

# **The Radical Left in Ukraine since Maidan: The Case of the National Anarchist Movement**

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## Table of Content

1. Introduction	7
1.1 Research problem and aim	9
1.2 Research Questions	12
1.3 Outline of the thesis	13
2. Theoretical Framework	14
3. Methodology	26
3.1 Limitations of Study	29
3.2 Data sources and methods	31
3.3 Sample description	32
3.4 Study populations(s)	33
3.5 Data process and coding	34
3.6 Credibility, transferability, trustworthiness and confirmability	35
4. Relevance of anarchism and left-wing social movements in Ukraine	37
5. Analysis: The National Anarchist Movement as the embodiment of cleavages in the wider Ukrainian society	40
5.1 Cleavages within the ‘New Radical Left’	41
5.2 Sexism	44
5.3 Cult of Personality and the old left successor	47
5.4 Attitudes towards Russia and the war	50
5.5 Nationalism	54
5.6 Changes after Euromaidan	55
6. National Anarchism	57
6.1 Origins Branding Problem	57
6.2 Coalition	58
6.3 Ideological Trajectory	59
6.4 Ideology	61
6.5 Pragmatism	64
6.6 Historical narratives	65
7. Changes in the relationship between actors of the New Radical Left	69
7.1 Relationship between members of the National-Anarchist Alliance	70
7.2 Relationship between National-Anarchist Groups with liberal and human rights organizations	72

7.3 Relationship between National-Anarchist and Post-Anarchist Groups	72
7.4 Conflicts between various groups of the Ukrainian Radical Left	73
7.5 Conflicts in-between far-right groups	75
7.6 Cooperation within far-right groups	76
7.7 Relationship between members of the National-Anarchist Alliance and far-right/nationalist groups	78
7.8 Conflicts between far-right and Ukrainian Radical Left	79
Conclusion	82
Annex	87
a) Annex A) Interview Guide	87
b) Annex B) Code Book	92
c) Annex C) Participant Observation Sheets	94
d) Annex D) Interviews	106
e) Annex E) Bibliography	257
f) Annex F) Plain Language Statement	267
g) Annex G) Consent Form	269
h) Annex H) Electronic Signature	271

## List of Groups and Acronyms

Amnesty International

Autonomous Action / Avtonomy Oprir / Автономний опір

Avantgard / Avantgard/ Авангард

Azov / Azov / Азов

Black Committee / Chornyi Komitet / Чорний Комітет

Black Flag / Chornyy Styag/Чорний Стяг

Black Rainbow (\*) / Black Rainbow'/ Chornaya Raduga / Чёрная Радуга

C-14 / Sich / C14 (Січ)

Carpathian Sich / Karpatska Sich / Карпатська Січ

Ecological Platform / Екологічна платформа

Ecological Action / EcoAction/ЕкоДія

Freedom / Svoboda / Свобода

Freikorps / фрікорпс

Insight / Insight / Інсайт

Katekhon / Катехон,

National Corps / Nacionalnyu Korpus / Національний Корпус

New Flame / Novy Vohon'/ Новий Вогонь

Nihilist / Nihilist/ Нігіліст

Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) / Orhanizatsiya Ukrayins'kykh Natsionalistiv /

Організація Українських Націоналістів (ОУН)

Right Sector / Pravyi Sektor / Правий сектор

RevDia - Revolutionary Action / Revoluciynna Diya / Revolucionnoe Deystviye /

Революционное Действие

Silver Rose/Sribna Roza/Срібна Роза

Sisterhood of Saint Olga / Sestrynstvo Svyatoi Olgy / Сестринство Святої Ольги

Sfera / Сфера (ХЖО)

Social Movement / SocRukh / СоцРух

Tradition and Order / Traditsia I Poryadok / Традиція і Порядок

Zentropa / Zentropa / Зентропа

ATO - Autonomous Resistance

AWU – Anti-Terrorist Operation

CFTU – Autonomous Workers Union\*

CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union\*

CPU – Communist Party of Ukraine

DPR – Donetsk People’s Republic Academy

LO – Left Opposition

LPR – Lugansk People’s Republic OM

RCAS – Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists

SAU - Union of Ukrainian Anarchists

SPU – Socialist Party of Ukraine

\*does not exist any longer

## **Abstract**

With political fringe groups gaining momentum during the Euromaidan Revolution in 2013, much scholarly attention has been given to actors of the radical right while dynamics by the so-called 'New Radical Left' have been ignored. In its past the New Radical Left was striving for cultural hegemony; however, their influence diminished when the movement developed severe ideological cleavages after Euromaidan. With an ideologically divided 'New Radical Left' one new group, the 'National Anarchists', has entered Ukraine's political arena with the aim of re-appropriating the concepts of Ukrainian nationalism and the idea of an anti-imperial struggle against Russia embodying contemporary Ukrainian society's internal division on those issues.

This research aims to address the ways in which social movements and radical groups can change their political agendas due to shocking and unexpected political events, such as the Euromaidan Revolution in 2013. While political opportunity structures matter, internal dynamics within movements are often stronger indicators for the movement's political course and path of alliance building. Posing the question of how and why internal cleavages within the pre-Maidan Ukrainian radical left have led to a fragmentation of the movement, this research additionally seeks to address how this dynamic has led to the creation of a new Ukrainian political phenomena - national anarchism.

By analyzing how different social movements active on the political fringes of the Ukrainian presidential democratic system operate, this research aims to give insight into the existing political players but also on the ways political communities are built in contemporary Ukraine. As a country undergoing significant political and social transformation, the timeliness of this research cannot be overestimated. With Ukraine pushing for democratic reform, the country experiences the effects of a pro-European alignment with political fringe groups on both sides of the political spectrum striving for visibility. The fact that most scholarly attention is directed at the prominence and dynamics of the Ukraine's Radical Right, similar patterns on the left remain understudied.

## **(1) Introduction**

When in November 2013, a small group of students protested the Ukrainian government's refusal to sign the Free trade and Association Agreement with the European Union, it kicked off a series of events that later became known as the Euromaidan Revolution (Onuch, 2015). Protesting for more political participation, human rights and socioeconomic stability and against corruption, large parts of the Ukrainian society mobilized (Onuch & Sasse, 2016); (Averre & Wolczuk, 2016). The sheer endless sea of opposition parties, social movements and later self-defense battalions that originated at this time would unify under the banner of fighting for Ukrainian dignity and against what they perceived as a return into the Russian orbit. While many researchers have analyzed the origins of the revolution and actors driving the Revolution, little to nothing is known about a small group of activists that has fought for the underlying values of self-determination, human rights, socioeconomic rights as well as freedom of expression and movement for over a decade. Although the Radical Left in Ukraine has been historically weak since the country's independence in 1991, internal cracks related to differences in norms and values came to the forefront pre- and post-Maidan (Ichshenko, 2016).

Like much of the Ukrainian population pre-Maidan, the heterogeneous Radical Left at the time was split on the issues of how to interpret what Euromaidan signifies for the movement and whether turning one's back on Russia is the right way to move the country forward (ibid.). The events of the Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed separatist war in Ukraine's East have all influenced the building of ideological cleavages within an already diverse group of actors among Ukraine's radical left. Often the existing cleavages were linked to linguistic issues as well as issues of identity and belonging. This meant that the question of what it meant to be Ukrainian, and especially who belongs and who doesn't, was affecting the way different groups prioritized their political goals. While some anarchist groups highlighted that no state should be trusted, they withdrew their support of Euromaidan (ibid.). Others saw themselves in the history and lineage of radical left writers and intellectuals such as Mykhailo Drahomanov, Ivan Franko and Mykhailo Pavlyk which were key figures in the creation of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Being strongly inspired by the socialist political tradition they not only set the tone for the intellectual Ukrainian left but also fulfilled a key role by creating the first Ukrainian political party the Ruthenian-Ukrainian Radical Party and were among the first to verbalize the Ukrainian political struggle for independence. Their tradition which preceded the Soviet Union, later became interwoven by leftwing groups with the legacy of Nestor Makhno's Black Army which became interwoven again with the continuity of Ukraine's anti-imperial struggle (Zak, 2019); (Skirda, 2004).

Already existing pre-Maidan cleavages openly erupted in 2013 with the breakup of Ukraine's biggest anarchist organization, the Autonomous Workers Union, on the issue of political support for Euromaidan. Splinters of different factions continued their work in a variety of different organizations and initiatives (Ichshenko, 2016). One anarchist group emerging from the remnants of the Autonomous Worker's Union became notorious for its support of Russia and separatists fighting in the east as well as adopting an openly Stalinist political agenda. This group known as 'Borotba' which joined separatists in the DNR, also claimed a narrative of fighting an 'anti-imperial struggle'(Gorbach, 2015). They argued that the Ukrainian government represented a 'fascist junta' while the separatists in the east were fighting to protect their sovereignty and relationship to Russia (ibid.). In return a cry for a 'pro-Ukrainian' anarchist movement within the radical left emerged to counter-act this tendency. A new social movement influenced by an ideology of 'national anarchism' and the fight for a 'Ukrainian national liberation struggle' and against a neo-imperial Russia was born.

Attempting to fix the branding problem of the 'New Radical Left', it provides an illuminating case-study into how Ukraine's history lends itself for the active creation and continuity of a Ukrainian radical left tradition.

Overall the topic of the Ukrainian Radical Left has received only marginal attention within the academic literature with only one prominent academic writing about the Ukrainian Radical Left. Therefore, one can constitute a severe gap within the literature regarding political fringe groups which this research seeks to address. While much of the contemporary research on political fringe groups is aimed at the Ukrainian radical-right an argument is to be made as to not neglect the Radical Left. While their overall size is rather marginal, their ideology and internal group dynamics have changed and adapted just as much as the Ukrainian far-right has in the aftermath of Euromaidan. While political polarization is never a unilineal process, the New Radical Left and the groups falling under its umbrella, are just as relevant in understanding the mosaic of contemporary Ukrainian politics as is the far-right revealing relevant trends. This is not only because they operate in a zone of informality, similar to their far-right counterparts, but also because of their innovative and unorthodox mobilization techniques and patterns (Minkenberg, 2002); (Mudde, 2016).

Additionally, the case should be made that looking at Ukrainian politics from a Western-centric perspective can be a disservice in understanding the current political dynamics. Fixed and western-centric understandings of terminologies such as 'liberalism', 'nationalism' and even political ideologies such as 'anarchism' are of limited analytical scope in the Ukrainian context. The analysis of the case-study of 'so-called' National-Anarchists will help reveal those analytical

disparities and outline how to arrive at an emic understanding of understanding those categories. It is therefore the aim of this research, with the help of qualitative research methods such as ethnography, to arrive at an understanding of what being part of the 'left' means in contemporary Ukraine. For that it is necessary to recap briefly the history of the Radical Left, particularly Ukraine's short romance with a real existing anarchist state, the 'Machnovichnia', and how their legacy continues to shape the current movement (Skirda, 2004); (Zak, 2019). In contrast to much of the literature heavy on theory this research aims to contribute empirical data about how these groups actually operate and function by employing ethnographic research methods such as Participant Observation (PO), Semi-open Interviews and Social Network Analysis (PA). There is much value in such research as little to no empirical data on the topic has been collected on these groups. As the research is based on extensive fieldwork and raw interview data collected over the duration of six months, this research project main contribution lies in its 'groundedness' in empiricism.

Therefore, I propose the following research questions: To which extent have the existing cleavages within the Radical Left facilitated the birth of the National-Anarchist Movement? And in how far are their social networks a demonstration of the complexity of Social Networks and informal relationships between different political actors in Ukraine?

### **(1.1) Research problem and aim**

The reason why I chose to focus on one group labelled a 'marginal political group' is because they lend themselves as a fascinating case-study for observing micro-dynamics within social movements after huge external shocks such as the case of Euromaidan. While the events have had various effects on Ukrainian society and one has to be careful not to overstate the societal divisions existing in contemporary Ukraine, one can observe new dynamics and trends which have been stimulated by Euromaidan. Ukraine's unique geography, being flanked by the Russian Federation as well as the European Union, has brought the country into the center of academic research preceding Euromaidan (Onuch, 2015). Much of the literature preceding Euromaidan focused on the existence of far-right paramilitary groups such as Azov, Right Sector and others thereby creating the idea of Ukraine being a 'hotbed' of political extremism (Vice, 2019); (The New Republic, 2019); (Haaretz, 2019); (Guardian, 2018).

Even though research on far-right actors in Ukraine is increasingly popular and prolific, the same fails to apply to the country's radical left. With only one major publication on the topic published in 2015, a strong case can be made for the utility of this research as there is a non-existing cadre of literature. Very few studies of extreme radical movements in this region exist,

and if they do like on the extreme right. Those mostly focus on political parties while authors such Froio & Gattanara argue that most radical fringe groups ‘go beyond ordinary politics and take a form of ‘groupuscular’ organizations (Froio & Gattanara, 2015 p. 86). The same applies to research on the radical left as most existing research is based on secondary data and rarely features ethnographic research methods (ibid.). Therefore, it is the aim of this thesis to present explorative research on these communities to help contribute to a deeper understanding of these groups' internal dynamics. By employing ethnographic research methods such as participant observation, participatory appraisal techniques such as social network analysis and semi-structured interviews, an analysis of the nature of national-anarchist groups political engagement, idiosyncratic political references, protest actions as well as alliance-building with like-minded groups is sought for.

Which brings me to the research problem I aim to address: if we do face a lack of academic literature on the topic of political extremism in Ukraine, especially regarding movements that attracts a sizable proportion of young people such as the anarchist communities, it is necessary to contribute to the creation of knowledge on these communities. This is particularly relevant because understanding these groups and communities will help us acquire a deeper insight into the creation of tensions and political cleavages in contemporary Ukraine as well as contribute to a mapping of political actors in the contemporary Ukrainian political landscape. As political polarization is never a one-way street and tends to lead to varied outcomes in terms of who and why people are attracted to such groups, it is necessary to not only focus on radicalization in terms of the Ukrainian far-right. Even though the umbrella of the New Radical Left in Ukraine is smaller and has overall been weaker since 2015, it is currently in the process of a heavy rebranding. As the demand for a New Left is rising all around Europe, Ukraine in this regard is no exception to this trend. The combination of Ukraine's radical left history with the geopolitical circumstances the country has found itself in make for an extremely insightful case-study.

Therefore, it is the aim of this research to address the ways in which social movements and radical groups can change their political agendas and alliances due to shocking and unexpected political events. I argue that political opportunity structures matter, internal dynamics within movements often are heavily influenced by activists' individual perception of these political events and consecutively influence the movement's political course and future alliance building. The movements internal micro dynamics and internal culture changes after the external shock of Euromaidan have pressured the New Left's political agenda to adapt. Therefore, analyzing the determinants and pressures that have led this dynamic make it necessary to understand more

about the cleavages that lie at the heart of these changes. Posing the question of how and why internal cleavages within the pre-Maidan Ukrainian radical left have led to a fragmentation of the movement, the second level of analysis the research addresses will focus on why this in turn has led to the creation of a new Ukrainian-specific political phenomena: national anarchism.

This research additionally seeks to bridge between a macro and micro level of analysis by employing ethnographic research methods. Understanding the trajectory of how Ukraine's political left has evolved since Euromaidan and shedding light on their internal dynamics, will help to underline existing literature on uncivil society groups by providing empirical examples of how these groups factually operate. Therefore, the utility of working with activist's self-perception and understanding of the Ukrainian political context, lies in the fact that it will provide answers on their self-perception and conclusively their overall operational patterns. In the context of Ukraine, where overall political institutions are rather weak, having detailed information about possibly radicalized political fringe groups is essential. Answering the question of the overall state of Ukraine's radical left and their importance in the Ukrainian political sphere, it additionally zooms into how this dynamic has played out on the micro level. In the case of the national-anarchist movement this research understands their existence and ideological position as a grassroots initiative filling a structural gap missing in Ukraine's left.

As anarchist groups participate in the Ukrainian political landscape and engage in several networks with other groups inside and outside of Ukraine, this research also aims to clarify the impact and extent of these structures by employing a Social Network Analysis-based approach. Due to the fact that the events of 2013 blurred the ideological lines of traditional left and right wing politics as well as the revitalization of the historical Ukrainian tradition of National Socialism (not to be confused with the German type), a unique entanglement of actors, social networks and political ideologies has emerged. By using ethnographic research methods, it will be ensured that the respondents are the center of the analysis. By depicting social networks and personal attitudes of activists between and within political fringe groups in Ukraine, this research combines an anthropological analysis with a political science perspective. Being explorative means that the operationalization handled in this research will be crafted endogenously and iteratively as the research moves along. The core concepts used for the operationalization will be derived from my research questions and outlined beneath.

## **(1.2) Research question**

My main research question is:

**To what extent have internal cleavages within the Ukrainian radical left prior and following 2013 Euromaidan affected the creation of a new national-anarchist movement?**

The above research question is supported by several sub-questions designed to examine the dynamics of so-called 'National-Anarchist' groups in more detail:

### **Sub-questions:**

- 1) How did individual members of groups belonging to the Ukrainian 'radical left' experience the building of cleavages prior to and after Euromaidan?
- 2) How did these existing cleavages as perceived by members of the movement facilitate the birth of a new 'national-anarchist' movement?
  - a) What are the dominant historical and political narratives members of the 'national-anarchist' position themselves and the movement in?
- 3) How has the relationship between actors of the 'New Radical Left' and other political fringe in the Ukrainian political system changed since 2013?

### **(1.3) Outline of the thesis**

Before the above outline research questions can be addressed, a look at existing research is essential. Therefore, the upcoming chapter 2 will deal with the theoretical part of the thesis. Focussing on the value of Social Network Analysis in the context of political fringe groups in Ukraine, the theoretical part will revisit the most relevant interpretations of the concepts of social capital as well as civil society and will finish with a review of the utility of the concept of so-called ‘uncivil society’ for the case-study of national-anarchists. The chapter will conclude with a specific outline on anarchist movements in the Ukrainian context.

Additionally, chapter 2 will quickly revise how these groups fits within social movement theory contributing to a wider definition of contemporary left-wing activism, as we see in Ukraine today. By using a definition derived from social movement literature for anarchist and left-wing movements, Chapter 2 seeks to address the question on how the contemporary ‘new left’ manoeuvres and adapts itself through a highly-politicized environment. In order to do so I will elaborate on the trajectory left-wing activism has taken in Ukraine since the Euromaidan in 2014 and current cleavages within the movement.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used in this research. It discusses the tools, methods and approaches that belong to ethnographic research and will revisit the process of data analysis as well as overall process of information generation and querying. Additionally, the chapter addresses the limitations of study as well as questions regarding the Sampling Description, Study Population and Data Collections Process. The chapter concludes by evaluating the overall reliability and trustworthiness of the research as well as address questions of positionality.

Finally, Chapter 3 features an analysis of the collected data and addresses the main research question: on how the ‘National-Anarchist’ Movement has emerged out of a vacuum and the existence of cleavages within the contemporary ‘New Radical Left’. The structure of the analysis is guided by existing theoretical insights into political fringe groups as well as so-called ‘uncivil society’ as well as social capital theory, social network theory as well as social movement theory in Central and Eastern Europe.

Finally, in the conclusion both the theoretical framework and the analysis will be synthesized, giving an answer to how the existence of cleavages within the Radical Left has led to the creation of the national-anarchist movement. Additionally, an answer will be provided to which extent this case-study exemplifies the division within the Ukrainian society as a whole, plus shedding light on the complexity of personal connections within these groups.

## **(2) Theoretical framework**

This dissertation draws from multiple theories from the field of social network, social capital theory, social movement theory as well as civil society and theory on uncivil society. All theories will help to contextualize the acquired empirical data from the field research while simultaneously providing a unique case-study on the understudied phenomena of the Ukrainian Radical Left. The chapter will proceed with a short summary of the existing research thus far and then delve into the main theories utilized for positioning the research into the wider academic debate. The goal of the research is to explore processes described by these theories empirically collecting primary data. The theories outlined in the upcoming section were highly relevant in conceptualizing and operationalizing the research questions that consecutively have guided the field research. Ultimately the overarching framework provided by theories will form the backbone of the conclusion in which the data acquired during the field research will be synthesized with it.

Before delving into the theories employed within this thesis a short recap of the existing literature on the topic is adequate. The topic of the Ukrainian radical left, in stark contrast to the Ukrainian radical right, flaunts only a small amount of publications published mostly by Ukrainian scholar Volodymyr Ishchenko. One of the bigger publications from 2015 titled: 'The Ukrainian new left and student protests. A thorny way to hegemony' dealt with the rise of the Anarchist-Marxist student union 'Direct Action' tracing back their mobilization pattern during their 2010 protests which had involved more than 10.000 students. In the article Ishchenko argues how in the beginning, Direct Action was able to capitalize on its strong left ideology using the concept of Gramsci's cultural hegemony (Ishchenko, 2015). Other articles of Ishchenko deal with the totality of the Ukrainian Radical Left in which groups are sparsely named and elaborated upon. Another group explicitly named by Ishchenko is the Anarchist-Communist Syndicate called the Autonomous Workers Union. He shortly mentions how on Euromaidan a group leftist united under the banner of a 'black sotniak' but shortly after was forced by far-right groups to leave Maidan (Ishchenko, 2016). Research carried out by Emily Chanell-Justice which dealt with the part of the Ukrainian left during the Euromaidan protests tells a similar story. In her dissertation, she describes how the protests were shaped from the perspective of left-wing groups and also finishes with the group's withdrawal from Independence Square (Chanell-Justice, 2016). Since the year 2016, one could constitute that research on the Ukrainian Radical Left overall slowed down significantly.

Even though the main contribution of this research will be empirical in nature, the aim is to contribute to literature within the Central and Eastern European region, in particular pertaining to the discussion surrounding civil society or rather ‘uncivil society’. For that it will be necessary to outline exactly which type of civil society the contribution will be aimed at. The other theory that informs the formation of the research questions and overall outcome will be social capital theory which will be tied in closely into social network theory. By delving in depth about these groups’ social relations between one another insights can be acquired about their overall capacities to mobilize and overall size and ultimately help assess the risks they pose to the state.

As Volodymyr Ishchenko pointed out in his article on ‘Fighting Fences vs Fighting Monuments: Politics of Memory and Protest Mobilization in Ukraine’ traditional research into contentious politics within Ukraine have been exclusively focused on these three types (1) Survey-based data on people’s willingness to participate in protest events (2) In-depth research of single event cases such as the Orange Revolution or (3) monitoring of events such as xenophobic or antisemitic events (Ishchenko, 2011 p.371). Moreover, Ishchenko points out that much of the literature dealing with Ukraine’s social movements and civil society characterizes the later as extremely weak (Howard, 2003). The reasoning for this assumption being made will be later elaborated upon more in detail within the section on the six different types of civil society applicable to the CEE and Eastern European region. Both Ishchenko and Kopecký & Mudde, argue that this is a methodological fallacy stemming mostly from the fact that conventional data sets such as the World Values Surveys (1995-1997) mostly aim at measuring institutionalized, formalized civil society organizations while disregarding the more common bottom-up, grassroots protest initiatives overall more common within Ukraine (Ishchenko, 2011 p. 373). This split between ‘non-institutionalized civil society’ continues to be of relevance in contemporary Ukraine, due to the fact that political fringe groups in Central and Eastern Europe exhibit different mobilization patterns and operate in the sphere of informality. Often tightly knit personal connection and social networks, they tend to be disregarded while they due to the fact that political fringe groups in Central and Eastern Europe exhibit different mobilization patterns and operate in the sphere of informality (Minkenberg, 2002); (Minkenberg, 2016). Often tightly knit personal connection and social networks tend to be disregarded while they give valuable insights into the size and scope as well as strength of anti-systemic oppositional movements such as the Radical Left.

According to Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, most academics agree that ‘civil society’ refers to uncoerced associational life distinct from the family and institutions of the

state.’ (Chambers & Kopstein, 2009 p. 359). While there is some dispute between liberals and libertarians on whether or not to include markets in this definition, one can say that most researchers focus lies on civil societies’ associational qualities which they conceptualize as a distinct sphere ‘distinct but in a special relationship with the state’ (ibid.). While some scholars include the market such as Gellner (1994) and White (1994), others ‘proposed narrower definitions’ such as to include the following-up to ‘liberal democratic principles’ (Howard, 2003 p. 41 in Celichowski, 2004). Applying strong normative standards to the concept of civil society Schmitter goes as far as to only include groups that ‘agree to act within pre-established rules of ‘civil’ or ‘legal’ nature (Schmitter, 1995 p. 4/5 in Celichowski, 2004). Within the literature this a normative stance on civil society as inherently good is taken (Celichowski, 2004). Changes within the focus of scholars studying civil society mostly center around different relationships between the state and the realm of civil society (ibid.). Chambers & Kopstein outline six major approaches within the literature.

- (1) civil society apart from the state
- (2) civil society against the state
- (3) civil society in support of the state
- (4) civil society in dialogue with the state
- (5) civil society in partnership with the state
- (6) civil society beyond the state

The two areas where this thesis aims to make its contribution are in the domain of (2) civil society against the state and (4) civil society in support of the state. Traditional literature within CS against the state within the Central and Eastern European region highlights the existence of ‘anti-politics’, describing small enclaves in which everyday citizens were able to establish their own political agency within a totalitarian system. By studying national-anarchist groups through field research I aim to give insights into how they themselves view themselves vis-a-vis the state (ibid.). Conclusively the strength of CS ultimately is viewed as the driving force behind the Soviet communist system’s collapse, which is then conclusively transferred into the argument of

a strong CS against the state (Kenney, 2002). Multiple scholars have questioned the direct link between the strength of CS in the region with the overthrow of communism as have they critiqued the assumption of its alleged weakness ever since the Soviet Union's demise (ibid.). Overall the question arising from this stream of thought is whether contentious civil society is good or bad for the state of democracy questioning the assumption of inherent 'positivity of CS'. In the article 'Civil Society and the Weimar Republic' scholar Sheri Berman convincingly argues that in the case of the Weimar Republic, an active flourishing civil society had a direct facilitating effect on the successful rise of the Nazis and actually contributed to the demise of the Weimar Republic (Berman, 1997). Arguing that a strong civil society could pose an imminent threat to political institutions, particularly in states where these are traditionally weak, other scholars such as Pereira, Maravall, and Przeworski add that political expressions such as protests, and street actions could additionally weaken political stability (1993). The crux of protests such as this is dependent on the level to which they are institutionalized within the given democratic system. Arguing that in functioning democracies 'anti-democratic' ideologies are consolidated, in the Ukrainian case one could pose a question as to whether how this exact process progresses (Ekiert and Kubik, 1999).

The case of the Ukrainian political system is particularly interesting as one could argue that the political institutionalism is weak due to a lack of trust in the political authorities (Tiffin, 2006); (D'Anieri, 2015); (D'Anieri, 2018). Here, the fourth dimension of CS, civil society in dialogue with the state, becomes relevant, arguing that:

'The crucial difference between good and bad civil society is that the former fosters and the latter destroys one essential value for the stability and quality of democracy: the value of reciprocity. Reciprocity involves the recognition of other citizens, even those with whom one has deep disagreement, as moral agents deserving civility. Bad civil society challenges this value through the promotion of hate, bigotry, and the negative empathy inherent in such acts as ethnic cleansing and spectacles of civic violence' (Chambers & Kopstein, 2009 p. 373).

Moreover, so long as 'uncivil society' can offer its members strong networks of trust and cooperation as well as belonging, they will continue to attract members (Kopstein & Hanson, 1998). In the case of the Ukrainian radical left this holds truth as well, as often the political ideals of the group are internalized by its members. As Kopstein and Hanson (1998) point out,

even in stable democracies civic association can cause issues, which motivated them to pose the question of whether their dissolution should be strived for. As this research will highlight the density and activity patterns of the Ukrainian Radical Left it will additionally provide insights into their potential to act in support as in direct opposition to the current political system. It will be the aim of the analytical chapter to highlight the domains in which cooperation with the authorities is sought and its successes as well as the areas in which their self-understanding and political goal setting could interfere with state institutions.

Using social network analysis in the cadre of this research means highlighting the utility of social networks from a position of social interactionism (Torsello & Pappova, 2003). In order to have a better grasp of social progress, dynamics within societies should be studied. As the authors Torsello & Pappova argue, the postmodernist turn in anthropology resulted in a loss of studying systematic patronage relations, strong interpersonal coalitions, as well as conflict within groups' so-called factionalism (Mascia-Lees, Sharp & Cohen, 1989). They argue that a fictional division was created between groups that organize via patronage systems and then other groups who engage in more 'virtuous' ways without making use of highly personalized. And while this artificial divide has been strongly criticized by anthropologists from the feminist tradition often within non-western cultural contexts, ethnocentric notions of formality and informality, private and public as well as on the level of the individual and the collective are rarely addressed in Europe's periphery and in particular Eastern Europe (Torsello & Pappova, 2003). Agreeing with the author, I would argue that in the case of Ukraine, studying highly personalized coalitions and factionalism provides us with essential insights. And while the iconoclast of critical self-evaluation in the discipline has led to a rapid change of terminology, we have been left with other academic buzzwords such as *civil society*, *trust*, *social capital*, *citizenship* and *good governance* which bring strong normative assumptions and demand continuous empirical verification (Torsello & Pappova, 2003 p:13). Therefore, in order to do justice to Ukraine's social context of political transformation, I believe a Social Network analysis will be essential in verifying and giving insight into the theoretical assumptions with which concepts such as civil society are loaded (ibid).

One meta theory frequently used in the context of post-Soviet transitional countries such as Ukraine is social capital theory (Polese, 2009), (Aberg, 2000), (Round & Williams, 2010). At its core, social capital theory is about investments into social networks, which are seen as vital in decreasing personal risks and are assumed to help with a wide array of factors, such as improving health, facilitating economic growth, and improving political stability by creating

trust (Torsello & Pappova, 2003.). This relationship of reciprocity in-between actors within societies or even on a more micro-scale within a political community is frequently portrayed as an all positive win-win situation for all actors involved, while social capital can be understood as essential for democracy-building (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 248); (Cox, 2014). And while social capital is about networking or ‘social investment with expected returns in which individuals engage in interaction in order to produce profits’ (Lin 2001:6), one could argue that this view of social capital, in which actors are seen as embedded in economic markets, is highly instrumental in assuming human behavior following strict rational-choice patterns (ibid.). Arguing that political communities might have different drivers that lead them to cooperate internally and with other international networks will help challenge an instrumentalist position by empirical means.

This is particularly so because traditional social capital theory formulated by Putnam assumes a relationship between social capital and the facilitation of economic exchange, while the mechanism causing the improvement are empirically hard to lay hands on. While traditional social capital focuses on so-called ‘bridging social capital’, the bringing together of different groups in society to improve civic participation and seen as essential for democracy-building, it draws a dichotomy with ‘bonding social capital’. The latter is defined as closed communities based on kinship or other patronage relationships; this type of social capital is mostly viewed to be detrimental to democracy-building as it is mostly associated with corruption and nepotism which scholars argue derives from the particularistic nature of its social relations (Cox, 2014). Although one could assume that both types of social capital might co-exist, a dichotomous perception prevails in sociological literature. Again, it is the aim of this research to shed light on the real existing empirical situation in which political communities engage with other actors in society without making a normative assumption of one type of social capital being more effective than the other.

While trust in formal institutions is traditionally low in Eastern European countries such as Ukraine, much problem-solving is carried out within people’s social networks demanding a stronger cultural theory-based approach while studying them (Mishler & Roose, 2001); (Cox, 2014); (Polese, 2001). Being key in decreasing risks for individuals, social networks shape economic and political development. The real question thus lies in understanding the relation between social networks, civil society and civic participation. Having an overview of the network and groups the movements engages with provides an insight into not only their abilities to mobilize but also their overall strength. From evaluating their internal ties with one another as well as the quality of these relations, a conclusion can be drawn regarding the risks they pose to the status quo as well as contribute to an understanding of the social movement’s political goals

from an emic perspective. At this point, a reference to the inclusion of group identity as crucial to this research must be made. Internal cohesion of political communities is not only facilitated by the social networks they are composed out of, but also the cultural context in which they originate. The political movement I intend to study represent their own set of norms and values that are derived from the cultural context and pressures in which they operate (Klandermans, 1995). While one could argue that culture is not only an over-arching social system, it needs to be studied as an essential core characteristic and driving principle to groups on the micro and interactional level (Fine, 1995).

Within social theory the ‘cultural turn’ carved out the relevance of culture in giving meaning to everyday life (Chaney, 1994). Deriving from statement all social life and relations should thereby be seen ‘as potentially political’ as all form ‘contestation of relations of power’ (Nash, 2001, p. 77). Cultural politics and therefore also the role of civil society became relevant to social movement theorists due to the fact that the interrelation of social identities and the formation of collective identity of groups can contextualize ‘dominant understandings of events and institutions’ therefore forming a background to oppositional activities (Melucci 1998 in Nash, 2001, p. 86). Nash argues that in much of social movement theory, the cultural politics that groups engage in are viewed as only a means to an end and ‘as preliminary to the participation in genuine politics’ (Nash, 2001 p. 86). Giving the example of the women’s movement for cultural politics, Nash outlines that for many theorists within social movement theory, even though they acknowledge the state in the formation of social movements, argue societal change can only be viable through the contestation of power (Nash, 2001); (Tarrow, 1998). Therefore, cultural politics can be defined as:

‘as potential in every social context in which power is at work, involving the contestation of normalised identities and social relations in which one individual or group is subordinate to another wherever they occur in the social field’ (Nash, 2001 p. 87).

In order to establish themselves as a credible actor in the political arena, political communities instrumentalize group narratives to engage in such cultural politics. These narratives are essential as they are internally shared and recognized by the individual members and are foundational in the establishment of collective identity (Klandermans, 1995). Some of these groups’ ‘narratives’ in this research draw on a particular interpretation of history. Utilizing historical figures for one’s own political agenda. Using culture as an analytical ‘toolkit’, one aims to ultimately create meaning and interaction, and through it understand the structure of the community itself (Ann Swidler cited in Johnston & Klandermans, 1995). As culture depends on shared identity, the

group must rely on shared rituals, resources and political ideology in order to create a ‘cultural community’, as Shils argues:

‘Without commitment, the group cannot hope to transform its circumstances with a view to eliminating or isolating relationships incompatible with the one deemed to be ideologically sound (1976: 154)’.

The rituals observed in the cadre of this research are therefore manifestations of political ideology, namely public protest or other events in which the members of the community demonstrate their loyalty to each other in the public space (ibid.). Sharing resources with each other demonstrates how ideology incorporates symbolism, necessary to reframe demands into cultural images and metaphors which are then staged publicly. Communities’ means of communication rely on a consensual authority system that deviates from each other depending on ideological perceptions of egalitarianism. However, overall internal organization regularly follows patterns of adherents (members) and movement entrepreneurs (elite) who take a lead in formulating key conditions for the group (ibid.). In the case of political fringe groups such as my case-study, communities are often forced to operate isolated and are surveyed by government elites (ibid.). Retracting into so-called ‘free social spaces’ is essential for these groups as they need a physical space to cultivate their practices and values (ibid.).

This physical space frequently can be mapped out in global networks of activism. Anderson describes in his book ‘The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination’ how historically anti-colonial movements as well as anarchist groups have engaged in what he calls ‘political astronomy’ (Anderson, 2013). His historical research of these movements demonstrates how the first stage of globalization has seen a vast exchange of information among empowered thinkers in what was then seen as ‘remote areas’ of the world. While demonstrating how these thinkers were connected in vast international networks, it too demonstrates how anarchist activism historically has been a gravitational force and the flip-side to emerging militant nationalism throughout Europe (ibid.). The example Anderson gives of leading anarchists being self-taught bilingual/multilingual in order to exchange information is a convincing example for transnational linkages that have existed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century within anarchist communities around the world (ibid.).

Having discussed the concepts of social capital and the importance of social networks and culture for the formation of collective identity one needs to elaborate on the implications this has for the evaluation of civil society. As mentioned previously, social networks are an essential unit of analysis for social capital, which is assumed to facilitate democratic consolidation. Since the

main research question refers to the role and impact these groups have in their respective political landscape, one conclusively needs to touch upon the role of civil society. This is assumed by Putnam in his classic theory that in order for civil society groups to be successful, they should not politicize or polarize topics within the societies in which they operate. However, one should strongly question whether any societal actor can be effective in civic engagement without pushing a specific political message or representing certain social interests (Foley and Edwards, 1996, p.4). In the case of Ukraine, groups are clearly identified as political fringe groups that often utilize violent means to bring across their political message. However, as the utility of studying political fringe groups is often questioned, I will continue with an elaboration on why the opposite is true. Cas Mudde and Petr Kopecký's analysis of civil and uncivil society outlines how the concept of civil society has inherent normative biases. As they convincingly make the point that civil society is generally seen as positive, what is meant by the term remains merely heuristic. A finding that is also supported by works of Sheri Berman as well as Jerzy Celichowski. Although civil society is often assumed as having a direct impact on democracy-building, one should rather study the nature of the relationship between organizations and movements rather than assume it. This misconception leads the authors to believe that including so-called 'uncivil society' in studies on civil society is vital as their public expressions and self-organization are as much a sign of a functioning democratic discourse than mainstream political groups (Kopecký & Mudde, 2003).

The authors argue that historically the Eastern European region has been associated with anti-Soviet dissidence fighting an oppressive totalitarian system. However, ever since the collapse of the USSR this view of activism against totalitarianism does not hold true as the political systems of the regions have been increasingly modelled after western democracies (ibid.). Nevertheless, this does not prevent scholars of mostly western governance and political science to overdraw the pro-democratic effects of civil society on a given system and associating liberal opposition in similar ways than previous anti-Soviet dissidence. This tendency of overlooking political fringe groups leads to ethno-nationalist movements, anti-liberal and anti-democratic movements being excluded when studying civil society in the region. It is often argued that fringe groups lack basic 'civility', using violent means to pursue political goals which justify their exclusion. What remains inherently problematic, however, is the assumption that civil society can only be a 'good' or 'civil' expression within a given society and frequently is derived from western-centric models (ibid.). The reason this is problematic is because civil society groups, modelled after western notions of how they should function and operate, regularly are perceived by the local population as elite driven, detached from their living realities and society and suspected to 'be bought' by Western donors. 'Uncivil society' on the other hand

often is seen as ‘true social movements’, gaining grass-root support and being composed out of advocacy networks that push contentious politics. The problem with this binary is that it does not reflect realities on the ground but mere speculations about how these groups operate. Also problematic is how NGOs with western attachments often reflect ‘a new global professional middle class rather than oppressed groups’, rather than progressive social movements in the country of origin which contribute to their perception as ‘foreign’ (Kopecký & Mudde 2003, p: 6). Traditional definitions of Civil Society state that civil society is: ‘everything operating between the state, the household, the family and economic production’ while simultaneously stipulating civil society to be independent from the state (ibid.). That this remains problematic and muddy has to do with the fact that many of these dimensions overlap as becomes clear in many examples wherein political parties are not financially independent (ibid.).

Which brings us to another essential critique: while traditional civil society groups are only interpreted as legitimate if they are within the realm of the political mainstream, they also are evaluated on the basis of organizational density and the need to fulfill core criteria on being long-established. This causes problems when analyzing contentious politics and fringe groups engaged in political protest as they are often young and dynamic groups with non-hierarchical structures of self-organization, or at least do not follow the classical patterns of what a civil society group should look like in theorists’ minds.

On top of this, we face another challenge. In the traditional academic discourse, civil society groups that are against the state are assumed to integrate into the state when being successful. This, however, remains problematic as these groups are not homogenous but heterogeneous, able to mobilize independently from one another. This can lead to groups mobilizing in line with the state or against it, while allegiances can change abruptly and are not path-dependent (ibid.). Another challenge that needs to be addressed is that political fringe groups are dismissed as credible actors on the basis of posing a challenge to the ‘rules of the game’ while, as mentioned before, the latter expression should be interpreted as the only voice citizens have that allows them to interact with their local elites (ibid.). Excluding them from the political arena by dismissing their political views makes it incredibly hard to understand Ukraine’s political landscape as we would override the diversity of actors and opinions in a political system in transformation.

In conclusion, the social capital that political communities such as anarchist groups and far-right groups possess openly challenges the notion that civil society groups are inherently ‘good’ or ‘civil’. Dismissing them from the political arena is equally dangerous as they do represent voices and opinions of citizens that seek to engage with their political superiors. While civil society groups are rarely heterogeneous or necessarily foster democratic consolidation in a

given country, there is an increasing need to understand why they feel it necessary to polarize society. Contentious politics as a source of social capital in Ukraine can therefore only be researched properly when including ‘uncivil society’, which is the goal of this explorative research.

While the concept of ‘uncivil society’ has some utility for the understanding of political fringe groups in the Ukrainian context, social movement theory provides guidelines for understanding the formation, motivation as well as active engagement of these groups. From the 1960’s onward researchers have published extensively on the matter, leading to a plethora of definitions and approaches. According to one definition developed by McCarthy and Zaid, Ukrainian anarchists would fit under the definition stating:

‘Social movements are voluntary collectives that people support in order to effect changes in society. Using the broadest and most inclusive definition, a social movement includes all who in any form support the general ideas of the movement. Social movements contain social movement organization, the carrier organizations that consciously attempt to coordinate and mobilize supporters’ (1977b, p. 2).

Their definition includes the following three factors that are synonymous with many other definitions on social movements existing such as 1) their strive for positive social change 2) mobilization via organizational means and 3) their focus on collective action (McCarthy & Zaid, 1977). Similar definitions such as by Opp (2009) highlight yet another element crucial to the definition of social movements. Arguing that social movements are inherently interwoven with the concept of ‘protests’ as well as operating within an irregular sphere, often engaging in unconventional forms of civil action.

While there is no universally acceptable definition of social movements there have been attempts to help classify the sheer variety of social movements. Movements are categorized according to the level of activism they exemplify and the overall typology that they adhere to (Fitzgerald & Rodgers, 2000). Their classification based on characteristics such as ideology, tactics, communication strategy as well as internal structures of social movements is used to assess whether they are a radical social movement or moderate (See figure 1)

	<b>Moderate SMO</b>	<b>Radical SMO</b>
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<b>Internal Structure</b>	Hierarchical leadership; formal bureaucratic organization; development of large membership base for resource generation	Nonhierarchical leadership; participatory democratic organization; egalitarian; “membership” based upon involvement; support indigenous leadership
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Summarizing this chapter, it can be said that groups operating within the sphere of the Ukrainian Radical Left within Ukraine can both be conceptualized within the literature on ‘uncivil society’ as well as a radical social movement. In order to gain comprehensive knowledge on those groups internal dynamics and political actions and strategy, social capital theory and social network theory has been utilized. While conceptualizing the research questions as well as during the creation of the interview-guide an approach was ascribed that bridges micro, meso and macro levels of analysis. While all of the above theoretical strands have provided an overarching framework for the empirical analysis, it needs to be stressed that the uniqueness of the acquired data by itself sheds light on the processes occurring within political fringe groups. The empirical data collected will potentially validate theories about the functioning of political fringe groups within the CEE and Eastern European Region. The later is to be seen as the key contribution of this thesis

### **(3) Methodology**

Ethnography as method employed within the discipline of Cultural Anthropology seeks to gain insights into 'native's point of view' within a given culture, also described as 'emic perspective' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). By attempting to understand a culture from the 'inside out'; ethnographers seek to construct meaning through the eyes of the people they study. In order not to apply own biases onto the research, strict conceptual and theoretical frameworks are avoided in the initial phase of the research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This is due to the fact, that approaching the field with preconceived notions of what one will find could potentially cloud the researcher's vision regarding the contextual and distinctive nature of the phenomenon one seeks to study (ibid.). It is the aim of ethnographic methodology to avoid any 'etic perceptions' meaning the applied experience and bias of the researcher itself which is often informed by theoretical conceptions (ibid.). Main strengths of this research methods is the focus on discovery-based research as well as induction that prioritizes 'local interpretations of events and actions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008); (Geertz, 1973). In this study all the advantages of ethnographic methodology will be directed at studying the Ukrainian case. Even though ethnography was invented as an instrument of academic inquiry studying non-western societies, it later reformed itself. From its origin as a discipline as an instrument of colonization practices, one has to constitute that ethnographies, as much of academic literature, have been written by specific people, for specific purposes and reflecting on particular historical periods. Meaning that their methods themselves are not free of bias and aims to be aware of its limitations (Gobo, 2008).

Ethnography aims to outline the origins of our human knowledge production which comes from an interaction of our five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. To understand how a certain individual in a group sees the world is therefore highly linked to their cognitive processes. For us as researchers that means we are interested in observing these processes. Because even though listening is essential, we often realize that actor's behaviour and given reasoning's are often not congruent (ibid.). Participant Observation aims to bridge this gap, by prioritizing what we see to what we hear. To do so we need to immerse ourselves as researchers into our research population while simultaneously be able to engage in scientific research (ibid.).

To think about methodology in social sciences one can say that a methodology can be defined as a 'global style of thinking', 'a general approach to studying research topics' or 'an overall research strategy' (Silverman and Mason cited in Gobo, 2008). In conceptualizing

methodology, I find two points particularly relevant for my chosen approach: pivotal cognitive modes, or the way knowledge can be acquired (listening, watching, observing etc.), as well as the theory of scientific knowledge that will be used. Within the theory of scientific knowledge, sets of pre-assumptions about the nature of a phenomena and the role of the researcher, among others, a range of solutions, devices to tackle the problem and systematic sequence of doing so are examined and questioned. Regarding the cognitive modes my focus will be listening (Discursive or in-depth-interviews) and on observing (Ethnography). Regarding the theories of scientific knowledge, I will base my research on a social constructivist perspective like that of Glaserfeld & Strauss. Adopting such a perspective has consequences on the outcomes that I wish to produce. I am not interested in finding natural or solid laws but instead in the pure investigation of a phenomena.

