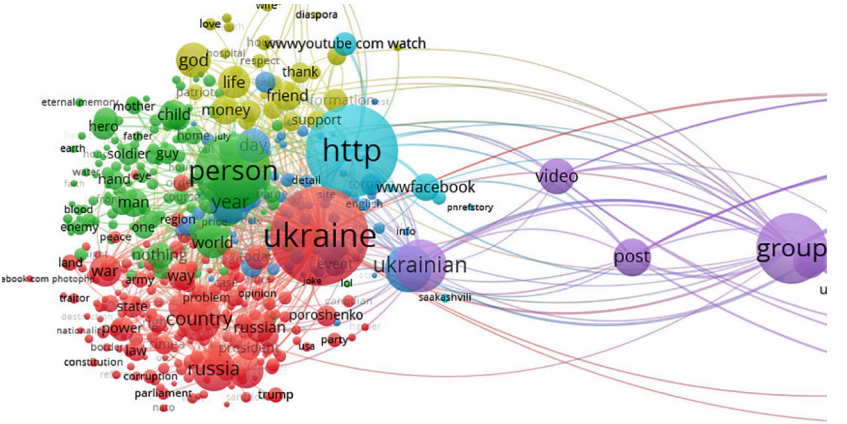
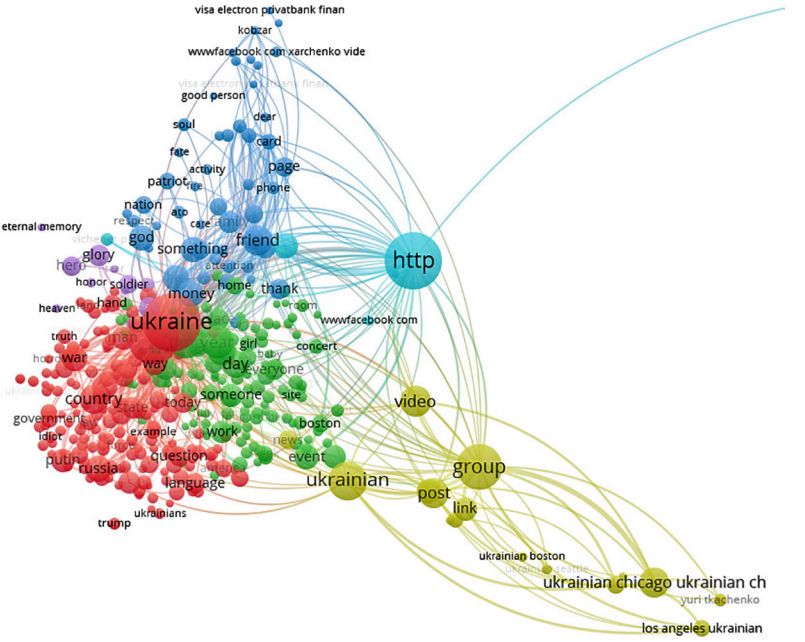
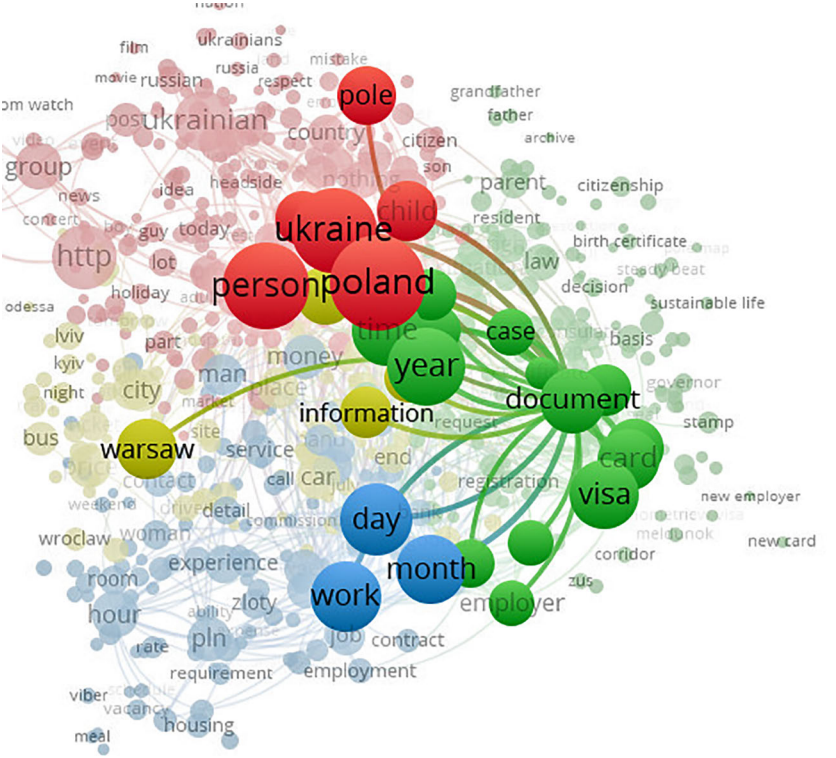


Figure 3: Clusters of topics among the Ukrainians in the United States (n=371).



Socially mediated participation among the Ukrainian groups in the United States is represented by a semantic map that consists of 371 nodes and 6 clusters. The topics arranged by clusters roughly correspond to the ones detected in the Canadian sample, although the conversations about integration and employment are more prominently featured (shown in green on *Figure 3*). There are also instances of hyperlinking behaviours within Facebook (purple), as well as externally (turquoise).

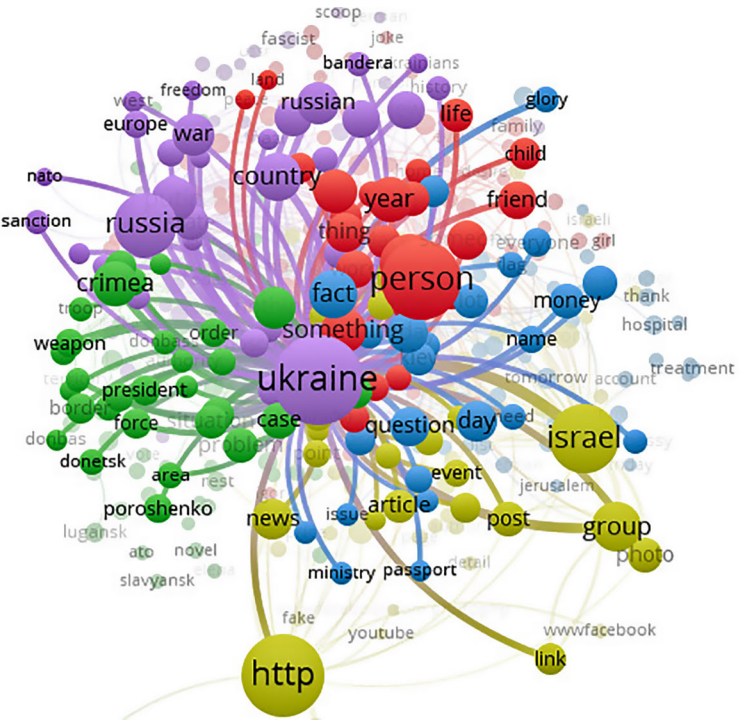
Figure 4: Semantic representations of platform-mediated discourse among Ukrainians in Poland (n=629). The map shows prominence of discussions around immigration, employment, and local logistics.



The semantic network representing discourses among the Ukrainians in Poland has 629 nodes (terms) and only four clusters. The most interesting finding from this networked representation is the prominence and centrality of Poland in the conversations – unlike the three other groups in the sample, in which discussions revolve predominantly around Ukraine. The cluster that represents participation in home-

land politics has a strong focus on the Ukrainian-Polish relationships (shown in red on *Figure 4*), and homeland humanitarianism is represented in yellow. The other significant cluster (shown in blue) represents local integration efforts, including the sub-categories of immigration, employment, and local logistics. Unlike the North American communities, Ukrainian groups in Poland did not share as many cross-platform hyperlinks and links to other Facebook content and groups (purple) – however, they did share other community member's profiles and information on local businesses. This is again suggestive of the fact that socially mediated participation among Polish Ukrainian communities on Facebook, while initiated by overlapping contexts of homeland and the country of residence, is directed predominantly at the country of residence.

Figure 5: Clusters of topics discussed among Ukrainians in Israel (n=342).



Finally, the Ukrainian community in Israel, although represented by a single group, had many active members and a large volume of platform-mediated conversations (10,744 members and 30,539 posts). The map for Ukrainians in Israel above (*Figure 5*) has 342 nodes (terms) and four clusters. Ukraine features prominently

in most of the discussions, and the topics revolve around discussion of homeland politics and the war (red), geopolitics and their historical underpinnings (green), humanitarian activism (yellow) and, similar to the North American groups, hyperlinks to external platforms and content on Facebook (purple). Similar to the other North American communities, the Russian-Ukrainian war was a prominent driver of platform-mediated participation in Israel: it is represented by various themes and serves to mobilize the Ukrainian communities in Israel around Ukraine-related content.