My aim is therefore to sketch a snapshot of a community which will help gain a better understanding into its internal mechanisms. In this specific research context, the idea is to show the self-understanding of these groups and how this self-understanding affects their relationship with not only the Ukrainian state but also Ukrainian society as a whole. My role as a researcher is that of an active participant in these communities. While social realities are actively created by the reinforcement of social constructs, this means that neither me as a researcher nor my objects of study, are able to achieve complete distance or objectivity in our assessments. Therefore, I adopt a position within methodological situationism which aims to synthesize subjectivists views with objectivists approaches. To do so it is vital for me as a researcher to reflect on my own biases and limitations as well as being extremely transparent in my data collection.

As the research design, I opted for is very much aligned with ethnographic research methods, a definite hypothesis has not been formulated. Rather during the course of the research, it will be necessary to re-adjust the focus to see whether the phenomena observed matches the previously formulated research questions. As political, ethical or social problems might emerge, the research design I have crafted is able to muster the necessary flexibility to deal with these challenges (ibid.). Overall, I believe that such an openness is an advantage over more rigid research designs that tend to ‘bend’ a topic towards the method rather than vice versa (Gobo 2008, p. 75). As conceptualization of the phenomena, the operational definition and the choice of the sample one uses are often interwoven with one, the decision to limit the research focus is usually taken in the field (ibid.). Regarding the role of reflexivity on the side of the researcher, meaning myself, the quote by Clifford Geertz is fitting:

“I have never been impressed by the argument that, as complete objectivity is impossible in these matters (as, of course it is), one might as well let one’s sentiments run loose. As Robert Solow, has

remarked that is like that as a perfectly aseptic environment is impossible, one might as well conduct surgery in a sewer (Solow cited in Gobo 2008, p.77).”

Therefore, one of the tools that one should use in order to avoid easily avoidable errors is a clearly crafted conceptualization. Because entering the field demands a previous reflection on possible conceptualizations of the topic, it makes it easier to link these with the attributes represented by the various sub-categories. As in the example of my research design, I am using my three sub-questions to each address one aspect or attribute which are related to my main conceptual topics. This is a necessary step as I am aiming to physically conduct fieldwork where I will document empirically observable events and aspects (Gobo, 2008 p. 80). Having a theoretical cadre helps to relate one’s own empirical findings to already studied theory as they help reveal patterns and schemas within social groups (ibid.). As making sense of events and behavioral patterns that we observe is the main priority of ethnographical methods, one needs to understand the relationship between both. That means the researcher needs to be able to link their interpretation to social actors and their behavior. The respective outcome of this relationship is called operationalization (ibid.). As it comes forward from my research design, I am aiming to create my own operationalizations.

As within much of qualitative research variables are often called indicators, the purpose remains the same. (Annex 1.0). Figure 1.0 below depicts the ethnographic research model. It is most likely to be compared to the research chain discussed, with small exceptions. As it is composed to suit the needs of field research the outline itself addresses a need for being reiterative. Meaning, that the nature of research design is best to be depicted as an upward spiral in which the process of writing goes through the phases of deconstruction, construction and confirmation. During this reflexive process, concepts, hypotheses and indicators can change (Gobo, 2008 p. 86). Having a pre-formulated research question, my research process will follow a similar process. For my research, it is necessary to match the empirical indicators that I have collected during the field research period with the pre-constructed concepts. The operationalization derived from this process will be of extreme importance as it determines how disputable my results will be (ibid.).

### **(3.1) Limitations of Study**

One of the main limitations during the field work period was the inability of the researcher to conduct interviews in Ukrainian or Russian. Even though English was the primary language for the research, there are linguistic and cultural pitfalls that can arise when a too narrow translation of concepts is used and in case the researcher is not fully familiar with the cultural context. The language barrier impacted the field research period in so far as it was more difficult to sample respondents that were not already belonging to a very small, highly educated and well-travelled elite.

While creating the interview guide but also during the field work period it became clear that concepts were not necessarily clear to respondents. This is why if possible the researcher relied on an 'emic' explanation of the concept by the respondent his or herself. In order to prevent the researcher's own cultural bias to be applied to mentioned concepts most transcripts and interviews were checked for linguistic and cultural biases by a fellow Ukrainian researcher. Based on his/her advice a translation of concepts for the interview-guide, as well as when I will do a data analysis were created. Through this process of triangulation, it was aimed to minimize linguistic and cultural misinterpretations.

In regards to gaining access to the field, the initial entry period turned out to be harder than expected. The response rate through Facebook and other social media channels was less than 5% and often respondents turned out unresponsive even after multiple messaging approaches. Even though the researcher has had existing contacts to one larger Lviv based group, it took over four months to enter the field properly. After the first contacts were created, the sampling of respondents followed organically via snowball sampling. Another factor that affected the breakthrough in access to the field was the enlarged social network of the researcher herself. It was possible to snowball respondents from varying organizations and groups as well as geographical locations after about five months into the field research.

Due to most groups' interlinkages with one another and the fluidity of affiliation within the Ukrainian anarchist and 'New Radical Left' the process of approaching respondents consecutively became easier. Mostly activists referred me to other friends of theirs from other collectives, providing phone numbers or Facebook, Viber or Telegram contacts. Telegram turned out to be the most reliable social media for approaching new potential respondents. Ultimately what turned out to be the most successful in approaching respondents was approaching them via shared circles of friends. As within Ukrainian culture a high emphasis is laid on personal connections and those often exist in a zone of informality, having access via 'so-called brokers' turned out to be highly effective. Therefore, the challenging access into the field was solved via

interpersonal skills and a deeper immersion into the field by the researcher herself.

Regarding the ethical dimension of the research, multiple precautions when approaching my respondents were kept. At all times, it was a priority to guard their privacy. My positionality as a foreign researcher affects the ability to which I am able to utilize and enter the field and overall meant a stronger dependency on my informers. Meaning there was time investment in order to generate trust, and ensure and guarantee the protections of the information obtained. For that I am intending to use the Consent Form in which my participants can indicate themselves if they want to be referred to by name or pseudonym. As I am also intending to carry out a Social Network Analysis, I will include the approval for this particular method in both the Consent Form as well as the Participant Information Sheet.

Particularly in this region research on the topic can be burdensome due to a variety of reasons: (1) respondents are hesitant talking about personal or politically sensitive topics or in the case of increasing radicalness of the group (2) be suspicious of the aim of the research, researcher in question or academic institution (3) respondents don't openly identify as part of a collective, group or social movement. Given the negative historical connotations of the ideology of anarchism in Central and Eastern Europe due to the legacy of the Soviet Union, one could expect these difficulties to occur when researching the Ukrainian 'New Radical Left' as well as anarchist's movements. It lies therefore with the researcher to overcome these obstacles by carefully selecting research methods as well as showing empathy in the research process.

The following sub-chapter gives an outline of the choices made by the researcher. The first section will reveal the choices for the group of respondents and different methods used by the researcher to approach individuals and groups within the movement in order to find participants.

### **(3.2) Data sources and methods**

I have relied on the following techniques to answer my main research questions and subsequent sub-questions:

1. Participatory Observation (PO)
2. Semi-open Interviews
3. Participatory Appraisal techniques (PA) Social Network Analysis

In order to address both all three sub-questions I have relied on extensive Participant Observation in the respective community. By being part of the groups social surrounding, I have gained insights into activist's actual behaviour vs. how they portray themselves. The acquisition of this knowledge was particularly relevant for addressing sub-question 1 and 3. The relevance of the semi-structured interviews for answering my main research question in combination with the Participant Observation was extremely high. It is a strength of method triangulation that I was able to observe certain deviations from the factually observed data from the PO with the what has been said in the interviews. Additionally, while addressing sub-question 3, I relied on Social Network Analysis as my Participatory Appraisal Technique (PA). For this method, I asked my respondents to elaborate on their social networks by letting them map it out themselves. Discussing their conceptualization of their networks helped me clarifying individual as well as collective relationships between collectives in Ukraine. The Social Network Analysis together with the outcome of the other two techniques helped to ultimately give an answer to my final research question. Throughout the research I made use of methodological, theoretical and observational notes in order to be more accountable and transparent in my data collection.

Overall, access to the full data set created via Atlas.ti via Harvard Data verse:

<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/8GXPMS>

### **(3.3) Sample description**

While a randomized selection of individuals for the study group would be the preferred *modus operandi* and generally achieve a higher representation of the study population, many qualitative studies rely on purposive sampling or so-called ‘snowball-sampling’. This type of sampling leads the researcher to select informants and individuals from the study population that exhibit certain specific characteristics which will lead to more in-depth exploration of the central themes of the research puzzle one seeks to identify (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

As previous chapters have highlighted within anarchist communities as well as within the broader category of left-wing social movements it remains difficult to draw strong conceptual lines. This means that the researcher is left to decide how to assess whether the respondents exhibits the characteristics which is needed for the studying of the research population. Self-declared self-identification is a strong valuable as an indicator for assessing the utility of a respondent. Whether the respondent exhibits certain characteristics that can be correlated to anarchist styles of activism, is a choice that finally the researcher needs to make. Whether to include certain activists or exclude others are therefore based on whether they contribute the research puzzle posed by the researcher.

Because this is a privacy sensitive topic, I depended on informants to bring me in contact with other members of the collective. Moreover, some of the participants have been involved in political actions on the edge of legality, which forces me not only to protect their privacy by leaving out their names but also to handle discretion during the whole research period.

As far as politics of accountability are concerned, questions can be raised concerning the degree of which the researcher’s interpretations and the phenomena align. To address the latter, it depends on the researcher’s ability to be accountable in his research. The credibility would therefore be judged by the audience separately. Regarding reliability, the concern usually lies with the measurement instrument, meaning the researcher him/herself (Gobo, 2008 p. 262). One strategy employed by ethnographers to tackle this issue is data triangulation. Using different methodology helps comparing data and spotting inconsistencies (ibid.). This is the reason that, in my own research, I decided to make use of three different methods for data collection.

### **(3.4) Study population(s)**

Approaching my previously formulated research questions, the researcher's priorities for the selections of respondents was based on the following criterion: the respondent had to be affiliated with an anarchist group and or another group, collective or organization that belongs to the umbrella of the 'New Radical Left'. During my field research my forebodings materialized as indeed matters of self-identification were complex. Within the pool of Ukrainian anarchists, I experienced how not all activists would self-identify as anarchist or belonging to a specific collective/group or organization (1). Often the lines between anarchist groups, loose congregations of individuals belonging to the 'New Radical Left' such as socialists, self-declared Trotskyists and Marxist were extremely blurry. (2). In the end, I kept to a very loosely defined definition of anarchists and included other members belonging to the Ukrainian radical left. I based my judgement on (1) them ascribing to the label of political activist (2) their partiality to full self-identification (3) some sort of affiliation to the collective/group/organization politically congruent with anarchist values. While some were more affiliated with more formalized political organizations or even parties, others were operating within collectives organized along DIY-principles. Most respondents (95%) self-identified as political activists while a smaller group (5%) had left the movement or no longer felt affiliated with any active group/collective or organization. Regarding the geographical stratification of respondents, all respondents of this research were based in Kharkiv, Lviv, Vynnytsia or Kyiv at the time of the interview. All of them have Ukrainian citizenship, and around 80% of the interviews that were not conducted in English were in Russian. A smaller majority, mostly from respondents in Lviv and Vynnytsia were in Ukrainian. In total over 50% percent of the interviews were translated from Russian or Ukrainian, while the other half was conducted in English. Most of my respondents were highly educated, having university degrees from Ukrainian universities. Out of the eleven interviews conducted four were women within the movement and six were men. The age range was between 20 and 45 years of age. Many shared the common characteristic that they were already politically active before Maidan even though some of them were members of far-right groups/organizations or otherwise affiliated. Out of the eleven respondents, three were formerly connected to the far-right.

Due to the small sample size of the study population the actual representativeness of the opinions and information expressed by the individual activists has to be characterized as high. This is due to the groups strong interpersonal linkages and flow of information which guarantees that the individuals considered for this research represent the actual majority of the groups' opinion.

### **(3.5) Data process and coding**

Before the Participant Observation Sheets, Semi-open Interviews, Videos and Texts were transferred were analyzed the following procedure was followed. All interviews were translated from Ukrainian and Russian to English and verbatim transcribed. All interviews were recorded with the exception of one interview of 2 ½ hours that was lost due to a technological malfunction with a mobile phone. The researcher went back into the recording and transcribed word by word. In no cases the researcher relied only on notes. For the Participant Observation pictures and video recordings were made in order not to forget details. Additionally, the researcher kept a memo book during the Observation to work against cognitive biases of forgetting specific information. All respondents interviewed were asked for their verbal consent regarding the taping of information and the degree of anonymity that they preferred. It was additionally clarified which information should be used and which left out in case it discussed politically sensitive issues for the movement. The researcher adapted the transcripts according to readability and added content clarifying markers in case of details and processes remaining unclear. Due to the poor quality of many translations this was necessary in multiple interviews.

All data that was collected was merged into a project on the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti to undergo content analysis. This entailed the coding of two Participant Observation Sheets, 3 Articles about the movement, 1 video and 10 Interviews. In the first stage of coding often referred to as ‘open coding’ a free arrangement of categories is created. Then from this point more stages in the analysis are added as the abstraction level and group associations move up in hierarchy. In the case of this research a code book was used that was created based on the existing coding scheme by Klandermans and Mayer (Klandermans & Mayer, 2005). Even though the code book was originally invented to understand the motivations of people to join right-wing groups, the overarching structure of it was helpful in creating a similar coding tree for the research questions formulated. The main reason for using a code book was in order to work carefully with the endogenously created operationalization’s and making sure that they pertain to a real existing concept. To make the semantic relations as tight as possible, it was helpful to have a ‘double coding’ process. Meaning having pre-formulated categories and concepts that then get enriched by the original material endogenously. During the whole process the researcher made use of atlas.ti and created in total over 280 codes in 30 different categories. These categories were necessary in order to streamline the different code families and get an overview into interlinking concepts. The results are to be examined in the upcoming chapter.

### **(3.6) Credibility, transferability, trustworthiness and confirmability**

Regarding the credibility of the research, one could argue that a variety of precautions should be taken by the researcher to ensure that one measures what one intends to measure (Shenton, 2004). Among those steps is to make use of well-established methods within qualitative research on the topic of ‘uncivil society’, social networks and social movements. Among the most prominent techniques within ethnography are Participant Observation, Interviews, Participatory Appraisal Techniques as well as information obtained from informal conversations (Beuving, 2008). A second strategy employed is the familiarity of the researcher with the material due to an extensive literature review and preliminary sighting of information. Additionally, it helps if the researcher has familiarized herself with the existing context the field work is located within and the cultural context (Shenton, 2008). Verification of the extent to which respondents have answered honestly was attempted by offering informants total anonymity and the opportunity to re-read relevant passages within the transcript.

External validity or ‘transferability’, as it is often referred to within qualitative research, is ‘concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations’ (Shenton, 2004). While it is the aim of this research to understand how the phenomena of ‘National Anarchism’ originated from the prior existing cleavages with the Ukrainian Radical Left, it is necessary to rely on individual respondents’ account on how these cleavages came to be. Additionally, an analysis by members of ‘National Anarchist’ groups such as Autonomous Resistance, Black Committee and Avantgard on the shortcomings of the Ukrainian contemporary Radical Left and their approach of re-appropriation and self-marketing are based on highly subjective perceptions. While overall perceptions and motivations are difficult to generalize, these shortcomings are minimized by providing an extensive background into the respondent’s contexts as well as specifying the study population that was approached by the researcher. Through these measures the researcher seeks clarification for transferability.

Regarding the trustworthiness of the research, commonly referred to as dependability which pertains to the possibility of whether ‘if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained’ (Shenton, 2004). Similarly, in order to ensure credibility and transferability an extensive study of pre-existing literature was conducted helping to craft concepts that later would be used and operationalized. By having two additional translators and researchers familiar with the Ukrainian political context and culture look over the results of my analysis, the researcher aimed at additional triangulation with the aim of increasing trustworthiness. The researcher acknowledges

though that having a cultural native check the results in it and of itself does not in itself guarantee the credibility of results as as sometimes linguistic misunderstandings and other factors can weigh in. However, overall the researcher believes that the risk is decreased by cross verifying the results with another researcher familiar with the topic who isn't a cultural native. However, one constraint to the possibilities of replicating the research are the measurements taken by the researcher to ensure anonymity. A researcher invested in doing follow-up research would be unable to find the exact same study population as much of the access was due to personal connections and trust relationships that were created after heavy time investment. This pitfall has to be accepted however as the information generated weighs out the disadvantages.

The last category needed to be addressed is the confirmability of the given research, meaning whether there is a 'qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity' (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, it refers to the possibility of how the researcher's own unconscious or conscious bias has potentially affected the concepts crafted within the research. Limiting these biases through the usage of a code-book and by having a second opinion on coding schemes by additional researchers, it remains that it is impossible to rule out all types of error.

One bias that is present in this research is the language and cultural cognition bias of the researcher. While some interviews were recorded in English, most that were translated contained misunderstandings in some specific situations. Usually these miscommunications were addressed with the help of translators, but in some cases the thought was not entirely clear to the researcher. Due to the fact that the researcher did not grow up in Ukraine, some important groups or political parties, ideologies or intellectuals might have been misunderstood during the interview.

#### 4) Relevance of anarchism and left-wing social movements in Ukraine

Ukraine has a long and complex history with anarchism, having hosted one of the world's first and largest real existing anarchist project. The so-called 'free territory' from 1917-1922 also known as 'Makhnovia' (Махновщина) lived its short-lived existence during the Ukrainian civil war (Skirda, 2004). The territory established and named after its leader Nestor Makhno's and his Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army stretched from its center Huliaipole to modern-day Ukraine's Zaporizhia oblast. Hosting an army of 30.000 volunteers and located on a territory hosting 7 million people the 'free territory', it was organized along anarchist principles of self-organization, freedom of movement and press as well as being crafted from the bottom-up (ibid.). While mostly focusing on combating the Russian tsarist forces, the so-called 'Whites' employing guerrilla tactics, Makhno's Army joined the Bolsheviks for short-lived period of cooperation (Zak, 2019). The Bolsheviks finally turned on the 'Makhnovia' in 1920 and decimated the movement until its extinction in 1922. Nestor Makhno, who was able to escape to exile in Paris, France since then has brandished himself into the collective memory of Eastern Ukraine (Skirda, 2004); (Zak, 2009). Makhno's Army's, which in popular memory was referred to as 'Black Army', always carried their symbolic black flags with them (Zhadan, 2007). This led to the adoption of black as the colour of the anarchist movement to this day (Kriwoschej 2014). Today anarchists in Ukraine as well as Ukrainians living in the former free territory affectionately refer to Makhno as 'Batko' - father.

During the Euromaidan revolution Makhno experienced a revival and his portrait and posters were often seen among protesters. For western onlookers, this was often confusing as self-declared anarchists openly spoke out in favour of the creation of a mono-ethnic state (Gorbach, 2015). Denys Gorbach explains this split as tracing back to Soviet Union times and the success of its propaganda (ibid). After the Black Army was crushed as were all other political movements after the 1920s the Bolsheviks began working in reframing the movement as lawless bandits which were made up of ordinary peasants who unrightfully saw themselves as representatives of the working class (ibid). Many films after the 1950s depicted the anarchist forces as authoritarian and top-down with Makhno as the a 'Fuehrer type', and additionally depicting them as anti-Semites against historical factuality. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that the average Ukrainian started associating anarchists with merciless and reckless criminals who executed everyone not agreeing with their political goals. Another sentiment that started sticking was the idea of the 'Makhnovists' as separatists, as in 1917 Ukraine remained a

part of the Russian Empire. These trends of framing anarchist ideology during Soviet Union have endured into post-Soviet Ukraine (Zak, 2019); (Gorbach, 2015).

What happened to anarchism was that the political ideology started to become synonymous with the aspirations of a young nationalist state and intelligentsia and was interpreted through the needs of the new state for foundational myths. This meant that Makhno, who had fought the Whites and Tsarist forces during the civil war, quickly became reframed as a hero of Ukrainian independence (Gorbach, 2015). As in contemporary Ukraine the Civil War has become a new milestone in post-independence historiography, the component of the anti-imperial struggle became the most stylized element in popular history. The imagery of Makhno as a strong patriotic Ukrainian independence fighter became even more entangled as it was interwoven with yet another strong romantic national ancestor myth (ibid). Gorbach describes how the mythology of the semi-autonomous Cossack territory of the Zaporozhian Sich of the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century was combined with a strong myth connected to Makhno. Just as the Cossacks were ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ loving and seen as a progressive republic, they also never gave up their autonomy to anyone. As Gorbach highlights, this myth of the Cossacks became incredibly powerful to Ukrainians as any linearity of historiography of the Ukrainian statehood is based on a shaky foundation after Kievan Rus was destroyed by the Mongol Hordes (ibid).

Another stronger narrative was needed, and Makhno’s connection to the Cossacks therefore comes as no surprise. In particular, the anarchist’s stigmatization as anti-Semites and anti-communist started becoming useful in post-Soviet Ukraine where these attributes gained prominence together with local patriotism (ibid.). Gorbach additionally points out that Makhno’s image as representing ‘the people’ resonated in a climate where the fight against ‘the corrupt elites and politicians’ had gained strong relevance. With a demand for anti-establishment candidates and parties being higher than ever, one can argue that the time for ‘anti-systemic’ forces within the Ukrainian society remains on an all-time high. Ultimately, the ‘contradiction’ of anarchist fighting for the creation of a state returned with a vengeance after the Euromaidan. However, the opinions on how to interpret Makhno’s legacy have also split the movement. When looking at the phenomena of National Anarchist’s within contemporary Ukraine one must bear in mind the reframing attempts and interpretations that seek to synthesize history with contemporary issues. The success as well as its clear internal contradictions have plagued the Radical Left since its post-independence resurgence.

While it is a common myth that Ukrainian society is heavily divided between West and the East, one can say that within the Radical Left the existence of cleavages were mostly due to disagreements regarding the movement's orientation between Russia and the European Union.

To a certain extent one can observe similar dynamics on the other side of the political spectrum, within Ukraine's radical right. In 2012, the appearance of major cracks within most major left-wing organizations as well as anarchist organizations came to the forefront. While some of Ukraine's biggest anarchist organizations such as the Autonomous Worker's Union had to battle with internal splits into pro-Russian and a pro-Ukrainian independence camps, the pre-Maidan period already exhibited a strong formation of ideological cleavages. In 2014 and with the start of Euromaidan, Ukraine faced its third revolution within a time period of 15 years. With its claims of riding the country of deep-rooted corruption and a total change of the political establishment, the costs of the annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine's Eastern territories against Russian backed separatists weigh heavily.

## **(5) Analysis: The National Anarchist Movement as the embodiment of cleavages in the wider Ukrainian society**

Following up on the outline elaborated upon in the first half of this thesis, the upcoming chapter will deal with the ways in which the birth of the National Anarchist Movement in Ukraine embodies the cleavages and political schisms that exist more widely within Ukrainian society after the events of Euromaidan and the Russian-backed war in the Eastern territories. Due to the absence of an existing case-study on the Ukrainian Radical Left after 2015, the formulations of research questions within the thesis is informed by theories outlined within chapter 2. Overall, it is the aim of this research to map out the contemporary political spectrum of players active within Ukraine and help contributing to a wider discussion of mapping out radical social movements endogenously as well as ground them culturally contextualized within the literature on ‘uncivil society’, radical social movements as well as political fringe groups.

The first part of the analysis will deal with the existing cleavages within the movement as well as how they have been facilitated by the events of Euromaidan answering research question 1. First the chapter will quickly recap, chapter (5.1) the external conditions of the Ukrainian Radical Left and then delve into the cleavages that have come forward from the data as most significant such as (5.2) Sexism, (5.3) Hierarchy (5.4) Attitudes towards the war and the military (5.5) Nationalism, (5.6) Changes after Euromaidan, to the ongoing divide within the Ukrainian Radical left and the consecutive creation of the national-anarchist movement.

Chapter 6 and its sub-chapters deals with the case-study of national-anarchist and the conditions for the existence of the National Anarchist Movement in Ukraine. It will elaborate on their political strategy and advocacy networks have matured since the events of Euromaidan. Not only have these groups gained strong experience in politically organizing themselves during these times, they also have gained confidence in their agency as actors for change within Ukraine. The chapter will give insights into the movements internal workings, their political goals as well as their approach to position themselves within a Ukrainian historical narrative and the canon of heroes. Aiming to visualize the conditions for their rise the chapter starts off with (6.1) Origins of the Branding Problem that lies at the core of the movements existence. Chapter (6.2) Coalition will deal with the advocacy networks within the movement that the movement has cultivated. The chapter (6.3) Ideological trajectory will describe the political processes the groups underwent in their overall development. Chapter (6.4) will deal with the group’s overall ideology and self-perception. Chapter (6.5) Pragmatism will elaborate on the political goals and the strategy the groups employ in order to grow their movement and increase their attractions to

the political mainstream. Chapter (6.5) Historical narratives concludes the end of the chapter addressing sub-question a) of research question 2.

The last part of the analysis will tie together and ask the question of positionality of these groups within the wider context of players in the Ukrainian political arena. How have their relationships to other groups changed after 2013 and how to best conceptualize these groups actions? Chapter 7 therefore addresses internal relationships between the different political fringe groups operating within the Ukrainian political sphere. Chapter (7.1) starts off with an analysis of the internal relationships and networks within the national-anarchist community. Chapter (7.2) addresses the relationship between nationalist-anarchist groups and human rights/liberal organizations and chapter (7.3) investigates their relationship to other groups within the radical left spectrum. Chapter (7.4) deals with the ever-present conflicts within the various groups of the radical left and investigating how these have affected the movements cohesion as a whole. Chapter (7.5) quickly recaps the conflicts present on the radical right. Chapter (7.6) investigates the different patterns of cooperation within the far-right such as cooperation between traditionalist and nationalist groups. (7.7) Deals with the existing relationships between members of the nationalist-anarchist spectrum and the far-right. Closing off chapter (7.8) are conflicts between the far-right and the Ukrainian radical left as a whole. By outlining the depth of relationships and highlighting the multi-strandedness of relationships in-between actors an answer to research question 3 is sought.

### **(5.1) Cleavages within the ‘New Radical Left’**

With the Euromaidan and Russian led aggression in Ukraine’s east, Denys Gorbach analysed in his article ‘Ukraine’s left: between a swamp and a hard place’ how the Ukrainian political scene since has not only radicalized but also the dividing effects the events have had on Ukraine’s political left (2015). He analyses subsequently that after the annexation of Crimea and the war in the East, not only was Ukraine’s society split on the events but also divided the so-called ‘Global Left’ as a whole. While one side joined the Kremlin narrative of the DNR as defending themselves against the ‘Ukrainian fascist junta’ in what they claim was an ‘anti-imperial struggle’ the same narrative has been claimed by a fraction of the Ukrainian left who actively seek to re-seize narrative control of the term, thereby attempting to ground it in the tradition of Ukrainian anarchism such as Nestor Makhno and the Ukrainian social-nationalist political tradition of the 1920’s – 1930’s. When addressing the first research question of the thesis it becomes apparent that most cleavages have already been pre-existing prior to Euromaidan and only came to the forefront with its escalation in 2014 during Euromaidan. The split originating in

2011-2012 has been mentioned by multiple respondents during the interviews as will be elaborated upon below (ibid.).

Prior to Maidan the Ukrainian left-wing sphere consisted of a mosaic of initiatives, political parties and heirs to the former Communist Party of Ukraine, the successor of the Soviet-Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU). Among the existing groups were anarchists, Marxists, Trotskyist, and other anti-fascist or labour union-oriented organizations (ibid.). In order to distinguish these groups the label 'New Radical Left' was invented by journalists and academics such as Volodymyr Ischchenko. The term specifically refers to groups and organizations that operate within a political tradition of the left that is not linked to post-Stalinist parties (ibid.). Pre-Maidan these groups mostly operated within a small subcultural sphere in which cooperation between groups was vital. Among the events organized together was the yearly May Day demonstration in Kyiv. These meetings were a foundation of an informal network of friendship and personal connections within the scene and has informed much of the core activity of these groups and activists ever since. The importance of these networks cannot be understated, as in many interviews it is mentioned how well connected individuals from different groups have been with one another back then. Even though a multipolarity of political opinions existed between the groups, cooperation was still a key feature before 2012. Ultimately, changes started when the Autonomous Workers Union (Avtonomna Spilka Trudyashchykh/Автономна Спілка Трудящих) (ACT) / (AWU), a key organization, internally fragmented into a libertarian/anarchist and a Stalinist/Marxist camp which later became to be known as *Borotba*. Later the Stalinist wing of the organization, which had strong ties to Russian nationalists and their overall political agenda, attempted a takeover of the union and fraternized against activists from the anarchist and Trotskyist camp of the organization which caused its demise. After 2014, *Borotba* rose to notorious fame within the Ukrainian left when their activists joined the separatists of the DPR and LPR.

One respondent (R9) remembers how divided the Autonomous Workers Union was around the time of 2011-2012. Voicing his disbelief about individual activists holding a Stalinist political view in an organization he understood to be organized according to egalitarian, anarchist principles:

'Everything started with the beginning of *Borotba*. But those good Marxists I thought there would be only libertarian Marxists, no Stalinist will join an anarchist worker's union. But for (these Stalinists) there was no internal contradiction. They entered the union and took all the important positions inside. Well, the union it was totally legitimate. [...] There was no higher authority or a 'boss' just a

gathering of activists/all members of the different branches. Sometimes there were guests who didn't have voting rights. I even had a trade union membership card and so on and there were several branches in Kyiv and different cities. But sometimes the membership was overlapping with other leftist groups.'

Individual activists within the Autonomous Worker's Union felt the building of cleavages on issues such hierarchy for quite some time and the question of how to deal with the Stalinist camp within the union soon became central.

'But the contradictions within the left-wing groups made us propose to exclude some groups of Trotskyists and Stalinist because of their toxicity for the movement. We had a deal inside the 'Soviet' [General Assembly] but a few days before the general assembly the socialist wing betrayed us. They made a separate deal with Borotba and totally changed their mind about their position. And they intimidated us. We had a deal! We signed it and how can you break it? Our group visited the general assembly and it was like some old-school [CPU] party gathering. Like people with large bellies, with leather folders. These people and these groups were the ones who in the future created Borotba. They were proto-Borotba (...) Therefore, yes, we had a large split'. (R9)

This large split mentioned by R9 right before the events of Euromaidan in Kyiv in 2014, already pre-existed within the leftist camp for a while. As many leftwing groups were initially skeptical towards the positions of the Maidan, Borotba finally broke away from the Ukrainian left when violence in January 2014 spiraled out of control (Gorbach, 2015). They openly declared the allegiances with the formation of the AntiMaidan, a group of pro-government activists that later would join the forces of the DPR and LPR separatists. Being ousted by the majority of the remaining left groups within Ukraine they have not been able to implement their political goals in the DPR either as they have shunned and repressed by separatist's authorities within the Eastern territories. Nevertheless, in terms of framing Borotba had claimed that the people of the Donbas and Eastern Ukrainian territories had defend themselves against being discriminated against by the Ukrainian state. For them keeping the friendship with the 'big brother' Russia, deemed more important than the what they perceived 'nationalist ambitions' of the Maidan protesters. While five years down the road most organizations on the left spectrum agree that Putin's foreign policy ambitions of the Russian Federation do not align with their idea of egalitarian and progressive values, the time around the Euromaidan was murkier. Being divided on the issue of attitudes towards the Russian Federation and issues of Russian-speaking Ukrainians identity and belonging, the violence against Euromaidan supporters and the prominence of pro-Russian forces within the AntiMaidan's often motivated activists to side with

the pro-Ukrainian camp. Additionally, it wasn't only the Kyiv based organizations and groups that had these internal divisions, but similar tensions arose all around Ukraine as one activist from Kharkiv (R3) remembers:

'We had a big problem with views like this, I think around five years ago. Since then we have no different views of [these issues]. All our activists are anti-imperial in ideology and all of us understand that Russia is the aggressor. Because we saw [what happened] five years ago when pro-Russian activists tried to make its own [in Russian] Republic here [in Kharkiv] similar to the DPR. [...] And we fought them five years ago, you know some organization like Borotba we fought against [them]'

With the intensification of the Euromaidan protests, many local activists in Kharkiv start to support the pro-Ukrainian side more prominently. One well-known activists from the Kharkiv scene (R8) mentions that he believes supporters of the Kharkiv anti-Maidan were entirely ideologically motivated:

'I believe they really believed their own ideology, they thought that Maidan was driven by fascist and they were behind the anti-Maidan in Kharkiv in Odessa. Old-communist left-wing activists DNR tried to establish a separate republic inside the DNR and they got crushed'.

Analysing the state of internal relationships prior and post-Euromaidan, one can state that while the split within the Autonomous Worker's Union was based on a built up of cleavages present for years, the final breakout of them was triggered by the events of 2013-2014. In the following analysis some of the key cleavages, such as internal issues with sexism, hierarchy and the Russia question and will be elaborated upon. While one of them standing by itself did not cause the rift within the Ukrainian Radical Left the build-up of all them and the total mosaic they created did.

## **(5.2) Sexism**

One cleavage that pre-existed the Euromaidan but continued to contribute to the split of the Autonomous Worker's Union has been the internal attitudes within the organization regarding sexism and sexual harassment. Within the wider circle of the 'New Radical Left' cleavages regarding hierarchy and sexism have been at the forefront of the division between the different groups. As one former member and public activists remembers (R1): 77 g

‘One conflict started because of a member who harassed several women (within the group). And other guys tried to not see this problem (...). I mean it happened not only within [Autonomous Workers Union] but also to groups that were connected to us’.

These cleavages existed prior to Euromaidan and continued to affect the already strained relationship between the different groups of the ‘New Radical Left’. When asked about which groups were affected by specific issues regarding the treatment of female activists, R1 responds:

‘Yes, [involved was] someone from DirectAction/Пряма Дія/Пряма Дія, someone from ‘Autonomous Resistance’ (Автономний Опір/АВТОНОМНИЙ ОПІР) in Lviv, and yes, we had many personal conflicts [because of this]’.

Another respondent (R9) addresses the prominence of sexism within the different Ukrainian left groups most notably a ‘traditional’ anarchist group called Revolutionary Action. ‘(Many of them) are Menarchists [laughs] or Brocialists.’

An incident in which the cleavages of sexism and issues regarding hierarchy aligned and brought the existing problems within the movement to the forefront was an incident during the Mayday rally of 2015 in which a group of Belarussian anarchists, which later became the anarchist group ‘Revolutionary Action’, hired to provide security to the event actually put participants in danger. In order to protect the protesters from attacks by far-right activists and counter protesters, the Mayday participants were instructed to form a column within the metro and to use weapons, sticks and banners for self-defense purposes. Activists from the Belarussian anarchist group, however, took away the weapons before the participants reached the metro telling the protesters that they would not be needed. Shortly after, when the unarmed Mayday participants reached the metro, they were viciously attacked by the far-right. One of the organizers of the Mayday remembers:

‘They were pointed very strategic attacks after they disbanded the column. I had a banner with sticks on it and used it for self-defense. Nowadays we know who [the attackers] were, but we had no fights with them. [...] Police showed up and detained all of them and we grabbed our stuff. All the people who had ran away were found and beaten. And after this incident the group ‘Revolutionary Action’ made a statement. We were at the 1st of May celebration and we saw the column of fucking queers, fucking faggots, fucking feminists who were waiving their rainbow flags and we didn’t see no real anarchist man. They just ran away when the aggression started, if you want to be a real anarchist join our group because we have no fucking faggots, feminists. From inside channels, I realized that this Belarussian guy was behind this whole situation. Nowadays I believe it was planned to break up the

column and to depict our group as a weak bunch of queers and motivate them to join their movement. I wrote a statement after this incident and I named this guy and his plans to create a Macho-anarchist movement. That he uses lies, physical strength and conspiracy theories’.

After the incident, R9 made a public statement on his social media where he tried to discuss what had happened during the Mayday rally and discuss who was behind the group ‘Revolutionary Action’.

‘After I released this statement where I called out this activist, people started arguing online and accused me, like what did you do? So, I wrote all my thoughts saying that this guy tried to break up the movement and be like a micro-fuehrer of the anarchist scene here in Kyiv. And people from Revoutionary Dia started threatening me that they would spread my personal information and tried intimidating me. And they even made a fake-account to pretend to be one of my clients for my tattoo saloon. When I was supposed to meet this client, they attacked me on the center of Maidan with two people in 2015, in the month after all of this escalation. But I wasn’t hurt much because their boss failed doing his job properly. And people around us were screaming, “what are you doing fighting on Maidan, this is a holy place! People have died here!” But they said this guy talked shit about us on the internet. Of course, I made a public statement that they attacked me, and after that their recruitment process slowed down and they only received marginal elements of society. Lumpenproletariat, small criminals, anti-intellectuals and people like that. Which increased making the movement more violent and aggressive. But as I said, anarchists are stupid and they quickly forgot about all these incidents and their leader started to attack different people because of homophobia or sexism. But people didn’t remember that he was anti-feminist from the beginning, and now he has his own little group. And the SBU is now searching for them because they are responsible for several attacks on the police and courts. To me, [they were] totally pointless actions, throwing Molotov cocktails at the windows or shooting with pistols. Also, I have been informed that they are living together in a flat and if they see a strange car they move away so they behave like spies. They have money, cars and firearms’.

The latter quote exemplifies how the division between the different groups is connected to different interpretations of how what they perceive as ‘real anarchist’ organizations and groups should be organized, and which issues should be prioritized. Additionally, it shows how the movement divided itself according to whether queer and feminist issues were to be taken seriously or whether an anti-capitalist, class struggle rhetoric should be seen as a main point of identification.

### **(5.3) Cult of Personality and the old left successor**

In order to accurately comprehend which factors have led to the existence of strong hierarchy-based cleavages within the Ukrainian far left, it helps to understand the historical reality of the left movement. As Denys Gorbach describes in his article ‘Anarchism in Makhno’s homeland: adventures of the red and black flag’ there are two particularly relevant developments within the history of the left during the Ukrainian Socialist Republic, and both lie at the heart of the schism between those belonging to ‘New Radical Left’ and the ‘old’ (2015). Often the cleavages regarding the interpretation of anarchist principles and ideology derive from a particular interpretation of what being ‘left’ means politically and in direct contrast to how anarchism is defined and understood in the West. Again, going back to how the anarchist movement was rephrased during Soviet times explains much of its current dynamics.

Another relevant aspect feeding into this question is that during protests during Soviet times were understood as being headed by liberals and often ‘real’ leftwing movements did not pick up on them. In the Soviet Ukrainian tradition, conservatives who supported stronger authoritarian state structures during perestroika were referred to as ‘right wing’ while the terminology of ‘left-wing’ mostly referred to liberals in the political opposition (ibid.). One could argue that this conceptual distinction grew weaker with the CPU’s agenda of openly returning to a strong conservative agenda based on existing Soviet nostalgia within Ukraine. The later association lies at the root for much of Ukrainian society’s disdain and understanding of the political left as being inherently tied to communist and post-Stalinist parties, among them being the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), the successor of the Soviet Communist Party of Ukraine; the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU); the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Peasant Party of Ukraine (ibid.). As all of these parties were related to the Stalinist tradition of parties and managed to forge a lasting bond between those ‘Old Left’ Political Parties, Slavic nationalism, social conservatism, orthodoxy and approval of the Soviet political project (ibid.). Those connections were still very much alive and kicking in the back in 2013 ruling of the Party of Regions under Viktor Yanukovich.

Many prominent left-wing organizations replicated patterns of authority and hierarchy from the Soviet tradition into their political programs often replicating the exact stereotypes that historically they were have been framed with. A good example of the later is the existence of the SAU ‘Union of Anarchist of Ukraine’ in Odessa or the ‘Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists’ (RKAS) in Donetsk. While the first is an openly conservative, self-declared ‘anarcho-capitalist’ group which has nothing against the state and an openly homophobic agenda, RKAS is known for its strong ‘Führercult’ around martial arts enthusiast

‘Samuarai’. Both of the groups cultivate a strong cult of personality, physical strength and subordination (ibid.). One respondent (R3) responds when asked about RKAS:

‘I talked to them, and they are very hierarchical and authoritarian. I talked to a guy who when I first read about some anarchist ideas and tried to find some anarchist in Kharkiv I found only RKAS in Donetsk. So, my first information about the movement was from RKAS. They said you must go to our Summer Camps and they said, you must come and my friend, we went there and see, they have some rituals where (the) woman within the movement feeds their master, Samurai’.

‘Yes, they have a very radical mindset, they read Kropotkin and fight with each other and shoot guns. No idea where they get them from, and this Samurai has a lot of accounts in different social medias and messengers. He writes that you (other anarchist groups in Ukraine) have no good 1st of May demonstrations because they are not disciplined enough when they march’.

The issue of hierarchy and authoritarianism again comes up before the crucial year of 2014 in the Autonomous Worker’s Union when the split between the Stalinist camp and the anarchist/Marxist camp becomes more prominent. R9 describes the atmosphere back then as being tense, with the cleavages that had existed all those years coming to the forefront:

‘It was the year 2014 and the reasons for [its split] were manifold. The Autonomous Workers Union/ACT, it was not like an ordinary trade union or something like that, even though it was a very small organization and they had problems with hierarchy [...]. And some people who created this organization, they thought that they could be more equal [than other]] comrades. That was one of the main problems, but it was not only that’.

‘We decided to not participate in Mayday that year and we stayed out of the assembly hall. We said it’s a shame as the deal is off the table, we have seen what they are doing to us. All the people we had the deal with before were sitting quietly, and all those Bonzos were talking and talking and talking. And when we made questions for them, “we heard that you joined our Mayday, we didn’t give our permission and vote in favour of it.” It was inappropriate, but do you want to go the parliamentary elections or do you have some type of financing from outside? And so, on and so forth. And they were just laughing about our questions, those marginalized anarchists just shitting [on us] and making noise for no reason. Okay, okay just leave us in peace. So, we decided to organize our own Mayday with only anarchists. With the possibility of non-anarchist groups to join, but based on our conditions.’

On the question on whether these members were older former members of the Communist parties of Ukraine, R9 responded:

‘I mean, they weren’t. They were young, they were not Soviet Communist, but they were replicating the style. Some of them were businessmen. Their leader, Borotba, was a businessman in the chicken industry and had connections to Bashir-Al-Assad and they promoted Syrian so-called socialism for years. We were surprised and our reaction was like what the fuck, but it was simply explained by his business interest. And they were militant anti-bourgeoisie power with a chief that sells chicken to Assad’.

The tendencies of dogmatic leadership within what is understood to be ‘old-school’ types of anarchist groups within Ukraine is exemplified by the RKAS, the SAU, Borotba but also a fairly new group called ‘Revolutionary Action’. Regarding their beginnings an inner workings R9 elaborates:

‘They (RevDia) stabbed someone a while ago, but the guy survived. The leader of this organization is a Belarusian who sat in jail. (...) After five years, he was released from jail and from the very beginning started a new organization. His name is Alexander Fanzkevitch and he is trying to be anonymous. He is a ‘Fuehrer type’, he is a single person who is making all decision together with his inner circle some advisers. And he delivers his orders to the outer circle of anarchists. And he went to Kyiv and tried to build up a militant anarchist group in 2015’.

Asked to elaborate on this particular group R9 says:

‘Their leader, he works for Apple as an IT-specialist. He is a very clever guy with a lot of money and he spends his money on the movement instead of himself. Additionally, they rob delivery guys and they use mobile internet and rob the couriers. One American guy was analyzing different anarchist and leftist movements in Kyiv here in Ukraine and he decided that RevDia for him has 100% the footprint of Russian intelligence. Because they are anti-war, very hierarchical, super “Fuehrerist” but at the same time they have strong contempt against the army, against the defensive war, like they do not say what to do with the war, how to end it how to make Russia stop. They just criticize the military and citizens, everything tied with the army and all their actions and activities lay down in the line of it. You’re helping to approve something like supporting. They unconsciously or consciously are supporting the Russian narrative in Ukraine and Russia’s international policy’.

The existence of a group such as Revolutionary Day visualizes exactly the areas in which the disagreements between different anarchist groups in Ukraine originate. With their old-school

hierarchical structures and reliance on strong masculine leadership, they are frowned upon by newer post-anarchist groups that are located predominantly in Ukraine's West and Central parts. The continuous build-up of cleavages between members of National-Anarchist groups and groups such as Revolutionary Action, therefore synthesized into a package in which those issues became inseparable from one another.

#### **(5.4) Attitudes towards Russia and the war**

When in 2013-2014 Euromaidan protest broke out one major cleavage was added into the already pre-existing mix of cleavages in-between groups. Every single of the interviewees, whether during the Participant Observation nor through informal conversations highlighted the relevance of the Russia question for causing even larger ideological rifts within the movement. This is due to the fact, that most contemporary Ukrainian Radical Left groups differ in fundamental questions on the causes, effects and attitudes that have created the basis for the Anti-Maidan protests and later the Donbas and Lugansk insurgency. Before Maidan most cleavages that were predominant within the groups were mostly related to the above discussed issues such as questions of hierarchy, attitudes towards sexism and regular infighting within groups. Meanwhile after Euromaidan the cleavages shifted more towards the question of how to position themselves vis-à-vis the state and how to understand the use of political violence in a context where Ukraine's territorial integrity had been violated. Additionally, the discussion and understanding of who was perceived as the biggest political threat and what to prioritize fed into the already existing split between the groups. While some groups such as the Ecological Platform and Black Flag decide to publicly speak out against the war, they still emphasize that the main problem lies on the level of the state and the capitalist system. Arguing that the origins of the war are connected with both sides having business interest within a capitalist system that drives them to further continue with the war, they try and avoid picking sides. Or as one respondent (R4) stated:

'Many L'viv activists from Black Flag and Ecological Platform, they say that anyway this war and it's like they are very active not to support any side. And they call people out as supporting Nazis but it is quite difficult and it is like two evils and so on. Long story, but anyway, this is also because of different regions. Because West and East Ukraine really have different types of struggles. Because in the West they have a really strong extreme-right and old people mostly support these movement and they must make some opposition to this. And they say a different view against all these organizations and they say very bad things about the war but it's unfortunately very naïve'.

The respondent highlighted one other major interesting observation that came forward from the data, namely the difference in attitude towards the war, Russia and nationalism based on the geographical region those groups are located in. While most activists that originated in Ukraine's Eastern and Southern territories highlighted how they are concerned about their group being framed as 'separatist' or 'pro-Russian' it was surprising how openly they argued for a pro-Ukrainian position while in L'viv, and in many Western regions a more sceptical attitude prevailed. In terms of the types of ideology that was represented by the different organizations, one could also notice that often in the West, anarchist collectives demonstrated more similarities with 'post-anarchist' collectives and ideas that are more commonly found in the West. While in the East a more localized, traditional form of anarchism, based on many foundational thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was more prominent. One statement made by a respondent (R4) indicated that due to L'viv being a historical cradle for Ukrainian nationalism, the groups operating within the cities have adapted accordingly and face other challenges than they do in Kharkiv. She stated that that anarchist groups in L'viv have to touch upon the controversial heritage of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and overall strength of the far-right in the region more than their counterparts.

For many activists from the East or even from the currently occupied territories the shock of the Russian aggression sits deep. They expressed that they could not believe it when it became clear that after 2015 Russian soldiers had been involved in the fighting. Many activists predominantly from Kharkiv or who are from the Donbas or Lugansk Region originally felt similarly to respondent (R8):

'Yes, because before 2013/14 we couldn't imagine that Russia would annex a part of us. For me as a citizen from Donbas I am in shock. We saw them not as a brother but as a partner. All our troops were deployed in Western Ukraine we could even cross the border easily. Now we are waiting for a new invasion, because Russia is preparing'.

Many respondents themselves indicated that the shock about the Russian aggression has led them to join a battalion or overall start training for an invasion. While some joined voluntary battalions fighting for the Ukrainian side others interpreted such a move as betraying the principles of anarchism. One example of such a cleavage is the antagonism between anarchist groups such as Black Flag and the Ecological Platform, and groups such as Autonomous Resistance, Black Flag or the formerly existing Black Rainbow. On the core issue of how to position themselves towards the Russian aggression and annexation of Crimea a multitude of

contentious points arose. Examples of infighting between the different camps were at its height around 2015, when this cleavage came to the forefront between members of L'viv based Black Flag and Ecological Platform and a former member of the Autonomous Worker's Union and current member of Nihilist (R9):

'Yes, they (Black Flag) are working with the Ecological Platform. I think they are extremely stupid people, they had a conflict with local Nazis in Lviv. And when I tried to interview them on what was going on they denied the interview saying that they have no business with our journal. I explained well okay you theoretically don't agree with us because we support the army and you are 100% fucking true anarchist that are not supporting anything tied with the state. Well it's okay I can accept that position but we do have a common enemy. And we have to fight that enemy and cooperate. But they rejected this proposition but shortly after that they gave an interview to a pro-Russian journal Strana.ua and Shari.net'.

Nihilist, an online political journal run by anarchist activists with a strong pro-Ukrainian position and among whose members are veterans of the ATO, the Anti-Terrorist Organization military operation who fought against the separatist in Ukraine's occupied territories, was not the first nor the last to experience this type of conflict. Multiple groups of different affiliations, size within the overall spectrum of the New Radical Left were torn on the same issues. Questions regarding the usage of language of Russian and Ukrainian frequently became a talking point within a variety of collectives. In one example members of the Kyiv based group 'Black Rainbow' adopted Ukrainian as their only means of communication even though they admitted most members were predominantly Russian speaking. One respondent (R1) describes it the following way:

'Of course, in Ukraine many activists they are not right-wing but with aspects of nationalism. Or rather they are very patriotic, and if you are against... I mean I do not know. For example, if you write your texts not in Ukrainian but in Russian it is not considered a good thing. Or in some rally speak in Russian it is viewed as a good thing'.

Also, within Autonomous Action, the Russian question became prominent. Having received multiple activists from the then occupied Crimea, they quickly adopted using Ukrainian language as their only means of communication. Both examples show the polarization within the scene in regards to language issues, and already indicate what later would become the split creating the Anarcho-Nationalist Movement. Since the beginning of 2015 groups such as Nihilist were extremely outspoken on how to perceive the Russian threat, arguing that the spreading of

‘Russkiy Mir’ Russian World project in Ukraine had been imposed by Ukrainian elites themselves (Nihilist, 2015). They additionally state that for Ukrainians today being politically pacifist is a position unable to be held as Ukraine is under direct attack from Russia (ibid). However, exactly for their strong positioning in favor of the Ukrainian state and its military resistance, they are criticized by other anarchist groups. But when asked about their principles (R9) summarizes it the following way:

‘I mean we don’t believe in the Ukrainian state, the Ukrainian government or even the Ukrainian army because of the prevalence of corruption. But we stand for the freedom, and we stand against imperialism and for Ukrainian independence. We will defend our values, our basic freedom, right to self-determination and integrity of our territorial border because Russia does not respect them. Some Russian anarchists say we are fake anarchists because anarchists never join the war, but actually I don’t give a fuck’.

When asking members of Nihilist, Autonomous Action, Black Committee or former members of Black Rainbow, they often stated that the major issues they had with other anarchist organizations would be the lack of outspokenness against the ‘Russian threat’. Allegations of being ‘pro-Russian’ or ‘pro-separatists’ were common characterizations used against one another. In their own self-promotion video depicting members of Revolutionary Action (RevDia) in the woods shooting guns and training they state that they view Russia as the aggressor and that their attempted militarization is as much a preventive measure against a possible invasion as it is meant in reaction towards the Ukrainian state. Revolutionary Action continues to get framed by other groups, predominantly by national-anarchists as a pro-Russian group. The later highlights that the question lying at the heart of the split is a philosophical disagreement over the causes of the conflict. Members of groups such as Ecological Platform and Black Flag would argue the main threat that Ukraine is dealing with are its own corrupt elites, who profit from the ongoing war with Russia. Existing conflicts are interpreted mostly through the lens of power relations in which the Ukrainian state suppresses its citizens. Class struggle as well as issues such as racism and sexism are prioritized. The current Russian regime under Putin is interpreted as equally disastrous to its citizens based on the strength of nationalist sentiments employed by Putin and his overall neo-liberal system. They argue that in the case of Ukraine the issues are similar; for them the issue of ethnic identity is seen as a strawman. While talking to members of these groups the argument would be something along the lines of that Ukrainians and Russians are very similar in terms of culture and that all efforts to foster this socially constructed divide of nationality is contributing to the problem of conflict rather than solving it. While this argument

has certainly had its validity within the Ukrainian Radical Left it is still met with strong disregard. Or as one member of an affiliated group would exclaim within an informal conversation: “How can we engage with post-identities, post-borders and post-nations if we don’t even have an existing nation? Because the one we have is under direct existential threat by Russia”

Or as one respondent (R9) put it:

‘I mean they are trying to avoid this question here. To call out an aggressor. When I told you about the Autonomous Worker’s Union which split up due to the internal scandal when one part tried to exclude the other one. They argued the internal division was due to ‘nationalism’ and labelled us ‘nationalists’ because we stood up for pro-Ukrainian positions and said that the best way to combat and stop military aggression is to kill the Russians that enter Ukrainian territory with weapons. And they said you’re a fascist because you want to kill Russians and no rational argument worked’.

### **(5.5) Nationalism**

When discussing the Russia question, naturally the cleavage of nationalism came to the forefront during conversations. The different interpretations of what it meant to be a nationalist in contemporary Ukraine and the historical legacies of the term within the post-soviet sphere make this issue a difficult talking point. As the clash between members of Nihilist and Revolutionary Action highlighted, the core cleavage is based on the issue of nationalism and how one as an anarchist relates themselves within the current conflict. R9 says when asked about whether he still identifies as an anarchist and how he understands the issue of nationalism:

‘I mean they would like me to get there. To not identify as an anarchist. So, I read in the chat on Telegram from RevDia that very often they are discussing about or debating with articles on Nihilist. But in a very unintelligent way, they are fucking idiots and morons or take a quote out of context and try to misconstrue it. And some young anarchists within RevDia think about us [Nihilist] that we are Nazis’.

When asked about this conflict between the different groups, another respondent (R1) adds that:

‘Yes of course! Many conflicts like that. For example, the site Nihilist/Ніліст. They are all very patriotic now and some anarchists even think they are nationalists not leftists (laughs). For me it is

funny and I know people from (...) moment I need to look them up. Ah how to translate. Social Movement/Socialnyy Rukh/Соціальний Рух they are not anarchists but they are leftists and they are not patriotic. And we even had very big conflict with one of their members (Stas Serhienko/Стас Сергієнко). He was a member of them and he (...) maybe he is not pro-Russian. But he was in Crimea when Russia attacked it and he had several pictures with Russian soldiers. Many more situations like this’.

The quote highlights how activists on both sides of the split, belonging either to the Revolutionary Action or Nihilist and other affiliated groups, see the other groups as reframing them. While members of Black Flag and Ecological Platform argue, they are framed as pro-Russian members of the other camp are labelled as nationalist. Members of Nihilist even issued a public statement reacting to the accusations, arguing that the difference between them and the Ukrainian far-right is their focus on social justice and equality for all and highlighting that the far-right will never stand up for the rights of women, sexual and ethnic minorities. They argue that the Ukrainian far-right has more in common with the conservatives in the Putin regime that they admit and delve into the connections between the influential Russian far-right ideologue Alexandr Dugin and his Ukrainian counterpart, chief ideologue of Azov – Eduard Yurchenko (Nihilist, 2016). R9 when asked on the characteristics of Ukrainian nationalist movement and them claiming the term responds:

‘Yes, he (Yurchenko) is doing it too. Abusing the corpse of Ukrainian nationalism and Azov is doing that too. It’s 100% white nationalist and even closer to Russian imperial – old school imperial ideology. The white movement in particular. The tsarist forces, they are trying to make a bad white tsarist far-right movement. Actually, Yurshenko started out as a big fan of the former executed tsarist family and he was spreading the idea of Ukraine as ‘little Russia’ not too long ago and he toured to Russia, to Dugin and different parts of Russia to speak to monarchists and traditionalists’.

The struggle to reclaim the terminology of nationalism and its meaning therefore lies not only at the heart of the cleavage within the New Radical Right in Ukraine, but also defines many groups interaction with other political fringe groups on the Radical Right.

### **(5.6) Changes after Euromaidan**

With the war fostering sentiments of patriotism and nationalism, it does not come as a surprise that traditional anarchist philosophy, which seeks to deconstruct the borders, nationalities and the state, has a hard time holding in contemporary Ukraine. Within the political arena, the new

Radical Left has been additionally confronted with a challenge. Not only is the terminology of socialism, communism and overall being associated with the term 'left' highly stigmatized within Ukraine due to its Soviet past, but also the perceived 'lack of outspokenness against the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea', has contributed to their weakening. Or as one respondent (R10) gets to the heart of it:

'Now the situation with leftists in Ukraine became worse than before the revolution. Because many left-wing activists took part in the pro-Russian side in this conflict and in this war. So, there was some reputation loss for leftist ideas in Ukraine, because of this collaboration of some leftist activists with Russia. So, the situation is worse'.

When asked how this development has affected the way that groups are able to attract members and organize their events respondent R4 replied:

'You know it's more difficult because after Maidan, and this is my own opinion, but it's like if you want to participate in big protest and we don't have some big anarchist movement at all here. It's very much in the underground. Plus it's impossible to be 'clean in your ideology' and protest so you cannot really say we cannot go there. I know some people who participated during Maidan who tried to spread their agenda. It was unsuccessful but they tried. But I also know some people, only two or three who joined ultra-right-wing groups in some actions. They said that left-wing groups do not create and organize anything and 'I want to participate in something' and they just went. And later they went to the war, as part of ATO but they are a small minority in the movement'.

The latter example shows how entangled social relations became after Euromaidan in regards to supporting the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO). Even though only a small group of anarchists went to fight in the Eastern territories, the phenomenon is still very much exemplifying the split within the movement as a whole. While some interpret their willingness to serve at the front as anti-imperial actions, others see it a betrayal of anarchist core values. Two different perceptions and narratives of what the anarchism means and how it should be interpreted are in direct opposition with one another. Getting to the core of the split, exactly this fundamental difference in understanding lies at the heart of the new social political movement of what I call 'National-Anarchists'.

## **(6) National Anarchism**

### **(6.1) Origins Branding Problem**

Summarizing, after 2015 the Ukrainian New Radical Left was confronted with a multitude of challenges ranging from their bad image within the political mainstream to the intensity of infighting between various groups. Out of this difficulty to brand themselves led them to become creative. As R10 highlights, the support of the DNR and LNR through the Autonomous Worker's Union splinter Borotba had left a vacuum for a pro-Ukrainian political left:

‘They haven’t had any confrontation with Borotba/Боротьба or any other organizations. But they tried to produce a pro-Ukrainian discourse in Ukraine. Because none rightist organization in that times had actual values for Ukraine and was actual for Ukraine’s situation and nor a leftist organization. So, they were trying to find new versions something to fit to that situation’.

In order to construct something new that does not replicate the old, many activists searching for a new stream within the Radical Left were more aware of what they wanted to position themselves against. R10 describes how himself perceives the difficulties the movement was facing:

‘The problem of previous leftist organisations was that they tried to produce some pro-Russian views and co-Russian conspiracy agenda in Ukraine. But they haven’t had any patriotic pro-Ukrainian agenda or any pro-Ukrainian views. So, that is their try to change the situation’.

In order to directly oppose this perceived orientation towards Russian narrative many already existing organizations and groups thought about new ways to introduce left political talking points into the Ukrainian political sphere while staying away from Stalinist or Trotskyist discourses. One example and a fairly recent metapolitical organizations that was founded as a direct reaction to these trends has been the group ‘Avantgard’:

‘Traditional leftists in Ukraine is a small organization with not many members, who discuss the political situation at the kitchen table. The biggest problem of Ukraine leftist activists is that they ignore the core problems in Ukrainian society, for example patriotism, occupation, and the conflict with Russia. Many leftist activists, after the war with Russia started, started to produce pacifist views and ideas. But they don’t label themselves as leftists. They have some left ideas, principles, and ideology, but they don’t label themselves as left. So, they try to stay out of this traditional left and

these discussions, who is a Trotskyist or who is a Stalinist, and try to find a new way. Summarizing their ideas, they want a strong Ukrainian state on foreign affairs on international level and a solved and restricted state on the internal level. So, decentralization. That's why they try to combine patriotic and leftist views in their organization. 'Avantgard' is trying to combine these views'.

The necessity for a New Radical Left that was able to reappropriate the political terminology of being left while simultaneously openly adopting a strong pro-Ukrainian stance has therefore provided a fertile ground after 2015 for organizations seeking to fill this gap.

## **(6.2) Coalition**

Among the most notable groups that emerged after 2015 is the anarchist-feminist group named 'Black Rainbow' and which was based in Kyiv until its dissolution. It aggregated many former members of the Autonomous Worker's Union that due to its split had decided to leave the organization. Another group named 'New Fire'/Novy Vohon'/Новий Вогонь was founded who were one of the first to self-label themselves as 'nationalist-liberal'. The most prominent member of New Fire, Dmitry Riznichenko/Дмитро Різніченко who is a former member of C-14, a famous neo-Nazi group from Kyiv but who distanced himself from the organization.

Other organizations that belong under the umbrella of National-Anarchist groups are Autonomous Action 'Avtonomiy Opir' in Lviv and 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет which are based in Kyiv and Vynnytsia. Both Autonomous Action and Black Committee are not solely anarchist groups but originated as nationalist organizations, or as one respondent (R1) put it:

'All of these organizations are not solely anarchist organizations. They are something like politically left in economic issues as well as in terms of Human Rights but with some aspects of nationalism. Because we thought it will make us more ehm – it made us "pretty" for people'.

Again, the point of being more appealing to the masses and the average Ukrainian come to the forefront from this particular quote. Especially with the political climate being as it is, it shows how a certain level of patriotism and nationalism is needed to succeed. After 2015, all of these organizations decided to cooperate with one another and build an official alliance. Based on coherence of fundamental values of being socially progressive but distinctly pro-Ukrainian in outlook, many saw the need for an overarching metapolitical organization bundling the different groups and organizations. This was achieved with the birth of Avantgard in 2017. Or,

as respondent (R10) described how the overall outlook and structure of the organization looks like:

‘All members of all the organizations which are part of Avantgard/Авангард are also members of Avantgard/Авангард. But they are still members of their own organizations. They don’t want to rebrand their organizations because, for example in Lviv, many locals know ‘Autonomous Resistance’/Автоному Опір/АВТОНОМНИЙ опір positively. So, if some people with a new brand came to the people in Lviv, the people could be confused. That’s why they decided not to change the brand, but just to coordinate common actions. But each organization continued to work with locals on their own areas. It’s like a confederation of organizations which provide some common actions for example. But all of them still exist separately’.

Both Autonomous Resistance and Black Committee are fulfilling a key role within the coalition and their personal connections manage to connect activists from all around Ukraine. With the establishment of their own metapolitical group Avantgard, their long-term strategy in marketing their movement to the broader political mainstream has been given shape. One group that is not officially part of the coalition but fairly close in overall political ideology is the nationalist-anarchist website Nihilist. Writers of Nihilist, similarly to Avantgard are often members in multiple nationalist-anarchist groups and represent a wide spectrum of opinions within the spectrum of the Ukrainian Radical Left. What unites all of them is their prioritization of the Ukraine’s anti-imperial struggle against the Russian invasion, and overall support of the ATO in Ukraine’s Eastern territories. Similarly, to Avantgard many of Nihilist’s writers and affiliates are veterans or have actively made a decision to join a combat unit highlighting the need for individual activists to prepare for a possible Russian invasion.

### **(6.3) Ideological Trajectory**

As touched upon in the earlier paragraph, some of the more prominent groups within the spectrum of the National-Anarchist movements originally started out as nationalist groups or even belonged to the spectrum of the far-right. One group that serves as the most clear-cut example of such a change in ideology is the group Autonomous Action. One member of Autonomous Actions (R7) describes their groups ideological trajectory the following way:

‘Avtonomy Opir was starting its activity, ‘Yuriy Timocheschin’ was a leader of Svoboda and at this time he said that Avtonomy Opir is just like a young organization, like a daughter of Svoboda. But it in reality is being like this, like he expected Avtonomy Opir to be and I remember this time when

Svoboda distributed papers to vote in favor of them in regional elections and then in parliamentary elections’.

With the group originating as an official sister organization to the far-right Neo-Nazi group Svoboda, it only started after 2013 that people started calling Autonomous Action a left-wing group. Inspired by left-wing academia and circles prominent members of Autonomous Action started engaging with socioeconomic theories of the left and slowly changed the group’s overall ideological outlook. Focusing more on human rights, issues of anti-corruption and minority rights the group synthesized these with their original nationalist ideology. One respondent (R8) summarizes it the following way:

‘I mean I told you here in Ukraine we have a mixed history from an ideological perspective. Yes, we have Avtonomy Opir, they combine fighting for independence, social rights, socialism which was interesting for me’.

While the group notably moved to the left after 2014, many activists were very careful to describe them as left-wing. This had to do with the fact that many former members from Autonomous Resistance nationalist days had not exited the movement. With a stream of anarchist activists from Crimea coming in after 2014, and the organization as a whole moving to the left, shortly after 2015 the group moved back towards exhibiting nationalist tendencies. One activist from Kharkiv (R4) describes them as:

‘Yes, they (Autonomous Action) became crazy mix of anarchism and nationalism. And then they got crushed again by nationalist and they said later that they are not anarchist anymore it’s a failed project’.

With Euromaidan and Ukraine’s struggle for national independence, a historical linearity is created with the traditional anti-imperial struggle engraved in traditional Ukrainian nationalist ideology. In the context of Euromaidan these words therefore have been blown in new life and gained only in significance.

#### **(6.4) Ideology**

The ideology of national-anarchism is therefore strongly connected to the re-emergence of the anti-imperial struggle and fight for national independence of the Euromaidan. Respondent (R1) summarized it the following way:

‘These changes of patriotism and so-called nationalist anarchism is that something that is connected to the events after 2015’.

When asked about the fundamental differences between them and Ukrainian nationalist and traditionalist groups, respondents from Nationalist-Anarchist group answer that for them it is only natural and understandable that there has been a surge in patriotism and nationalism within the Ukrainian society due to the war and the occupation in the East. They argue that however the main difference is that right-wing groups generally not leave it with patriotism but aim to sell conservative values along with them. For them questions of identity and belonging as well what it means to be politically left does not clash with their understanding of being a Ukrainian patriot. Or as R1 summarizes her experience:

‘For them it is inherently connected but for me it is not. You can be Ukrainian; you can write in Ukrainian and be against Russia but not be a nationalist or a conservative person. Of course, the war made people more patriotic, and Maidan too! Maybe it is a natural process of, when some empire splits and some parts the former empire are striving for independence. These types of developments are very natural, so for activists it is important to be patriots. And I know many people who are now veterans, because of all this war. And they are leftist’.

The same rhetoric and self-understanding came forward from the interviews and data collected with members of Autonomous Resistance. When asked about how the group was able to combine values that seemed to be at odds with one another, they responded that even though there would be frequent contentious debates, the way they managed was by implementing traditional anarchist DIY techniques. One respondent (R7) explains the procedure:

‘In Avtonomy Opir, they are really trying and managing to find this connection and common ground and consensus between such different people and actually it works out [like with this guy]. For our internal structure [Avtonomy Opir] we have no formal leadership, and we organize ourselves in collective gatherings. We decide the agenda and important points for the organization together. I really enjoy this spirit of anarchy, in which we are self-managing the organization by the principle of

self-organization because you feel like you a part of a bigger picture. Everyone contributes to it and it is very personally satisfying to see your input used and implemented directly. It works the following way: you just go to one of the gathering's, meet with other activists from the organization, you pitch your idea and if other activists agree to unite on the idea, we will collectively carry out the action'.

During conversations, it became clear that the membership pool of Autonomous Resistance is extremely diverse, ranging from individuals with stronger nationalist perceptions to more clear-cut self-described anarchist, Marxists or Trotskyists. However, the focus on self-education and self-organization techniques that enable every member to be heard and included show a certain baseline commitment to the principles of egalitarianism inherent to anarchist philosophy. Their strongest unifying factor however has been their approach of dealing with patriotism. While incorporating a strong pro-Ukrainian rhetoric and symbols into their political agenda, they simultaneously strive for educating their own members and others about the dangers of fascist ideology. One example where this strategy comes forward is their approach to training their own activists. R7 explains:

'In our gym, we have a crossed-out swastika and a crossed out imperial eagle and in the middle of the gym we have a Ukrainian 'Trisub' because we are against fascism, imperialism and when people come to our gym they already see these signs and they understand the political thought behind our organization. New people understand that in this gym it is not a normal gym and it's not only about sport but a matter of concept. Plus, our gym also arranges many events and a lot of lectures. We take self-education very seriously'.

Another quote highlighting the balancing act strategy that they employ and the way they prioritize the anti-imperial struggle over other traditional left-wing talking points is this by respondent (R1):

'Left organizations have a very different political position of course, and for us it is always a question of being against imperialism and being with our – not nation but being with our people'.

Describing how for most members of National-Anarchist Groups are committed to the national liberation struggle and Ukraine's territorial integrity comes first, many prioritize issues surrounding the war and support the military. Describing again the split between the groups and how they self-define their ideology as 'Social-Nationalist' due to the ideologies infusion with socialist and Marxist principles. Respondent (R7) describes it like this:

‘Right now, we have a national liberation struggle in the East. And we have a lot of members and activists AO that are involved in fighting this war and there are called the veterans of ATO. And we are talking about the war, and for example our Lviv feminist group ‘Feministischna Masternya’ ‘Feminist Workshop’ who have actually two sides on the question of the war. The first part of their group says we are having a war right now in Ukraine and second camp talks about an internal struggle and a civil war. Our organization can be named social-nationalistic but not in the meaning that we have seen throughout the course of history, but it is the same story with Marxism. If you call yourself a Marxist in Ukraine or in Germany it will be two different types of Marxism.’

The self-labelling as social-nationalist as touched upon in an earlier segment remains problematic due the terms association with the Third-Reich. However, in the context of this research it is more accurate to again speak of an umbrella of left ideologies that are combined within the group’s repertoire. Anarchist values are clearly represented in the groups emphasis on collective decision making, the value of small communities and collectives in realizing social change as well as their overall organization structures. Continuing that:

‘Our people have this problem, they have left their houses in Eastern Crimea, I am from Crimea for example, we should help these people. We need to be on their side and of course it is a part of some I do not know, if you try to do something political and you are an anarchist not trying to be in the parliament or something like that. You should always be a realist and be connected with our social and political reality’.

The latter example shows how these groups also incorporate the traditional solidarity towards minorities as well as the most vulnerable elements within society in their political agenda. By highlighting how difficult it is for them to completely withdraw from the political sphere, thereby losing all means to get their voices heard, it becomes clear that National Anarchists have chosen a different path for themselves. By involving themselves in a double approach in terms of carving out political relevance within the current system, they on the one hand focus on self-training and capacity building for their own groups while simultaneously try to involve themselves in contemporary political actions. One example in which this strategy becomes clear is in the way that they approach for example highlighting LGBTQ+ rights. Respondent (R1) says:

‘Maybe that is a compromise, but if you can for example help woman as a feminist or make LGBT pride, you should tell people that you are very, very patriotic it is ...ehm very important. To invite

veterans to the pride, it is important to us and take part in the war. You should tell this to people. Because if you want to have any success in this political landscape this is what you need to do’.

Using a patriotic rhetoric and talking points in their favor is therefore an outright strategy in creating more space and leeway for their movement to enter the political mainstream and in order to more successfully recruit new members. Being aware that using patriotic language helps them to further advocate progressive policies and debates, they are strategic about the way they portray themselves.

### **(6.5) Pragmatism**

One major finding from the data was that in terms of the group’s ideology and political convictions, they were mostly adapting to the current climate. A pragmatic attitude towards the state and the government was therefore one of the most striking attributes the group exhibited. One example is the group’s attitude towards the Ukrainian state. Even though they agree with traditional anarchist principles that reject the state authority and prefer smaller self-organizing communities instead, they view the current situation with a strong sense of pragmatism. Or as respondent (R10) perceives the situation when asked about his views of the Ukrainian state:

‘The main reason is the aggression of Russian foreign policy. Without the Ukrainian state, it would be a Russian state. They want that the state of Ukraine will be soft and doesn’t restrict any political rights. the power will be decentralised and so on. But the state has to exist to protect the Ukrainians from the Russian aggression’.

Being very aware of the complexities staying close to anarchist principles brings with it, most friction arise with other groups in the way that they deal with the Ukrainian state. In the case of Autonomous Action, they have a very strong pragmatic attitude regarding how they position themselves vis-à-vis the state. Respondent (R7) describes it as such:

‘Sometimes people ask us when we cooperate with the local government and municipalities how that works together with our anarchist principles. But I think that in Ukraine we are not politically developed enough as to completely reject the state. We should view the state in terms of cooperation. Right now, we use the state as long as we can as we can, we are not able to organize at this stage of development entirely on our own. If we have a right to make a claim on government support I will make it. Within Avtonomy Opir to talk about self-education to promote our political agenda and to raise our future political leaders we fall back on every financial aid we can. Why wouldn’t you grab

financial support from the state if you have the possibility and then you implement the programs you want. But people think that anarchist always only reject the state entirely even though for us it is more efficient to use it in our own terms’.

Another way in which groups such as Autonomous Action exemplify their usage of pragmatism is by the way they recruit their members. In conversations with activists, they would regularly highlight their openness to recruiting members of all backgrounds. Saying that many of their members come from former far-right groups, their main focus lies in educating their activists through the continuous organization of events and lectures. This focus on DIY culture and movement away from public shaming and cancel-culture seems to work out for the group as their membership has increased over the last years. Especially their metapolitical project Avantgard has done well in terms of implementing this approach.

#### **(6.6) Historical narratives**

During the field research period, much of the groups focus on an anti-imperial struggle was linked to Ukrainian hystorography. As touched upon Makhno was frequently referred to as one of the most foundational figures for the movement. Showing how Makhno is reinterpreted in the light of the current Ukrainian struggle of independence respondent (R10) summarizes it the following way:

‘Machno is an example of real Ukrainian tradition. Because Machno demonstrates the ideas of decentralization and anti-authoritarianism. These are core elements of the Ukrainian tradition. This freedom-love. So, the use again Machno’s views. The traditional Ukrainian values of freedom-love and anti-authoritarianism.’

For all organization involved within the spectrum of National-Anarchism, including Makhno in their activities remains key. Whether it is Autonomous Action, Black Committee or more recently Avantgard, all of them continue to highlight his legacy for the movement. One member of Autonomous Actions says:

‘To come back to March Makno in 2015, Avtonomy Opir decided to organize a week of Nestor Makhno to organize some lectures, some actions and at the end of this week they still wanted to organize the March’

However, the connections drawn went further than only Makhno's legacy. As one of the earlier quotes elaborated on the links between so-called 'Socialist-Nationalism' and the infusion of the groups ideology with Marxist ideas and principles, another historical period stuck out from the data. As mentioned previously the Civil War period became an important anchor point for post-Soviet Ukrainian hystorography and among the points of referral has also been the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic of 1917, which effectively was socialist in nature. The tradition of Ukrainian intellectuals of that period gets mentioned multiple times by a variety of different respondents during the field research period. When asked about the canon of these writers and inspirations to the current national-anarchist movement (R9) responds that:

'It was long before Hvuili Vui, at the time of Shevchenko who was one of them. They were Enlightenment thinkers and writers. Give knowledge to the people, take down the tsarist government, anti-imperial, anti-establishment, liberal and democratic values of course with a kind of ethnic and confessional elements. But they weren't much political they were like intellectuals, writers, poets, artists that sometimes gathered and tried to make some manifestos. And close to the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century all the nationalists, nearly all of them were socialist. Socialists, Social Democrats just some of the figures were what we considered right-wing [in the meaning of that time] meaning integral nationalists of the French type. Like Catholic, strong presidential republic model in mind, strong ethnic dimension to their thoughts. But nobody actually liked them and even during the revolution were killed by other nationalist factions.'

This tradition of National-Socialists as being referred to by the group were of a very distinct tradition within Ukraine. With the geopolitical situation being as it is, it is very understandable how their heritage of combining strong socialist elements with nationalist elements becomes useful to current National-Anarchists. For a radical left struggling to find its place within the current war dominated discourse, delving back into history serves as a way to create newfound political legitimacy. When asked about how the OUN and the legacy of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists fits into that picture (R9) responds that:

'Ukrainian National Socialism died in 1921 when the Ukrainian People's Republic was demolished by the Soviets. And after that there was a vacuum in terms of national movements there were some groups who were trying to bring nationalism back. A group of Ukrainian fascists, Ukrainian Enlightenment Union or the socialist Union. They tried to have dialogue in Rome several times, they were part of diaspora. And in the 1920s and 1930's they created the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). And it originally consisted of people from different political origins and tendencies but many of them were inspired by Italian fascism. Old Rome rhetoric, good old

Mussolini and one of the talented writer Dimitry Domtsov he was very much so a fan of them. He was very good in writing propaganda, but it wasn't very effective. It was like inspiration, aggression with no political explanation why and what to do with it. To get Ukraine independent, and what do then? Just simply support us and together we will achieve it. Even the OUN did not like him very well because he was splitting and spoiling the movement.'

One of the original reasons on why spreading fascist ideology was not very successful was that the mostly agrarian and rural Ukrainians were not responsive to their ideals. For them much of their rhetoric was not connected to their own living realities and political goals. However, it is interesting how it has regained importance for members of National-Anarchist groups to reframe what being a 'real Ukrainian nationalist' really means. For many of them, traditional Ukrainian nationalists have always been socialist in nature and traditionally fought of an imperial threat posed by Russia. One of the names mentioned in this connection has Andrii Nikovsky, who is regarded as one of founders of the Ukrainian nationalist ideology. During tsarist times, he was a political leader and served as first president of the Ukrainian National Union (1918) and minister of foreign affairs during Ukraine' first period of struggle for independence (1917- 1920) (Encyclopedia of Ukraine, 2001). Writing the first manifest of Ukrainian independence 'Ukraina naselaya' one respondent mentions how after Ukraine's independence in 1991, his old constitution was reconsidered as it was seen as very progressive in terms of civil rights. As a prototype for the new Ukrainian constitution, the idea that nationalist being a dirty term that anarchists should not associate with is therefore disregarded by some respondents. Summarizing their attitude towards this dilemma respondent (R9) says:

'Many relevant figures within nationalist movements were democratic socialists during the Soviet period and were battling against the totalitarian state. In the university, I read a lot about their thoughts.'

In the tradition of reframing the historical movements in the light of current events statements such as this are therefore not a surprise and have to be interpreted in Ukraine's distinct historical context:

'And it's the same with Avtonomy Opir, we stand social rights and actually we support the slogan of UPA which is about the oppressed fighting against the oppressors, basically it's the formulation of our anti-imperial struggle.'

The case of the National-Anarchist's groups such as Autonomous Resistance are particularly interested as them being from Lviv affects them strongly in the way they form their political agenda. When asked about the difference in which National-Anarchist groups relate themselves to topics such as the UPA or nationalist-socialist ideas from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, respondent (R1) has the following thing to say:

‘I mean there were no people that can appeal to socialism and Nationalism, in Kyiv were just Nazis that were not interested in the old-school national socialist ideas of national liberation So, before the Maidan they [Autonomous Resistance] really became more left-wing and before Maidan they regularly fought with Pravy Sector.’

One can summarize that by positioning themselves within a tradition of progressive socialist-nationalist figures, members of the national-anarchist movement seek to create additional legitimacy for the movement. They are very strategic about how to market themselves to the Ukrainian political mainstream as they are aware of the need within the Ukrainian society for a strong foundational myth. By tapping into this need, these groups have slowly but surely evolved since their birth in 2015. While their member base is still small they themselves describe their movement as continuing to grow and emphasize the structural gap within the contemporary Ukrainian political scene that they seek to fill. The last quote additionally forms a great bridge towards the third and last research question addressed in this thesis which will be dealing with how the relationship between the different actors within the Ukrainian Radical Left has changed since 2013-2014. Overall, the quote demonstrates how political ideologies are not only locally and culturally contextualized by actors of Nationalist-Anarchist groups but also how the latter affects their behaviour and solidarities towards other groups within the spectrum.

## **(7.0) Changes in the relationship between actors of the New Radical Left**

In order to address the last research question on how the relationship between actors of the 'New Radical Left' and other political fringe groups in the Ukrainian political system changed since 2013, a Social Network Analysis was carried out. Moreover, to provide a relational perspective on the groups that will be studied, the researcher asked members of the groups themselves to map out their relationships to other groups via either description or by visualizing them. The researcher chose for this method in order to not only highlight group members' attitude towards the other groups but also specific individuals. By doing so the researcher was able to have an insight into the mutual bond creation through friendship, romantic relationships, family and other relationships. Understanding how mutual bonds were created, reciprocated and continuously entertained gave insights into the consequential changes that happened post-2013.

To quickly recap the reasoning for using Social Network Analysis (SA) as a participatory Appraisal technique lies in understanding social capital through the visualization of networks (Long, 2003). While social capital is usually understood through a singular perspective, SA helps provide a more in-depth analysis (ibid). Addressing the blind spots of social capital theory such as it being understood nearly always as positive (1), neither conflictive nor gender bound (2) or lacking in not combining micro and macro dimension with one another (3) and last but not least its usage along other forms of capital without actually specifying what it actually looks like in practice (4).

In this Social Network Analysis, the changes within the Ukrainian New Radical Left are being tracked according to the social relationships and interactions that they dependent on (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994). The relationships people in this research were engaged in were either (1) multi-stranded, meaning engaged in multiple ways or (2) single-stranded, meaning through one common denominator such as family or business ties. Adopting a transactional perspective contributes to understanding of the roles individual activists adopt as well as the normative expectations that follow up on them (Boissevan, 1979); (Beuving, 2018) In order to evaluate the network, it was first necessary to map its scope and size through mutual conversations and the Participant Observation. As much of the social interactions between the groups was characterized by conflict mapping participants, mutual expectations was another task the researcher focused on (ibid.). The group's dynamics were often a result of patterns of collaboration or conflict which made it necessary for the researcher to make two categories of analysis: one on the level of the group and their overall attitude towards members of other groups, and then the personal perceptions of individual members.

### **(7.1) Relationship between members of the National-Anarchist Alliance**

In summary, regarding the multi-strandedness of relationships between members and individuals belonging to Nationalist-Anarchist Groups such as Autonomous Resistance, Avantgard, Black Committee, New Flame or the formerly existing Black Rainbow, one can conclude that reciprocity networks are created and kept in place through a variety of links. These include among others friendship relations, romantic relationships, material and immaterial exchange relationships as well as overlapping group memberships and affiliation. Starting with the latter, one can observe that particularly with the founding of Avantgard in 2017 and the creation of a metapolitical umbrella organization formerly existing informal relationships were formalized on a group level. As one of the founders (R10) highlights:

‘Members of all the organisations which are part of Avantgard/Авангард are also members of Avantgard/Авангард. But they are still members of their own organisations. They don’t want to rebrand their organisations because, for example in Lviv, many locals know ‘Autonomous Resistance’ Автоному Опір/Автономний опір positively. So, if some people with a new brand came to the people in Lviv, the people could be confused. That’s why they decided not to change the brand, but just to coordinate common actions. But each organisation continued to work with locals on their own areas. It’s like a confederation of organisations which provide some common actions for example. But all of them still exist separately’.

The reason Avantgard was able to unite activists from all over the country was due to the existence of a coalition between the groups (Autonomous Resistance, Black Committee, New Fire and the former Black Rainbow\*) as well as individual friendships between members since the year 2015. Planning multiple activities together such as the March Makhno in Vynnytsia and the May Day parades in Kyiv has created long lasting bonds between the groups and their individual activists. Groups such as Black Committee, which were not founded on anarchist principles and should rather be classified as a nationalist group, were part of the coalition, as is New Flame which was founded by the prominent ex C-14 member Dmitry Riznichenko.

One could argue that one of the core ways belonging and multi-strandness of relationships within National-Anarchist groups is created is through the principle of pragmatism towards members’ political views and affiliations, in which new recruits are met on a personal, friendship basis. Exclamations such as this by members of Nationalist-anarchist groups (R7) are particularly frequent within the data:

‘For example, I participate in marches and events, but not only from Avtonomy Opir, not only as a participant and member of Avtonomy Opir but also as a member of other organizations.

As a lion share of activist groups have been former members of far-right, conservative or nationalist groups their overall approach towards integrating them into their membership structure is rather flexible. Activists are able to participate in events, lectures and gatherings and within the group it is assumed that naming and shaming them for their views and convictions is not the way forward but rather that a plurality of opinions should exist. One of the founders (R10) of Avantgard explains how the same principle applies to their metapolitical organization:

‘We talked about it for a long and it should be a platform that unites a broader spectrum of organisations. There are topics which are taboo for us and which we don't support. We now have the organisation Avangarde, which unites groups in various cities. There are right as well as left wing organisations present. The rhetoric of the organisation became more developed and broader, which gives other organisation the possibility to come to us.’

One could argue that openness towards to a plurality of political opinions and members with various backgrounds for groups of the national-anarchist spectrum leads to stronger overall group cohesion. During the Participant Observation of Black Committee's 10-year organizational anniversary, the researcher could observe first-hand, the variety of activist's backgrounds present at the event. Some activists from Autonomous Resistance and some from smaller anarchist groups attended. Most of the members present were part of metapolitical organization Avantgard, and some were additionally members of OUN. Bonding between group members was achieved by sharing meals, consumption of alcohol as well as organization of non-political activities such as the organization of concerts. Another domain in which solidarity among members of Nationalist-Anarchist groups come to the forefront has been the question of how to protect individual activist's identities. One respondent (R7) highlights that:

‘Within Avtonomy Opir the main age is 17 to 20 years old and these people they are still dependent on their parents and therefore it makes sense that they need to protect their identities.’

One can constitute that by safe guarding one's own activists, Autonomous Resistance creates strong bonds of trust and increases group cohesion among its members. Being one of many examples on how the movements keeps reciprocity networks between individual

activists and the group itself in place. Overall, the members of anarchist-nationalist are bound by mutual friendships, romantic relationships as well as through the organization of regular events. Activities such as sport additionally foster a climate in which group-cohesion is increased and mutual bonding situations are provided for.

### **(7.2) Relationship between Nationalist-Anarchist Groups with liberal and human rights organizations**

In one example outlined by a member of Autonomous Resistance there has been in-depth cooperation between them and members of human rights organizations. One respondent mentioned that in light of repressions by the Ukrainian Security Services (SbU), Autonomous Resistance were forced to search for a lawyer and to get into contact with other more powerful organizations that could provide them with legal assistance. (R7)

‘Right now, we are joining forces with Human Rights Organization with lawyers and organization which help protect us.’

Overall, from the data one could conclude that there is a certain depth to the cooperation between national-anarchist groups and human rights/liberal organizations. While some of these relationships are more business-centred, namely at the groups legal issues for example, others are more multi-stranded. There has not been an extensive mentioning of strong interpersonal or friendship ties between the two groups however, some smaller connections do exist. Overall, human rights groups as well as members of Nationalist-Anarchist groups mostly exist in benevolent co-existence, with activists joining each other's activities in regular intervals. Examples of where this particularly holds true are events such as the Kyiv Pride or the International Women's March in which members of both groups are represented. Members of National-Anarchist groups frequently highlighted that it is important for their group to show their faces at these types of larger-scale events. Also, to a certain extent to demonstrate their willingness to show unity within the Radical Left towards the outside world.

### **(7.3) Relationship between National Anarchists and Post-Anarchist Groups**

Regarding other groups in the wider spectrum of the New Radical Left such as the L'viv based Black Flag and Ecological Platform, which could be classified in ideological terms as post-anarchist groups and which closely cooperate, and members of the National Anarchist spectrum

one field of cooperation stuck out from the data. While asking respondents from Autonomous Resistance about their cooperation with Black Flag and Ecological Platform they would regularly reply that in terms of ideology they often disagree with each other. Cleavages are mostly based on disparities such as Autonomous Resistance's strong pro-Ukrainian, anti-imperial stance as well as their members' engagement in ATO. However, all three groups have experienced repressions by the Ukrainian Security Service (SbU) and the local police. When asked, one member of Autonomous Resistance mentioned that when these searches became more frequent among their own members, they would provide legal assistance and help in any way they could. When the same happened to members of Black Flag, solidarity between the groups prevailed. Respondent (R7) elaborates:

‘We cannot leave them alone in such a situation and vice versa, the situation is with Black Flag, when they had the same searches and security checks by SbU their activists were just left alone with the situation. Avtonomy Opir understood that they must protect them and that Black Flag is more relevant and closer in political orientation to us than far-right organizations, and we tried to support some of their activists who had these searches happen to them. The support takes the form of going to the court and trying to persuade in a sense of this activists, also we went to SbU and trying to make a “picket” in front of their Lviv branch because one of the left activists of Black Flag, he might be convicted for ten years of prison’.

What sticks out from the data is the explicit mentioning of the fact that Black Flag ideologically is closer to them, which is the reason they deserve solidarity. Even though the two groups have common disagreements regarding how the left should position itself vis-a-vis the war and the Ukrainian state, they can come together on an ad-hoc basis. Additionally, in terms of the relationships in-between the groups it became apparent that there has been overlap between members of Ecological Platform, Black Flag and Autonomous Resistance in terms of joining each other's activities. One has to say though that these incidents usually occur on the individual activists' level while on the group level the group's relationship with each other remains strained.

#### **(7.4) Conflict between various groups of the Ukrainian Radical Left**

As it has been touched upon throughout chapter 6 a multitude of cleavages exist within the Ukrainian Radical Left and between its main actors. Starting with the strongest frictions between groups, one can find that tensions between particularly groups from the National-Anarchist coalition (Autonomous Resistance, Black Committee, New Fire, Nihilist and former Black Rainbow\*) and groups such as Revolutionary Action and Black Flag, as well as Ecological

Platform are the strongest. This is due to these groups being the most ideologically opposed regarding the major cleavages elaborated upon in the first chapter of this analysis. While the conflict between Revolutionary Action and members of Nihilist as well as conflict between Social Movement and members of Black Rainbow has been elaborated upon in detail in earlier sections, one observation will be addressed in this section, which is the state of social relations between these groups despite conflicts.

The first would be regarding the positionality of the group Ecological Action based in Kharkiv. They were particularly interesting as they represented a more traditional anarchist style, meaning very connected to traditional Ukrainian and Russian anarchist philosophers while simultaneously combining them with post-anarchistic values such as a strong focus on DIY culture. Often members of Ecological Action took an intermediary position between national-anarchist groups and their counterparts. They would highlight that on a personal level they would support any group in the wider Ukrainian Radical Left spectrum with the exceptions of groups such as RKAS, SAU and Borotba in case they would come under fire by the Sbu, the police or far-right forces. This demonstration of solidarity for other activists, and their willingness to contribute and support in material and immaterial ways to events organized by other groups highlighted the ambiguity of the state of the Ukrainian Radical Left. Often respondents would argue that the only reason they fail to support each other more visibly in each other's protests is the distance between the different cities' communities and the expenses that go along with it. This observation is rather interesting as it means that on an individual basis personal relations, friendships and romantic relations exist and flourish. One respondent (R4) exclaimed that she thinks that even though the Ukrainian Radical Left was weakened after 2015 it is now recovering. Saying that they have become smarter and better in tackling the framing of their groups as 'Russian agents' and 'separatists', she also made very interesting comments about the 'ideological purity' of the movement, saying that for them this is an unachievable goal.