For the purpose of this study, establishing and validating individual community membership was less important than the fact that these users were collectively mobilized around the ongoing war in the homeland. Although discourses do not always translate into action "on the ground", seeing consistent patterns of discursive engagement at scale speaks to the significance of the homeland war not only in generating conversations, but also in fostering capacity for humanitarian relief. Although, as Hoskins (2021) warns, we should be critical of implying a direct relationship between knowledge and humanitarian response due to the abundance of information flows that may make visible, but also conceal, images of distant human suffering.

Discussion and Conclusion

This exploratory study is among the first to map platform-mediated discourses of homeland humanitarianism at scale, using semantic networks to compare the patterns of participative war among Ukrainian communities across four countries of residence: Canada, the United States, Poland, and Israel. I found that participatory war happens along three dimensions: first, by discussing homeland politics; second, by discussing the war and its geopolitical implications; and finally, by providing battlefront relief directly to the affected communities. In consistence with social movements literature to date (Hess/Korf 2014; Koinova 2012; Voytiv 2020), the first phase of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2014–2022) was a crucial mobilizing factor across all four communities in the sample, although the wide variety of humanitarian relief initiatives is a rapidly emerging phenomenon that merits further enquiry. In addition to remote participation in homeland politics, each of the groups had a distinct local component, which represented communicative efforts for integration in their host countries. Importantly, the Ukrainian platform-mediated communities were also seen to be making cross-platform, as well as intra-platform connections to other groups. We investigate hyperlinking as socio-semiotic traces elsewhere (Boichak/Kumar 2022), treating them as a point of entry into the spaces, cultures, and borders that constitute the Ukrainian national web, and mapping them onto localized sites of their production.

As seen from the analysis above, participatory processes in platform-mediated communities abroad may take a variety of forms and may be initiated by or directed at overlapping contexts of homeland and the country of residence. For instance, discourses among the Polish Ukrainians were centered on local opportunities, rather than events in the country of origin. This discrepancy could be explained by historical factors: Polish authorities conducted an aggressive assimilation policy toward Ukrainian immigrants, whereas Ukrainians who moved to Canada, the United States, and Israel had opportunities to maintain their Ukrainian identity (Krasynska 2015). As an outcome, many Ukrainians arrived in Poland as labour migrants who, whether despite or because of their geographic proximity to their homeland, got increasingly mobilized by issues of local, rather than global or transnational, significance. This observation helps understand the concept of remote mobilization as a phenomenon that occurs on a number of levels – as can be seen from the semantic maps, while some platform-mediated communities embed their engagement in local, national, and transnational contexts, others might just be part of social systems that are distinctively local.

What do these findings mean in the context of homeland humanitarianism? First, we find evidence of the changing dynamics of remote involvement in the transnational humanitarian landscape surrounding wars. Mobile and locative media do not just foster new capabilities in conducting wartime operations – extending the battlefronts into the realms of communication and perception, they reconfigure the social conditions shaping user's relationship to war. As users and audiences have transformed into networked publics, mediatized contexts have opened new avenues for human geopolitics, linking people's everyday practices to war efforts of states. In this context, sociologists and media scholars are well positioned to illuminate remote participatory patterns in wars, attending to the higher-order social transformations that augment our understanding of humanitarianism.

While the phenomenon of homeland humanitarianism is anything but new, the scale and the scope of remote involvement in homeland wars is only going to expand in the next decade, with implications on our understanding of the role of transnational actors living outside of their countries of origin on the global geopolitical arena and in humanitarian spaces. Going back to the opening vignette, D's initiative to come to the aid of the soldiers in his country of origin was contingent on platform-mediated communication, which was integral in drawing public attention to the occupation, mobilizing supporters, setting up logistics, and documenting the numerous humanitarian acts that took place at the battlefront and surrounding areas. D wasn't alone: he was part of the numerous transnational communities driving a collective humanitarian response of an unprecedented scale, mobilizing their personal networks to challenge the status quo in the ongoing war by engaging in homeland humanitarianism (Boichak 2019).

This chapter adds a unique dimension to an emerging body of literature that examines homeland humanitarianism by demonstrating its increasing significance in the context of digital wars. Creating grassroots spaces for remote participatory involvement in war, transnational actors contribute to the creation of a socially mediated geopolitical landscape. Assuming technological interconnectedness will only deepen in the next years, understanding the diffused and deterritorialized nature of remote participation in contemporary wars will have increasing analytic utility.

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