Arguing that members of her own collective joined far-right groups in activities aimed against the Kharkiv 'Anti-Maidan' or anti-corruption protests highlights the biggest division line separating pragmatist groups such as Ecological Action and more ideologically settled groups such as Black Flag and Ecological Platform. Activists from the latter two groups highlighted that for them, accepting Nazis or activists affiliated with far right or nationalist groups remains a highly controversial issue and they would refrain from admitting such members. Members of Black Flag and Ecological Action for example expressed their discontent for actions such as the 'Noch na Bankova' where members of human rights organizations, liberal civil society organizations as well as members of National Corpus and Azov protested together against the

inactivity of the Poroshenko government against attacks on civic activists. One respondent (R1) who is in a romantic relationship with the former C-14 member Dimitry Riznichenko says:

‘Former members and me, we meet with each other, with Dimity, and we joined New Fire because after this meeting my comrades did not understand why I tried to speak to Nazis’.

The continuous conflict between members of Nihilist and members of Revolutionary Action that unfolded via social media is an example in which two groups were unable to bridge their overall ideological disputes. Respondent (R9) remembers that after the attack on a Roma camp in L’viv he reached out to members of Black Flag and Ecological Platform only to be rejected by them:

‘When I tried to interview them (Black Flag/Ecological Platform) on what was going on they denied the interview saying that they have no business with our journal. I explained, well okay, you are not theoretically don’t agree with us because we support the army and you are 100% fucking true anarchist that are not supporting anything tied with the active state. Well, it’s okay, I can accept that position, but we do have a common enemy. And we have to fight that enemy and cooperate. But they rejected this proposition but shortly after that they gave an interview to a pro-Russian journal Strana.ua and Shari.net’.

Overall, one could conclude that social relations between different groups within the spectrum of the Ukrainian Radical Left continue to be filled with tensions. Even though on a personal level multi-stranded relationships between the groups exist, they are mostly bound to the groups place of origin. After Euromaidan, many respondents highlighted that with the intensification of cleavages groups’ overall patterns of cooperation were affected.

### **(7.5) Conflicts in-between far-right groups**

Conflicts in-between groups from the far-right spectrum mostly were between members of traditionalist and nationalist groups. Respondent (R1) who had the most personal connections to activists from the far-right spectrum pointed out that the state of the contemporary Ukrainian far-right is as equally divided than the radical left. Elaborating on this point, she says that major cleavages splitting the movement also go according to ideological lines as well as the Russia and war question. This split is particularly prevalent between members of traditionalist groups and nationalist ones.

‘There is a part of traditionalist group called Silver Rose/Sribna Roza/Срібна Роза which is small anti-feminist group. I know traditionalists from this group had problems with C-14.’

When asked about cooperation's between activist from Katechon and Zentropa with Neo-Nazi groups such as C-14, (R10) mentions that they do not get along very well at all times and (R1) confirms that sometimes the in-fighting within the Ukrainian Radical Right, particularly between Nationalists and Conservatives is strong. One of the reasons for conflicts with in particular C-14 is their leader. As (R1) puts it:

‘Very often they are personal connections that they have. And for example, I do not know if write down right-wings such as C-14 now they have many problems with right-wing community because their leader Evhen Karas/Євген Карась, he is not a good person.’

While many examples were given for internal conflicts within the Ukrainian far-right one can also observe cooperation. Respondent (R1) exclaims at some point during the interview that most interpersonal connections between the scenes is based on whether people were ‘civil’ in their behaviour. Arguing that members of C-14 had many problems with their own scene, was in her opinion due to the fact their communicative style mimicked ‘common hooligans’. At some point, she even says that she decides on a case-to-case basis which members of the far-right she talks to. Paraphrasing her she says that ‘with some Nazis you can talk to and others you cannot’.

### **(7.6) Cooperation within far-right groups**

When asked about the cooperation in-between groups on the far-right mostly the relationship between National Korpus and Right Sector would be mentioned. When asked about their exact entanglement (R1) describes:

‘National Korpus used other organizations named Pravy Sector to do all the job. But like actually by exact directions from Nationalny Korpus because Nationalny Korpus is a political party and they are allowed by law to do what they were doing there or to make such actions or to have for example paramilitary branch [which they have]. And to some parliamentary activities because they will be just banned and excluded from other political parties and therefore National Korps used Pravy Sector and other minor organization to do their job and to present on this far-right actions and events.’

But their relationships with one another are not only within the legal sphere. Arguing that both groups membership base mostly overlaps (R7) explains that:

‘From Svoboda/Свобода to Nationalny Korpyus to Pravy Sector. And in Lviv in there are also representatives of ‘Tradition and Order’ and C-14. But for anarchist’s organization they don’t exist, it is very funny that basically the same people from National Korps and Pravy Sector they are just going to ‘pickets’ and saying that we are representing ‘Tradition and Order’ so here they are but basically they are just the same people.’

Relationships between Ukrainian value conservative groups such as Katechon, Zentropa, Tradition and Order as well as Sisterhood of Saint Olga are well established and exist. When asked respondent (R1) affirmed:

‘Traditie I paradok? They conservative but they have connections with right-wings too’

Continuing that the relationship is mostly on a personal, friendship basis or due to relationships. This is particularly the case between anti-feminist, traditionalist organizations such as the Sisterhood and Saint Olga and the Silver Rose and groups such as Tradition and Order.

‘So, they are all affiliated with each other, but it is all more personal. Because part of Katechon is the Sisterhood of Saint Olga, with leader Oleksandra Sklar. She is girlfriend of leader of Traditie and Paradok.’

### **(7.7) Relationship between members of the National-Anarchist Alliance and far-right/nationalist groups**

Regarding areas of cooperation between members of national-anarchist groups and far-right groups, three main areas for cooperation were being mentioned. One is in the field of ecological protests the other in the area of corruption and or labour rights. When asked about personal connections to traditionalist groups, (R1) explains that:

‘Yes, for example a guy who is a member of Katechon he is a leader of a small Trade Union group in “Кривий Ріх/Кривий Річ” and he met people from Labour Initiatives – yes. In ecology, sometimes yes. People from National Corps and Azov and people who are liberals, yes, they can be connected. But more often it is not something open. You can have a friendship with someone, and you can know some of their rumours.’

Confirming that these personal connections, whether friendships, romantic or otherwise connected are mostly know via rumours within the movement but seldom outright confirmed. Following up on what she means by that she replies that:

‘Yes, for example feminist can have a relationship with right-wing guys. It is a friendship, it is a connection by sex, by friendship, by common job not activist job at all. People can work together in some ordinary companies and in left-part, now we have liberal organization such as Insight which is an LGBT organization or Amnesty International for example.’

Saying that the cooperation between members of groups is usually on a personally level she continues that for her former organization Black Rainbow, she had no issues in working together with individuals from the conservative groups Katekhon or Zentropa:

‘I do have friends (among) Katekhon for example by Zentropa too. But in politics we have of course very different positions and we never made something together. Because there is a very big difference between us.’

That there is cooperation between left-wing groups and right-wing groups is also not only the case in cities such as Kyiv but a Ukraine-wide phenomenon with one respondent (R3) highlighting Odesa’s specificity in relationships such as that:

‘Yes, we know about them. But in Odessa they are very strange, it’s like the city of post-modernism where ultra-right and ultra-left forces when they work together for example.’

Another example of cooperation between groups and activist from the anarchist-nationalist spectrum and groups from the far-right spectrum is the common organization of events such as lectures. (R1) explains how her organization and the conservative group Sisterhood of Saint Olga planned to co-organize an event on feminism in Kharkiv.

‘I will have a lecture in Kharkiv but before March, because in March I will be here. Lecture will be about anti-feminist groups such as the Sisterhood of Saint Olga and we would even like to organize some type of discussion with me and Oleksandra Sklar but we do not know whether that is possible. Because some personal biases.’

## **(7.8) Conflicts between far-right and Ukrainian Radical Left**

Summarizing the relations between the Ukrainian far right and radical left one can argue that since Euromaidan, attacks predominantly from actors of the far-right towards activists from the radical left have been increasing. Respondents described that the cultural wars of 2011-2012 that mostly saw fights between members of the Radical Left hardcore scene and far-right hooligans shifted to other activities such as the destruction of events, demonstrations and pickets planned by the Radical Left.

‘One traditionalist group they tried to attack feminist organizations, events, LGBT events. People from Katechon organized attacks this summer, they tried to attack Kyiv pride, but police beat them.’

Attack on members of the LGBTQ+ scene as well as feminist events started to become the focus point of attacks since 2013. One activist (R1) remembers that former members of Black Rainbow fought with activists from C-14 from 2015 onward. The reason for the hostilities were that former C-14 member Dimytro (...) exposed the current C-14 leader Evghen Karas connections to the Ukrainian Security Service (SbU) in a public social media post:

‘Yes, I and Dima were in this discussion and people who organized it. Right-wings they promised us that it will be safe. But C-14 went there and tried to attack us. Five people from their side and two people from the other side. So, after that this conflict became, a small one. They now sometimes write something, but they try to stay away far.’

Through the creation of the nationalist-anarchist group New Flame, this particular activist was able to pull conservative groups away from attacking LGBTQ+ organizations more publicly.

‘Yes, we had a very big subcultural war with them. We stopped it former Spring. When traditionalists who are not Nazis but conservatist’s from Katekhon and other organizations. They tried to conflict with LGBT organizations and after that they made their event against left-liberal activists. And they asked me to be a person with a opposite position on their lecture. On their discussion and after that people from C-14 tried to attack us and they had.’

Other groups that were targeted by traditionalist groups were events by the LGBTQ+ organizations Inside and Sfera as well as Amnesty International. The history of attacks on such events has led the Ukrainian Radical Left to organize their own security. Whether this security is provided by trained members of likeminded anarchist groups or by organizing

self-defence for their activists, one can see that their behaviour changed according to threat posed by the far-right. While the Kyiv scene has been traditionally hit regularly by counter protests and attacks on activists' other cities such as Kharkiv saw a drop of violence after 2014. When asked about the frequency of attacks and who perpetrated them they would reply that attacks on anarchist spaces such as the former Kharkiv based squat 'Avtonomia' or the current autonomous space 'Bunker' were mostly carried out by Tradition and Order or Freikorps. Talking to another activist from the Kharkiv hard-core scene, he pointed out that he is surprised with the low activity of attacks in Kharkiv throughout the last two years. While participating in the Kharkiv Women's March this year, (R5) exclaimed that:

'What I see is that the problem is coming back. Because here in Kharkiv we had some people in our scene, in the Kharkiv Hardcore scene which were attacked recently on the street.'

Soon after the interview the interviewee noted that a hard-core music event the same evening was attacked by members of Freikorps spraying pepper spray.

Summarizing the this part of the analysis, one can conclude that the overall outline of group cooperation between the different political fringe groups operating with Ukraine has changed since 2013-2014. Due to the building of extensive cleavages within the radical Ukrainian left, some groups have shifted their focus towards the political mainstream or even recruiting members of the radical right. In the example of nationalist-anarchist groups one can observe the variety of actors that exist within their personal networks. While they focus on creating inter-group solidarities through a variety of means, they additionally reach out and attempt to recruit new members from different political backgrounds. Their approach on pragmatism additionally affects their willingness to deal with the Ukrainian state and members of the far-right. These connections are also based on either interest of the group or because they share a common priority. In the case of national anarchist joining ATO and becoming veterans one link stems from there.

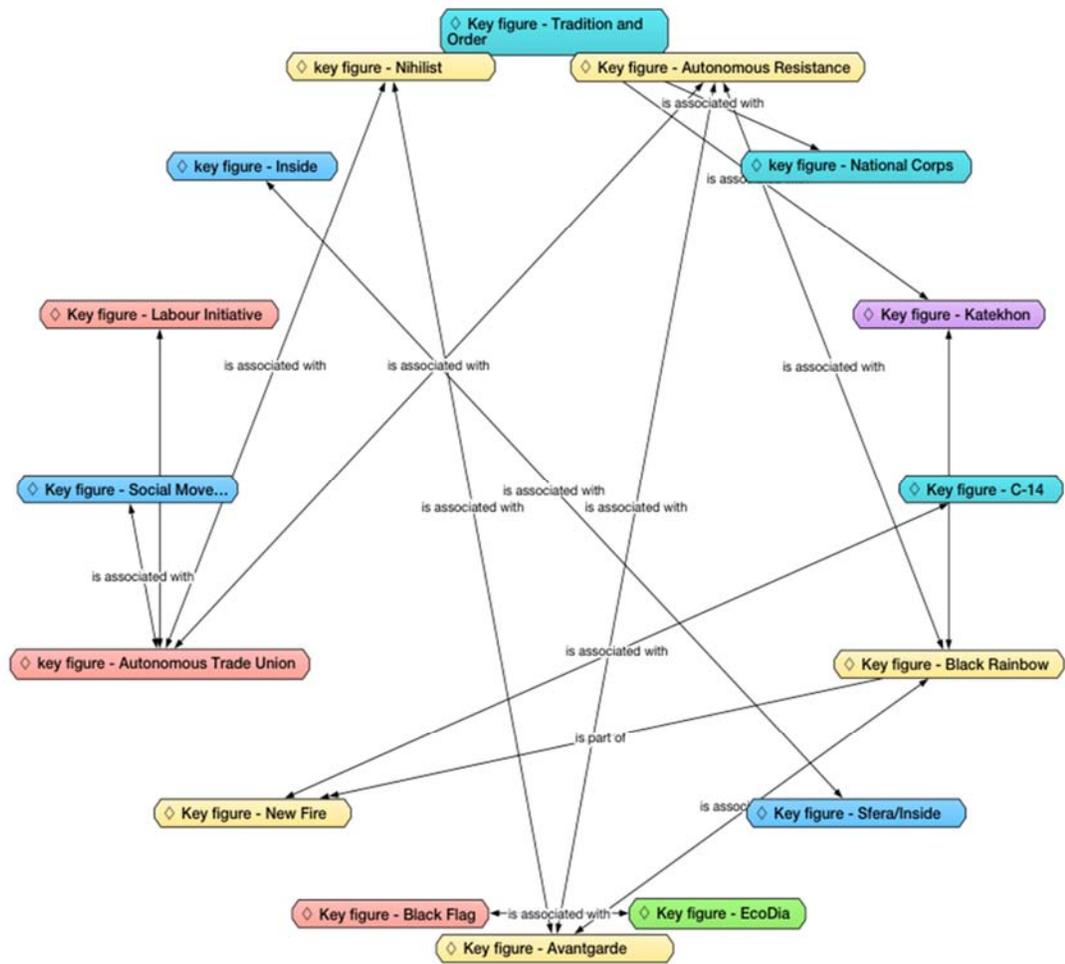


Figure 1.1 Overview of key activist's personal connections

## **Conclusion**

In the introduction, the author has made a claim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the existing micro-dynamics within the contemporary Ukrainian Radical Left since the Euromaidan Revolution in 2013-2014. With Euromaidan facilitating an already pre-existing split within the Radical Left, one can see acceleration of this process whereby two main camps emerged. While one group overall emphasizes the necessity of the Ukrainian Radical Left to take a stance regarding the Russian annexation of Crimea and aggression in the Eastern territories, this newly formed group of national anarchists frame the current geopolitical dilemma of Ukraine within an ongoing anti-imperial struggle. The second group, self-described traditional anarchists, fail to share this interpretation of national anarchism, often outright claiming an intermediary position within the war. They argue that the driving factors for the war are the profit driven vulture capitalism of Ukraine's and Russia's elites as well as their ongoing corruption schemes. Arguing that the working-class gets instrumentalized in viewing the war as a clash of Ukrainian vs. Russian culture, these groups continue rejecting the Ukrainian state and military apparatus.

Within these two broader streams existing in the current movement of the Ukrainian Radical Left since 2014, one can constitute that all of them operate as active political fringe groups within the Ukrainian political sphere. Moreover, scientific literature thus far has neglected studying these movements in detail and little information of the movement remains accessible. Additionally, often broad generalizations about the movements size, function and ideology prevail. The author argues that these groups' internal micro-dynamics and exhibited cleavages since 2014 fittingly visualize divisions within Ukrainian political fringe groups as well as to a certain extent Ukrainian society as a whole.

In order to give an answer on the main research questions and consecutive sub-questions Participant Observation, semi-open interviews and a social network analysis were carried out. This research aimed to provide an answer to the following question: to which extent cleavages within the Ukrainian radical left prior and following 2013 Euromaidan have affected the creation of a new national-anarchist movement?

The overall pre-existence of cleavages within the Ukrainian radical left pre- and post-Euromaidan has had high significance in the creation of the new branch of national-anarchist movement. This is because pre-existing cleavages were multi-fold and multi-layered even before the civil war continued to polarize the Ukrainian left. This is due to the old left's attraction and platform imploded with the impeachment of Yanukovych, and the post-Euromaidan was significantly weakened the structural conditions for a successful radical left seemed futile but

nevertheless the scene recovered slowly. As elaborated upon throughout the analysis the major cleavages that pre and post-Maidan within the scene were conglomeration of issues such as internalized sexism within the movement, issues regarding hierarchy and the interpretation of anarchist ideology and principles. As the fight was mostly between who got anarchism 'right' and who got it 'wrong' pre-Euromaidan, the discourse changed significantly post-Euromaidan. Within the beginning of the war in the East and the invasion of Russian troops supporting the separatists, the main cleavage slowly began moving towards issues such as militarization, the Ukrainian state and overall strategy on how to deal with Russia's aggression. Ichshenko mentions in his 2015 article 'the Ukrainian Left during and after the Maidan Protests' how the Ukrainian left was unable to distance itself clearly from Russian politics and the flirtations by some of its members with the anti-Maidan protests (Ichshenko, 2015). When Borotba appeared on the stage of Ukrainian politics supporting the so-called 'anti-imperial struggle' of the DNR and LNR, the movement suffered a heavy blow in credibility from which it did not fully recover until this day. Most respondents mentioned in that in their view it was difficult to accurately assess the situation at the beginning of the insurgency. They acknowledge that the late and hesitant reaction by their groups could have contributed to the movements demise. They particularly highlight how the division within the movement was dependent on the interpretation of the war and consequential needed actions.

The argument formulated on the basis of the literature review was that in order to actively contribute to the debate surrounding 'uncivil society' one must actually be able to map out how such groups operate in practice. In the methodological sections as well as in the theoretical part it has been highlighted the actors who fell under the umbrella term of the Ukrainian 'New Radical Left' are in practice an extremely ideologically diverse group of actors and groups which can both be classified as part of civil society and as a social movement. Nevertheless, the argument can be made that they fit the definition of 'civil society' as 'associational qualities which they conceptualize as a sphere 'distinct but in a special relationship with the state' (Chambers & Kopstein, 2009, p. 359). Regarding the case-study used within this thesis, namely national-anarchist groups, one can argue that even though they fit the definition of 'uncivil society' as outlined by Kopesky & Mudde, meaning operating against the political status quo, forming anti-systemic opposition, being predominantly grass-root activism as well as exemplifying a non-formalized organizational structure, they exemplify a high willingness to cooperate with the state. Members of national anarchist groups have highlighted their overall pragmatic approach towards the state. Due to the fact that within their political ideology they interpret anarchist as well as traditional left-wing political values as being connected to an anti-imperial struggle,

defending Ukraine's territorial integrity against the Russian aggressor takes precedence to other issues. With many members of the nationalist-anarchist groups actively joining ATO and becoming veterans, they highlight the need to be attractive to the mainstream and to actively decrease the negative branding and stereotypes surrounding the word 'left-wing'.

Answering the research question 2 as to why these groups have emerged after 2014 and why one can conclude that they filled a structural gap within the Ukrainian political spectrum, after the split of the Autonomous Worker's Union and then later the events of Euromaidan voices for a strong pro-Ukrainian position of left-wing groups were becoming louder. Many young people that were interested in progressive political topics such as social inequality, minority rights but also fighting corruption saw that these issues were inseparable from fighting Russian aggression. In their line of argumentation Putin's regime represents a strong conservative, back-war agenda very much resembling the cultural conservative climate of the Yanukovich era. By adopting strong pro-Ukrainian rhetoric, a focus on Ukrainian language and progressive politics, they argue they can provide a credible alternative for the whole Ukrainian political system. By making themselves the anti-thesis of everything they consider Russian, national anarchists have reframed the political debate in their favor. As many activists have highlighted, they are positive about the future potential of such a political movement as they are providing a viable alternative to the social conservatism propagated by the Ukrainian far-right.

In making a statement about the re-appropriation of the term nationalist one can see why the topic of historical legacies and figures was included as part of this research questions. In order to get away from the very negative framing of left-wing politics, and in order to help co-construct a historical narrative of Ukrainian statehood a linearity is drawn between the ever-existing anti-imperial struggle against an aggressive Russia, imperial Russia or Soviet Union in which heroes such as 20<sup>th</sup> century Ukrainian intellectual's such as Mykhailo Drahomanov, Ivan Franko and Mykhailo Pavlyk as well as figures such as Nestor Makhno are incorporated into the emporium of progressive Ukrainian heroes. This reframing is necessary as to appeal to average Ukrainians in their perspective, as they argue Ukraine is in need of a strong and alternative foundational state myth. By incorporating controversial issues such as the role of the OUN and UPA into their political program instead of shying away from them, they attempt a synthetization of Ukrainian history that allows for a more nuanced understanding of history than does the story told by the radical right or the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance. The inclusion of the sub question a) as part of research question 2 therefore has been in order to shed light on why they are engaging in this process and what it says about the need for the creation of such a myth within the Ukrainian society as a whole. For left-wing politics, their re-framing attempt and overall long-term political strategy that is based on consensus and a plurality of

opinions stands as an inspiring and fascinating example and in direct contrast to contemporary left-wing groups in Western Europe.

By having demonstrated how they use Ukraine's particular historical and cultural context for their own means, it is demonstrated how left-wing movements today are faced with a similar challenge than throughout history and how they can respond to external shocks in a constructive way. Additionally, in order to understand this specific branch of interpreting anarchist ideology, it was necessary to bring together all the different historical bits that have shaped the Ukrainian left-wing movement. The latter part was of particular relevance, as much of this phenomenon might not be misunderstood otherwise by a reader with a western-European background. Overall, the case-study of national anarchist raises interesting questions regarding the question as to how far 'anti-systemic opposition' can really exist. A point that has also brought up in the Chambers & Kopstein (2009) article where the existence of 'anti-politics' is criticized under the assumption that the dichotomy between the state and the sphere of civil society is overemphasized. One can argue that in the case-study of national-anarchist groups, they operate both within the boundaries of being 'anti-systemic' opposition as well as they do 'cooperate' with the state. This is due to the fact that they view the Ukrainian state as necessary to protect Ukraine's territorial independence against the Russian aggression and their overall pragmatism towards the current political system (Berman, 1995). Coming back to the argument laid out by Sheri Berman, namely questioning the assumption that an active and strong civil society as being inherently beneficial to democracies, one can argue that in the case of national-anarchist groups that they do not constitute an active threat to the political institutions at this moment in time. This is due to the fact that the national-anarchist movement is still very much entangled in infighting with other groups within the Radical Left spectrum as well as due to the fact that their overall priority is supporting the ATO in the occupied territories.

Regarding research question 3 on how the relationship between actors of the 'New Radical Left' and other political fringe in the Ukrainian political system changed since 2013, one can say that at its current state the Ukrainian radical left's internal division remain significant. On an ideological level members of national-anarchist groups and traditionalist groups have found toward each other based on both groups prioritization of the war. Overall, one can observe many interlinkages between group members that encompass a multitude of relationships such as friendship, romantic relationships, material and immaterial support and overall event attendance. While many activists confirm that these linkages exist informally and are often not outright spoken about, they continue to murky the waters for outsiders seeking to understand Ukraine's contemporary left.

While it is a limitation of this research that it was carried out mostly in the English language, it still provides a first step in shedding light onto such communities, attempting to position their unique existence in their own right.

To understand how radical fringe groups operate within contemporary Ukraine, one recommendation would be that more ethnographic research is needed. As most groups operate in zones of 'informality' and offside the formalized political processes, one needs to 'go beyond ordinary politics' (Froio & Gattanara, 2015) to which ethnographic research can contribute profoundly.

## **Annex**

Interviewguide

Alexandra Wishart – 2313886

### I) Background

#### **Research purpose**

The context of this research seeks to shed light on how the Ukrainian anarchist movement manoeuvres itself within a political landscape shook by the war against Russia in its East. By analysing how different social movements active on the political fringes of the Ukrainian presidential democratic system operate, information is sought that gives clarification not only on the different players that exist but also on the ways political communities are built in contemporary Ukraine. As a country undergoing significant political and social transformation, the timeliness of this research cannot be overestimated. With Ukraine pushing for democratic reform, the country experiences the effects of a pro-European alignment with political fringe groups on both sides of the political spectrum striving for visibility. While much attention is given to the prominence of far-right groups operating within Ukraine, similar patterns on the left remain understudied.

#### **Ukrainian Context**

In the case of the Ukrainian political system, the events of the Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-backed separatist war in Ukraine's East have all influenced the building of ideological cleavages within an already diverse group of actors within Ukraine's radical left. Already existing pre-Maidan cleavages openly erupted in 2013 with the breaking apart of Ukraine's biggest anarchist organization, the Autonomous Workers Union on the issue of political support for Euromaidan. Splinters of different factions continued their work in a variety of different organizations and initiatives. One anarchist group emerging from the remnants of the Autonomous Worker's Union became notorious for its support of Russia and separatists fight in the East as well as adopting an openly Stalinist political agenda. This group known as 'Borotba' which joined separatists in the DNR and PRD also claimed a narrative of fighting an 'anti-imperial struggle'. They argued that the Ukrainian government represented a 'fascist junta' while the separatists in the East were fighting to protect their sovereignty and relationship to Russia. In return a cry for a 'pro-Ukrainian' anarchist movement within the radical left emerged to counteract this tendency. A new social movement influenced by an ideology of 'national anarchism' and

the fight for an ‘Ukrainian national liberation struggle’ and against a neo-imperial Russia was born.

## **Research Questions**

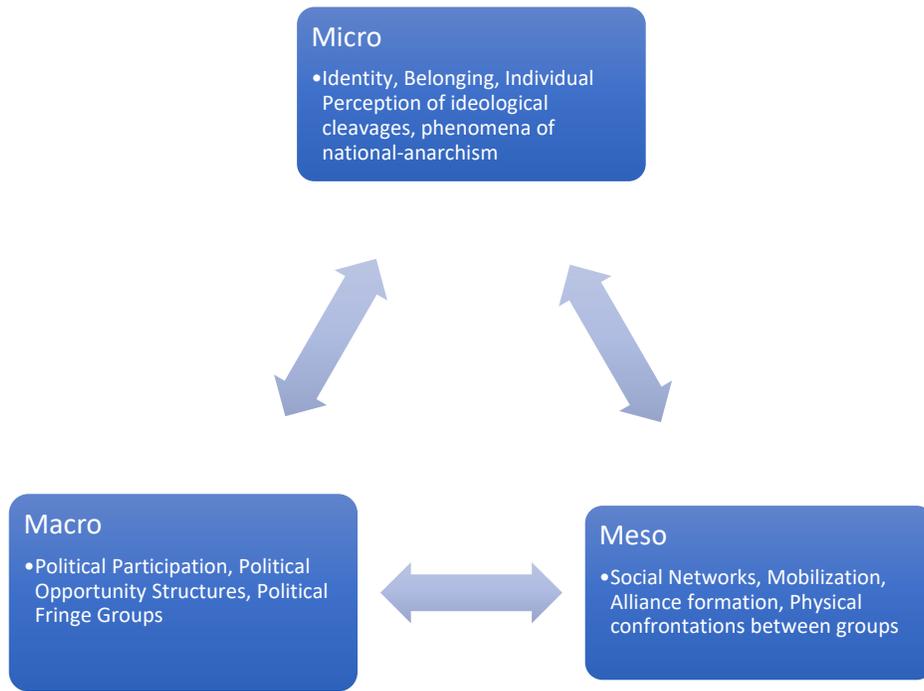
It is the aim of this research to address the ways in which social movements and radical groups can change their political agendas and alliances due to shocking and unexpected political events. Arguing that while political opportunity structures matter, internal dynamics within movements often are heavily influenced by activist’s individual perception of these political events and consecutively influence the movements political course and future alliance building. Posing the question of how and why internal cleavages within the pre-Maidan Ukrainian radical left have led to a fragmentation of the movement, the second level of analysis the research then seeks to address on why this in turn has led to the creation of a new Ukrainian specific political phenomena - national anarchism. This research additionally seeks to bridge between a macro and micro level of analysis. Answering the question of the overall state of Ukraine’s radical left and their importance in the Ukrainian political sphere, it additionally zooms into how this dynamic has played out on the micro level. In the case of the national-anarchist movement this research understands their existence and ideological position as a grass-root initiative filling a structural gap missing in then Ukraine’s left.

As anarchist groups participate in the Ukrainian political landscape and engage in several networks with other groups inside and outside of Ukraine, this research too aims to clarify the impact and extent of these structures by employing a Social Network Analysis based approach. Due to the fact that the events of 2013 blurred the ideological lines of traditional left and right wing politics as well as the revitalization of the historical Ukrainian tradition of National Socialism, not to be confused with the German type, a unique entanglement of actors, social networks and political ideologies has emerged. By using ethnographic research methods, it will be ensured that the respondents are the center of the analysis. By depicting social networks and personal attitudes of activists between and within political fringe groups in Ukraine, this research combines an anthropological analysis with a political science perspective. Being explorative means that the operationalization handled in this research will be crafted endogenously and iteratively as the research moves along. The core concepts used for the operationalization will be derived from my research questions and outlined beneath.

**Q1: To which extent have internal cleavages within the Ukrainian radical left prior and post 2013 Euromaidan affected the creation of a new national-anarchist- movement?**

[The phenomena of so-called ‘national-anarchist’ political fringe groups within the Ukrainian political landscape must be interpreted as a direct result of the internal split within the ‘New Radical Left’ prior to Euromaidan and the movement’s internal cleavages regarding the political attitudes towards the Russian-backed separatist war in the Eastern territories]

### Levels of Analysis



My understanding of the different levels of analysis within my research is that they overlap with each other. One cannot simply make a clear division between these different levels of analysis; however, some questions come first in precedence that deal with the emic understanding of what the participant is engaged in before slapping theoretical labels on her/him. In that regard, I also see belonging as an important part that feeds into the community itself and the support it provides. As the more interesting questions the research aims to answer deal with the impact these groups have, political participation and activism are clearly a more macro-factor influenced by the sum of the meso- and micro-factors.

**Sub-questions:**

1. How did have individual members of groups belonging to the Ukrainian ‘radical left’ experience the building of cleavages prior to and post Euromaidan?
2. How did these existing cleavages facilitate the birth of a new ‘national-anarchist’ movement’?
3. What are the dominant historical and political narratives members of the ‘national-anarchist’ position themselves and the movement in?
4. How do they operate within the Ukrainian political sphere and how have their actions been repressed by other actors?
5. How has the relationship between actors of the ‘New Radical Left’ and other political fringe in the Ukrainian political system changed since 2013?
6. How have these changes in relationship impacted these groups social networks and their motivation to connect with different actors within and outside the Ukrainian political system?

**Two focuses: 1. Cleavages, 2. Actor-centered networks**

Time-frame: 45 Minutes

Type: Semi-structured

**Sub-questions operationalization: (key concepts)**

**Personal Perception/ Social Network/ Identity/ Activism/**

➔ focus lies here on emic view of the respondent!

**Identification to Collective/Group**

How would they define anarchism and being a political activist? -> How did you get in contact with political activism? -> which collectives? -> How long have they been a part within the collective? To whom do they feel connected most within the group?

### **Political Activism in the Ukrainian Context**

-> are there any special characteristics about political activism in the Ukrainian context? What is your understanding of the term 'national anarchism'? -> How would they define the contemporary state of activism in Ukraine?

-> What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about anarchist activism in Western countries? -> How has and does the war affect your political views, affiliations and how activist groups have developed?

-> What is your personal opinion on groups working together with so-called "far-right groups" > how would you divide the Ukrainian political scene, which categories of separation make the most sense to you? -> Has there been a rebranding of left-leaning movements in Ukraine?

### **Persecution due to political affiliation**

Have they ever felt discriminated against or being harmed due to their connection to the collective? -> Police discrimination & SBU, by the University, Employer etc. -> How acute would you label the threat of the current rise of nationalist groups in Ukraine?

### **Activities**

What are the political activities and actions, the groups they are affiliated with, participate in? -> How frequently are they participating in these activities?

### **Social Networks & PA**

What is the outline of the social networks they maintain both with like-minded activist in Ukraine? -> let them draw out the different groups based on ideology and how they relate towards different issues

## **Observation Proforma (PO) related questions -> triangulated with interview-answers**

What are the political activities and actions, they are participating in?

(Civil society activities, going to municipality hearings, open-mic gatherings, planned events etc.)

(Observation of their social networks in action, the way they support each other during events and other)

### **Annex B: Code Book**

The code book by Klandermans et. al (1986) was used as guideline and inspiration for an existing coding scheme. It was consecutively adapted and operationalized according to the specific Research Questions of this dissertation. The code book was crafted endogenously according to the findings visible in the data.

#### 1. Cleavages within the ‘radical left’

##### 1.1 Contradicting opinions prior to Euromaidan

- 1.1.1 Attitude towards hierarchy/principle of egalitarianism
- 1.1.2 Attitudes towards the war, annexation of Crimea, separatism
- 1.1.3 Attitudes towards sexism
- 1.1.4 Attitudes towards nationalism/patriotism
- 1.1.5 Attitudes towards the state
- 1.1.6 Attitudes towards the military
- 1.1.7 Attitudes towards Russia
- 1.1.8 Attitude towards ‘National Liberation Struggle’

##### 1.2 Contradicting opinions post-Maidan

- 1.2.1 Attitude towards hierarchy/principle of egalitarianism
- 1.2.2 Attitudes towards the war, annexation of Crimea, separatism
- 1.2.3 Attitudes towards sexism
- 1.2.4 Attitudes towards nationalism/patriotism
- 1.2.5 Attitudes towards the state

- 1.2.6 Attitudes towards the military
  - 1.2.7 Attitudes towards Russia
  - 1.2.8 Attitude towards 'National Liberation Struggle'
- 1.3 Confrontations between groups within the radical left
- 1.4 Physical confrontation with actors from the radical right
- 2. Entry to the organization
  - 2.1 Joining on personal initiative
  - 2.2. Joining on exterior recruitment (networks)
  - 2.3 Past experience in other political groups (radical right)
- 3. Level of Political Repression experienced while being a member
  - 3.1 via Ukrainian Security Service (SbU)
  - 3.2 via Police
  - 3.3 via other channels
- 4. Critical Events
  - 4.1 Marches, Demonstrations, gatherings, DIY etc.
  - 4.2 Self-organization of educational lectures
  - 4.3 Organization of sport events for self-protective purposes
  - 4.4 Involvement in municipal hearings, active participation in local communities
- 5. Social Networks
  - 5.1 Density of cooperation between different groups
  - 5.2 Affiliation based on location
  - 5.3 Affiliation based on shared political agenda
  - 5.4 Attitude towards cooperating with other political fringe groups (radical right)
- 6. National-Anarchist Groups
  - 6.1 Ideology
    - 6.1.1 Ideology of 'National-Anarchism': moral self-direction, total freedom, anti-authoritarianism, anti-imperial struggle, political pragmatism
    - 6.1.2 How the interviewee sees the ideology of the movement and eventual perceived discrepancies with traditional anarchist values
    - 6.1.3 Links with past ideologies: does the interviewee link or disconnect present and past?
  - 6.2 Structural Integration into the group
    - 6.2.1 Totality of integration: participation in other groups, social networks within movement and outside the movement, building of coalitions
    - 6.2.2 Participation in actions: demonstration, marches, campaigns etc.

## **Participant Observation #1 Observer-as-Participant**

Nine Observational Dimensions (Spradley, 1979)

Grand Tour Observations:

**Space:** The location of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March March was within the city center of Kharkiv. The march started out from near the metro station 'Ploschad Konstitucija' on Sumska Street and from there it moved towards the Kharkiv Opera following straight through the city center of Kharkiv. The whole March ended close to the metro station 'Museum' and the square located in front of the metro.

**Actor:** The main organizers of the Kharkiv Women's March was the group 'Sfera' a Kharkiv based LGBTQ+ organization linked to Inside in Kyiv. Their main organizer Anna Sheremetova brought together feminist collectives from different cities and political orientations. One actor among them were feminist activists from the Kharkiv anarchist based EcoDia. From their group, approximately 15 activists participated in the March. The total amount of people that joined the March was between 150 and 200 Gender balance: approximately 70% of the participants were female, 30% male. Core group of the organizing party: approximately 30 activists. Other actors involved in the March where the Kharkiv police, approximately 300 to 400 police men were employed to protect the March. Journalist and media representatives present: around ~ 80 people. On the counter protest, there were 5 women from an anti-feminist group close to the far-right group 'Tradition and Order'. From 'Tradition and Order' around 20 male activists were present.

**Activity:** People chanting slogans: 'Kitchen and fashion – is not freedom! 'Riot, make love and don't give your human rights away'; 'Girls and boys are both oppressed by patriarchy'; 'Women's rights – Human Rights'; 'Free Women – Free Country'; 'The place for women is everywhere'; '8<sup>th</sup> of March is not just for flowers'; 'My body my business'. People walking in a line towards the main gathering point in the center of Kharkiv. Some people with megaphones shouting instruction to the people participating in the March.

**Object:** Large banners with feminist slogans, memes or drawings (mostly Russian language, some in Ukrainian), rainbow flags and flags with the anarcho-feminist colors (black and purple), differently colored costumes, colored, people wearing make-up, some people wore facemasks.

**Act:** Among the individual acts observed where organizers trying to keep the masses in line. Some small statements by the organizers to TV/broadcasting representatives. Other small acts observed where individual participants of the March talking to outsiders observing the March from the sidelines. People joining in and out of the March to get a glimpse on the activity of the police.

**Event:** Organized on the official 8<sup>th</sup> of March international women's day 'Sfera' in Kharkiv organized it in order to draw attention to Women's Rights in Ukraine.

**Time:** The event started at twelve o'clock with a gathering of a crowd near the metro station. Police had already been at the location an hour in advance to secure the area. From there the crowd slowly started moving towards the city center at around 12:30. The March took around 45 to move to its final destination near the metro station 'Museum'. There the March came to a hold for around 30 minutes in which the participants shouted further slogans and engaged in a small shouting match with anti-feminist counter demonstrators. After this the crowd dispersed and small groups entered the metro.

**Goal:** The goal of the organizers was to draw attention to Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Ukraine. Their main focus was to express the political message that gender discrimination is still normalized within the political mainstream as is LGBTQ+ discrimination and visibility. Another goal was to achieve publicity within the media for their cause.

**Feeling:** Emotions felt and expressed by the present activists were mostly those of tension but also relief. Several activists we talked to after the March expressed their expectation of provocations and attacks on the side of the police as well as far-right counter protesters. During this 8<sup>th</sup> of March demonstration no physical attacks occurred, much to the surprise of many local activists. Overall, the March seemed calm, well organized and diverse in terms of participants. Many families with smaller children participated in the March, as were older people and members of the LGBTQ+ community. From the side of the police no attacks took place and the amount of openly discriminatory behavior was less than expected. Small provocation occurred among them one incident of a police using a homophobic slur towards a participant were observed.

Mini-Tour Observations

Before joining the Women's March on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March in Kharkiv, the decision was made to participate actively in it. Meaning that from the positionality of a researcher the position taken was not one of a passive observer. The reason for this decision was that in order to understand more about the political activism exhibited during the March it is best to observe it first-hand. The atmosphere experienced during the March was a friendly one, people helped each other or had short chats with each other. The organizers dropped in and out at the sidelines, watching and eyeing the police man as they were expecting a provocation by them. They themselves appeared tense and also had taken the decision to hide their identity. While the people participating in the March were very diverse, men and women, members of the LGBTQ+ scene as well as whole families, all of them participated in the activity of chanting slogans. Many people had brought self-made banners and posters which they held above themselves. What was noticeable was that some slogans were in Ukrainian while the language of nearly everyone participating in the March was mostly Russian. Some participants of the March had subcultural appearances, colored hair and more alternative clothes. While the March went through Kharkiv's city center, many bystanders stood at the sidelines watching the spectacle. Police and journalist flanked the March on its sidelines. When the March came to a stand still at the Museum Metro station, it was visible that a counter protest movement had arrived. Around 4/5 women were holding placards standing on a car placed on the right side of the metro. In front of them were 20/25 men from Kharkiv's Freikorps/Tradition and Order group. They started chanting 'The women's place is in the kitchen' while the participants of the March chanted back 'Women's Rights are Human Rights'. This dynamic kept ongoing for around five rounds of chants being met with counter-chants. After this the participants of the March dispersed in organized groups into the metro. The organizers made sure everyone left to a hidden location as the Women's March in the previous year had always been attacked. In the last year with the active help of the Kharkiv police.

One hypothesis formulated and derived from the observation on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March in Kharkiv was that for all activists present at the March represented a wide a diverse variety of actors fitting the definition of the 'New Radical Left'. Additionally, it was visible to the outside observer under which strong political pressure the organizers of the March stood. Attacks by the police and counter-demonstrators were not only expected but are a constant reality for political activists organizing events associated with left political ideals.









## **Participant Observation #2 Observer-as-Participant**

Nine Observational Dimensions (Spradley, 1979)

Grand Tour Observations:

**Space:** The event was held in the city of Vinnytsa, in Western-Central Ukraine in at restaurant Smereka, Pershotravneva 160. The restaurant was located in the center and had a conference room on the second floor. The style was traditionally Ukrainian. The room was spacious, with many windows while the bar was located on the ground floor.

**Actor:** The main organizers of the event was the group 'Avant-garde' which is third-party organization aiming to unify political activists sharing a similar version of 'nationalist-anarchism'. Among the members were official activists from Black Flag, a Vinnytsia and Kyiv based national-anarchist collective (around 12 people), people from Avtonomy Opir, mostly activist who came from Lviv (around 5 people) and activists from other locations (around 5 people). On top of this there were 2 people from a newly established anarchist village in the outskirts of Vinnytsa. Total amount of activist's present: 25. Gender balance: 4 women, 21 men. 1 Foreigner, 24 Ukrainians.

**Activity:** Official celebration due to the traditional date of 1<sup>st</sup> of May within anarchist circles. On top of it the group 'Black Flag' was founded 10 years prior to this date so both events were combined with each other. The overall event was semi-public but mostly intended as a social gathering of the members to celebrate the recent achievements of the Avant-garde project. The spokesperson of 'Avant-garde' Denis Kotov opened the event by giving a 15-minute speech regarding the progress of the movement and its history. The speech was due to the groups 10 year anniversary and a toast was given to which all participants enthusiastically cheered with Uzvar (traditional Ukrainian drink). After it a traditional Ukrainian three course dinner was served. (Borscht, Salad and potatoes with meat and an alternative for the seven vegetarians/vegans). After this a film about the Worker's Liberation Struggle in Argentina was shown, to raise awareness regarding worker's exploitation across the globe and increase international solidarity. After the movie, most people moved downstairs for the informal part of the event. Two concerts were held for which people donated 140 Hryvnia (around 5 Euro).

**Object:** Six large tables in the main room, decorated with white table cloths, plastic flower bouquets, wooden stools, larger screen for the movie in the middle of the room, beamer and banner of avant-garde outside of the room. Banner depicts a black and white pattern demonstrated below:



**Act:** Single actions carried out by people were people leaving the room to receive phone calls or to smoke. Individual activist were late due to arriving by train and long travel routes.

**Event:** Organizers of the 1<sup>st</sup> of May informal meeting in Vinnytsa envisioned it as a semi-informal meeting of activists and sympathizers in order to create team-building and motivate the movement going further. The event was not officially advertised but rather invitations were handled via activist's networks themselves.

**Time:** The event took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2019. To celebrate the event began 14:00 even though starting officially 20 minutes later. First people met whenever they arrived and while officially there was a schedule, much of the event's time planning was handled on an ad-hoc basis. Sequentially the event was opened with a speech by Denis Kotov, then the dinner was started and the movie began. After the movie, around 17:00 o'clock informal drinks were served

downstairs in another small room. People left for informal conversations and to smoke outside. After that the concerts started after seven o'clock and most people moved to the same room than the movie was screened at.

**Goal:** People were trying to accomplish a gathering to celebrate the birthday of 'Black Flag' as well as do justice to the tradition of the first of May 'Mayday'. In order to celebrate both the international worker's day and demonstrate international solidarity, it was another goal of the movement to appear strong and cohesive to the outside world and present the movements political manifest.

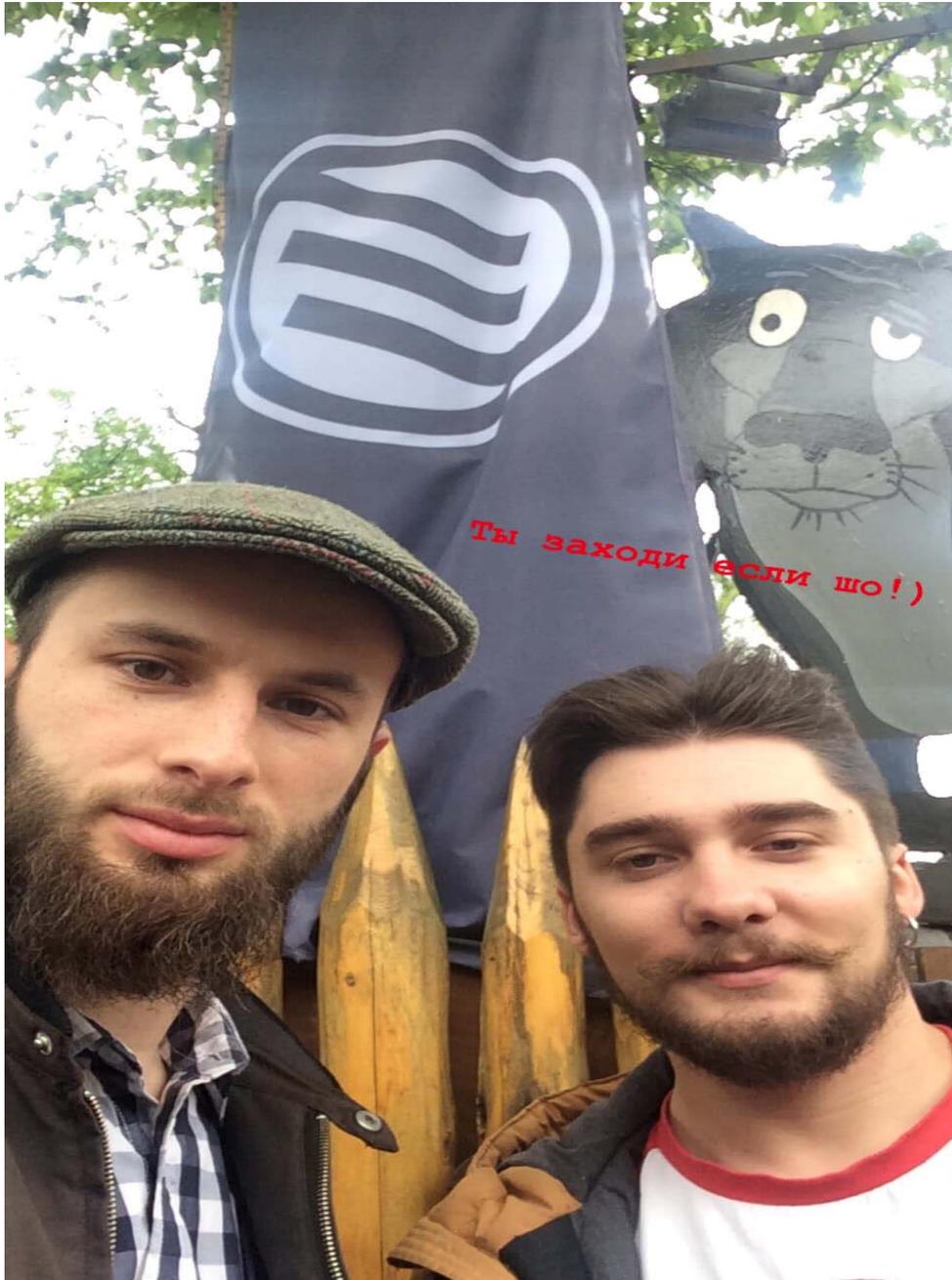
**Feeling:** Emotions felt and expressed by the present activists were mostly the feeling of joy of being together and overall positive outlook on the event. People were happy to see activists from cities further away from Kyiv and Vinnytsa and expressed that they were looking forward to the event. Much enthusiasm was expressed by the people present towards the researcher. Mostly people were curious why a foreign researcher would specialize on social movements and political fringe groups in Ukraine. People were very open and communicative when asked about parts of the event, their own role in the movement as well as political ideology of political situation within Ukraine.

#### Mini-Tour Observations

As an active participant in the meeting I got immediately approached by multiple activists which were interested in why I joined their meeting. Even though most of the conversation happened via the help of an Lviv based activist translating from Ukrainian/Russian to English, some conversations I was able to conduct in Ukrainian/Russian. However, it was very obvious that people present at the event were Ukrainian speaking or made the conscious decision to only talk in Ukrainian. Another thing I observed which was rather interesting was that people were leaving and entering the event whenever they wanted. There did not seem to be an informal norm on being late or people interrupting people talking being considered as rude. From a cultural perspective, I was also able to observe that the speech held by the Avant-garde spokesperson reflected an interesting rhetoric and was full with metaphors. The way he spoke reminded me of a very official event and it seemed to create a certain type of hierarchy. It was clear that even though everyone was a 'comrade' some activists were informally considered as leadership figures while other were more carrying the movement on what's considered it's based. In terms of appearances, some members were clearly dressing according to subcultural codes, black

clothing, sport-wear and piercings and tattoos were visible. Women's role in the movement was mostly being there as girlfriends while some exceptions were one activists who had been a former volunteer at the front and member of ATO and another one who took a prominent role within the movement in terms helping the groups external communication. Both of them self-labeled feminists as it came out from conversations were active driving the movement towards more inclusivity and pragmatic implementation of progressive values. Most people treated each other very friendly and it became clear to me as an outsider that people knew each other and valued each other. The social networks created were stretching geographically from the countries West to far East and many told me that the movement was growing organically in membership. When asking activists about their long-term goals many emphasized the necessity of creating a formalized body or organization/political party which is able to combine progressive social policies while simultaneously presenting itself as pro-Ukrainian. All activists I spoke told me that the future of left social movements in Ukraine is dependent on this realization of a balance between those two things. Many emphasized that in a country torn by war, it is necessary to take an open stance in favor of Ukrainian independence and national liberation.

One hypothesis formulated and derived from the observation on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May in Vinnytsa was that for all activists present at the meeting, both being part of the 'New Radical Left' as well as identifying as pro-Ukrainian patriot is not perceived as inherently contradictory.



## Transcript Interview: Kyiv [R1]

Color-coding based on different group affiliation

**Red** = labour initiatives, ‘traditional’ anarchist groups

**Yellow** = ‘nationalist’-anarchist organizations

**Green** = ecologically oriented anarchist groups

**Dark Blue** = Foreign anarchist groups

**Dark Green** = Stalinist organization, Communist, ‘Old-left’

**Blue** = Human Rights Organizations, ‘liberal organizations’, LGBT-interest groups, Media

**Dark Green** = Nationalists, classified fascist groups

**Purple** = ‘Traditionalists’, far-right affiliated

**Magenta** = Key individuals

**Grey** = Autonomous space

**Dark Grey** = Sport facility connected to activist group

**Dark Red** = Paramilitary Organization

[I]

I have a couple of questions that I would like to ask you, I’ve sorted them according to different categories I am interested in. First, I would like to know more about how you became a political activist, then on your perception on activism specifically in the Ukrainian context and then we will move on the situation of persecution and/or non-persecution of activists. What your personal experiences are in this regard, the activities that you are involved in and the social networks/group connections among each other. For me, I am mostly interested in the outline of those networks and those groups in Ukraine. Therefore, let’s start out with could you elaborate on how you got into anarchism as a movement?

[R1]

Before Maidan, I read several books, Erich Fromm, Simone de Bouvoir and Karl Marx. But I did not join any political group and only when Maidan started I went to the center of the city as most people at that time. And joined the protest. I read anarchist book such as Kropotkin, Bakunin and had met several guys from the left-movement. But the left-movement was not very strong during this protest (Euromaidan) and it was very weak and mhh. It was not connected because many people from other small groups, five, six, seven students, many groups, the left political position but not from some strong organizations. And right-wing organizations were stronger, and many

liberal organizations were stronger of course but when Maidan finished, I thought what to do. Because for me it had not reached enough, and I understood that the country did not change and we continue to have a lot of problems now. Problems still coming from the Soviet Union, earlier years of Ukraine and they have not been resolved yet. So, many people tried to join some activist groups and I was looking for something “light” something oriented towards social democracy like that. Not left-wing radicals, but in Ukraine we do not have any organizations like that and so I started to speak more with anarchists. Among them the organization (Autonomous Workers Union)/Avtonomna Spilka Trudyashchykh/Автономна Спілка Трудящих (АСТ).

[I]

Do you know what was the full name in Ukrainian?

[R1]

The Autonomous Workers Union/Автономна Спілка Трудящих. I do not know, there were maybe 30 members in their best days. And I joined this organization because I did not have any other choices.

[I]

In which year did you join them?

[R1]

It was 2014

[I]

And were their closest to your own political views at that time

[R1]

[R1]

Of course! Close because of anarchism and feminism. Because feminism to me was more important to me, even before Maidan. So, I started my way as an anarchist with them. Maybe after half the organization got split. With one fraction which I was part of we created ‘Black Rainbow’/Chornaya Raduga/Чёрная Радуга.

[I]

And why did the split occur?

[R1]

It was the year of 2014 and the reasons for it were manifold. **Autonomous Workers Union/ACT**, it was not a trade union or something like that. There were a very small organization and they had problems with hierarchy because some people they created this organization. And some people who created this organization they thought that they could be more that equal comrades. That was one of the main problems, but it was not only that but one conflict started because of a member who harassed several women (within the group). And other guys and other guys tried to not see this problem.

[I]

Inside the group?

[R1]

Yes, not only inside the group. I mean it happened not only within **(Autonomous Workers Union)** but also to groups that were connected to us.

[I]

Do you have the names of the groups that were connected to you? The ones that had similar issues?

[R1]

Yes, someone from **DirectAction/Пряма Діа/Пряма Дія**, someone from **'Autonomous Resistance' Avtonomy Opir/АВТОНОМНИЙ ОПІР** in Lviv, yes and we had many personal conflicts. Because before Maidan this organization was really small maybe 7 people but after Maidan it was the situation that the organization that it started to grow very, very fast and it is not easy. You know people some of them are not real anarchists, they just want to speak to people, drink, they do not want to make a political career but it is their own choice.

[I]

Okay, so what would you say drew them into the movement back then?

[R1]

I don't understand, why they joined this organization?

[I]

Yes

[R1]

Ah, it is different for different types of people. Some want fun, some want to have sex, drink maybe they are lonely and they want to be part of a tight-knit community which speaks with them on an equal level and are polite to them. Have friends, have some relationships with each other. People who want to make some type of career in Human Rights organization or political organizations they think that it is easy to join a small group and get some experience.

[I]

And was that also what motivated the new group you mentioned, **Black Rainbow** to start?

[R1]

Yes, when we started we were maybe 20 people. And 5 or 7 joined us maybe after that, (translation from Russian) existed for some time. Yes, for two and a half years.

[I]

And how come **Black Rainbow** does not exist anymore? What happened?

[R1]

First we had a very bad situation when I worked in Human Rights organization for Labour Law, and we organized a lecture for guys from **Revolutionary Action/Revoluciyna Diya (ua)/Revolucionnoe Deystviye (rus)/Революционное Действие**. They are from Belarus and one of them started to shout (translation) ah not to shoot with a gun. Because he had a conflict with another guy because of a girl. It was a really stupid situation, and after that in our organization because I organized this lecture. In our organization, there was a conflict afterward, it is not easy but for some people it was only a reason to split because there were already many personal biases and problems. So, we lost maybe 10 comrades in this conflict.

[I]

In which year was this conflict exactly?

[R1]

Maybe December of (...) 2015. Yes, something like this. But after this we found new people and maybe 2 years ago, the organization finished. Because I went away, and two other informal leaders went away too. With the other guys, I do not know what they are doing now.

[I]

Do you know if any other former members joined other groups or collectives here in Kyiv?

[R1]

Ehm, people from **Black Rainbow**?

[I]

Yes.

[R1]

A couple of them are now in **Revolutionary Action** and some of them are not in organizations, but in small DIY collectives for various aims. Such as helping homeless people and some they work in Human Rights organizations or Feminist or Labour Law Organizations.

[I]

And from the ideology that **Black Rainbow** had. What were some of the core issues the group was concerned with?

[R1]

I mean we were anarchists.

[I]

Yes, but how do you define it? It seems to be that there are different conceptualizations of anarchism within the movement.

[R1]

Yes, correct! We had a small text for this. A sort of introductory text for new members in which we describe we are against capitalism, racism, sexism, the state, hierarchy against homophobia. Against all (laughs). So, for us it was very important to have feminist-anarchism as part of our group and we even organized a march. For example, take back the night

[I]

It was here in Kyiv, right?

[R1]

Yes, twice. We made it and many small rallies like that. We had a fun connection, always with liberal organizations.

[I]

Which ones?

[R1]

**Insight/Інсайт**, it's an LGBT organization here in Kyiv. And we worked together with other smaller feminist groups. I do not know if they still exist at the moment. Yes, and after **Black Rainbow** I went to an organization called '**New Fire'/Novy Vohon'/Новий Вогонь** a nationalist-liberal organization which is in a coalition with **Avtonomiy Opir** in Lviv and '**Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет** here in Kyiv. All of these organizations, are not solely anarchist organizations. They are something like left in economic positions as well as in terms of Human Rights but with some aspects of nationalism. Because we thought it will make us more ehm – it made us “pretty” for people.

[I]

You mean more attractive? Or would you say it was part of a branding strategy to attract more people to the movement?

[R1]

Of course, in Ukraine many activists they are not right-wing but with aspects of nationalism. Or rather they are very patriotic, and if you are against... I mean I do not know. For example, if you write your texts not in Ukrainian but in Russian it is not considered a good thing. Or in some rally speak in Russian it is also not good.

[I]

Would you say that these changes in patriotism are connected to the war in the East?

[R1]

I do not understand

[I]

I mean are these changes of patriotism and so-called nationalist anarchism is that something that is connected to the events after 2015.

[R1]

[R1]

Ah, yes! It is connected. It is a natural process, if you have a war you of course you will see a rise of nationalism. And maybe it is not bad if it is only, very often right-wing elements try to sell people not only patriotism but also conservative values with it. For them it is inherently connected but for me it is not. You can be Ukrainian, you can write in Ukrainian and be against Russia but not be a nationalist or a conservative person. Of course, the war made people more patriotic, and Maidan too! Maybe it is a natural process of, when some empire split and some parts the former empire are striving for independence. These types of developments are very natural, so for activists it is important to be patriots. And I know many people who are now veterans, because of all this war. And they are leftist.

[I]

I understand. What is your personal perception of the anarchist movement. Were there people who had issues with this so-called patriotic or nationalist anarchism? Are you aware of any groups or collectives that have had issues or conflicts because of these developments? Between groups that define themselves as more patriotic and others who are not.

[R1]

Yes of course! Many conflicts like that. For example, the site [Nihilist/Нігіліст](#). They are all very patriotic now and some anarchists even think they are nationalists not leftists (laughs). For me it is funny and I know people from (...) moment I need to look them up. Ah how to translate. [Social Movement/Socialnyy Rukh/Соціальний Рух](#) they are not anarchists but they are leftists and they are not patriotic. And we even had very big conflict with one of their members ([Stas Serhienko/Стас Сергієнко](#)). He was a member of them and he (...) maybe he is not pro-Russian. But he was in Crimea when Russia attacked it and he had several pictures with Russian soldiers. Many more situations like this.

[I]

But what happened to him? What was the incident?

[R1]

Ehm, I do not know where he is right now. He went to Germany after the situation where Nazis from **Nacionalny Sprotyv/Національний Спротив** attacked him. But I really do not know all the small details. Before that he had a conflict with me. Because we met him in a place where we always meet and have fun and asked him about some of his political opinions and he did not explain it... yes but we did not beat him or something like that. But after several months Nazis did.

[I]

And do you know whether they were members of a particular group? Because you say they were Nazis?

[R1]

It was a small group, 3 people attacked him but the whole group is maybe 5 or 7 members. It was not some big organization. This is all I know about him.

[I]

But do you know whether they guy who was attacked was member of any pro-Russian groups such as **Borotba/Боротба**?

[R1]

Yes, he was a member of **Borotba** but several months and years before. He was a former member but he did not explain his political position. He did not explain that he is no longer affiliated with people from **Borotba**. And after the Nazi attack he even spoke with **Borotba** and gave an interview to them online. It looked really hmm, not good.

[I]

Problematic, I see. Do you know whether there are any specific groups Kyiv that have conflicts with each other? Or are they more or less on the same boat?

[R1]

Conflicts on what? There are sometimes discussions between organizations, **Socialny Rukh**, they are not anarchists but they are leftist and other organizations. Anarchist organization or left-nationalist groups. But not anything with attacks or violence involved.

[I]

And what is your personal perception of those in brackets (anarchist values and nationalist values) but how would you define it for yourself. And how would you define it for yourself personally? Especially as you mentioned Ukraine being part of this anti-imperial struggle, a very left-wing idea of fighting oppressions. But how does it work in other domains, you were explaining earlier a bit on these conservative values, where do you draw the line exactly?

[R1]

Ehm (...). If you want to know my difference between nationalist who are right-wing and nationalists who are left-wing. Right-wing guys they are conservative, sexist, homophobic against migrants and etc. Left organizations have very different political position of course and for us it is always a question of being against imperialism and being with our – not nation but being with our people. Our people have this problem, they have left their houses in Eastern Crimea, I am from Crimea for example, we should help these people. We need to be on their side and of course it is a part of some I do not know, if you try to do something political and you are an anarchist not trying to be in the parliament or something like that. You should always be a realist and be connected with our social and political reality. Maybe that is a compromise, but if you can for example help women as a feminist or make LGBT pride, you should tell people that you are very, very patriotic it is ...ehm very important. To invite veterans to the pride, it is important to us and take part in the war. You should tell this to people. Because if you want to have any success in this political landscape this is what you need to do.

[I]

It is a very pragmatic approach towards social change

[R1]

For me? Yes, maybe not for all people but for me yes.

[I]

I am asking this question because I am trying to understand more in-depth what it means to be an anarchist movement in Ukraine. Because there are some, when you read articles about Ukraine, trying to understand anarchism here for them they sometimes have difficulties to understand where this nationalist or what they call 'nationalist' element comes from. You were mentioning

that you were in this cooperation with 'Autonomous Resistance' Avtonomy Opir/АВТОНОМНИЙ опір Are you very much on the same page in terms of ideology and organizing events?

[R1]

We had a coalition with them. And yes, we had common events such as the Machno March in Lviv. And the first of May parade in Kyiv and together with the Black Committee, who are not anarchists at all (laughs). And yes, we had a coalition and ehm I was a member of New Fire at that time. And this organization had a very big conflict with right-wing organizations.

[I]

Which one? Do you know?

[R1]

With C-14. Can I smoke and after that I will explain it in more in detail? Because it is the most interesting part.

[I]

Yes, of course no worries

[Smoke Break]

[R1]

When I was within the anarchist movement I never had a conflict with right-wing guys because I made some feminist events. Lectures, rallies, marches and now Nazis are more traditionalist. Like for example Katekhon/Катехон, Zentropa/Зентропа, Traditsia I Poryadok/Традиція і Порядок and they hate feminists. But Nazis several years ago they did not hate feminists. For them it was something independent (from it?). Something not very interesting.

[I]

Okay

[R1]

I made lectures about labour law because I had a relationship with a lawyer who now works for ...maybe it will be interesting to you to talk to him. George Sandul/Георгій Сандул, from

labour initiative it is a organization which is connected with trade unions. I worked for them several years ago, and yes he is chief and he is a former anarchist from the US, United States.

[I]

That does sound very interesting yes.

[R1]

And we made events like that. Nazis never tried to conflict with us. But two years ago I left my organization and joined another organization 'New Fire' and the leader of New fire was Dmitry Riznichenko/Дмитро Різніченко former Nazi. Now he is a liberal and works in a human rights organization. Maybe most famous former Nazi, because other they leave into an ordinary life and they are not in politics now. It is not easy to leave a Nazi organization you know.

[I]

Do you know which organization he was affiliated with?

[R1]

New Fire was not affiliated with any of these groups.

[I]

No, I mean Dmitry

[R1]

He was a member of C-14. He was a very famous Nazi and as a veteran. He attacked people many times. He was very, very radical.

[I]

I see.

[R1]

But we met each other because he wanted to destroy the exhibition of my anarchist friend who is an ...ehm

[I]

An artist?

[R1]

Yes, David Chichkan/Давид Чічкан.

[I]

Yes, I know him.

[R1]

He is a member. Former member but now Black Rainbow does not exist. So, he is a former member of Black Rainbow. My good friend and comrade. And we meet with each other with Dimity and we joined New Fire because after this meeting my comrades did not understand why I tried to speak to Nazis. So, after this I did not have any other choice than join someone and I joined them. They were really right-wing

[I]

In the beginning?

[R1]

[R1]

In the beginning, yes! They were right-wing. Half of the organization was like nationalist. Liberal Nationalists. Half-Nazis.

[I]

What do you mean by half-Nazis? Where is the line in ideology for you?

[R1]

If some nationalist he is not very radical against human rights but if someone Nazi it is a very conservative position and very aggressive position, xenophobic and sexist. Yes, but they changed this position very fast.

[I]

How come, why did they change their position?

[R1]

Because of me (laughs). Because I left my organization and my movement and I should create something new for myself. And I understood that I cannot be together with real right-wing guys. It is not for me and the first reason is me being a feminist. I do want to be in some strong position within an organization, maybe not a formal position but be ...

[I]

An important leader?

[R1]

Have some power. Some influence. For me it is not interesting without that. Maybe that does not sound to anarchist but it is true (laughs). I do not want to lose my time. Now when I have a job in an IT-company, I am a programmer it is very important to make something really interesting and to have some influence. Without it I can live an ordinary life, make money, speak with people yes. And am I so I tried to change this organization and I succeeded. And we made a coalition with **Avtonomy Opir** and **Black Committee**. It was the idea of **Avtonomy Opir**, not our idea. We made several events together, it was not such as strong connection because **Avtonomy Opir** is Lviv. We are here in Kyiv. **Black Committee** is not a very big organization. So it was something more like fringe and something like (Translation) there were some plans for future. I saw that leftist groups are really weak right now. And I tried to create another type of movement. Not left not right. And it was my big and not very clear idea. Because a year and a half ago former autumn SBU (Security Service) attacked **Avtonomy Opir** in Lviv. And after that Nazis supported the SBU in this issue and **C-14** wrote that it was very good that the Security Service tries to destroy this left-nationalist group. They called **Avtonomy Opir** anarchists and they called them even separatists. Which is not true because maybe half of **Avtonomy Opir** are veterans. They are not separatists it is bullshit. But Nazis wrote things like that and of course we support our friends from **Avtonomy Opir** and the leader of New Fire, **Dimitro** he wrote posts about **C-14**. Because he is a former member

[I]

So he has influence?

[R1]

Yes, and he knows a lot of information about them. He knows that they are connected very close to SBU and leader of **C-14**. Is like an informal worker of the SBU. And when **Dimitro** wrote this post, **C-14** started some subcultural war against us.

[I]

What do you mean by that exactly, subcultural war?

[R1]

First they tried to explain other Nazis that we are all anarchists and they tried to explain anarchist means being a separatist. And all LGBT activists are separatists. They tried to make this connection.

[I]

I see.

[R1]

And some Nazi group joined them in this subcultural war. They attacked us several times, destroyed our office, they beat **Dima (Dimitro)**, Several times he was alone from **C-14** were 10 people something like this.

[I]

Oh, and when was this?

[R1]

Former autumn. Yes, I do not know... Hmn (Translation of Anonymia Grozy) Anonymous threats were made. For me it was threats to rape me for example, to...

[I]

Really?

[R1]

Yes, to kill me. To do something to my face. Things like that. They wrote several articles about us that we are all anarchist. We **Avtonomy Opir** and **Black Committee** and tried to connect us to other left organizations with which we never have had any connections.

[I]

Like which ones?

[R1]

Like, **Socialny Ruch**. It is very funny. All I we had was with **Revolutionary Action** in Belarus and we connected with them and yes. They found out where we live. We even (Translation)

[T]

They even shot each other

[I]

Really? When was it?

[R1]

Former winter, a while ago. After our rally on Maidan because it was a full year of Maidan. And we made some big rally with many different people, and comrades from different organizations they stayed in our home. So, Nazis found out where we live and yes (attacked us). (Translation).

[T]

They used this green material, I do not know the name also.

[I]

Green material? You mean paint?

[T]

Pain but the medical stuff.

[R1]

To the eyes.

[I]

Like they did in Russia to Navalny?

[R1 & T]

Yes!

[R1]

And they made some also with Dima. They beat our comrades several times. After that we found them near Ministry of Social Politics and we had a fake 'Granata'

[T]

Grenade

[R1]

Grenade with us. But they did not know that it was fake so they did not attack us. (Translation)

[T]

The fascists ran away.

[I]

Ah so they escaped?

[R1]

Yes, they disappeared after that. So yes, we had a very big subcultural war with them. We stopped it former Spring. When traditionalists who are not Nazis but conservatist's from **Katekhon** and other organizations. They tried to conflict with LGBT organizations and after that they made their event against left-liberal activists. And they asked me to be a person with a opposite position on their lecture. On their discussion and after that people from **C-14** tried to attack us and they had (Translation).

[T]

The member from **C-14** he got injured by a knife. And the ambulance was called and he went with the ambulance. There was a fight.

[I]

Did he survive? It was not life-threatening?

[R1]

Yes, he survived. And he even did not write some letter to police. He is okay now I do not know more. But he is okay.

[I]

Would you say it was a measure of self-defence?

[R1]

Yes, I and Dima were in this discussion and people who organized it. Right-wings they promised us that it will be safe. But C-14 went there and tried to attack us. Five people from their side and two people from the other side. So, after that this conflict became, a small one. They now sometimes write something but they try to stay away far. Yes, and I tried to have discussion with different right-wing people even try to be friends. Because I need to know when they try to attack rallies and lectures and sometimes I know.

[I]

And what is your opinion on things such as Noch na Bankova. There was something written by Nihilist that there were members of Azov/Азов and National Corps/Nacionalnyy Korpus/Національний Корпус present at this event. And then there was a follow-up with the rally here at the police station in Podil for the memory of the journalist Katya Gandziuk case.

[R1]

Several days ago?

[I]

Yes, there is this connection between National Corps and some civil rights organization here in Kyiv.

[R1]

I do not know this situation very well, but I know that in the rally like that. Many different people were in there and at Noch na Bankova there were Human Rights organizations, liberal organizations and Nazi organisations. For me when police beat someone from C-14, not all Nazis but them in particular it is good. Even if police kill them it will be good. Because they (Translation)

[T]

They cost us a lot of nerves

[R1]

Yes, and I know that they join rallies like that not because of their support of the exhibited positions. C-14 have money. And they tried to have connection with different political parties because the leader of them wants to be a politician.

[I]

And do you think they cooperate with a lot of political fringe groups such as New Flame does for example?

[R1]

Can you translate to Translator (in Russian)

[I]

New Flame and Avtnomoy Opir and I was asking specifically if there were any other connections between them. Such as there were connections between National Corps and other groups. Whether they are mostly separated from each other?

[T]

You mean the connections between right-wing groups or left-wing groups?

[I]

Left-wing and right-wing groups.

[T]

Between them or inside the camp?

[I]

Between them.

[R1]

Between right-wing and left-wings? Very often they are personal connections that they have. And for example, I do not know if write down right-wings such as C-14 now they have many problems with right-wing community because their leader Evhen Karas/Євген Карась, he is not a good person.

[I]

Heard about him, the police is searching for him due to a variety of incidents.

[R1]

There is a part of traditionalist such as ...**Silver Rose/Sribna Roza/Срібна Роза** a small anti-feminist group and the radicalists. I know traditionalists from this group had problems with **C-14**.

[I]

On the basis of what?

[R1]

Political position, for traditionalist it is more important to be against feminists and LGBT, they are anti-liberal. For nationalists, it is more important to be against Russia and leftists, it is a question of subcultural politics. We have several small groups such as **Tradition and Order/tradytsia I poryadok**.

[I]

That is the group by **Bohdan Khodakovsky/Богдан Ходаковський**?

[R1 & T]

Yes.

[R1]

He has a relationship with **Oleksandra Sklar** from **Katekhon**. **Katekhon** it is the most traditionalist organization affiliated with **Zentropa/Зентропа** which is affiliated with from Italy right-wing group.

[T]

Five-star movement?

[R1]

Minutu, Chas. Maybe not so important but they have money from the European right-wing organizations. It is a traditionalist group and they tried to attack feminist organizations, events, LGBT events. People from **Katechon** organized attacks this summer, they tried to attack Kyiv pride but police beat them. So, they are all affiliated with each other but it is all more personal.

Because part of **Katechon** is the **Sisterhood of Saint Olga**, with leader **Oleksandra Sklar**. She is girlfriend of leader of **Traditie and Poradok**.

[I]

But where are they in the spectrum are they more traditionalists?

[R1]

**Traditie I paradok**? They conservative but they have connections with right-wings too.

[I]

I mean the **Sisterhood of Saint Olga/Sestrynstvo Svyatoi Olgy/Сестринство Святої Ольги**.

[R1]

Ah, they are very conservative. It is an anti-feminist organization, they have five to maybe seven women who are against feminism. And they always write about it. This is 8<sup>th</sup> of March March they tried to invite more conservative women to show us that some women can be against feminism.

[I]

I see.

[R1]

Yes, all these organizations are affiliated and in right-wing something like that. Maybe we can talk about **Svoboda/Свобода** but they are a party. And part of Svoboda are members of **Katechon** for example. It is a friendship, it is a connection by sex, by friendship, by common job not activist job at all. People can work together in some ordinary companies and in left-part, now we have liberal organization such as **Insight** which is an LGBT organization or **Amnesty International** for example. It is a liberal organization but it is maybe very left right now because anarchist organizations are very weak right now. Maybe there is only a small group right now. Some parts so some parts of anarchist organizations such as **Nihilist** for example they are not organizations but they are part of the media. Left-wings are **Avtonomy Opir**, left-nationalist and **Black Committee**.

[I]

They are based also in Kyiv?

[R1]

Yes, they are based in Kyiv. And they have connection with (Translation)

[T]

Committee of liberation of political prisoners/Komitet vyzvolennya polityvazniv/Комітет  
ВИЗВОЛЕННЯ ПОЛІТВ'ЯЗНІВ (?)

[I]

And what is it for a type of group?

[R1]

It is neither left nor right. It is a human rights group which works with people who are in prison. Yes and, so we have not strong anarchist. We have some anarchist-nationalists and we have liberals.

[I]

And **New Flame** would also be here (on the conceptualization)?

[R1]

Yes, when we met each other they (...) some here but after that they were here maybe even more leftist that **Avtonomy Opir** and **Black Rainbow**. Because we joined LGBT pride which was very important for us, because one of our members is gay. He is a veteran of ATO, **Viktor Pilipenko/Віктор Пилипенко**.

[I]

A he was famous in the media a while ago, right?

[R1]

Yes, he is our comrade also of course we should join LGBT activities.

[I]

And what about groups such as **DirectAction** and **Black Flag**? Would they be somewhere here on the spectrum (points to drawing)

[R1]

**Black Rainbow** yes! Now it does not exist.

[I]

Ah I mean **Black Flag**, Schorni Stag

[R1]

Ah, yes **Black Flag** from Lviv is now here. And **Direct Action** are here too.

[I]

What about **Eco Dia/Еко Дія**?

[R1]

Are they a part of **Black Flag**?

[I]

No, they are from Kharkiv.

[R1]

Ah, yes, they are anarchists from Kharkiv. Some of them are former members of the **Autonomous Workers Union (AWU)** but from Kharkiv. Because we had some people here.

[I]

I have a question because I heard about this Squad that does not exist anymore here in Kyiv. It was squad organized by a guy called Alex Kovzhun, I am not sure if you know him. He is a member of “Who ordered the attack/killed Katya Gandziuk” and he is also affiliated with the National Corps and he told me that this Squad was some kind of a meeting place for people from National Corps and other groups. Do you know whether he is affiliated with New Flame?

[R1]

No, I do not know him.

[I]

And are you aware of this Squats existence? Too bad I do not remember the name of it...

[R1]

Ah, Squat in Kyiv?

[I]

Yes, but for a very short amount of time only.

[R1]

I do not know or have heard about this movement. I better know (about) traditionalists because they try to get into conflicts with us last, former Spring. They attacked events by Inside and Amnesty, and we protected these events. There are many connections between organizations which are not entirely based on political connections. For example, people who work with 'Traditionivi Initiative'

[T]

Labour Initiatives

[R1]

Yes, yes. They have friends with **Katekhon** for example, I do have friends (among) **Katekhon** for example by **Zentropa** too. But in politics we have of course very different positions and we never made something together. Because there is a very big difference between us.

[I]

So, there are certain areas where group interests overlap such as labour unions, for instance ecological topics?

[R1]

It is not cooperation, I do not know how to explain but (Translation)

[T]

Laughs, well it is not cool for such organizations to cooperate

[I]

Okay, I see I need to rephrase. I do not mean cooperation as active cooperation. But I mean they meet as organizations in some areas where their interests interfere with one another.

[R1]

With labour initiatives and ecological initiatives, yes.

[I]

Because I was thinking about this planting of woods in the forest by ...

[R1]

Yes, for example a guy who is a member of **Katekhon** he is a leader of a small Trade Union group in “**Кривий Ріг/Кривий Пір**” (*it's the name of the city – Serhi*) and he met people from Labour Initiatives – yes. In ecology, sometimes yes. People from **National Corps** and **Azov** and people who are liberals, yes, they can be connected. But more often it is not something open. You can have a friendship with someone, and you can know some of their rumours. (Translation)

[T]

Rumours?

[R1]

Yes, rumours also about sex. But it is not open.

[I]

If I understand correctly there are mostly personal connections?

[R1]

Yes, for example feminist can have a relationship with right-wing guys.

[I]

Okay, I see.

[R1]

And it is not something extraordinary for Ukraine right now, because all these movement right-wing, left-wing are not so big. And if you went to some event you could have met someone.

[I]

I see and would you say that in recent years, do you feel that right-wing groups overall have become more popular? Because that is what you read in the media about all the time or did it stay how it used to be?

[R1]

Maybe some of them are more popular of course, but it is subculture. You can be popular within subculture but that means nothing. Only several people from the whole movement became a member of parliament or leaders of big movements. It is a very, very small community. But of course, journalists wrote about them but no one of them became some political leader. For example, Evgen Karas from C-14 he has less than 20 people now. I had more. I had more before Black Rainbow split. So, it is not something strong. Of course, they are aggressive and of course the big organization such as Azov they have money. But not left-radical or right-radicals are able to win elections like that.

[I]

And how is that for groups that are here (points to chart) on the spectrum, groups like New Flame or Avtonomy Opir or Black Committee? Do you feel that they are gaining more ground, becoming more popular or did they stay as it used to be?

[R1]

It is not easy to become more popular because for example for half maybe of Ukraine, being part of the LGBT community is seen as not okay, so if you support LGBT many people will be against you. But it is principle to support LGBT. Or it is principle to support human rights organization. And right-wing they look more patriotic of course and the situation with people from SocRukh/ConPyx, Stas Sergienko they were very bad for the left movement. Because it looked like all left-wing affiliated groups are not patriotic.

[I]

Bad for the image.

[R1]

Yes.

[I]

What about groups such as Avantgard/Авангард?

[R1]

It is a former **Avtonomiy Opir** and **Black Committee**. So, so of course they have their organizations but they created together **Avantgard**.

[I]

And do you know do they have other contacts with people from other groups again?

[R1]

Of course, of course! For example, they have many friends in liberal movements maybe not in LGBT organizations but in groups that support refugees or for women.

[I]

I understand. In terms of the far-right groups and traditionalists, what is your opinion on their potential to coordinate their efforts. Quite recently there was this idea of a common candidate between **Svoboda** and **National Corps** that failed to work out for some reasons.

[R1]

It did not work out because they, they cannot agree with each other. It is not an issue about traditionalism and nationalism. It is an issue of money for example, of power and maybe it is better to be a leader of a small organization, lead 20 people than to be part of a big organization where you are nothing. So, they cannot make something big and strong. Same for leftists. It is the same problem in these subcultural radical political groups. People have ambition and they do not want to be a small person in a big group. They prefer to be a big person in a small group that vice versa. It is more attractive for them. Right-wings can be connected quite close with one another, and some of them are not very patriotic.

[I]

What do you mean they are not patriotic?

[R1]

They like Russian philosophers such as Dugin.

[I]

Really? You mean the found of Neo-Eurasianism?

[R1]

Yes, they like him very much. For them it is not easy to be part of some nationalist organization.

[I]

That means they probably also do not agree with some of the ideals of **National Corps** then? I mean with the Intermarium strategy?

[R1]

Yes, or with **Svoboda**. They cannot agree on anything.

[I]

Therefore, they are just as fragmented as the left? In the sense that they are having just as many conflicts and internal problems.

[R1]

Yes. If left-wing groups have issues, anarchists, can I do not know, treat you on Facebook, write about you some post and if you have conflicts with people from the right-wing you will be attacked. And they attack each other, it is a lot of violence between each other and my friend from **Katechon** even told me that there is a bigger possibility to be attacked by other far-right groups than by anarchists of leftists.

[I]

Are you personally very afraid, in your current position? Because you mentioned that you were already attacked several times?

[R1]

They did not make something bad with me, because I am a woman. And for them it is not okay but they treat other and I am not afraid now. Because now I speak more with liberal, with human rights organizations and I work alone. And I have no time to be in conflicts and met people from right-wing organizations and because of this friendship I am more safe than other people. I do not know if I can be beaten I will be beaten only by **C-14**.

[I]

Meaning they are the most radical, most prone to violence?

[R1]

No, they are most...

[I]

Into street gang violence?

[R1]

Maybe, yes. They are not honest people. I do not know how to explain. A person can be right, left, liberal but a person can be honest. For example, fight ('Odin, odin').

[T]

One against one

[R1]

One against one. Or a person could be as a member of C-14 and attack someone with ten people. It is not a question about their political position other rightists even told me that C-14 is not the most right-wing organization.

[I]

In terms of ideology?

[R1]

Yes. But they are very aggressive and for example with people from I do not know Azov I cannot have a conflict. Because they are too big to have a conflict with small...

[I]

I see, and groups such as Karpatska Sich/Карпатська Січ are they affiliated with C-14? Or are they their own entity?

[R1]

Yes, they even made a common march. Two or one year ago. I do not remember. Really big, looks great in their aesthetic of course. They are affiliated with C-14 and with traditionalists too. And they attacked feminists former Spring.

[I]

Was that the attack in Lviv?

[R1]

In Uschgorod.

[I]

Wait, I did hear about this incident.

[R1]

Yes, in Uschgorod. And in Lviv too. At the last LGBT pride, they went all from their towns to Kyiv and **Karpatska Sich** they went with 15 people from their group. I do not know exactly.

[I]

Yes, I remember because they were speaking at this pan-European Conference here in Kyiv a while ago and they were saying that they were doing quite well in terms of recruiting and military training. And do you know maybe one additional question. I know that a couple of these right-wing fringe groups put a lot of emphasis on training. Like **Azov** has the Reconquista training facility, where they do Martial Arts and is there something comparable on the left. Something that helps these groups with self-defence?

[R1]

Yes, for example one guy from Israel. I do not know if I can mention his name, maybe I do not know. Maybe it is not safe but a former officer of the Israeli Army he made a course for people who want to serve in the army or want some skills.

[I]

Self-defence skills?

[R1]

Yes, self-defence. They even have some training in the forests.

[I]

For groups in which spectrum?

[R1]

Mostly anarchists. Black Flag, Ecological platform/Екологічна платформа. Not liberals, liberals they do not even try to defend themselves. They call the police. For me that is not a very good position because okay, you can call the police but if you cannot protect yourself. Maybe it is better to call a medical staff.

[I]

Does the police even protect some groups at all? Do you think there is a bias?

[R1]

Police sometimes does protect people like in the case of Kyiv-pride. Because it was a very big event, very, very important political event for them. But small events they never protect.

[I]

But do you think there is a prioritization in terms of cities, cities where they protect you more and other where they do not care? I heard from anarchists in Lviv that it is harder and harder and that the police would not do as much and the same situation in Uschgorod. But that in Kyiv the police would do a little more comparatively.

[R1]

Maybe the police (is more active) in Kyiv because it is the capital and there are many events with ambassadors. But I do not trust the police. When we had the biggest conflict with C-14, the police did not protect us, police did not do anything at all. So, for me it is not a good idea to call them and a better idea is to fight for myself. I even told liberals, we should fight with some Nazis and with other you talk. They are two different types of Nazis.

[I]

The ones you can talk to and the ones you cannot?

[R1]

Yes, and the police will not protect you. I will return now.

[I]

Finishing we would like to ask you some small questions about events in the future and some people you would recommend to talk to and groups that are interesting.

[Break and informal conversation about the role of the so-called 'anti-imperial struggle in Ukraine]

[I]

You were just saying that political groups in Ukraine do not really have another choice than being anti-imperial.

[R1]

Yes, it is a part of all-Ukrainian ideology.

[I]

You cannot avoid it. I was thinking maybe for us it will be interesting to know more about events for us to attend. Lectures, demonstrations and so forth.

[R1]

Demonstrations? There will be a big demonstration in March on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

[I]

Is it the one in Kharkiv?

[R1]

In Kharkiv, in Kyiv in Lviv in all big cities. In Uschgorod in Mariupol many cities. And about lectures this weekend there will be the lecture about right-wing attacks, leftists lecture in I-Zone.

[I]

Do you know who organizes it?

[R1]

Leftists and liberals, **Anna Grytsenko/Анна Грищенко** for example and others. And of course, in first numbers of March there will be many feminist events.

[I]

I think in March we will actually be in Kharkiv to talk to some people from **Eco Dia** and join the March ourselves.

[R1]

I will have a lecture in Kharkiv but before March, because in March I will be here. Lecture will be about anti-feminist groups such as the **Sisterhood of Saint Olga** and we would even like to organize some type of discussion with me and **Oleksandra Sklar** but we do not know whether that is possible. Because some personal biases.

[I]

If they agree at all to meet you?

[R1]

I can meet her and other members very easy. But I do know, know whether she or someone else will agree to this debate and it is some personal conflicts. Because I do have a relationship with her friend.

[I]

You mean friend from their movement? Meaning he is also a conservative?

[R1]

Yes, it is not so easy to make some public discussion to many personal biases.

[I]

Do you know anybody from different groups, because in April a friend of mine will be here in Kyiv to interview people from different far-right organizations. **Nationalny Corpus** and **Traditie Paradok** do you know anyone from them. Anybody that would also talk to us?

[R1]

From the right or left?

[I]

From both actually, right and left-nationalists, people from this wing. (...)

[R1]

Okay, I think it will be easy to meet for example Anya Grytsenko from Nihilist.

[I]

Okay, that would be great!

[R1]

She is a researcher who writes about right-wing groups and she is a sociologist, anarchist and I think she is very easy to meet. It would be easy ... George Sandul from Labour Initiatives, he is a former member of Black Rainbow, my former boyfriend and now he is a director of the Ukrainian branch of labour initiatives. Because they have a director in the USA and one in Ukraine. Whom else? Maybe someone from Black Committee Tytskyu/Тицький or Simkova/Сімкова? They are a couple and they are the leaders of Black Committee. From Avtonomy Opir...

[I]

I know Maksym Osachyk and Serhii and he said he is too busy.

[R1]

Okay, Masola/Мацола.

[I]

Denys said he is also busy but also the problem with Denys is that he for sure does not speak English.

[R1]

Irina Voloshyn/Ірина Волошин. Maybe she can help. She is a very active comrade and informal leader of the group.

[I]

I I asked Serhii and he contacted a couple of people in Lviv but I do not know exactly whom he contacted and he said that he had problem because people did not reply. From Kharkiv Sharigina/(Анна) Шаригіна who is a liberal feminist most famous, Kharkiv liberal feminist. Or I could connect you to Masha, I do not know her surname but she is an anarchist-activist. From liberal part, from Insight Olena Shevchenko/Олена Шевченко and I think that connection would be easy because she always speaks with researchers, from Amnesty their leader I forgot her

name. Spokesperson yes, it is easy to connect them. From **Nihilist**, maybe not only **Anja Grizenka** but also **Leshan/(Євген) Лешан** he is an anarchist/veteran and **Dmitry Mrachnik/Дмитрий Мрачник** he is good too. With right-wing it is not so easy.

[I]

That is what I thought. But that is okay as I will be able to contact them via my friend that has contacts with mostly **Azov**.

[R1]

From **Svoboda** and **Katechon** **Yuri Noyevyyu/Ноевий, Yuri** he is a man. He is pleasant with reseachers and journalist. I do know very well **Artem Oliynuk/Артем Олійник**. I can connect you with him. Try to contact **Miroslava Shiman/Мирослава Шиман**, **Shakhovsky/Шаховський** on Facebook now they are more liberal in attitude because they have personal connections with feminists. But I do not know how to approach them I only know them on Facebook. From **Katechon** and **Cinopra** it is easier to get in contact with them. If you try to talk with them do not ask directly about Dugin, it is not a secret but they try to not look like Duginists. It is not very difficult to connect with them but the right-wing are afraid that you write something bad about them as they had many experiences with the liberal media who then wrote something about them. I can send you links to different people.

[I]

That would be great, maybe send them a message that I would like to talk to them and then I will contact them.

[R1]

Yes, from **Katechon** it will be easy and from **Cinopra** it will be more difficult. I know several former members **Verbych/Вербич** who is a former member of **C-14**. Or **Kobra/Кобра** a former member of **Katechon** and former member of **C-14**. Not sure if he can speak on certain issues.

[I]

Do you have a contact for **New Flame** potentially?

[R1]

**Dimitry Riznichenko**, **Oleksandr Goshilik/Олександр Гошилік** and I can try to connect you. With them it is easy to talk, they are very open and easy-going than from other groups. I can

send you links and Facebook pages of the different groups. Maybe from **Azov** Yurchenko/Юрченко but he thinks he is more important than he is.

[T]

He is like an ideologist for **Azov**

[R1]

He is a fat alcoholic (laughs) who has no friends. And other Nazis do not like him very much.

[I]

Well, that is a lot.

[R1]

And a lot of rumours!

[I]

But that is great because I am mostly interested in interactions anyhow.

[R1]

Let's see if I can talk to right-wings and ask who would be suitable.

141:40

**Transcript Interview: R2 Lviv [27: 30]**

Color-coding based on different group affiliation

**Red** = labour initiatives, 'traditional' anarchist groups

**Yellow** = 'nationalist'-anarchist organizations

**Green** = ecologically oriented anarchist groups

**Dark Blue** = Foreign anarchist groups

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[I]

I tried to contact some people from **Avtonomy Opir**/Автономний Опір/Autonomous Resistance where I know a couple of people from, I know **Maksym** and Sergey, but **Sergey** is not part of the movement anymore, so I got another contact via a girl that I interviewed in Kyiv a while ago, **Tatyana Pavlenko**,

[R2]

She is having dreads?

[I]

No, not really but she became quite an important figure in the movement

[R2]

Sexual scandal?

[I]

No, she became a bit famous in brackets because she ... She was one of the founders of **Black Rainbow**/Chornaya Raduga/Чёрная Радуга which is an LGBT/feminist organization that does not exist anymore but she is together with a guy from **Cich/C14**. Basically, a Nazi, and Hromadske made a reportage about it a while ago

[R2]

Oh, yeah, I have heard about it, he left the movement?

[I]

Yes, and they started a new group which is called **New Flame**/Novyy Vohon/Новий Вогонь and they are connected with **Avtonomy Opir, Black Committee**/Chornyy Komitet/Чорний Комітет and that is it. But she gave me a contact from a girl here from **Avtonomy Opir** but she did not have time to meet us. I do not know times and commitments are moving at the moment.

[R2]

Hmm, interesting. So, you do you know anyone except for this girl **Veronica** from **Ecological Platform**/Ekologichna Platforma/Екологічна Платформа

[I]

And **Anton** from **Black Flag**/Chornyyu Styag/Чорний Стяг

[R2]

But **Anton** is not from **Avtonomy Opir**?

[I] No he is from **Black Flag**, and another of our contacts is **Yarina Voloschin**

[R2]

Yes, she is from **Avtonomy Opir**

[I]

She referred me to a friend **Anna Ivancik**

[R2]

Ah she is from Inside, but I can try to connect you to **Lisa** from **Black Flag**.

[I]

We realized that people forget about appointments and it is hard to pin them down, so I guess we should come back.

[R2]

It is particularly interesting to talk to activists from Lviv because there is such a largely developed far-right, with the exception of Kyiv of course. Here we had this incident about an exhibition called **(32.49 Shevchenko conversation in Russian)** maybe you have heard about it, an exhibition that was cancelled.

[I]

Because of protests?

[R2]

Not protests, but threats it was about Shevchenko. You know the metro in Kyiv

[T]

There was an exhibition of Taras Shevchenko recently

[I] I think I have heard about it

[R2]

But some guy went off about it

[I]

But why was that?

[R2]

Because it was not canonical portrait of Shevchenko, it is totally crazy but in Lviv some movements are threatening the people from Kyiv who want to do this exhibition here which is just typical

[I]

Do you know which groups they are?

[R2]

I think **Cich 14**, but I am not entirely sure. I need to check, a friend of mine wrote me about it. Not sure who told me but I will ask.

[I]

But what you're saying reflects a lot on the interview that **Anton** gave me last time I was here where he told me about the 8<sup>th</sup> of March March in Lviv, where they got so under pressure so that for this year they decided not to do the March at all. Just because they are afraid of provocations

[R2]

And also, we have Feministychna **Masterynia** so they can be available this week. But I think I can connect them with you and write to you. When I went to Berlin, to this protest I was interested in how the activists there think about geopolitics.

[I]

Which type of things did you talk about exactly?

[R2]

With Nana? Why does the left-wing movement think that the far-right in Europe is rising? And what about all the contemporary political streams that there are in Berlin and political life in Germany. Because, I mean in the news there is not a deep analysis of the origins of it. I mean the EU, they became too left and too progressive, excessive and people do not always understand what they are doing. For example, Globalization is threatening people and radicalizing people of the left and on the right in Europe and here. It goes in waves first to the left and then to the right and then to the left again.

[I]

Even though the difference between the far-left and far-right quite striking here in Ukraine in comparison to Western Europe quite striking. In terms of ideals and the way they organize themselves. Like in one example an American NeoCon got invited by the Conservative Student Union at NaUKMA to speak on the Conservatism as an answer to Globalism. And he was in front of many people from **Nationalny Druzhyny**/National Militia/Національні Дружини, **Azov**/Азов and the Crème de la Crème of Kyivan fascists and they were really disappointed that this guy was not a white supremacist.

[R2]

Also, the far-right guys in Ukraine they have structure but the groups which are really big and influential so I assume they already have some influence in politics and some finances through that.

[I]

Like Azov? They have a lot of money so it is very noticeable that they get financed from somewhere but how is it in Lviv? I know in 2013, **Avtonomy Opir** and the left here was quite strong but what happened?

[R2]

I do not know anything about them right here, I was never interested in movements like that. I was on Maidan in Kharkiv, I was with guys from the anarchist scene because they were young and normal guys and we had common friends.

[I]

Not because of their left political views?

[R2]

But of course, there were also some right-wing guys there and left-wing and right-wing were on Kharkiv Maidan and sometimes they had arguments but most of the time they solved it in peace. It was weird to see that and right-wing guys just went to Maidan to stand there and left-wing guys did some performances and posters and stuff and they co-existed. I wanted to go to Kharkiv because I knew people, go with some friends do some volunteering and then go home. That was before all the horrible things happened.

[I]

In terms of the far-left and far-right mixing on Maidan what were your impressions of that?

### **Transcript Interview: Bunker [R3 & R4]**

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[I]

Were you happy with how the March took place yesterday, like with the action and with how many people were there? Was it successful?

[R3] It is a hard question because we had some success, some problems. For example, we had only one time when the far-right came in such strong numbers. Last year they did not come and four years ago we made a great 1<sup>st</sup> March... (March? Yes, that's what I am saying).

[R4]

Four years ago, we made the first anarchist-feminist protest and we got a problem with **Revanche**/Реванш, which is the name of this fascist organization here. And now they already changed their name to '**Traditie i paradok**'/Традиція і Порядок it translates as '**Tradition and order**'. And now they are not so aggressive on the streets, they changed in, they tried to be more like to stop our protests say in the media area. For example, yesterday they organized another protest...

[I]

The counter-protest?

[R3]

Yes, but in the past, they mostly tried to find somebody on the street after the protests and tried to attack them.

[I]

Yesterday we actually talked to some organizers of the March and they said that they had to escape quite quickly because they were afraid of counter-actions.

[R3]

Yes, because we had stories like that with them. Many guys from this organization, four years ago attacked after the protest. And two years ago, they tried to attack but it was unsuccessful for them because there was good cooperation with the self-defence groups which made a plan after the March. People left this area

[I]

Evacuation plan basically? And what do you think are the attacks getting worse on autonomous spaces/groups and clubs here in Kharkiv?

[R3]

(in Russian) It depends on the city actually. Because in Lviv, in West Ukraine they have become more aggressive and we have many stories to which we listen sometimes to our comrades. In Kyiv, it is actually more difficult because many left organizations have already been crushed, and they have some issues in some public areas during protests, during feminist protests and yesterday they happened problems.

[I]

You mean during the 8<sup>th</sup> of March March?

[R3]

Yes, mostly far-right forces fought with the police and I am not wrong, I heard that nobody from the activists got beaten. So that is okay, but here I think our anarchist groups mostly got some problems, some fights mostly in the past. And last few years...

[R4]

But they (Russian)

[T]

Threats (translation) So they made a satire video about the far-right where R3 acted as a far-right activist and they found the place of his registration, where he lives officially. And they wrote on the walls that they will find and kill him.

[R3]

(in Russian)

[T]

In the winter, several years ago R3 filled like the sanction on conducting the meeting to the city council but he always changes the flat number in this report and the far-right they found this particular flat. Not his flat and wrote a (threatening) letter to them.

[I]

Some threats?

[R3]

These are different examples of cooperation between the police and government structures and far-right organizations.

[I]

Is it very embedded, very strong this cooperation with government structures here in Kharkiv?

[R3]

embedded?

[T]

(Translation)

[R4]

Yes, very embedded. But it depends on the far-right organization. For example, **Freikorps**/Фрайкор for example they are very connected with some government support we do not know with which people exactly, but we saw in many protest actions that their members were hanging out with the police. And then police gave them instructions like now you make a provocation and after 15 minutes we will push you away. And they say: okay!

[R4]

Basically, they plan together and two years ago we had in a past squat **'Avtonomia'**/Автономія some ultra-right people came there. And squatters made a circle to take these people inside the squat, they (Russian)

[T]

They took them hostage, the members of the far-right (laughs).

[R4]

Yes, and they took their phones and looked up their texts in messenger when police wrote that you can attack the squat in this time and day.

[I]

Really? So, they had a proof that the police and them were cooperating.

[R4]

Yes, yes, the proof was in the group messenger.

[I]

And this group 'Freikorps', is it similar to 'Traditie I Paradok' are they also traditionalists?

[R4]

The incident was two years ago, so 'Freikorps' and 'TS' are quite young organizations maybe one year old.

[I]

So, the people who attacked were from other groups back then?

[R4]

(Sighs) You know we have a lot of ultra-right groups they have a very long life (expectancy). Some group start out for like one year or two years and then they rebrand themselves.

[I]

And then they disappear or something. But what is the big difference between 'Freikorps' and 'TS'?

[R4]

You know it's interesting that they have a big difference with attitude towards mainstream ultra-right groups like for instance 'Nationalny Druzhiny' and 'Nationalny Korpus/National Corps/Національний Корпус, Svoboda/Freedom/Свобода' and 'Right Sector/Pravyy Sektor/Правий Сектор'. Because they, oh haha difficult question what is the difference...They are quite similar, but it is easier to say that the difference between them is that 'TS' is freer of external control. Like with this group we had exactly problems when they tried to attack us while 'Freikorps' until now haven't carried out an attack. They went exactly to the protest, tried to block and it and how we are for mass media and then they left. That's all.

[I]

Some kind of media spectacle they are after?

[R4]

I think the difference is that 'Freikorps' speciality is their goal to ATO, next (part of their) program is to go to Kyiv protests and try to prevent them. They tried to stop LGBT actions and now they tried to stop feminist actions which is a new part of 'Freikorps' program.

[R3]

They also tried to stop antiracist action in the Summer of 2018. When our comrades from our organization when they made their action with problems with (Roma) people and where one person also died...

[I]

I did not hear about this incident.

[T]

Ah there was the incident in Lviv, where they murdered one Roma.

[I]

Ah, of course I did hear about that. Okay.

[R3]

And here our comrades tried to organize an event in Solidarity to talk about this issue in the public area. And 'Freikorps' tried to block and it and screamed louder. And the protest it was quite small

[T]

a small meeting

[R3]

But they tried to be louder and they also screamed we evicted squat. Like the squat 'Avtonomia' and we will evict all Roma. It is crazy but it is also one of the proofs that they had some voice [some role] also in the question with the Squat in the past.

[I]

How do you think the left-scene is developing in Kharkiv. Is it getting stronger or gaining more supporters or the opposite of it?

[R3]

I think it is becoming cleverer [laughter]

[I]

In which sense?

[R3]

Yes, because looking at the past, we understand that in 2011 and 2012, the scene was very young and mostly a subcultural anarchist movement. Mostly parties and concerts but during Maidan, the movement started changing as we gained experience in how to organize ourselves. And then the movement became weaker after the squat got crushed and the movement got splintered into smaller collectives and groups. But now this dark period is in the past and we have in I mean in Kharkiv, like few different some small groups, some anarchist after the squat who participated in the creation of squad in the feminist-queer pride hub some group there, some group more/some people don't make anything but Bunker here we I think grew up also and we are not so big ehm but more really more horizontal and it's great!

[I]

And in terms of groups is Bunker mostly affiliated with **EcoDia**/EcoAction/ЕкоДія or also with other groups. Do you co-share the space?

[R3]

A lot of different people, actually a lot now we are more closed we don't make public information to events here

[I]

Because of the attacks?

[R4]

No because of SBU, they try...

[R3]

In spring 2018

[R4]

One year ago, SBU called to (translation) owner of the room. Flat? And say we cannot make open events or actions.

[R3]

It was crazy because one of our activists who studies at the art academy and the SbU they a few times visited the academy where she studies and tried to talk to her because of the anarchist movement. To get more information but she said no, no and afterwards the director and head of the academy called her and told her she must come to his office. And when she came there, they knocked on the door and when the security service started talking to her. It was crazy but she was nice about it and last Spring they tried to push the ground to understand what is it anarchist movement here in Kharkiv in different ways. Tried to block some of our work/actions so it was during one week in the same week when our friend talked with the guys they also called to owner of this flat and on that meeting, they also I visited this owner they told that we can't control if some far-right forces will attack you with Molotov cocktails, we cannot protect you so start thinking and there was another incident which is why we have big sympathy for the owner of Bunker even if he says we can stay here without making any public events. We have closed events and only if our friends want to use this flat for some small events we permit it, something big would be impossible anyway because the space is not big. Now we mostly, if we want to do something big we cooperate with the pride hub. They have their own space, and it's very great and big and there are many possibilities to do something with it.

[I]

Do they have their own space? Do they have funding for it?

[R4]

Yes, yes, they have funding. I don't know exactly now who funds them. I mean who gives money but I remember in the past it was Friedrich Boell Stiftung.

[I]

Yes, it's a German foundation.

[R4]

But right now, I don't know who funds them.

[I]

In terms of cooperation between different groups, do Kharkiv collectives join to other actions and events in different cities in Kyiv and Uschgorod etc. Is there human and resource exchange?

[T]

Translation of question? (Translation)

[R4]

[In Russian] No not a very big exchange between the collectives.

[I]

Not like in Kyiv or Lviv. Because I remember when we talked to people in Lviv they would say they have partners in Kyiv or Lviv but in Kharkiv it's not like that?

[R4]

No, it's rarely

[I]

So, the scene is quite for itself?

[R4]

Yes. But last Summer we made a camp together with **Ecological Platform**/Ekologichna Platforma/Екологічна Платформа in Lviv, but even for many activists from here it was difficult to go there. It took two days.

[R3]

A lot of people have no money and they need to go by hitchhiking.

[R4]

Every year many activist from Kharkiv go to Kyiv Pride and I think if something happens very serious in Kyiv or Lviv, activists will say let's go we need to support and show solidarity but right now no. Right now, we don't need this help here.

[I]

It's interesting because talking to activist's in Lviv they would usually say 'Wow Kharkiv has such a strong and great scene and in Lviv it's really difficult because you cannot even do a

women's March on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March', because last year there were so many provocations with the police. So right now, they are just afraid, from their stories it sounds that the scene in Kharkiv is actually quite active and quite stable.

[R4]

Yes, because even if we had problems with Nazis on the streets in the past, they usually attack with gas balloons or some pepper spray and then fighting with fists. But in Lviv they have another level of violence when they attack with sticks and knives and other weapons. They are more aggressive so.

[I]

I have another question, I was discussing with \* that some groups and some collectives they have different views on what is happening with the war in the East. Some of them being anti-militarization and some of them joining the so-called anti-imperial struggle against Russia. Did you have any similar internal problems with groups in Kharkiv that had like different views on these things?

[R3]

We had a big problem with views like this, I think that five years ago when only one start so now we have no different views of these issues. All our activists are anti-imperial in ideology and we all of us understand that Russia is the aggressor. And we see that in the being five years ago when pro-Russian activists tried to make its own [in Russian] Republic here. Like DNR?

[T]

They tried to create a similar organization to DNR and LNR here in Kharkiv Region.

[I]

Separatists?

[R3]

Yes, and we fought them five years ago, you know some organization like **Borotba**/Struggle/Боротьба we fought against.

[I]

They are like Stalinist or old-Bolshevik?

[R3]

They call themselves Marxist [laughter]

[I]

They support the DNR

[R3]

Yes, they support them and a lot of people from Germany support **Borotba** and the anti-Maidan because they think there are a lot of anti-fascist there.

[I]

Because Russia is such an anti-imperial power [laughs]

[R3]

I think many Germans support it because of the Red Cross helping **Borotba** in the past and they made some tour around Europe, where **Borotba** told them that all Ukraine is fascist and Russia is anti-fascist. But now a year ago when we were in Berlin and talked there with activists, we found that many people had already changed their mind.

[R4]

We have information that **Red Cross**, that we wrote about it three years ago that they took ten thousand euros to help prisoners, anti-fascists in Ukraine but **Aleksandr Kolshenko** 10.000 euro from this money 9000 euro nobody knows where it went. So, we think that this money went to anti-Maidan.

[I]

Wow! Really?

[R4]

We don't know where it went so we suppose it went there. And many activists heard about this story, it was a big scandal. And talking about those views I agree that inside our organization we have a common view and no discussion. But we have some problems with the views, we have different view opposite to Lviv activists.

[I]

Which ones for example? **Black Flag**/Chornyy Styag/Чорний Стяг or **Ecological Platform**?

[R4]

Many Lviv activists from **Black Flag** and **Ecological Platform**, they say that anyway this war and it's like they are very active not to support any side. And they call people out as supporting Nazis but it is quite difficult and it is like two evils and so on. Long story but anyway this is also because of different regions. Because West and East Ukraine really have different types of struggles. Because in the West they have a really strong extreme-right and old people mostly support these movement and they must make some opposition to this. And they say a different view against all these organizations and they say very bad things about the war but it's unfortunately very naïve.

[I]

Childish? Interesting that you mention these regional differences. Do you think that these regional differences affect how anarchism as an ideology is differently interpreted and the way that collectives here work?

[R4]

I mean that's everywhere, many types of expressing views and ideology. Whether in music or political more radical people who propose to work in some educational space so it's different everywhere. It's easier to say that really different types how anarchist movements grow. So Lviv for me it's really interesting because they had like a story that they were like the main ultra-right area and then they became...

[I]

became like a hotspot for left-wing activism after 2014.

[R4]

Yes, they became crazy mix of anarchism and nationalism. And then they got crushed again by nationalist and they said later that they are not anarchist anymore it's a failed project. And only after it appeared that **Black Flag** came out of this which is an interesting development for the scene there. We have another story here in Kharkiv with the squad.

[I]

I was speaking about this regionalism because I read that some organizations, 'traditional anarchist groups' that came from the East, especially from Donetsk and Lugansk were very hierarchical organizations. Not very egalitarian

[R3]

Do you mean **RCAS**/PKAC/Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists/Революційна Конфедерація Анархо-Синдикалістів? Wow, that's a long story. That was a long time ago [laughter] how many years ago do you read this? I talked to them, and they are very hierarchical and authoritarian. I talked to a guy who because when I first read about some anarchist ideas and tried to find some anarchist in Kharkiv I found only **RCAS** in Donetsk. So, my first information about the movement was from **RCAS**. They say you must go to our Summer Camps and they said you must come and my friend he went there and see they have some rituals when some woman they watch feed of their master. You know **Samurai**/Самурай?

[I]

Yes, I've head about him he is like a cult leader!

[R3]

Yes, they have a very radical mindset, they read Kropotkin and fight with each other and shoot with guns. No idea where they get them from and this **Samurai** he has a lot of accounts in different social medias and messengers. He writes that you have no good 1<sup>st</sup> of May demonstrations because you are not disciplined enough when you march.

[T]

You don't walk in straight lines, you are not organized.

[R3]

They only March like soldiers in Donetsk.

[I]

I heard about **KAS** and this region but there is also something in Odessa they call themselves anarchist but then for the free market or something like this. If you heard about this before? It's a very strange phenomenon and I read about them. Anarcho-Kapitalist **SAU**/CAУ/Союз Анархістів України

[R3]

Yes, we know about them. But in Odessa they are very strange, it's like the city of post-modernism where ultra-right and ultra-left forces when they work together for example

[I]

Sounds like Kyiv [laughter]

[R3]

No not like in Kyiv.

[I]

I guess it depends, people from traditional anarchist groups don't but there are some former activists and that there are some personal connections. Especially with groups like **Black Committee**/Chornyy Komitet/Чорний Комітет and **New Flame**/Novyy Vohon/Новий Вогонь.

[R4]

You know it's more difficult because after Maidan, and this is my own opinion but it's like if you want to participate in big protest and we don't have some big anarchist movement at all here. It's underground, it's impossible to be clean in your ideology and protest so you cannot really say we cannot go there. I know some people in Kyiv Maidan who tried to, [Russian] who tried to spread their agenda. It was unsuccessful but they tried. But I know some people, only two or three who participated with the ultra-right in some actions because they said that left-wing groups do not create and organize anything and 'I want to participate in something' and they just went. And later they went to the war, as part of ATO but they are a small minority in the movement.

[I]

To me hearing about this is very interesting, to hear about anarchism in the Ukrainian context because it is difficult to understand the types of tensions that these groups are working in.

[R4]

Yeah, we know we are on another level.

[I]

I was talking with \* about the differences in collectives and how they approach anarchism, difference between post-anarchism plus the historical dimension here in Ukraine.

[R4]

Oh, I just see we need to leave in five minutes they are starting self-defence classes here soon.

[I]

Do you have any questions about the research because I will anonymize everything of course.

[Informal conversation explaining the research]

### **Transcript Interview: Kharkiv [R5 & R6] [1:29:00]**

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[I]

I have one contact who used to be from Chita who now lives in Liege, Belgium, \* maybe you know him? He does some illustrations for **Moloko** and he is a good friend of \* and \* in Moscow. And some of the collective that is based in Moscow, so from there I thought it will be interesting to do some research on them and then later actually two years ago I was for the first time in Lviv and I met **Serhii Marko** and **Maksym Osadchyk** and I thought to myself it is a very interesting subject you know to look at not only Social Movements on the far-right, because I

mean everybody does that but to look at the what's happening on the far-left. Looking at the subculture here, some feminist movements and other groups as they are all connected to each other. Find out more what happened after 2015. Because a lot of researchers came for Maidan and after that there was just silence.

[R5]

Yes, that's exactly what happened. Yes.

[I]

And actually, right now for me it's way more interesting for me to see what's happening. Because you were saying that people dispersed, how did that affect the scene and things like this.

[R5]

Yes, it affects the scene especially if we are talking about the music scene. We also have some consequences of that because we used to have a very closed scene, with the threat of being attacked by Nazis because of our [political] views. All shows were not really advertised and only friends of friends could come and that obviously also had consequences for the growth of the scene. But there are more people who were active actually and they were people who supported us even though it was dangerous. Some people were coming and after small, if something happens I mean people were leaving because we did not want to risk anything. But at least we had a core of the scene that was very active.

I: Do you know how many people who were in this core of the group?

[R5]

I mean if we talk about physical confrontation like about street actions maybe like 12 to 15 people.

[I]

Still quite a lot of people. If they are helping out full-time.

[R5]

[Russian] to R6 explaining the question and translating. She asked about the condition of our scene and the political persecution and how it became politicized.

[R6]

[Russian] In Kharkiv? People were afraid to get beaten and now...

[R5]

People disassociated from some views because of them being afraid to get attacked. All because things became political yes. So now we, lately we didn't have any problems with Nazi shows and all the shows are open and openly advertised and Facebook or VK events. Everything and we didn't have problems so far but what I see is that the problem is ...

[I]

The problem is coming back?

[R5]

What I see is that the problem is coming back. Because here in Kharkiv we had some people in our scene, in the Kharkiv Hardcore scene which were attacked recently on the street.

[I]

Here in Kharkiv? Recently?

[R5]

[Russian] translates question to R6

[R5]

Yes, so people from the hardcore scene were already starting getting attacked since 1 ½ years ago. Sometimes after the show, sometimes just in the center because people think they look like a skinhead or something are you a fucking anti-fascist or something. Some Nazis who are younger they do not know these subcultural codes, who you should listen to, what are the names of the bands and how people look like. They are more fashionable and they dress in parkas, everything that is youth style.

[I]

So, they just copy it?

[R5]

They copy it, they have some right-wing views or maybe they go to football...

[I]

Hipster Nazis.

[R5]

Yes, something like this. But there are some who know about appearances and these codes and if they see you have some special hat or special jackets they think you probably belong to some scene. So, we had some people had problems because of what they were wearing. Even though they had no anarchist or anti-fascist symbols on them. Yeah, they just already...

[I]

But because they wore black hats, certain kind of clothing, parkas?

[R5]

Like a black hat, skin head hat type of thing. Cap? No not really baseball cap but it's very short one with square ornaments.

[I]

Like in the UK, everyone wears them. I understand which style you mean, I know which one.

[R5]

Something like this and for **Hamtani** jackets or something like that, it is pretty much popular among subcultural people and those Nazis don't give a fuck about it. But some people really pay attention, this guy looks like he is a **[slang for anarchist activist 'schafka'] [6:27]**

[I]

And which groups did you have the biggest problems with? Because you were saying they are coming back like **Azov** or? Is it like **'Tradition and Order'**?

[R5]

Even at recent protests when I came we were together a week ago at this long March but on Wednesday he was feeling sick and was staying home and other people when we were together we had a small punk mob at the protest and on Wednesday there was our city council session. So, we were like...

[I]

What did you do exactly, you had the March and was there any other type of action?

[R5]

Yeah, it was on Saturday we were just shouting with slogans, what we want, what we need and about our mayor. About our city council and what we think about local decisions on transportation, because about this because they just raised prices for the public transport and there is the court decision that they have to roll it back to the old prices. Since this decision wasn't lawful there is no real financial basis, yes so it wasn't really publicly shown any economical calculations and what was, why do you have to raise prices? Why exactly this price. And why 60% and not like 10%. So, the court judged that it should be the old prices and until the higher court will look into it. But they refused to follow the decision of the court and that's why people were angry. And that was why we were there on Saturday. Also, there were mobs of Nazis there. Because they were trying, I think they belong to some organization which tried to be represent all public events just to show they are here and some Nazis were really young. Between 17 and 20 years old. A whole mob of 20/30 people of 17-years old...

[I]

Do you know if they were mostly Kharkiv based? Or do you also have this phenomena like in Kyiv where they collect Nazis from different cities and bring them to these events?

[R5]

I think here they were only locals.

[I]

Locally grown fascists.

[R5]

A few different organizations were present there. And sometimes they don't even interfere with each other. I think they have some political agenda, their own agenda and some of their own political goals and sometimes they don't cross each other's path. This is the young division of Svoboda party and from another party, 'Tradition and Order', 'Freikorps'

[I]

Khodakovsky?

[R5]

Some people were...

[I]

They are like conservative as a movement?

[R5]

Some of them were from the 'Patriots of Ukraine' and their office was right here actually on this street. And the chief of that office is now a deputy in our Verkovna Rada, Biletsky.

[I]

Ah, him of course he is from Kharkiv!

[R5]

Yeah, he is from Kharkiv, and he has a huge [Translation] office. Yes, I mean so he had to pick an organization that was famous for violent actions and for everything so people from ...there were confrontations, physical confrontations with people from Patriots of Ukraine. And it's an organization from the early 2000's and it doesn't exist for five to six years already. But we got much more than only them, we had this major one and now we have a few, several smaller ones. So, I am afraid that at some point for our music scene, people will start getting problems again. Because I am afraid that they [Nazis] will start coming to the shows and some people just leave because they don't want any problems. Some people that come to shows they don't want any, don't want any problems. They are like this, until it's safe. Because if it's not safe anymore they will leave. Because ten years ago there were more people in the music scene, because of ideological reasons/motivations. And now more people just come for the music. Only the music.

[I]

So, it's not as much entangled with each other anymore?

[R5]

Yes, and they are some people who pay way more attention to the quality of the music. How they play and in which way. Because in the early 2000's the scene was defined/characterized by

such things supporting the band no matter how the quality of the music was like. Because they shared your political ideals.

[I]

Like real DIY approach?

[R5]

Yes, but with time people who started playing better they started appreciating skills if somebody can play something that's interesting. So, it's not just like playing loud and fast music with some idea, it's not enough to be heard. Not to be enough to be supported, some people think you can just take a guitar and sing two chords and it's cool. But people are fed up with this primitivism in music so many pay attention to skills and finally we got internet. And it wasn't as widespread in the early 2000s, everyone downloads everything. And if you play some shitty thing it doesn't really interest people. That's I think very important to do and play something qualitatively good and to have a good message. Then your message will be heard much better than if you just...

[I]

And do you think that overall the activist hardcore scene is growing in Kharkiv?

[R5]

No unfortunately not. It is very apolitical. We get a problem now that some people go to hardcore shows and then they feel okay to go to Nazi shows as well. Especially in Kharkiv we don't have too many Nazi hardcore show but the Nazi hardcore scene is starting to pop up in Ukraine. Overall the phenomena of far-right hardcore is growing.

[I]

Like black-metal as well, they are everywhere.

[R5]

With Black metal, it has always been like that for ages. But with hardcore it never happened before. I was happy for many years, oh the Nazi scene they have such shitty music. I am so happy you suck so much that nobody will actually come to see you.

[R5]

The problem is that a year ago I saw on Instagram some practice of some people in Dnipro and they were Nazis trying to play hardcore. And I was like hmmm, we had a couple of bands like that before.

[I]

Like which ones?

[R5]

You want the name? They had a first show in Kharkiv just two weeks ago and its band from Dnipro one called 'Worst' another called "Three hill city" I think they are now based in Kyiv but they are originally from Dnipro. And also 'Trivoschni dnia' so it's so new Nazi hardcore bands and some people who supporting them what I noticed from who likes the announcement on IG, many people are not really from the music scene in Kharkiv at least, they just support **Nacionalny Korpus** or **Nacionalny Druzhyny, C-14** stuff like that. So, they are just coming for supporting their guys but they are not really into the music. But I watched some videos from their show in Dnipro and I was fucking surprised to see people with patches, Vegan, straight-edge, hardcore, old-school, Krom X . So, what I see in this trend is that they still need the culture, that's a common thing with being straight-edge and now they are doing it with music. And some people I know from Kyiv who feel okay to be official and to be at their shows as well. Like them, some loud music is more important than what's behind it. Yeah. So, in Kharkiv I know only one person who comes to our shows, because we were not there. But we know some people, friends of friends and we see some pictures and videos and we could only notice on person from the Kharkiv scene who was there. And I already had a talk with him because I wondered why you went there to support these bands. And I am afraid that these people, that after watching these videos I got very upset, and it's a very young scene and they already get so many young people to their shows and will substitute the 'real hardcore scene' but how to say it, their scene doesn't really have balls. I don't like this phrase in English, but I can't find any other comparison. Because they are very supportive to each other and even if they play very simple stuff, [their supporters] come from different parts of the country, like we used to have in ten years ago. And now they do it, and with our scene it looks like people don't really care anymore. Oh, it's not good enough I will not support it anymore.

[I]

I mean I can imagine that they are sucking up these trends like veganism and straight-edge etc. but one thing that they will not co-opt and you see that with the Black Metal scene as well and that is anything connected to feminism. That's totally out of the boundary.

[R5]

I am surprised they are also into veganism. But yeah, they will never be on the side of LGBT or Queers or feminists that's for sure.

[I]

It's very interesting because one of the headquarters of **Azov/ Nacionalny Korpus** called Reconquista Club they have a vegan menu as well. They have like vegan and vegetarian options.

[R5]

There is a café in Kyiv called 'White vegan' it's a very weird name and when they were pressed on why, what do you mean by this name by people. People were asking on their post and on their page in the comments and they were answering it has nothing to do with racism, just a guy saying that white means clean and pure and new. Something new and it already sounds a bit... but the other problem is that many people from this Nazi hardcore scene, I saw were commenting under their posts on their page. So maybe it's a coincidence.

[I]

They are picking up on it because they want to see something in it usually.

[R5]

Very weird coincidence for me. Maybe the owner didn't mean anything racist but for some reason, I see people who go to Nazi shows who left comments 'Oh fucking nice, such a good café'. So, for some reason they are really happy exactly about this place. I don't know maybe it's the name, oh it's our place. I don't know.

[I]

But I mean that's what they do all the time this gas lighting strategy, they say one thing and then when somebody asks them is this meant in this way they say 'Nahhhh' but only for the real members they will be like yeah of course. It's like you see it a lot online that you know they use certain signs, and when you ask is this a sign you appropriated like with Trump, the sign they will also be like 'Nahhhh'. Do you know how it looks? [shows sign with fingers] It's a part of

the alt-right meme vocabulary. What are the most active groups that you have right now here in Kharkiv?

[R5]

Did you talk to \*, he was on the March yesterday?

[R6]

Guy with a black banner with an anarchist sign.

[I]

No, we talked to \* but not to \* No but with him we haven't talked yet but we will.

[R5]

I thought maybe we meet at the March and I will introduce you and he probably forgot or he didn't find me. Or he was busy with something else. Because I wanted you to talk to him as well because he was active in many initiatives. We did Mayday together, he worked in the Squad as well as R6.

[I]

You were also active in the squad?

[R5]

R6 has the squat as a tattoo [shows the tattoo] It is our Kharkiv based squad 'Autonomia'

[I]

Ah it was evicted by the police, right?

[R5]

Last year it was evicted. By 'communal services'

[R6]

Some sources they have hired some random people, some 'Titushki' and the LGBT community in Kyiv/Pride, the last three years there were many problems inside of the squat.

[R5]

There is a very difficult story about the squat, some internal problems with the people that created it. Initially all people involved in creating this space, left for one or another reason. After the fourth year of existing it happened. The first conflict started to appear over the understanding over how the squad internal organization and future, some people who were into activism where more into strict rules no drugs, no alcohol and some other people just wanted to hang out, to have fun and take it easy. Alcohol, drugs and stuff like this...

[R6]

...and tattoos!

[T]

There was a room where they shared cloths for people in need but then this room was turned into a tattoo salon.

[I]

And they couldn't have had both?

[R5]

I mean there was guy who was doing tattoos was living at the squad and he decided to make it his tattoo place.

[I]

Did he make yours?

[R5]

One of the guys who lived at the squad made this tattoo. Actually \* before he did vegan food delivery here in Kharkiv he worked at the squad and that was a small café inside of the squad. And before this vegan food delivery he does right now he was working at the vegan café at the squad. Not far from this place and me and my girlfriend we were coming there, like three times a week. Three days they were working and two days a week we were coming.

[R5]

[In Russian]

[I] But was it also the internal conflict that caused the squad being taken apart this quickly and easily?

[R5]

Yes, yes because after the internal conflict there were many conflicts. And many activists left this place and the last big conflict was between the last few activists and it turned away people from the squat. Because I for myself decided, if there would be any attack I would not come to defend it and to help people that stayed there. I didn't associate with them because of lifestyle, because of their activism and their views. So, that is what I gave forecast a couple of years ago that it is a really bad thing that they are doing. When the squat gets in problems, getting attacked by Nazis it will be easier to take it apart. They managed to turn people away and that's what happened last year. And I am surprised it lasted that long. I expected it to happen sooner.

[I]

How many years did it last?

[R5]

It began in 2014, right after Maidan. A few months after Maidan.

[R6]

[Russian]

[T]

The idea of the squat was to provide housing for refugees from Ukraine's East. They repaired the house, created the squad and made housing for refugees.

[I]

I see.

[T]

They made an advertisement that they collect food and clothes to redistribute it to people from Eastern Ukraine.

[I]

And where there many from the Eastern Territories who made us of this offer?

[R5]

50% percent of the people who were from the East but also activists. People who moved from the East but were left-wing activist. But also, some regular people.

[T]

There were people who only pretended to be refugees in order to get housing. There were people who really got into alcoholism, some marginal parts of society but there was also a percentage of refugees.

[I]

Did you receive support from NGO's for the squat?

[R6]

[Russian]

[T]

Some rich people who supported Euro Maidan send money to the squad to repair it.

[R6]

Also, normal people send money or clothes, products. There were some cases where a programmer helped out the squat via donations. But not too many people.

[T]

There were ordinary people and rich people helping. While rich sent 10.000 Hryvnia normal people paid for food and other things.

[R6]

[Russian]

[T]

So, they found furniture at some, just on the street. Got it into the squat and considering electricity they connected to some network.

[R5]

Illegally

[T]

Even locals who were living in the district helped out with the organization of the squat. There was a deserted building with alcohol, narcotics and cigarettes. With a lot of trash and they cleaned it and people were curious what is happening there and came and helped.

[R5]

The building was abandoned for many years. It wasn't a comfortable place or to pass by and that's why locals were alright that some people started using it.

[I]

It was a real DIY space.

[R5]

Actually, \* was also in the first batch of activists working at 'Avtonomia'.

[R6]

[Russian]

[T]

One every three month

[I]

Are there any remnants of the squat? People from the former circle of 'Avtonomia' who try to substitute what the squat used to do?

[R5]

You know the squat was extremely unique for the whole of Ukraine. It was the first ever squat and it was only closed after it came under attack. Even some young Nazis tried to attack it a few times but later they gave up.

[R6]

[Russian]

[I]

It's close to the big squat in Ljubljana, [Metelkova](#)? So, it was for this region one of the pioneers? Do you think there is a chance for another squat like this in Ukraine?

[R5]

I don't think so because I am afraid there are not people to take the time. Squat it. Even at the last point of the squat when there were six or seven left and they had a lot of conflict among each other. We decided what should we do. Should we forcefully kick them out of this place? But to do this we need other people to substitute them and who have energy to work, and time to dedicate to the project. And we had a big meeting about future plans. Other left-wing activists who were against the developments the squat was taking. We discussed and decided against forceful evictions of the squatters. Because anyway those activists who lived there, there kind of after all the conflict they lost their motivation and energy. Though they already spent a lot of their time on the squat, and they lacked more energy. So, we decided let's leave them like it is and let's not support them further. And after that the vegan café stopped working, no events maybe some small exhibitions sometimes. And like R6 said, they only got support from some LGBT organizations and that's it.

[I]

Which LGBT organization?

[R6]

Kharkiv based [Sfera](#), linked to [Insight](#).

[R5]

They dealt with the situation somehow. They did some events at the squat. We also R6 booked a few shows there and that also dragged people there. It was a big room with not a really good acoustics, because of the old tiles on the walls. There was a library too.

[R6]

Anarchist and Communist library and other important thinkers and writers. Scholars and artists were represented there.

[T]

The local alcoholics were stealing the plants and grains in the garden of the squat.

[R5]

They needed snacks after their moonshine. R6 was doing the gardens and sometimes they would be stealing stuff from it.

[T]

And they were planning to open a gym in the squat.

[R5]

Because the building was big enough. So, that's why it's really a shame that it got evicted. But it could have been the biggest activist center in the whole of Ukraine. Now the building was destroyed so it became uninhabitable to everyone. Some homeless people are still in the building. Some homeless people are living in the part that wasn't destroyed. It's abandoned as it was before.

[I]

I was wondering when you were talking about this conflict, was it also sometimes about ideology or just about the way the squat was run?

[R6]

No mostly about usage of alcohol and narcotics. In terms of ideology?

[I]

Yes, I am asking this because it came up in interviews that there many ideological and political fights within the different groups, especially in Kyiv.

[R5]

It's always everywhere. I've been and when I was in New York and I tried to organize some protests to support, I've been involved in different marches, protests and actions and I was the organizer of some to support Russian anti-fascist who were in prison. For different fake-case sometimes not, but overall many fabricated cases and there were a lot of people arrested which is why we organized a protest next to the Russian consulate. Then the consul or member of staff and they were wondering which organization we represent. When I told, him we don't represent any organization but only a circle of people who share a certain idea he lost interest and didn't want to talk. They think that everything that happens, is organized by someone. Or somebody paid money so they need to know who is responsible, they cannot comprehend people would be

motivated to organize themselves without being paid. So, in New York I was seeing many people many more people, different ideologies, left-wing patches anarchism, anti-fascism t-shirts and merch so I invited everyone to join us. And actually, maybe just one person from this whole punk scene joined our protest, I also talked to some groups and only a couple of people from these groups. So, the event wasn't too crowded. [Russian]

[T]

R6 does not talk to \* because of some political differences and the history they had within the squat. When there was a conflict in the squat, \* took the side of another group and that's why they don't talk with each other.

[R5]

It's just an example of how different groups, at some people cooperate or they do something together and at some point, they stop and that's it. It's like the example I gave at some protest when I was organizing it in New York at the Russian consulate. But there many times when nobody is there, maybe that was one of the reasons why we had less people. People needed to go to work and something but also my close friend who is from Russia and who was supporting me. Even she told me I am tired of organizing all of this for the two of us and these few supporters. It's too much, I won't do it anymore. We expected more feedback, from people who claim to have left-wing views, it's not Kharkiv it was New York. Therefore, disappointment is also common with people who are being active in any type of activism and organize events of course. People who are active in any type of political activism. Like with \* he was so active and then he just completely disappeared.

[I]

You mean \* from **Avtonomiy Opir?**

[R5]

Yes. [Russian]

[I]

I think he had something like an activist burn-out and he decided he wanted to get completely rid of it and disassociate with his former activities.

[R6]

[Russian 45:00 – 49:00]

[T]

Well, other activists group in Kharkiv just don't have such funding like LGBT organizations and also, they have a threat from the far-right with everything they do. There is more pressure and from both sides on activists.

[I]

And maybe you can ask, do you think there is also some conflict between groups between of the perception of the war. In terms of how what is happening in the East is framed?

[T]

[Russian]

[R6]

[Nods head]

[I]

So, it's very similar in the sense that people are in general are against militarism and some are saying it's an anti-imperial struggle. Russia doing what the US does and that's why we need to defend. But it's split in half or how would you say is the division? Is it according to certain groups?

[T]

You mean like only two camps?

[I]

Or is it more nuanced?

[T]

[Russian]

[I]

So, after 2014, there was a lot of overlap because of the overarching issue of patriotism?

[T]

And a lot of different opinions, and even some guys from the left-wing scene they might have fought in the right-wing way. In terms of actions and them engaging in patriotism.

[R6]

They are trying to link anti-fascist with separatism. Especially, in Eastern Ukraine. Anti-fascist – criminal, separatists...

[I]

Right now, they linking anti-fascism with separatism?

[R5]

Yes, Nazis promote the idea that anti-fascism means separatism. That means it is really hard to people on the left to keep using the term and call themselves anti-fascist.

[I]

So, they only think it is in the Ukrainian context? They were like separatists?

[R5]

They have really strong propaganda, but they say anti-fascism means pro DNR.

[I]

And when did this start? That anti-fascism was sort of coined as being pro-separatism?

[R5]

That started right after Russia started to claim that on the East of Ukraine there is an anti-fascist struggle [ongoing]. Because this Russian propaganda on the mass media it always...

[I]

They use the term of nationalism, right? Because Ukraine is depicted as this nationalist junta...

[R5]

Yes, they equate nationalism with Ukraine and in the annexed territories, are seen as against nationalism and against imperialism. And that again means anti-fascism. So, and after that all

Nazis they used the same rhetoric than Russia does, because it is really good for them. They use it in their favour.

[I]

Their going back also to some communist former Soviet phrases about nationalism. I understand.

[R5]

I had a discussion with one guy who was in the army and he was [fighting] for Pravy Sector, 'Dugh'

[T]

It is a like voluntary Ukrainian corps of Pravy Sector it is like their military wing.

[R5]

He was like a regular guy, he is not a 'radical'. Just a regular guy from a regular small town who wanted to be a volunteer, to defend the land. And I had the conversation with him, because there was some protest and he was asking what is going on. And I decided to talk to him because while others were doing their stuff, because I see the guy in the military thought I don't want anybody to have problems. So, it's better to explain what we stand for. And he also had that conception that anti-fascism stands for supporting the DNR/LNR. And I am saying it's not true because it is totally about different things. Nazis tried to put the equate signs between both but it's not correct. So, I explained him how I felt about that and he told me that actually I had a conversation just today with a guy who was telling me this. That anti-fascism means separatism so some real Nazi was talking to this guy explaining him how anti-fascism is bad because it means separatism. And I explained him our position and I hope that he, at least this guy made some conclusions for himself. So, one of the examples that the ultra-right wing that they really do their propaganda to show how anti-fascism is bad.

[I]

I was wondering because I heard that there was this one organization Borotba did they actually go and fight in the occupied territories?

[R5]

Yes, Borotba is extremely bad. They did a bad job for all left-wing people.

[I]

I heard about them, they are seen as the biggest traitors by multiple groups.

[R6]

Self-called Bolsheviks, Euro-Maidan they supported the anti-Maidan and pro-Russian in Kharkiv.

[I]

So, they basically fucked it up for all anti-fascist, now it's easy to make this connection.

[T]

They have very nationalist values.

[I]

So, you had two sides, with the idea and claiming the anti-fascist struggle

[T]

Yes, within Euromaidan...

[R6]

Black Flag...

[T]

If you brought a black flag to the demonstration they told you to put it away, it's seen as a provocation.

[T]

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, there is a Memorial Day of [...] a Russian anti-fascist who were killed.

[I]

I've heard his name before.

[R5]

They had banners to support

[I]

They came

[T]

They asked to put the banners away, because it is a provocation.

[R6]

And the organizer of the March

[I]

I have a friend who is from Russia who fought for the Ukrainian side for one of those battalions with anarchists in them. You are aware of these structures, I mean they know about the volunteers and these battalions that anarchists actually ended up in?

[T]

[Translation] Battalion, no but there were several people, but it wasn't a whole battalion.

[I]

I see.

[R5]

People from the left-wing scene and from the hard-core scene, were in different battalions. Some were in **Pravy Sector**, even one was in **Azov**, one was in **"Aidar"** and others in others. Actually, the guy in Azov had to leave because other people in the battalion really didn't accept the guy. Because he was telling that every day he expected he could get killed by his own side.

[I]

My friend \* he actually fought in Donetsk but is also from the hard-core scene and he was in a battalion from **Pravy Sector** I think.

[R5]

People go to different battalions, and we cannot judge where they go because the supply and state of the Ukrainian army back then was so bad and people who wanted to be a volunteer. They wanted to have some at least decent conditions of their service. So, if you go there and you do not even have shoes, or clothes or some random, no defence shields or anything. It is different

from battalion to battalion. Because volunteers bought stuff and the regular Ukrainian Army at least in the first years was in a horrible condition and only those who were taken to the army by force, who didn't want to but had to serve. Only those people were really drafted to the front. That's why those who were as a volunteer we were choosing different battalions which had at least some support to help them survive.

[I]

I see. It's an interesting topic. To me it was really shocking that friends of mine they came to the collective squat in my hometown back in the Netherlands, and they made a presentation about Euromaidan and what was happening and what anarchist's groups in Ukraine are doing to support this struggle. And they were also having two or three members that fought in the East. For me it was really strange because they made some sort of a presentation also about how to spot you know the far-right symbolism and they compared some that they had seen at the front. Some that they saw during Euromaidan and made some, how do you say, made some sort informational evening about it. It was very confusing [to me], so wait there were anarchists and then people from the far-right and then they are together at the front and at the same time are trying to show these are the Nazis and trying to identify them. I was like wow, what is happening. It is a mess.

[R6]

[Russian]

[T]

Some people from the anarchist scene they went to the scene just to get military experience but they didn't think properly about the fact that they are on the front representing and fighting on the side of the state. It was only because of gaining military experience [for them].

[R6]

[Russian]

[I]

And then were then stuck with the far-right

[T]

Yeah. R5 & R6 went to some protests against the metro price raisings recently.

[R5]

Especially on the second protest, on Wednesday when it was a working day and R6 and another guy were sick. And I went there just alone and I felt so uncomfortable because of these groups of people. On Saturday in general there were a lot more people maybe between 1000 and 15000, but on Wednesday there were less people. The protest was organized by an organization which is not connected to the far-right it's called [Kharkivski anti-korruptiony centre] anti-corruption center. But they are loyal to anybody who supports their actions.

[I]

I mean it's like often with the corruption struggle that the sort of the interest groups of the far-left and the far-right meet also in case of Kherson with Katya Gandziuk who is an anti-corruption activist and then people said later that she actually had links to people from C-14. That they liked her.

[R5]

That's what they supporting her now.

[I]

Exactly but she wasn't herself linked to the far-right but they supported her anti-corruption struggle.

[R5]

The problem with right-wing groups they show most social activity overall. Sometimes that is because their leaders get such task to do that. They have such, sometimes they for their promotion purposes but anyway as a result we see who is in the front of social protest. And in the front of social protest is the far-right, for this reason for that reason. It doesn't matter because they make themselves visible.

[I]

I mean also at the women's March recently. They had like ten or fifteen people standing in front of the museum. And the people from the counter protests were like screaming the women's place is in the kitchen and some really stupid slogans. And then the people from the March would scream back and it was rather silly the whole show between them. I thought that comparing it to

Action that I've seen in Europe, I was impressed how well organized and it was very calm. And they actually had good slogans.

[R5]

How many people were at the March?

[I]

Maybe 150/200?

[R5]

That's cool because two years ago there were maybe 15 people and they got attacked by Nazis. And one of our friends was beaten on the head with a baseball bat.

[I]

Really? Did he have any lasting injuries?

[R5]

He had a big injury on his head. And they were attacked not in the center near the action but outside somewhere at the train station. One guy was looking at them where are they going and then called the others. They lurked and waited for them after the action and then attacked.

[I]

We heard that yesterday was similar actually. Because people from the organizing group **Sfera** told us they had to disperse very fast and they all went to locations that they didn't know. And that they could only meet us in the evening for an interview because they were paranoid about whether they got rid of the Nazis or not.

[R5]

That's very good idea to be paranoid about that. [Russian]

[T]

Okay, several years ago there was a 1<sup>st</sup> of May demonstration and people dispersed and the far-right was searching for the organizers of the March but based on people who were alternatively dressed but they hadn't participated in the March. And they beat them and then those guys who were looking alternatively at the organizers of the March after that we became victims.

[I]

It's like in Kyiv there was an attack a couple of months ago where they attacked two guys on the street because "they looked to gay" and they attacked them with knives in the middle of Kreshatyk. They could have also theoretically also just attacked a foreigner because they just don't understand that people dress differently. But right now, in Kharkiv are there a lot of attacks on a regular basis? Or only after special events?

[I]

Mostly aimed at feminists and LGBT groups?

[R6]

[Russian]

[T]

So, you can't advertise any type of anti-fascist meeting as anti-fascist. You have to cover them because if it is advertised openly it can be disturbed by the police or the far-right will cooperate with the police to shut it down.

[R6]

[Russian]

[I]

EcoDia? Bunker you mean the sociocultural center?

[T]

No, Nazis discovered Bunker and they just wrote some slogans on the wall.

[R5]

Even on this street, with "Sneshana" and I saw a lot of stickers and we were starting to take them off. And we actually did it right next to their office. And we were confronted by people from 'Freikorps' what the fuck we are doing and why. And I said I am cleaning the streets, because it's too much stuff on the walls. Too much in front of my eyes, and being nervous and we had a long conversation with them. It didn't end in a physical [confrontation] but they were very angry and saying this is our street, our place. If we see you again you are going to get problems. That's

the first thing and the second thing we know where your office is “Na \*”. And he gave me the address of **Bunker** so we know where to find you. And I said then you’re probably wrong because I have no idea what you are talking about, I am not a part of **Bunker**. He thought that only a guy who takes of stickers can be someone from **Bunker**. They know only this place, they don’t know other activists exists.

[I]

Probably better they don’t know.

[R5]

Yes. But this protest a couple of days ago I felt so uncomfortable because I was alone. And on the first event we had mask and on the second one I was the only one wearing a mask. And everyone was like looking at me, who is that guy why is he in a mask. Even I was giving an interview to a local TV-channel and the guy asked me what’s your name and last name.

[I]

Lol you were wearing a mask for a reason.

[R5]

Why do you need my last name? What does it change? I have an opinion and I told it to you. Why would you need it? ‘Why are you wearing a mask?’ Because I want to and because I can. That’s why I am wearing it. But do you think it is still up [Russian] Do you think it is relevant to put a mask on today? Because it was on Saturday that people did why are you doing it today? Such a stupid question and also, I noticed that one of the journalists who took interviews from people, he was in company with a guy from **‘Tradiciya I poryadok’** [Russian] When we went to buffet place which makes cheap pizza on Prospekt Nauki we met lot of Nazis there who were also going to eat there. The day when there was a Nazi gig and we also felt that we decided to leave and more and more of them came. And we were afraid they came for us and I met one guy there who I later saw on one of the TV-channels who was also a journalist. And he knew all of the far-right guys in the pizza place. That’s why one of the guys was holding their flag and watching me like I was standing a few meters from him. And then at some point I met one guy who was active in anarchist movement a few years ago he is not active anymore. I haven’t seen him in a few years. \* so, cool to see you and I started talking to him and I noticed one hour after the protest started a few Nazis standing next to us. Right next to us. Really close. And I said to \* let’s go. He didn’t listen what the guys behind us had said and he didn’t realize I just wanted to

make it somewhere safe. We went to that place and I see they also moved somewhere. So, I figured it was time to leave and we left at that point.

[I]

Will there be a third gathering of the protest?

[R5]

I don't know if it's going to be but I am not sure but it should be. This organization **the anti-corruption center** they still eh...[Russian]

[T]

They still report to courts and have ongoing law suits.

[R5]

Court cases yes, the city council they made this decision. They applied it, it went to the court. The court confirmed it was unlawful and they made a new decision exactly the same like that. But with a different number and a different date. So, it looks like every time you go to the court to dispute the city council makes the exactly the same decision with a different number. So, you're just losing time for disputes and at the same time they overcharge you. They make millions and billions every day.

[I]

They hope people will drop it at some point. I see.

[R5]

Yeah. But sometimes the police get the order not to touch the activists in the subway. And those who get into the disputes with the workers. Like I want to come and I want to pay but I want to pay the price that is local and lawful. And some activists do that all the time. And probably the police had orders not to make problems and to anger the social activists. That is why when we came back from the action there were three cops in the subway and we talked to the subway staff about the entrance fee. And they said you are breaking the law so we are breaking the law. So, we climbed over the fence and they didn't arrest us. Normally they would arrest you or fine you.

[I]

But because of the protest they didn't?

[R5]

Yes, but I don't think it will last long. Because now I see more security near the metro these days. Because I try not to pay, it is my principle position not to pay them the extra amount of money if I need to go to other options.

[I]

That is the daily life protest? Because something like if you pay the 8 hryvnia you already lost the battle?

[R5]

Yes, they make millions and millions and there is no transparency on where it goes to. Where do you spent it? Hryvnia to hryvnia. And there are a lot of corruption scandals, because the Kharkiv subway this Kharkiv anti-corruption center showed some documents that the subway buys these parts for trains for three times the market price.

[I]

So many disappears somewhere?

[R5]

Yes, somebody is making money with this. It is the same thing with advertisement, the whole subway is full of ads and also very small shops selling different stuff inside of the subway. You can see it everywhere. 100 of them and all the money from there they go to someone. Not to the budget of the subway and they don't give any reports on this. It's millions and millions and they want normal people to pay more. If things were clear and money goes to the budget, regular people would use the subway for the same price and no extension would have been needed.

[Informal conversation]

### **Transcript Interview: Lviv Translation [R7]**

Color-coding based on different group affiliation

**Red** = labour initiatives, 'traditional' anarchist groups

**Yellow** = 'nationalist'-anarchist organizations

**Green** = ecologically oriented anarchist groups

**Dark Blue** = Foreign anarchist groups

**Dark Green** = Stalinist organization

**Blue** = Human Rights Organizations, 'liberal organizations', LGBT-interest groups, Media

**Dark Green** = Nationalists, classified fascist groups

**Purple** = 'Traditionalists', far-right affiliated

**Magenta** = Key individuals

**Grey** = Autonomous space

**Dark Grey** = Sport facility connected to activist group

**Dark Red** = Paramilitary Organization

[R7]

You said that you know \* and \* has been talking about this girl \*, **Autonomous Resistance'/Avtonomy Opir/АВТОНОМНИЙ ОПІР** has been performing a much more actions regarding Nestor Makhno since 2012 or 2013. By law in Ukraine and in Lviv region specifically to make a 'picket' or March one needs to the allowance from your local municipal government. The municipal government will inform the police for them to secure you during this March. So basically, just to maintain civic obedience and security. There were some cases when they **Avtonomy Opir** didn't inform the municipal government but still when they came to make the 'piket' or that March on a specific date and because of a specific reason the [police] was already at the location and they [police] were saying that everything is okay and they just knew that that **Avtonomy Opir** will be there and they just performed their professional obligation just to secure them. Just secure this March and 'picket', so it means that knew about this March beforehand and particularly this case was about some picket before the Russian embassy in Lviv.

To come back to March Makno in 2015, **Avtonomy Opir** decided to organize a week of Nestor Makhno to organize some lectures, some actions and at the end of this week they still wanted to organize the March. When the time of the March was coming some far-right organizations like **National Corps/Nacionalnyy Korpus/Національний Корпус** and **Pravy Sector** and some other organizations which were basically just registered but not actually existing and in some they were third organizations which made this suit to the court against **Avtonomy Opir** not to allow them to perform this March. Just against **Avtonomy Opir's** professional activity. But in reality, there were only **Nationalny Korpus** because their used other minor organizations which were not registered. **National Korpus** used other organizations named **Pravy Sector** to do all the job. But like actually by exact directions from **Nationalny Korpus** because **Nationalny Korpus** is a

political party and they are allowed by law to do what they were doing there or to make such actions or to have for example paramilitary branch [which they have]. And to some parliamentary activities because they will be just banned and excluded from other political parties and therefore **National Korps** used **Pravy Sector** and other minor organization to do their job and to present on this far-right actions and events.

You are asking whether **Tradition and Order/Tradytisia I poryadok** joined this organized agitation against the March? I mean not in this March but were against **Avtonomny Opir** organizing this March of Nestor Makhno in Lviv?

This organization **Tradition and Order** is only located in Kyiv and in their background of the general political situation with this hysterical civic organization that people are the same but they are just going for one organization to another but basically it just a circulation of the same people. From **Svoboda/Свобода** to **Nationalny Korpus** to **Pravy Sector**. And in Lviv in there are also representatives of **Tradition and Order** and **C-14**. But for anarchist's organization they don't exist, it is very funny that basically the same people from **National Korps** and **Pravy Sector** they are just going to 'pickets' and saying that we are representing **Tradition and Order** so here they are but basically they are just the same people. It's very easy to follow them because Lviv is such a small city. Very easy to understand that it is always the same people. I know almost everybody from all three far-right groups here in Lviv.

[I]

I remember this is also what **Anton Parambul** told to me in an interview in the past, namely that people from different activist circles know each other faces in such a small city as in Lviv. Therefore, they don't cover their faces anymore.

[R7]

**Avtonomy Opir** is a leftist part of society for leftist in Lviv. And connecting leftist organizations in Lviv, there is **Black Flag** and **Socialny Opir** which is the name of their previous organization before Black Flag but it's essence is that **Black Flag** always was enemy organization to **Avtonomny Opir** because **Avtonomny Opir** had a lot of people I mean, anarchists. Some nationalists, Marxists, Socialists and other activists from other movements. I enjoy **Avtonomny Opir** because people are so different and they still manage to organize the group and to have internal discussions and find consensus together. Still they co-exist with each other and it's great that people are so sensible and can manage to live together [without smashing each other heads

in]. Before this I was part of a far-right organization and I can compare it directly and [people were not as sensible in these groups]. Within **Avtonomny Opir** we have a guy who is **Lemkish/Lemkos**, small nationality, one of the minorities in Carpathians they are a minority in Germany so he is a strong nationalist and stands for preserving the culture, the language and that is the most important thing for him. In **Avtonomny Opir**, they are really trying and managing to find this connection and common ground and consensus between such different people and actually it works out [like with this guy]. For their our internal structure [**Avtonomny Opir**] we have no formal leadership, and we organize ourselves in collective gatherings. We decide the agenda and important points for the organization together. I really enjoy this spirit of anarchy, in which we are self-managing the organization by the principle of self-organization because you feel like you a part of a bigger picture. Everyone contributes to it and it is very personally satisfying to see your input used and implemented directly. It works the following way, you just go to one of the gathering's meet with other activists from the organization you pitch your idea and if other activists agree to unite on the idea we will collectively carry out the action.

In **Black Flag**, people who came from **Avtonomny Opir** and moved there because they perceive them as stronger defined by anarchist principles. A lot of weekends in **Black Flag** there were a lot of people who really take the environmental problems seriously, they have a shop where they sell some eco-friendly products. They also feed the homeless but at the same time just recently they understood that they should cover their faces in their public actions and protests. Because they were attacked multiple times and within a short period against their activists, therefore they took this decision and take security more seriously. You can compare **Black Flag** and **Avtonomny Opir**, but I would say that **Avtonomny Opir** is way more professional in taking care of the security of their activists while **Black Flag** is not doing it as much. Everyone is personally responsible for themselves and they need security more serious I think.

For example, when they have some searches made by the police made by national security SbU, it is happening for years and these are very serious, very brutal searches. When we had the same searches happening to our friends from **Avtonomny Opir**, we are trying to provide them with help, not to leave our friends/activists. We cannot leave them alone in such a situation and vice versa the situation is with **Black Flag**, when they had the same searches and security checks by SbU their activists were just left alone with the situation. **Avtonomny Opir** understood that they must protect them and that **Black Flag** is more relevant and closer in political orientation to us than far-right organizations and we tried to support some of their activists who had these searches happen to them. The support takes the form of going to the court and trying to persuade

in a sense of this activists, also we went to SbU and trying to make a ‘picket’ in front of their Lviv branch because one of the left activists of **Black Flag**, he might be convicted for ten years of prison. But there are such activists from **Avtonomny Opir**, they managed to rescue him from this verdict [by giving legal support.] We are trying to make these SbU searches public via social media to frighten the SbU from making unlawful convictions. As a result of our efforts, the SbU they didn’t proceed with the conviction and the court dropped charges of the activist. Therefore, right now their faces are covered when they are making public actions.

Personally, I only once got the idea to cover my face because I think that this is a question of my security and it will be better for me to say something publicly and to make such a March. Just to be an activist without covering my face, because then will know about that I was at the March and if the SbU will take activists where everybody will know about the March. It will be like easier to provide such proofs in the court. For example, I participate in Marches and events but not only from **Avtonomny Opir**, not only as a participant and member of **Avtonomny Opir** but also as a member of other organizations. For example, in Lviv there is an organization, which have deals with national education issues and they to make improvements to this sphere. It’s called **‘Batkivska Rada Lvivshiny’/Батьківська Рада Львівщини/Parent’s Council of Lviv Region** and it’s a parental council of the Lviv region. It’s basically mothers who decided to unite in such an organization, and decided to make a council against unlawful payments [corruption] in schools. When my child got into the kindergarten I constantly saw these unlawful payments and people regularly demanded such illegal payments. I understood that I should become a member of this organization and to do more about it as it is not right. Therefore, I am not only a member of **Avtonomny Opir** but also a member of an organization against ‘illegal housing’. It is predominantly old people and it would be very strange to cover my face in their protests. I am not against covering people covering their faces, but for me it’s not really relevant. Within **Avtonomny Opir** the main age is 17 to 20 years old and these people they are still dependent on their parents and therefore it makes sense that they need to protect their identities. And not all parents take their child’s activism seriously. In my case my mum always asks me why I am doing what I am doing. I answer that I want to change the system, to have another life.

With **Avtonomny Opir**, we have a sport club called **‘Citadel’**. Mostly we have very young members but we do not have a lot of new people right now within our organization because we have a broader issue with finance. It is the reason that not so many new people can join and there are not enough financial means for the trainers and right now their main trainer is an activist who then became a trainer himself and not a professional employee. They have a lot of competition

and their trainer became judges but they always said to their sportsmen that if you've out as an activist in some actions for example against illegal and illegal housing or something like this then Titushki came this event to this action and they see that you are like a sports man and therefore they can beat you to death. They had also such an action, called sportsmen don't beat Tituschka. We don't have people who really have a salary being a trainer for the 'Citadel'. Also, we have no employees, because if you are a member of a sport club you can make money from competitions or become professional but it's comparatively a very low salary. Especially comparing it to other clubs in Ukraine. But you shouldn't become a Tituschka or employed to perform professional agitation if you're an official member of 'Citadel'. [These are the rules of our club].

Within Avtonomy Opir we have never used our sportsmen for our actions or securing them. Or for securing our 'pickets'. In our gym, we have a crossed-out swastika and a crossed out imperial eagle and in the middle of the gym we have a Ukrainian 'Tryzub' because we are against fascism, imperialism and when people come to our gym they already see these signs and they understand the political thought behind our organization. New people understand that in this gym it is not a normal gym and it's not only about sport but a matter of concept. Plus, our gym also arranges many events and a lot of lectures. We take self-education very seriously. For example, we had some trainings of Jiu-Jiutsu or we had social March against increasing of taxes but for the increasing of their salaries and many people joined. Our sports men feel sympathy to these activities and our political cause of Avtonomny Opir. When we opened in 2009 when Avtonomny Opir was still a nationalist organization we got attacked. In 2012, Avtonomny Opir started to talk more about social policy and social inequality. Avtonomny Opir talked about some UPA actions, the reason that UPA was confronting fascism and Soviet groups for so long because people could really understand their motives and there were simply and we are similar to the OUN in political terms. So, they accepted it. Incomprehensible

Avtonomny Opir as a national organization was constantly repeating nationalism without fascism and chauvinism, and when there were nationalist organization they held a lot of internal lectures and seminars to discuss this topic in-depth. And teach themselves essential concepts to understand them and then in the second stage to implement them. And through such internal discussion and seminars they understood they are closer to the left-wing political ideas. At this time, some left Marxist and anarchist joined the organization [Avtonomny Opir], and through such a variety of different people and thoughts we adopted very interesting positions and from this crystalized a new concept of Avtonomny Opir.

From 2013, everyone started to call **Avtonomny Opir** a leftist or left-wing organization. So, then **Avtonomny Opir** from 2009 onward existed only as a ‘mummy’ which were brought by activist. **Avtonomny Opir** was starting its activity ‘**Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn**’ he was a leader of **Svoboda** and at this time he said that **Avtonomny Opir** is just like a young organization, like a daughter of **Svoboda**. But it in reality is being like this, like he expected **Avtonomny Opir** to be and I remember this time when **Svoboda** distributed papers to vote in favor of them in regional elections and then in parliamentary elections.

[Phone rings short break]

We also experience extreme persecution and searches by the security services in our offices and in our shop [**Avtonomny Opir**]. I would like to tell one interesting story for example one day when just somebody asked us to tell how it happens and we after distributing some leaflets we went to ‘**Hogwarts**’ and I said to one guy, like have you notices this guy who was following you all day and that guy answered to me like oh no you are just exaggerating. What are you talking about the guy literally followed you! He neglected her warning and thought she joked. You know when some Belarussians came to Ukraine and tell about they are persecuted by their national security service and you think to yourself ‘Oh I am in Ukraine’, nothing like this can happen here. But this concept that Ukraine is a ‘Rechtsstaat’ and there is the existence of the Rule of Law is a farce. But actually, we have the same situation than our neighbours Belarus and Russia. One day I got home to sleep and then I woke up suddenly, seeing that **Denys Maziola** called me and told we me we are getting searched by SBU right now. When I heard it I immediately dressed up and hurried over to their place. When it happened, I called an activist’s who was close to me, because I knew that he will be able to spread the news of the searches and distribute the information that I wanted to go around. SBU took away their phone’s [inhabitants of **Hogwarts**, four activists], you don’t have a right for your phone in the situation of your house being searched. That’s how the investigation process works. And then these activists I ran to, followed them to inquire about the possible investigations and tried to analyse the situation. And they got to the analysis that the SBU must have followed them for a long time and has made many recordings on them to crack down on them.

These were the most recent actions the SBU target us with and we quickly understood that we needed to stay under radar for a while. We understood we need to abstain from openly ideological actions and wait some time to gather back strength. In order to be in a better position

soon and to represent a bigger political force that do not put up with these types of unlawful treatments and is able to oppose them. Right now, we are joining forces with Human Rights Organization which lawyers and organization which help protect us. Additionally, we entered into a coalition of human rights organization's and they would try and hit us again with one of those unlawful searches there will be another case of unlawful searches against us we will not only share it via Facebook/Telegram but our partners from this coalition will help us and spread these news as effective as possible. I understand this is the only solution for us to build a new strategy and to survive. When we got last persecuted by the SbU it was extremely severe which means we have to be smarter in the future. We always have to be many steps ahead of the Security Services. Last time all our pages and web presence was banned and our website got blocked. It was unavailable for usage for more than six month and even though we tried to recover it but it was nearly impossible. At the same time, we are depending on our page as it is our most vital source of information and we have documents on there since 2009 until the incident. On our website are a lot of articles, news, documents and other information and now that we recovered it we are trying to secure all our documents and we scanned every single file. Now we store all information at a safer place and in order to stop the SbU to stop our memory and our history completely.

This constant blocking of our website it is happening because of SbU member, one employee he tried to block our site. He has worked on it for five days and he made a claim to the provider to gain information to block the website but under Ukrainian law their request was rejected. After the last SbU search, we really suffered serious damage to our reputation and big financial losses. But again, it was also very useful on another level because it made us realize we need to invest in security and since then we have. We have cooperated with lawyers and human rights organization to achieve more security and in another case of another search we will not any longer prohibited to see our lawyer like it was the case last time. Plus, we will be more accustomed to traditional proceedings and it will be very useful to us. And we pay the lawyer a year ahead and he obliges to work for us during the whole year. Because in every case we will receive help. This is one part of our securitization strategy and the second step is to go through this process of self-education and we listen to a lot of courses/trainings on how to protect our image as a political entity. Also, I subscribed to a university course on criminal law, not because I am a fan of interaction with criminal law but in the last year they implemented a lot of amendments to the criminal code of Ukraine and we are trying to keep up with it. Knowledge is our weapon, especially if you face such a struggle. You have to know more to be able to defend yourself against the system.

Back then we regularly gave lectures to our members and activists, but we realized it was very hard for us to gain and recruit many followers. Because all people who you know will come but normal people from the street won't be interested. Which is why we realized we should do our normal events but change the names of the events. Trying to rebrand and put it under the umbrella and brand of 'Vilna Schkola/Вільна Школа/Free School' and a lot more people are coming to these events. And they very much enjoy them. We are trying to make these lectures in libraries or in some youth centres and libraries which is already a very different location and it changes how many people can join. As for example with the head of the Lviv educational center in Lviv he knows me personally and I talk to him a lot and I tell him about our within Avtonomny Opir and our activities and the struggles with SbU. He says that I know you personally and I like Avtonomny Opir's activities but you have issues with your public representation in mass media. Probably if I wouldn't know you on a personal level I would not join your organization Avtonomny Opir. Right now, I am more interested in figuring out what you do/organize because you are changing your image and trying to appeal to more outsiders and core of the society. If you want to appeal to the masses and act in the public eye you will have to deal with increasing confrontation and different opinions that will come up at public events. Especially with issue of LGBTQ rights we made a seminar and many people came, especially conservatives and many youngsters. We are trying just to speak about it and its already positive signs. To make these events, lectures and Marches and just to make these issues public. We also motivate people who are interested in ecology, in the past we rescued some cats and dogs that were straying and brought them to an animal shelter. With this particular problem of stray cats and dogs we understood that for years we tried to make changes and it did not work out. But then again this 'Kommersant' nothing happened and the regulations for these pets in Ukraine is very inefficient but we are trying. Ultimately, we actually fired the head of Lviv department of Ecology who actually was a bad guy who came also was involved in scandals about illegal wood logging in Lviv forests. The courts decided an order that prohibits animal abuse by court. And it makes us very happy we got this law passed.

Sometimes people ask us when we cooperate with the local government and municipalities how that works together with our anarchist principles. But I think that in Ukraine we are not politically developed enough as to completely reject the state. We should view the state in terms of cooperation. Right now, we use the state as long as we can as we can, we are not able to organize at this stage of development entirely on our own. If we have a right to make a claim on government support I will make it. Within Avtonomny Opir to talk about self-education to

promote our political agenda and to raise our future political leaders we fall back on every financial aid we can. Why wouldn't you grab financial support from the state if you have the possibility and then you implement the programs you want. But people think that anarchist always only reject the state entirely even though for us it is more efficient to use it in our own terms. I think such pure anarchist views are not really what the world needs I mean you can engage in DIY actions helping the homeless, caring for the nature you activists are getting beaten and killed and you are doing nothing with that. We also had these threatening SbU searches and we also didn't know how to cope with them. We even had one activist woman and a guy in our group which came to face to face with an activist from the far-right and he said hey let's settle this. Actually, he could show that leftist are not the weakest part of our society, basically that boy from the left from **Avtonomny Opir** beat up the far-right guy who actually tried that assaulted the girl from **Avtonomny Opir**. Later he made a public statement how he tried to attack the girl. All these threats we keep them far from realization because we are participating in all public conversations and try to stay in the public sphere. As with me and other **Avtonomny Opir** activists keep appearing on TV and Radio and to keep pushing our agenda in the public sphere. In my case if something will happen against me, but I know that friends of **Avtonomny Opir** will try and protect me. For example, this month the organization of 'parental gathering' who are trying to stand for good education and against corruption will take place. Also, another event will be organized from the group 'against **unlawful building**' I know I will get some support but also only if I stay active in the public sphere.

**Avtonomia has this special plan on how they are tackling historically sensitive topics, because for example they have a [...] here in Lviv. How do they usually achieve this, basically how they would like to expose this picture of our historical linearity here in Ukraine but simultaneously we are adding anarchist values into it.**

Right now, we have a national liberation struggle in the East. And we have a lot of members and activists AO that are involved in fighting this war and there are called the veterans of ATO. And we are talking about the war, and for example our Lviv feminist group '**Feministischna Masternya**' '**Feminist Workshop**' who have actually two sides on the question of the war. The first part of their group says we are having a war right now in Ukraine and second camp talks about an internal struggle and a civil war. Our organization can be named social-nationalistic but not in the meaning that we have seen throughout the course of history but it is the same story with Marxism. If you call yourself a Marxist in Ukraine or in Germany it will be two different types of Marxism. And it's the same with **Avtonomny Opir**, we stand social rights and actually

we support the slogan of UPA which is about the oppressed fighting against the oppressors, basically it's the formulation of our anti-imperial struggle. I work in a school and I see the imposing of this really new form of nationalism. In my school. I talked to our director and they say that in high school there is no talk of the far-right will be permitted. It doesn't depend on any political party; no talks are permitted because these are kids and they are still malleable and not yet adults. They might have troubles evaluating the knowledge they are getting fed. As I said to the director that they should be prohibited to go to high school it is my initiative, we also have lessons of Ukrainian education but I do it in a very impartial way. I am talking about the restrictions of ... which might take place in very crude ways and there might be a big necessity to restrict somebody's rights for instance for public security and it must be held in rare situations. I am really sure that Ukrainian nationality is very interesting and we have a lot to offer to world. I would like to conserve our traditions and languages but at the same time I see oppose the idea of national borders being set in stone. Unfortunately, there will always be people that are trying to occupy your country and societies won't be as progressed as to involve themselves in a pan-European project without borders. I always tell my children that the strength of the state should be evaluated through its culture through its economy when you can share your knowledge or tradition with others. I do really support the idea of having the right of different organization in our civil society and that means that we are going through the process of true democratization and that means that everybody can express their political thought. Which is good but at the same time we should be able to express our views without getting threatened or beaten, or suppressed. I remember that when in Lviv after Maidan all our organization came together 'shoulder to shoulder' at our main square. **Azov/A3OB**, **Black Flag**, **Avtonomy Opir**, basically everybody could shake each other hand and great everyone and congratulate themselves on the achievements of Maidan.

[R7] [01:08:30]

We talked about it for a long and it should be a platform that unites a broader spectrum of organisations.

There are topics which are taboo for us and which we don't support. We now have the organisation Avangard, which unites groups in various cities. There are right as well as left wing organisations present. The rhetoric of the organisation became more developed and broader, which gives other organisation the possibility to come to us.

[I]

Which ambitions does Avangard have, do they want to unite the Left and the Right?

[R7]

We talked for a long about the issue that there needs to be a platform which can united a broader range of organisations. **Avangard** was born because we saw that because in Lviv we do what **Chornyj Komitet** does in Kyiv, although it is a right-wing organisations. They say that they are against beating and fighting and want to decide on things on a more intellectual level. They accept us and vice versa, because we talk a lot, meet each other. We do common actions. For example, last year when there was an attack on **Kyiv Pride**, **Chornyj Komitet** wasn't among the attackers. They just went there and took photos. They didn't take part in either side. I think it is already a great success among Right-wing organisations. When they ask us for something, we can agree on it. That shows that people with different dialogues [strategies] can unite.

[I]

Do you think it helped AO to talk on topics of sexuality that one of the veterans came out as gay?

[R7]

I want to say that homosexuality in general is a very problematic topic for our society. For example, when I say in Odesa that I am a Lesbian it wouldn't be much of a deal (Jews say: "You have a right to your own decision"). In Lviv, the situation is different, they would point their finger at you. Again, there is a difference between the state on the one hand and societal acceptance on the other. That is why if people don't learn to accept and tolerate, it will happen. And if we talk about the outing of the volunteer, he said that he didn't encounter any problems during service. I also understand that why he was there [in service in the East], he did not talk about it. I think that a lot of the people that served with him didn't know about it [his sexual orientation]. The same is now happening with the colleague from our organisation who currently serves in the East with **Azov**. He has an anarchist tattoo and he says that taking a shower, he has too wait to be alone, so nobody sees it. He says that he needs to be careful.

The level of acceptance of people differs. For me, for example, outside the organisation, it is completely normal. But for society everything depends on the level of acceptance of the society. For example, on First of May, if you employ traditional May 1 paroles, it is different from talking about the rise of the price communal service or indexation of salaries. You always need to think whether it is the right time for certain topics. We need to find a "golden middle" which

is more understandable to the society now and here. We can talk about philosophy with intellectual people, but if you meet a person that worked for 12 hours, if you tell him about gays and lesbian, he will say "give me something to eat and i want to relax."

As we live in poverty now, the social needs are much bigger than the cultural ones. The increase of artistic actions and exhibitions is not being understood by society, as they rather think about how to buy bread tomorrow They rather worry about how to buy bread tomorrow than look at artwork. We should always be "in trend" if you have your own organisation. If you stay in touch with society, you will be understood better and through that, you will be able to change that society and tell them that violence is bad, to be gay or lesbian is normal.

I, for example have a son. I often thought about what to say if my son came and said me that he was gay. I now understand what kind of reaction I should have in order not to spoil the motherly relationship between us, to support him. Ten years ago, my reaction would be different, but now I know that I should support him in his choice so that he would break and that he feels that he can develop his personality. My personal evolution is also linked to that.

[I]

So it is about slow and steady progress and realistic pragmatism?

[R7]

For example, if tomorrow there would be a revolution and I could make a huge leap forward, I would use that possibility. And even if they tell you that that is not desirable, I would say that often you need to do that leap forward. But in the current situation, I understand that I cannot do that big jump forward. But I would be ready to do it. And with working in the organisation, I lead more people towards being able to potentially make that step. But for now, we rather work step-by-step.

And that is why we are called **Avangard**. Because we get that force up on its feet so that if that moment comes, and it can be every second, tomorrow or even in one hour. So that it would be less painful for other people to do. If on the first Maidan [2004], they only created a part, than on the second Maidan in 2014, we already have developed a more advance civil society. If I compare the Odesa at the time when I studied there 15 years ago and the Odesa of present day, then the civil society has grown thanks to that last Revolution that showed us that we are able to change something, even if it is hard and there is a lot of corruption, police and laws. But we can still do it.

[I]

Why is Ukrainian activism the way it is and whether we in the West understand anarchistic activism in Ukraine correctly? For example, German anarchists don't understand why Ukrainian anarchist would call themselves patriots.

[R7]

Our activists **Maxym Semenchuk** went to a conference in France and two of our activists went to some anarchist meeting in Germany, where activists from various countries came. And we went to Levan to a labour union-Marxist event. There were Marxists from Ukraine which were anti-War and pro-Vatniki. Our activists which came there said that in Europe, they can't understand our situation like we are not able to fully understand the European situation. We can say that the needs and the masters are different ones at the current stage. If we would more similar needs, that would perhaps unite us. I never understand Belarusian that for example switched off their phones, used VPN connections. For me it was somewhat strange. But in the light of recent attempts by SBU, that became more normal. I have a couple of identifications on my telephone, I use VPN. I learned that from the Belarusians and understand that the system is very similar everywhere, but hides behind juridical norms, humanism or privacy of people. But the system works the same everywhere. Whether you live in France or Ukraine, there is no difference. And even in Ukraine, as we say, the opinion about the war has divided us. There are for example Right-wing which are pro-war and nationalistic, that divide has also effected the Left.

A person that looks for information will find it and analyse it. Someone that doesn't look for it just listens to what we say.

**Maxym** said that anarchists in France don't really deal with political questions, but rather building communes, open shops and cafés. And we still deal with politics and that is very hard, but interesting.

I asked the question why leftist and anarchist organisations, if we look at the historical discourse, were so short-lived. Right-wing organisations are more lively within the political sphere. We should also be more engaged. There are some example, although not that many. I think that in future, anarchist activists need to learn how to be politicians and play in that arena. So that we can change something now and here and not in the books or in some distant times. They can be on the street all the time and we will sit at home. There is also the question of how to deal with the police. If I go to police and complain about some illegal beating of people during actions, I see that as normal.

I understand that in our times, refusing the state is a very long and distant thing. But I think that if we develop in terms of economy or artificial intelligence. I think that interesting things can be developed if we listen to what anarchists say, such as class-free society or the absence of the state. Without politics, it is very hard in our times. It is a new space for realisation.

[I]

What events will be organized in the next couple of months?

[R7]

[talk about Makhno-March and May 1

The last march was in Vinnytsia in May, next one will be in Odesa soon elections]

We now organise the Makhno March through **Avangard** for the past two years, not only AO.

[I]

Do you know some contacts from **Avangard**?

[R7]

**Dennys Kotov** from Vinnytsia. In Vinnytsia, they had a Russian organisation called **Volnytsia**, which was a right-wing organisation and now became left-wing. There is also activists of **AO** in Vinnytsia. D.S. tried to be independent activist, which failed and then returned to **Avangard**. There are interesting activists from **Chornyj Komitet** in Kyiv, especially **Anya**. The organisation includes **OUN**. Anya won an international case against the Ukr. state, which now is obliged to pay some 40 or 20 thousand hryvnja to her for unjustified actions in prison.

[Detytsky in jail]

From a right-wing perspective, they **OUN** became more left, although they still don't accept LGBT, etc. Thanks to them **Chornyj Komitet**, we have normal communication and don't attack each other.

They **OUN** are a very big organisation which has a long history, but they are not fascists. **Pravyj Sektor** is, but not **OUN**. For me, they are more representatives of nationalism. They play the bandura, are for the Ukrainian nation. They are nationalists. The majority of their members are not fascists. There might be some among them, but that organisation is very interesting to me.

[contacts to activists in Vinnytsia

We had the situation that one of the activists who was asked by a journalist to be interviewed, was beaten up by **C-14]**

### **Transcript Interview: Kyiv [R8]**

Color-coding based on different group affiliation

**Red** = labour initiatives, ‘traditional’ anarchist groups

**Yellow** = ‘nationalist’-anarchist organizations

**Green** = ecologically oriented anarchist groups

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**Dark Red** = Paramilitary Organization

[Conversation about Hooliganism in Ukraine]

[I]

Were there any anti-fascist clubs here Ukraine?

[R8]

There was only one anti-fascist club. I Lugansk I have no idea how they survived. [Laughter]

[Informal Conversation R2 Questions]

[R8]

On Maidan 19<sup>th</sup> February and 4<sup>th</sup> of February. I couldn’t see any political parties with banners [on Maidan]. Even **Right Sector** I haven’t seen them on Maidan. And I know that story when the

most organized far-right organization C-14 they escaped Maidan during this day [one of the most violent days], trying to take the refuge in the Canadian Embassy.

[D] Why did they leave?

[R8]

Because they were scared. And many members of the far-right and local far-right activist took part in the fighting's and street fights.

[I]

And in total how many from the anarchist camp were involved in the fighting's?

[R8]

How many? I will show you, let's make a little excursion to Maidan and I will tell you about it. I am not sure about [inaudible] we tried to make our own battalion our own self-defence units. You know on Maidan we had this self-defence structure, the sotniaks and I not sure but I think we had 14 or 12 units on Maidan and we tried to organize ourselves. In our own DIY sotniak, left-wing and we managed to mobilize 75 activists. We were a huge part of the left-wing activity on Maidan. Maybe in total 100 active members.

[I]

And do you know a lot of people from Avtonomny Opir? Maksym Osadchyk and others?

[R8]

I was a member of and local activists Avtonomny Opir in Kyiv but I am not a member anymore. I need to focus on my studies [laughter]. I though they [AO] looked like they would take up a more active role on Maidan. In Kyiv, in Lviv they [inaudible]. I am very disappointed because I thought Avtonomny Opir would take up a more active role on Maidan but they didn't. But some within Avtonomny Opir that were more critical [Anton] they said that Maidan is a not a real revolution because there are so many groups of the far-right there. And that's why we shouldn't participate.

[I]

And when did you join Avtonomny Opir?

[R8]

Maybe in 2012.

[I]

Okay. What was the main reason to join them? Because back then there were more nationalist, correct.

[R8]

I mean I told you here in Ukraine we have a mixed history from an ideological perspective. Yes, we have **Avtonomny Opir** they combine fighting for independence, social rights, socialism which was interesting for me.

[I]

Do you think they are successful with this mixture at the moment?

[R8]

No, they lost their chance due to lack of participation in Maidan.

[D talks to R8 about research]

[R8]

I wasn't on Maidan constantly, only in shifts. Like how people used to do it they work and then go home. I was at Maidan during the night and in the morning, I would go to sleep.

[I]

During the night was the most dangerous to be on Maidan? Even not participating which is why they lost popularity. [Talks about the Park, walking around].

[R8]

Yes, yes but in February the most dangerous it was on Maidan during the morning, the most violent day was February 18 and most battles happened in the morning.

[I]

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>?

[R8]

On February, the 18<sup>th</sup> 10/12 people died and then another ten or fifteen people died in-between the days. And other people died on February 12<sup>th</sup>.

[I]

This friend you talked about that was from [the left resistance] died there what was his name?

[R8]

His name was **Sergii Khiimskyi** maybe you have heard about him. Because he was a known anarchist on Maidan. Because we have two killed anarchists on Maidan, one was **Sergeii Khimsky** from Lviv and **Korosten** from and **Khimsky** was in our group and then and then another activist tried to join this unit, self-defence unit and then...

[I]

Do you know from the self-defence unit [left-resistance] on Maidan how many people later joined the front? Where there a lot?

[R8]

A lot. First there were two voluntary battalions '**Aidar**' and '**Kultshchytskoho/Кульчицького**', they were with people from Maidan and Eidar especially. Because Eidar was self-defence and most people from **Avtonomny Opir** joined the Lugansk one and then relocated to Eidar. I remember when I was with Anton and other member from **ATO**, a musician, he was sentenced in Germany after crushes with police. Maybe you know him? I was with them when they went to the front from Maidan, Maidan was a base back then like a 'Shtab' where people gathered and then went to the frontline.

[I]

And do you know a guy called \*... from \* and he is from Russia and also was in the left-resistance on Maidan and then joined a **Pravy Sector** battalion at the front. He knows all the guys from **ATO**.

[R8]

I know only two Russians on Maidan who joined the Ukrainian nationalist battalion. One guy is Sergey, he lost a leg. And then another guy Illiya from Russia if he is from \* maybe I know his face but I am not sure.

[I]

I mean he was also in the Hooligan scene, member of Partisan Minsk and the antifascist club in Moscow which is against Partisan. I don't remember the name

[R8]

I met on Maidan with Sokrat/Сократ. In Russia, he was a prisoner and famous prisoner. I met with him and with few Russians even some anarchist from St. Petersburg. They even tried to create a unit. Also, a lot of Belarussian activists. Our SbU is looking for them because they have a very bad reputation.

[I]

I think I know why, because of a shooting that happened because of a girl. The incident was a while ago, it was something connected to this group Black Rainbow.

[R8]

[Laughs] I was a direct witness of the incident I was there. It was the a lecture in 2016, in Kyiv a very famous political prisoner from Belarus came Mikola Dzyadok/Мікола Дзядок but another one and he came and that's why many left-wing activists came. One was a hooligan from Arsenal Kyiv and others joined and the went to this office took out a gun and tried to hurt the guy. But nothing happened, because they weren't using real bullets. But local news outlets totally freaked out a shooting in Kyiv, anarchists with weapons. But it was a stupid jealousy drama about a girl. But the guy who shot got kicked out of football clubs later. It was a very strange incident. You know the guy who got shot literally sat two chairs away from me. Why is this happening here in Kyiv. I mean it was organized very seriously and were waiting for attacks by far-right activists but it didn't' happen quite the opposite from within the left.

[I]

Did you also hear about this event where this art exhibition by David Chichkan got attacked?

[R8]

Yes, I heard about this incident. I was nowhere near this exhibition.

[D]

Oh, yes and there was another case where activists trashed the Shevchenko Exhibition here in Kyiv.

[R8]

I know this activist, not personally but he is from Wynnytsa. And he is not very strange but he has a bad reputation. Cause he organized very unclear actions against local authorities. But this is this Ukraine you know. One part of society, crushes portrays and the other part of society is fighting against them and publishes news on the events. On Maidan, we had anarchist painters and artist. **Barbakan** a very famous artist. On Maidan we had anarchists, cultural anarchists not political anarchists but very patriotic. Nobody crushed them or tried to attack them.

[I]

Their art was appreciated? And where there actually some women in the anarchist wing on Maidan?

[R8]

I don't know, maybe. There was one girl from Lviv from **Avtonomny Opir** I am not sure if she took part in fighting's, but she was conscripted to the front. I am not sure I will send you a contact.

[I]

People from **Avtonomny Opir** told me this, so I was just wondering.

[R8]

I know that in courses organized by this former Mossad guy, this Israeli who is training anarchists there are some girls among them. And they don't want to go to the frontline but they do prepare for mobilization. Because you know here in Ukraine we are always waiting for a new wave of invaders from the East. Or any type of intervention.

[I]

Do you think it is realistic?

[R8]

Yes, because before 2013/14 we couldn't imagine that Russia would annex a part of us. For me as a citizen from Donbas I am in shock. We saw them not as a brother but as a partner. All our

troops were deployed in Western Ukraine we could even cross the border easily. Now we are waiting for a new invasion, because Russia is preparing.

[I]

Do you think they want to take this part of the Azov Sea to make a land connection to Crimea?

[R8]

Yes, it's the main goal. A friend of mine who is a teacher in a school in St. Petersburg and she told some friends of mine who told me that Putin ordered this university to find a water supply option for Crimea. So, they are really trying, and a big disaster for Crimea. Without the Dniepro they have a problem, and they won't find the water. And in this situation ...

[I]

Do you think that this time the Ukrainian Army is prepared? [Informal Conversation]

[R8]

Do you know **Borotba**?

[I]

Yes. I know one girl who did research and she spoke to a girl which boyfriend has been a member of **Borotba**. And claims to have been poisoned by somebody who is against **Borotba** which could basically be everyone in Ukraine. It was an interesting story. But they are Stalinist-communists if I understood correctly?

[R8]

Ukrainians have published a documentary, with documents receipts from **Borotba** to journalist. Because Russia payed them, they payed some people from **Borotba**.

[I]

I mean it's not surprising because many of their people went to the DNR/LNR correctly? They mobilized a lot of people. But they are completely gone now? Why did they leave did their activist get attacked?

[R8]

I believe they really believed their own ideology, they thought that Maidan was driven by fascist and they were behind the anti-Maidan in Kharkiv in Odessa. Old-communist left-wing activists DNR tried to establish a separate republic inside the DNR and they got crushed.

[I]

There was a US journalist who wrote about European activists that travelled to DNR and started to realize Russia is not this big anti-imperial defender that they thought it would be. A lot of German and French fighters and activists in the DNR. And they are starting to turn on them. So yes, I am familiar with this case. It's a very interesting dynamic. Where is the breeding ground where are all these hard-core Stalinists in Europe coming from?

[R8]

You know the DNR constitution has a rhetoric which is anti-imperial. Their constitution recalls a lot of wordings of antifascism etc.

[D]

Well they pretend to fight against fascist Ukraine, it's funny to see Antifa is fighting there...

[I]

There is no way Antifa is connected with this.

[D]

Some volunteers from France, they are also South America they claim to be Antifa. So, this is where this connection comes from.

[I] It seems this group spoiled it for everyone, claiming to be Antifa. And that's why other left-wing groups have such a hard time because they get associated with **Borotba**. And other activists get completely discredited because they get thrown into the same mix while they have nothing to do with **Borotba**.

[R8]

In the Ukrainian Army, you can find a whole political rainbow from your full-blown fascist to anarchist everything is possible.

**Transcript Interview: Kyiv [R9]**

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**Dark Grey** = Sport facility connected to activist group

**Dark Red** = Paramilitary Organization

[Informal Conversation]

[I]

This guy he was on Maidan, R8. He knows a lot of people from **Avtonomny Opir**.

[R9]

Yeah, I know him right now he knows everyone in the radical left. After Maidan, they had a very different origin. Some people came from the far-right, some from liberal sides and some just stayed in the [political] positions they were before.

[I]

How was that for you?

[R9]

I was at Maidan, while being a dogmatic anarchist and I met several important lessons on Maidan at the beginning of the war.

[I]

Which ones?

[R9]

As a regular anarchist-syndicalist I was living in a sort of virtual reality simulation. In which this reality was created by several theoretical intellectuals. After the first WWI, like in the inter-war period some modernists that were concretizing the knowledge and ideology in some kind way that it can develop.

[I]

Who and what do you mean?

[R9]

For example, the Russian writer Vadim Groyevsky, it's his nickname I am not sure which is his original name. There were some thoughts that he is working on military counterintelligence. Because of several episodes of his detentions and stable agitation after that without no problems with the police, FSB or other law enforcement entities. While a lot of different anarchists were in prison or killed. Nevertheless, that's not our topic.

[I]

But this is where you came from ideologically

[R9]

At the beginning when I was 18 I became a classical liberal, according to the traditional definitions in the books, meaning freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of enterprises and so on and so forth. Like democratic, parliamentary republic was my ideal I even joined the liberal party. Liberal party of Ukraine here in Kyiv. I was even a candidate at the local 'soviet' but we failed and actually all the party and their trying that elections were in 2005. It was a technical election for gathering support to Kyiv cities mayor at the time. I wasn't aware of that before and when I was present at the all-party gathering in Kyiv I was the only member who voted against the support of the Kyiv Mayor. At the time, it was **Olexandr Omelchenko** **Олександр Олександрович Омельченко** *Oleksandr Oleksandrovyč Omel'chenko*, almost fifteen years ago. After that I became disillusioned with the Ukrainian political system and in political values which were built on this system. Disillusionment, I was searching for my political ideals and I think I moved in the right direction. Like true or correct direction but then I started reading old-school anarchists and this put me on the wrong path I believe. In the sense that I felt I was to a huge extent in living in an illusion. After Maidan, I started reviewing my beliefs.

[I]

But which parts exactly did review, because you said you were very familiar with anarchist theory, the classics and the interwar-period. So, in how far changed Maidan the way you relate to these ideals now?

[R9]

You know people don't give a fuck about trade unions, about their labour rights about direct democracy. People don't want to work out things, but they can fight or die for some delusions. Maybe some of them have some connections with reality, but most of them have no connections at all.

[I]

What do mean?

[R9]

Like for example the Euromaidan. Not exactly just the idea of anti-corruption, it was more complex. People just had some type of meta-delusion we will simply join to NATO, the EU we will simply throw away the corrupt government, we will change everything by putting the right people in and persecuting the wrong. Just the rule of the law some changes, not radical changes but some shifting of figures, maybe some new laws and different laws that can work. So, it was like making the system of the past 20-years' work without any deep laying analysis of the system and why it was there in the first place. It was not combatting the problem at its root.

[I]

What would you say lies at the heart of this problem, because do you think there is a certain characteristic in Ukraine or Ukrainian society that facilitates this?

[R9]

You know my delusions, I was very close to a Hippie, believing in the good core of all people. If you just put those people in good circumstances and people will just lose all their evilness so I had large delusions about people as a whole. I just believed in people's intelligence, rationality and I thought all the people I meet are just like me but maybe some of them are on the wrong way, something like that. Because we had a very closed society, because most of the people just I can't say they hated anarchists or left-radicals but mostly people wrote to us that were part of a

marginalized society. That was totally true and also. We had bad blood with other leftist because of their delusions. Almost all groups in Ukraine are in-fighting with each other.

[I]

Which group back then where you associated with?

[R9]

With the **Autonomous Workers Union** and before that **Direct Action**, but I started out from the Student Trade Union. I had read much about them, I searched for a syndicate and I joined it. We made some programs but a part of anarchists was hardly against, a part of the Marxist wing supported Stalinists. And the anarcho-syndicalist union became some sort of melting-pot of different opinions and low levels of morality pushed out the people they didn't like in the meaning of theory, ideology some inner type of corruption. You know all of Ukrainian society, you know like when you put some fabric into water.

[I]

Like soaked up?

[R9]

Yes, all of Ukrainian society is soaked up by corruption. From the lowest to the highest level. If somebody gives a certain amount of money from a certain event, or several [inaudible]. You know a lot of people believe in this shit. Not hierarchy, evil jews... conspiracy theories it is a part of Ukrainian society. Some type of low-level conspiracy begins when people are trying to sort ... so this year just broke up. I quit the union because Marxist were loyal to Stalinists took all the positions and some anarchists simply were loyal to them because of some interpersonal connections.

[I]

Where these the people that later joined **Borotba**?

[R9]

Everything started with the beginning of **Borotba**. But those good Marxists I thought there would be only libertarian Marxists, no Stalinist will join an anarchist worker's union. That's what I thought.

[I]

It seems counter-intuitive.

[R9]

But for them it was no (...) it was simply okay for them. They entered the union, took important positions inside.

[I]

How many people were the core of the group back then?

[R9]

Well, the union it was totally legitimate. Of course, all insides, were made with different values not the values that were taken to the ministry of justice like no hats. No some rulers or bosses just like gathering of activists/all members of the branches. Or some guests who don't have voting rights, which they could have if the branch decides to give it to them. I even had a trade union membership card and so on and there were several branches in Kyiv and different cities in Kharkiv and well for the most part of the big cities. But sometimes the membership was overlapping with leftist groups

[I]

Such as?

[R9]

Such as groups that in the future created **Borotba**. They were proto-**Borotba** or some socialist groups close to them. Like that yes, we had a large split.

[I:]

In which year was this large split?

[R9]

In 2011, the biggest split because every year we made an all left Mayday.

[I]

I've heard of it.

[R9]

But the contradictions within the left-wing groups made us propose to exclude some groups of Trotskyists and Stalinist because of their toxicity for the movement. We had a deal inside the coordinator, soviet but in a few days before the general ....

[I]

What type of deal did you have?

[R9]

I will come to that. A few days before the general assembly the socialist wing betrayed us.

[I]

What do you mean?

[R9]

They made a separate deal with **Borotba** and totally changed their mind about their position. And they intimidated us. We had a deal! We signed it and how can you break it. But they were totally okay with it, they said that the people in question from these two fractions are okay, we have personal connections with them. And if you don't like this final decision you need to shut your mouth. They had money, really good connections even within the SbU so they are totally okay it was like that. Our group visited the general assembly and it was like some old-school party gathering. Like people with large bellies, with leather folders.

[I]

Are part of these people remnants from the Soviet Communist Party?

[R9]

I mean they weren't they were young they were not Soviet Communist but they were replicating the style. Some of the were businessmen their leader, **Borotba** was a business men in the chicken industry and had connections to Bashir-Al-Assad and they promoted Syrian so-called socialism for years. We were surprise and our reaction was like what the fuck but it was simply explained by his business interest. And they were militant anti-bourgeoisie power with a chief that sells chicken to Assad.

[I]

I mean I have heard about the cult of personality, as I've been researching some alleged anarchist union, like the SAU and the one in Donetsk and all of them are very hierarchical, old-style with some more Stalinist elements.

[R9]

I know exactly what you're talking about. We decided to not participate in Mayday that year and we stayed out of the assembly hall. We said it's a shame as the deal is of the table, we have seen what they are doing to us. All the people we had the deal with before were sitting quietly, and all those Bonzos were talking and talking and talking. And when we made questions for them, we heard that you joined our Mayday, we didn't give our permission and vote in favour of it. It was inappropriate but do you want to go the parliamentary elections or do you have some type of financing from outside? And so, on and so forth. And they were just laughing about our questions, those marginalized anarchists just shitting and making noises for no reason. Okay, okay just leave us in peace. So, we decided to organize our own Mayday with only anarchists. With the possibility of non-anarchist groups to join, but based on our conditions.

[I]

And was it successful?

[R9]

Yes, it was very successful. We gathered of the leftist scene from Mayday we had 500 people, it was very cool for Kyiv. And very cool for the organization that consisted of 7/8 people at the time.

[I]

Which prominent groups were present back then?

[R9]

Student Trade Union, **Direct Action** we had a deal with Stalinist okay we don't like you but we have a deal so we just don't have to split our internal unity. The Nazis are in power we have to unite and care about our unity. It was a delusion once again.

[I]

Which Nazis are you talking about **Svoboda**?

[R9]

Yes, they were doing very well back then in 2011. So many of those people, well okay I will just finish most people in anarchist and in all left-people are completely stupid idiots. Simply regular people they care only about the job, their family and vacation and they are much better people in the meaning of intelligence and morality than most anarchists I know.

[I]

So, the term ... because of the... of 2011?

[R9]

Not exactly, they were the first signs? The foreboding omen? My bad impressions only worsened during these years. Yes, in 2016 I joined the paramilitary group that consisted mostly of civic nationalists. They made military trainings and drills. It's called the **Ukrainian Legion**.

[I]

Yes, it rings a bell.

[R9]

Me and several different leftists joined this movement after Maidan.

[I]

Why specifically the **Ukrainian legion**?

[R9]

It had no ideological content, just military drills and knowledge that we need to know about. My comrade a military comrade in 2014/2015 after he returned from the war he said he knew absolutely nothing when he went to the front. He operated a military vehicle as a sniper from the barrow. The operator of the artillery weapon in this vehicle and but he didn't know about the tactics of infantry, simple first aid, some movements/tactics of small groups. He was just regular guy at the front but with a weapon.

[I]

He was a volunteer or drafted? And was he from the same circle? He was an anarchist?

[R9]

Not exactly anarchist, but old-school communist. He even was a member of parliament in 2013...from Crimea. He's much older than, Evgen Leshan, maybe you saw him on FB. He's a public figure but after this horrible experience he left the communist party of Ukraine and tried to join some left-radical groups. And in the end, he joined to Nihilist webzine that we are working on. And from that time, from the beginning when he returned from the front he was originally from Crimea, so his parents and he lost everything his house, his local motherland so he joined the army and he explained his position. It was very wild at that time within the left-radical scene, that he would join the army and he is going to kill people. But joining the army means you are fighting for one capitalist overlord against another capitalist overload [in their mind-set]. It was very dogmatic. Actually, his experience he brought back from the war helped me to throw away my former dogmatic positions, of course I supported Maidan in its last days before Yanukovich expelling.

[I]

So, where you also at Maidan?

[R9]

Well, only sporadically but I didn't like Maidan at all. It had the picture of revolution, rebellion like in 1968 in Paris like that very bright colours, the Molotov cocktails, the barricades it all looked fantastic and fascinated people but actually the core of this movement. It wasn't even a core of the movement it was a large mass of simple people, simply conservative religious people from all over Ukraine even on the revolutionary stage the clerics read the prayers like that. So, it was horrible for me like what the fuck? Also, some oligarch groups, some members of parliament financed Maidan because they smelled their chance to get into power to help the rebellion. First inspired by liberal, supported by nationalists and different groups all over Ukrainian society. It was really a popular uprising but it had some kind of ideological borders. This borderland began like with your belief-system, if you're believing in the good Tsar, the good kind and everything else doesn't matter much.

[I]

So, it was very black and white?

[R9]

Yes, or you believe in the power of the people, the republic and democracy. You could be fascist or anarchist, socialist or civic nationalist you could be one of them but the core you should

support the republic principle. The principles of people's democracy in this meaning I cannot even say that Maidan fascist, was actually fascist. It was revolutionary inspired people with no political origin or far-right origin or very conservative origins.

[I]

That got co-opted by the far-right.

[R9]

Yes, it got co-opted, because it was like they had an opportunity to show up, show their strength. Appear like 'good guys'

[I]

Do You think it was failure on the side of left-wing movements back then that they didn't capitalize on this window of opportunity?

[R9]

Well, the leftist on Maidan were possible only as incognito individuals. Because organized left groups got expelled with different reasons. Some of them were called 'betrayers' or 'Soviet Communists' means the enemy. Or 'provocateurs' or they had no explanations and some groups simply got fed up with them and everybody said like well okay at least we have Maidan.

[I]

So, it you perceived it as very hypocritical?

[R9]

Well, there were very well organized far-right groups on the Maidan **C-14, Pravy Sector** was an organizer and revolutionary party that anybody could join. Like do you believe in Ukraine, yes, I do. Do you believe in the unity of Ukraine, yes great you're a member! But the problem was that many different shades of far-right joined the movement and it got some interesting ideological touches to it. Anti-Islamism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-Communism. But it wasn't even an official program it was like you know something that people loved or something that people had and that they were showing themselves with [?] If you're a nationalist you have to beat up some type of leftist, if you don't beat them up you're not a real nationalist. Yes. And the most organized right-wing group **C-14** is still alive and even raised by funds from the state, the Ministry of Culture and ruled from the Security Service.

[I]

Do you know whether C-14. I remember there was also a fraction from Svoboda on the Maidan. Was there some overlap between the groups?

[R9]

Not exactly, this is a very small community you know. It's not exactly nationalist movement or fascist movement, it's like you know a very strange phenomenon. Does it have any, something close to different examples all around the world. I never studied the far-right groups in the world but they were like very small, very close group that [C-14] that worked with the SbU in different ways. There is a very big chance, possibility they had and still have some kind of criminal attitude. It some overlapping of criminal activity and kind of fascist activity. Because they are not intellectuals they never wrote manifestos or books or articles they are just making actions inviting people trying to brainwash people. But you know they don't have any program or stable ideology when it was very cool they were Neonazis. When it came out of fashion they became old-school nationalists. These people aren't very ideological they are very voluntoristic, their leader I mean and very pragmatic. They co-work with the SbU, the police if possible for them.

[I]

Like in Lviv and in Uschgorod.

[R9]

They are trying to make connection between different far-right groups, they are like criminal bosses. Like a respected person in a criminal world. They are trying to separate criminal and nationalist groups and be like the arbitrar of the medium between the different groups.

[I]

But they lost quite some popularity right, because now there is Azov and their political wing and party the National Corps.

[R9]

The Azov movement, the National Corps Party they have a lot of money. Really a lot and free space for their movement. They don't even know what to do with all the money. So, they are hiring intellectuals, 'so-called' intellectuals like Olena Semenyaka and this funny guy

**Yurchenko.** I am a big fan of him. Once we met, you know Edward your new movement the Intermarium it has the Lothringercross as a logo and I am wondering are you Catholics?

[I]

No, they are mostly secularist.

[R9]

Or the anti-Nazi French front? I mean they had the same symbol. I was trolling him and he was like. He said: It's not even Christian, this is just the compromise within the different groups. He talks very like he is talking with himself. I actually didn't understand much of what he was saying. Maybe you read this guy, very old writer from the 60's journalist and writer. Ehmmm – similar to the dead president of the US John F. Kennedy II. He wrote a book conspiracy of dances I am reading it right now.

[I]

I have never heard of him, this US writer.

[R9]

He even got the Pulitzer Price for this book and it shows. The origins of traditionalism in post-war Western World.

[I]

Inter-war period?

[R9]

60s, how did those traditionalists arise and how are modern neo-reactionist or dark enlightenment people come from. And **Yurchenko** is just a copy of the main character of this book, very poor guy that lives in his 30's with his mothers, doesn't have a job.

[I]

Not a lot of friends from what I hear. I mean R1 told me that nobody likes him.

[R9]

Yeah, exactly he is just talking and talking about his delusions. About monarchy like taking back to the times of absolutism, rejecting the constitution, the republic, women's rights and human

rights to re-establish the pre-French Revolution World. And he is just like a drug addict, psychedelic drug addict that is living in his delusion.

[I]

But thank God, he has **Olena Semenyaka** who is formulating his ideas for the bigger publics.

[R9]

Same with **Avakov** who gives a lot of money to ... who hire such kind of people. Right now, we can see the dawn of the nationalist movements.

[I]

Do you mean like it's becoming less popular or more?

[R9]

Like the sun is coming down?

[I]

No, it should be dawn.

[R9]

Dawn of nationalism now in Ukraine, because all nationalist groups describe themselves as nationalist aren't actually nationalists. They have nothing to do with the original goals of Ukrainian nationalism.

[I]

But they are what?

[R9]

Because all of the groups from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had nothing to do with nationalism. Because all the old-school definitions of nationalist. Did you study Ukrainian nationalism?

[I]

Only some parts. I read Timothy Snyder [laughs]

[R9]

Ukrainian nationalism started from liberal democratic movement of writers, in the middle of...

[I]

Ivano Frankiv and Hvuili Vui?

[R9]

It was long before Hvuili Vui, at the time of Shevchenko who was one of them. They were Enlightenment thinkers and writers. Give knowledge to the people, take down the tsarist government, anti-imperial, anti-establishment, liberal and democratic values of course with a kind of ethnic and confessional elements. But they weren't much political they were like intellectuals, writers, poets, artists that sometimes gathered and tried to make some manifestos. And close to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century all the nationalists, nearly all of them were socialist. Socialists, Social Democrats just some of the figures were what we considered right-wing [in the meaning of that time] meaning integral nationalists of the French type. Like Catholic, strong presidential republic model in mind, strong ethnic dimension to their thoughts. But nobody actually liked them and even during the revolution were killed by other nationalist factions.

[I]

So, you would say nowadays nationalist are not going back to their original roots of the meaning of the term? Of Ukrainian nationalism?

[R9]

Not exactly. Ukrainian National Socialism died in 1921 when the Ukrainian People's Republic was demolished by Soviets. And after that there was a vacuum in terms of national movements there were some groups who were trying to bring nationalism back. A group of Ukrainian fascists, Ukrainian enlightenment union or the socialist Union. They tried to have dialogue in Rome several times, they were part of diaspora. And in the 1920s and 1930's they created the **Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)**. And it originally consisted of people from different political origins and tendencies but many of them were inspired by Italian fascism. Old Rome rhetoric, good old Mussolini and one of the talented writer Dimitry Domtsov he was very much so a fan of them. He was very good in writing propaganda, but it wasn't very effective. It was like inspiration, aggression with no political explanation why and what to do with it. To get Ukraine independent, and what do then? Just simply support us and together we will achieve it.

Even the OUN did not like him very well because he was splitting and spoiling the movement. But very talented guy and they paid him for his works.

[I]

Is he still very popular?

[R9]

Not exactly because that OUN was really fascist. But people within Ukraine had no deal with fascism because originally it was Western Ukraine, colonized by Poland and it was very poor, rural and village regions with no industry, no universities. Almost all big cities with universities and high school, yes were polonized. And the conscious Ukrainians were just peasants, and they tried to organize and they simply just didn't understand fascism. What purpose does it serve, they didn't see a connection and usefulness of their terminology for their daily life? Because fascist used the republican tendencies in Italy in their rhetoric.

[I]

Didn't translate to the Ukrainian case.

[R9]

It didn't have any connection because the fascist movement, was not proletarian in the core and the mass of village people didn't see any purpose of being fascist. So, it was the mix of traditional Ukrainian nationalism like you know, the leftovers from the revolution and some new insights from fascism and when the Nazis arose in Germany. There were sponsoring the OUN.

[I]

Yeah, I am familiar with what happened after that.

[R9]

During the war when the largest part of OUN decided to split with Germany and to provide some independent politics and almost all of Ukraine was occupied by Germany. Central and Eastern industrialized parts of Ukraine where wondering about OUN agitation. Their reaction was like what the fuck, we have nothing to do with that. What is the purpose of this activism. The people lived already in an industrial society and it was a mix of village nationalism, some religious fascism, symbolism and it had no connection again with their living realities. So, the OUN decided to appeal to more socialist values and wrote manifestos, changed the language and

shifted the political language to appeal to different parts of Ukrainian society. And when the UPA arose, Ukrainian Insurgent Army it was a 100% ruled by the OUN. For example, it was also a new conglomerate of different partisan movements. Some of them were totally fascist, some of them were totally socialist or national socialist [not in the German meaning but in the revolution time meaning]. So, this mix was trying to battle for independence they had a lot of different program sometimes they were not very nice to each other. They killed each other, they fought Germans and Soviets and again among themselves. But at its core it was a people's republic, democracy, legal equality just simple Republican values. With some liberal and fascist tendencies inside, but at the core they were Republican Democratic added with some delusions, thanks to God they didn't win. Because it could have been a very big shame to Ukraine.

[I]

But can you explain how it relates to the current far-right in Ukraine?

[R9]

In the middle of the 60s the revolution, the beginning of revolutions in Europe arose. In Italy, the new-school leftist and rightist killing each other, there were huge protest. The Soviet Dissidents were inspired by this and wanted to make real socialism in the Soviet Union, democratic socialism and they called each other Neo-Marxists or Neo-Communist. Well, they knew about Neo-Marxism and yes and some of the elders that have died now. A huge figure within nationalist movements were democratic socialists during the Soviet period and were battling against the totalitarian state. In the university, I read a lot about their thoughts.

[I]

Like Mikola Riabchuk and others?

[R9]

Yes, and Levko Lukianenko, he is a complete madman now. Also in delusions. He came to the university where I studied with lectures. And it was a huge mix of conspiracy theories and other strange beliefs but in their origins, they all were leftist, even far-left in comparison with the Soviet Union. Because the late Soviet Union Communism was right-wing and liberals/nationalists/democrats and socialist and Neo-Communist were left-wing. The OUN in exile became one part was Hitlerist and is disbanded shortly after the war. Different parts were 100% liberal, they called themselves National-Democrats, it's a very popular assembly for a huge part of the politically active society. Like National Democrats. Like some kind of market

liberalism people's republic like the Rule of Law but strongly civic nationalists. So, when the Soviet Union collapsed there was almost no original nationalism, all the Ukrainian Nationalism that came from abroad from the diaspora, from exile like the OUN and several parties that gathered in Ukraine. There was a very popular, strong but after the death of their leader they shortly disbanded, collapsed. Yes, so and nowadays the preminent nationalists was/were at the core exported. Russia exported neo-Nazis, like Russian neo-Nazis were exported from the West as a phenome specifically from the UK.

[I]

What do you mean exactly? Like inter-war philosophers that got incorporated into the mix?

[R9]

They oriented towards Nazi-skinheads in the US and the UK. People from the Klu-Klux clan but Russian far-right and counter culture is very influenced by the skinhead culture. Some Neo-Nazis from Germany, post-war Germany. And Republicans and Confederacies from the US.

[I:]

Sounds like a strange mix. They took all these elements and then they applied them to the Russian case.

[R9]

Yes, and after it was mixed into football hooliganism and into the skinhead subculture. Also, exported to Ukraine and almost all modernist nationalist, modernist not in the cultural meaning but in the useful nationalist definition started as vulgar neo-Nazis. Because they saw it in Russia, Russian skin-heads beating up some Caucasians. And spread propaganda about the killing of black people. But which black people in Russia? There were no black people in Ukraine, no ethnic conflicts but they were already preparing for the Holy Racial War, 'Rakhuva' subcultural phenomena. They also mixed with the left-overs of old-school nationalist, like okay yes you can be a skin-head but listen up son, some day it was the organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and they fought not only the Soviets but also Hitler. It was like that, so different cultures, different groups were shifting and changing ideas and experience but in the end the Neo-Nazis were the most prominent part of Nationalist movement and they weren't nationalists in the original meaning they had no deal with independence or people's Republic, Democracy, Rule of law or Social Justice just like the former Nationalist thought for. It was like spending time beating up people, looking cool, beating up punks.

[I]

But do you think that changed now with war against Russia, that this anti-imperial element came back and this idea of the nation-hood, the state-hood?

[R9]

In some kind, it is a fake sentiment. Because for example the **Right Sector** was appealing to old-school nationalism like Stepan Bandera etc. but it consisted of Neo-Nazis. For the most part, I mean after Maidan disbanded, only Neo-Nazis left in the Right Sector because different people said we want the revolution, and now we are going to build up the new state. And you guys keep continuing playing in your sandbox.

[I]

This is also the reason why **Svoboda** didn't become very popular after Maidan right? They kind of disbanded, even though one can say probably within society the majority of people would say about themselves that they are nationalist or at least patriots.

[R9]

For example, the **Azov** movement started from oh shit -

[I]

Yes, I am very familiar with the **Azov** movement, but I am mostly right now I am trying to conceptualize because they are so many different streams to understand

[R9]

Before the core of the Azov movement, it was a pro-Russian Neo-Nazi Movement called '**Patriots of Ukraine**' you know with **Biletskiy** from Kharkiv, it is very contradictory because they were named the patriots of Ukraine but they were like the street force of the social-nationalist assembly of Ukraine. Which was composed out of the national socialist party of Ukraine that later formed **Svoboda**. And in the end just the street neo-Nazis were left in the group. If you look at their really old interviews with **Biletskiy** on YouTube from 2010

[I]

He said some very strange stuff about Hitler.

[R9]

He also said that we Ukrainians are modern people we have no need for the national state or sovereignty and we have to band with Belarus and Russia and build like a fundament for white nationalism. You know in the world the kind of far-right groups that are most successful. Ethnic nationalists are very marginalized, the civic-nationalist or left-nationalist and white-nationalist and supremacist. White nationalized, I mean you are aware of the alt-right the core of their ideas is white nationalism, like the Western civilization, Judeo-Christian civilization with an Anglo-American tradition is at its top, maybe some German, Italian or Irish. It's all okay as long as you are all white people.

[I]

But then in their logic and hierarchy there is nothing for quite some time and then they are the Slavs... and then after that there is nothing.

[R9]

The white nationalists appreciate Russians, they are okay because a true fascist Russian ruler is so cool. But for example, Ukrainians like Richard Spencer for example he doesn't live in existence of Ukraine as for him it's part of Russia's sphere of influence and periphery. And part of Western liberal periphery.

[I]

Yes, I am familiar with this European far-right and it's one of the reasons **Olena Semenyaka** is touring around Europe trying to find groups that are pro-Ukrainian and are willing to stand in for them.

[R9]

So why I think that white nationalism it's dumb, it's because nationalism died and several groups are trying to use its corpse to help and shield themselves and to win some collective support and sympathy.

[I]

Do you think that about Poroshenko as well?

[R9]

Yes, he is doing it too. Abusing the corpse of Ukrainian nationalism and **Azov** is doing that too. It's 100% white nationalist and even closer to Russian imperial – old school imperial ideology. The white movement in particular. The tsarist forces, they are trying to make a bad white tsarist far-right movement. Actually, **Yurchenko** started out as a big fan of the former executed tsarist family and he was spreading the idea of Ukraine as 'little Russia' not too long ago and he toured to Russia, to **Dugin** and different parts of Russia to speak to monarchists and traditionalists.

[I]

Did he ever distance himself from this?

[R9]

Even nowadays he doesn't but **Olena Semenyaka** tries to do it but he doesn't even try to say something about say very well he is a conformist. He doesn't work, he used to work at the university but then left and he just tried to be like I don't know how this animal is called – a leech? He's a leech to the Ukrainian system and to profit from any source of influence in Ukraine. Before Maidan he took was a member of the Party of Regions because the Party of Regions was in power and from one side they were social conservatives and another reason is that they were truly right-conservative clerics. Family values, traditional values, ties with the Russian orthodox Church etc. The thing that all traditionalists enjoy to hear. Inspired by **Dugin**, well actually he didn't invent it but he just took it from ... a few years ago and different guys it's like **Dugin** and traditionalism it's like Lenin and Marx and Engels. He was just interpreting and taking the part of Marxism and so **Dugin** in taking power of traditionalism and try to re-interpret their writings. The people that were involved in politics back then, writers and theorists so he just simply accumulated all of their works. Bringing them into actual politics and **Yurchenko** tries to be the Ukrainian **Dugin**. But he fails, because **Dugin** is a very sexual active and drug addictive figure and very much the opposite of **Yurchenko**. Not very much a stereotypical traditionalist. But he's very clever and I am not sure he believes in the stuff he talks about.

[I]

If he's really that smart maybe he is a high-level troll [laughs]

[R9]

He is very smart, he is some post-modern right-wing intellectual that is trolling everyone and at some point, it all spiralled out of control and he got some power. And now became part of the Kremlin propaganda machine.

[I]

Just reading his ramblings about land and sea powers it just sounds like total made up bullshit to me. I am reading it and I am laughing out loud what is this clusterfuck of concepts.

[R9]

You know these traditionalists are trying to imitate some far-left intellectuals

[I]

I mean they are trying but they are failing hard

[R9]

You know they are trying to imitate this strong tradition of far-left intellectuals from Sorbonne that read Foucault, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze from the 60's were the proto-type of the image of left-wing intellectuals. The men that had intellectual power, a one-man army that can turn people around in any political direction.

[I]

Frankfurter Schule destroying and corrupting minds since the 70s.

[....]

[R9]

Going back to the far-right there is no image of the ideal of their intellectuals. Richard Spencer and Aleksandr Dugin form their prototype of what to strive for.

[I]

What about Greg Johnson?

[R9]

Yes, maybe but I think not even close because all these people aren't living in these university societies, they are not in contact with students.

[I]

Not conversing at the Parisian salons.

[R9]

They are not involved in much intellectual lives...

[I]

They do have YouTube channels [laughs]

[R9]

Because everybody will like them, because of the racist ideas. I am not saying that left-intellectuals are 100% right or had no failures. Like that I am not fascinated by them these days of course. But you just can't deny that they've got fashion and people like them a lot. Not even the leftist, but the broader masses like them.

[I]

You mean like more progressives?

[R9]

Not even only progressives but simple, normal people. They were present on the TV, ministries and were on shows. Foucault for example was part of the Ministry of Culture and then when someone asked him is it okay for you to work in the government he said you know France is a very strange republic. French like everything that's French and if I invented a poison, they would drink it because it's a 100% French and fashionable. And that's why I am the emissary of the ministry, I travel all around the world and bring my own agenda and it's totally okay because I am French. And I am an original French product.

[I]

Sounds vaguely familiar.

[R9]

So, the right-wing activists are not allowed in any part of society which is why they work on their virtual societies, like on YouTube. They don't have they own universities or are established.

[I]

I mean in Ukraine they are taking a huge shot at preparing a new Ukrainian generation to follow in their footsteps. They are prepping a new generation of intellectuals and that's what **Plomin** and **Cossack House** is about. They are trying to get out of the ditch of being shoved to the subcultural domain.

[R9]

Actually, you see even the far-rightist don't like their own intellectuals. So, I think that they are a dead-born project.

[I]

I don't think so but I guess it will be interesting to see. But let's bring the interview back to the far-left. I mean I do focus on both groups in my research so it is still very useful to me. What do you think about this phenomena of 'nationalist-anarchism' groups such as **Avtonomy Opir**, **Black Committee** and their project '**Avantgard**'.

[R9]

Well, originally, they started out by being inspired by neo-Nazis but they [...] they were far-right autonomists but the grind of [...] and sometimes co-worked with maybe you saw the old Italian film 'Sun bubble place'

[I]

Sun babble place? No.

[Tea Break]

[R9]

Do you know this metal, but you know about the 70s in Italy? About the activity of the far-right and the far-left in Italy? So, this one of the most known movies about the resistance, and it was very much inspired by Italian far-rightist in this period of 70s. In Germany, it was like the German autumn period you know 'Lisova' on the left-side and the RAF that were trying to import [...] Trying to find Ukrainian nationalist groups. It was a very stupid mix, and the leftist even fought with them sometimes.

[I]

Based on what?

[R9]

Based on simple subcultural wars. He looks like an anarchist let's beat him up. It was like that.

[I]

In what kind of situation, they would work together with the left?

[R9]

Let me explain, one guy that invented the **National Labour Party** in Kyiv it was a very funny media project, and it gathered many different Nazis. Also, **Yurchenko** was a part of this and talked about his disillusion and how to \*\*\* his students. It was very weird and very sexual. He was drunk most of the time and he talked in his lectures about his female students. That he wants to fuck them and going way too much into detail. Here we go that's a far-right 'intellectual'. So, this guy from Russia was a .. of this group the Ukrainian national socialist party and then they shifted from being traditional Neo-Nazism to Street Hooliganism and shifted to 'Troskerianism' and then split.

[I]

When was this split?

[R9]

In the late 2000's, 2008 or 2009. And their leader inspired by **Bather** started to read Karl Marx and found himself a Marxist. And he said it's okay to be a Marxist and Nationalist at the same time, he proclaimed there's much great stuff in his books and went and it's okay to fight for national liberation and to be socialist. Plus, he argued that in Ireland there is the ETA and there are similar ongoing worldwide. He argued that why would you need to be a nationalist as Ukraine is an independent state, with its own language and culture has state support. What's the point of being a nationalist nowadays? So, he found another area of interest and started stating Ukraine is under the international worldwide financial capitalist threat, and we are under this threat and need to liberate ourselves. But the point for was for the Nazis was to become socialists. You're a Nazi you stand for the Ukrainian nation but let me tell you about the international financial capital system. They say yeah, yeah, it's ruled by Jews. And they said not exactly not even close so they tried to implement socialist values and policies into the far-right spectrum. Very subtle they introduced Marxist ideas such as anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism

and an emphasis on social-economic rights and it worked. But the main point was to move away from Nationalism and move towards socialism. They tried to implicitly sneak in these ideas

[I]

And were they successful?

[R9]

Yes, they were very successful as the beginning of 2014, the **Autonomous Resistance** was very much a left social movement and even had a very strong anarchist core which relied on self-organization, very DIY. No hierarchies and very anti-establishment. But as they started as **Autonomous Union**, more or less National-Socialists they kept some nationalist core values mostly focused on self-determination and independence of Ukraine. And based in Lviv, they also had a small branch in Kyiv. Which wasn't successful because there were nearly no traditional nationalists here in Kyiv like in Lviv. I mean there were no people that can appeal to socialism and Nationalism, in Kyiv were just Nazis that were not interested in the old-school national socialist ideas of national liberation So, before the Maidan they [**Autonomous Resistance**] really became more left-wing and before Maidan they regularly fought with **Pravy Sector**. **Autonomous Resistance** and [Name of Group] **Reaktor**, far-right autonomous fascists, and they were autonomous declinists but autonomous **ascidians** for you easier to understand.

[I]

I feel I need to draw a map to understand these different organizations, and figure out where they are in the spectrum.

[R9]

I mean I am not an expert, I am also just exploring and reading up a lot on it because I find it interesting. But I met an old-school who was part of **Patriots of Ukraine** and then later became part of the left and this guy who told me many insights. He is from Kyiv, but he has many connections. But he has met **Yurchenko** and has been part of the **National Labour Party** and ... he is an artist.

[I]

How did you meet him?

[R9]

We got into contact because he read about my ideas, and articles and in this sphere, there is a lot of communication between the like-minded. He spent a lot of time in OUN throughout different periods of time, and he is very difficult to talk to. Yes, it's part of his character. He's a misanthrope, But, we were talking about the Black Committee and Autonomous Resistance he is from Black Committee but is an associate with both. As they made the union, the Avantgarde movement. This guy lives in Vynnytsa, have you been?

[I]

No, but I have one contact there, they are behind the March Makhno in Vinnitsa.

[R9]

Well, I am not sure about their ideology because they are comprised out of different people some of them are from the far-left and some of far-right origin and they gather around some kind of strange activities like they are social radical party. [Martichuk?] Very, huge fat guy, Nazi and government member but then he got in jail for corruption and after he was released he left. Just a regular Nazi so this guy was a medium with different far-right groups and parliament members in Vinnitsa. Like talking to the parliament MP's and voting in elections, make money from some strange schemes. In the political meaning, he is a very bad guy, and the things he stands for. On a personal level is not very greedy and very open but within the far-right he is an important figure. And he has worked very openly with the Black Committee in the past. And we hear rumours that these ties exist, even though they try to hide it. People associated with them received money from different sources, unknown sources and they made some kind of order. Sometimes we are nationalist, not Nazis but we don't want to work for capitalist so they just take money from different sources and act on their orders. Some capitalist they make something bad, like building illegal houses and people give money from one medium to another medium. And they take this money and will agree with the building of this house. And they use the money they received in a corruption scheme for their own political goals and events. Maybe the construction was illegal but they don't care. They take the money for their own development, like political opportunists. Very traditional national activity [Inaudible]. There is some action that we don't believe in this bullshit, supporting these illegal buildings because your comrades are getting money from these groups. [inaudible] I asked some guys from [...] wtf there are some exclusions because based. Personally, I don't like that I am not openly an enemy of this group. They are trying to make friends with me, they are positive towards me but when they are trying I am suspicious as why they would like to attract me to their group. Ask me what my personal opinions are and trying to socialize.

[I]

And what's your knowledge on **Avant-garde**? Their project? What they do because there seems to be a lot of overlap.

[R9]

It's a third organization, a sort of umbrella organization for them. They are very young and haven't yet achieved anything but they are ambitious.

[I]

I just met him once after the Makhno March, he was nice. [Inaudible] He just told me had an activist burn-out.

[R9]

Maybe you've heard about all the demonstrations and overall situation Russia. Where anarchists and liberals [inaudible] [conversation about specific sort of Russian political activism]

[I]

Where does it come from?

[R9]

From Novosibirsk [...] When **Maksym** and **Sergey** moved from Crimea to Lviv, they joined **Autonomous Resistance**. And they brought the movement onto a new path.

[I]

And there was a third guy, **Dennis Mazola**?

[R9]

I just met him once during March Makhno and after that we smoked all together. A very cool guy but I don't know too much about him.

[I]

I remember he moved away probably some activist burn-out.

[R9]

You know \* and \* are intellectuals reading to Marx, Trotsky and Bakunin but he was more into hard-core and going to shows, beating up Nazis he didn't like this long-term strategizing and political work, these discussions about nationalism and discussions about Ukrainian national liberation. A lot of people from the hard-core scene are staying away from these discourses because of the many bloody massacres in the 2000's, they still vividly remember them. It was very bloody subcultural war from 2005 onward between Nazis and hard-core punks in Kyiv, in Odessa, all over Ukraine actually. In Crimea, everywhere.

[I]

So, there was a very strong sentiment against incorporating anything even close to nationalism afterward.

[R9]

You know if you are not wearing the right shirts, wearing what you're supposed to wear you will have a problem. If you are at a hard-core punk show and don't show the right 'attitude' you're not part of the movement. It is very in and out-group mentality. Punks started to exclude everyone that looked like a Nazi and they started beating up everyone, sometimes not even Nazis but people that looked like them. They were a purely subcultural movement, and Svoboda tried to incorporate the Nazi side but then this Nazi movement disbanded. Some became leftist or simply apolitical. Sometimes they would chat about the good old times of the subcultural wars, people remembered each other from back then.

And then there was this incident with the stabbing of a guy in Kyiv, it was seven years ago. He was attacked on a March of **Direct Action** Trade Union, it was not like I will kill you because you are a communist we will have a fight with each other and then we go out to get a beer afterward. Not very violent, danger for life. But shortly after that he spent time with people from the far-right. Had a lot of friends on the left and everywhere. He wasn't making sense politically and he was working in an orphanage. And when the war started he became a volunteer and joined, I don't know "platoon" and 100 people is the next stage. He was a commander of four units. He wasn't a military officer because he was a volunteer. They were not there because of his ranks, and after the war returned to this orphanage where sometimes he was attacked far-left guys. People from **Revolutionary Action**. One guy was Russian, he was oppressed there in Russia and it was his last day in Kyiv and after that moved to Poland as a political activists. I mean anarchist activist, you know the minority of anarchist activists are real theorists but then the others drink beer, try to be cool and have slogans. They want to be part of something bigger

and with him it was the same, and he wanted to stab a Nazi. So, he saw this guy with a shirt from his volunteer battalion and artist from Kyiv it was [...] Ukraine veteran. So, Russian anarchist stabbed this guy for wearing this T-shirt. Like a Chechen-separatist. It was very fucked.

[I]

And what do you think about all this in-fighting between all these groups. Because I have heard about these attacks and incidents within all the different movements.

[R9]

I mean R1 was part of **Autonomous Worker's Union** and she voted to exclude my comrade based on nationalism. But nowadays she is more nationalist than the guy she was against back then, which is very ironic. **Volodymyr Zadiraka** is his name.

[I]

What were the official reasons, just nationalism?

[R9]

Very hard to explain because I first really liked the idea of anarchism, theories and implementation but after Maidan it was like a wake-up call where I reviewed all of my ideas. And I realized my disillusions, not like people are stupid and they should be ruled by some omnipotent leader but it's not like that. But they talk about the revolution is possible, they talk about trade unions etc. and all that. We were all inspired by anarcho-syndicalist and thought we can build the movement. I mean in 2014 it was a huge time for anarchists here in Kyiv, being more than 50 active people. It was very cool back then.

[I]

In how far was the Maidan then this big disillusion? I mean it was a revolution, not like the anarchist one but a popular uprising. How did that clash with your idea about how the revolution would take shape?

[R9]

Because you know the examples of politics cannot be simply, [inaudible] and sometimes they just had [...] So okay we thought that maybe Marxism and some ideas played a very big role in this disillusion. Historical materialism, it has a very cool mythology, but Marx himself explained all his ideas of this mythologies [...] You know later I realized that when I was younger I had a

healthier way to think about all these things. I thought I hate the state and I hate capitalism, what do I practically do with that, where do I go from here? And later with reading up on all this theory, my mind became jumbled with all this jargon and I became zealot in terms of my political convictions. I don't want to say

[R9]

About the 'Revolutionary Action' **Revolutia Diya**, the anarchist movement they are very secretive, they show no faces no ID they are hard-core anarchists. Many of them are hackers but they want to be anarchist and try to be like RAF, Red Army Faction but an anarchist RAF doing terrorist attacks.

[I]

Attack on who?

[R9]

On people like the one they stabbed a while ago. But he survived. The leader of this organization is a Belarusian who sat in jail. He knows \* but he stays away from this guy. He sat in the jail after a very stupid action of anarchists. They threw Molotov Cocktails against a car. You know in the Khimky Forest incident in Russia. Anti-fascist attacked the administration building because they destroy the forest and beat up the companies. Because this company hired Nazis to beat up the anarchist and eco-activists. And after this attack on the company who is building these roads, several people got arrested. Most ran away from Russia or got underground. And Belarusians wanted to make a solidarity action against repression but they did it in the middle of a gas war between Belarus and Russia. It was horrible timing and their action was some type of spoiler and they thought those anarchists were hired by Russia to make Belarus look aggressive against Russia. And to worsen the relationship and they very violently suppressed the movement and threw many people in jail for very long sentences. After five years, he was released from jail and from the very beginning started a new organization. His name is **Alexander Franzkevitch** and he is trying to be anonymous. He is a Fuehrer type, he is a single person who is making all decision together with his inner circle some advisers. And he delivers his orders to the outer circle of anarchists. And he went to Kyiv and tried to build up a militant anarchist group in 2015. Their organization it was not created officially, just a group of insurgent anarchists. Mainly from Belarus and they were invited to our Mayday rally to work as security for the event. But after the Mayday we made a column to move inside the metro but the security took away all our weapons.

They said the March is over, there were no attacks and they collected all our weapons, sticks, clubs, everything and put it in the car. And the rest of us went towards the metro and I was in the middle of the column. Then I saw that at the beginning of the column the remaining guys from this security group starting chanting 'Antifa' and it was like okay, what is going on. It looks like some kind of provocation and in a few meters a group of camouflages guys turned around attacked us. People ran away frequently it was total chaos as nobody had weapons. More than 30/40 people tried to fight the attackers off but in the end, everyone had to give up. Some attacks continued on the streets, three people tried to run but were found by this group. They were pointed very strategic attacks after they disbanded the column. I had a transparent with sticks on it and used it for self-defence. Nowadays we know who they were but we had no fights with them they simply just didn't distance from them. Police showed up and detained all of them and we grabbed our stuff. All people who had ran away were found and beaten. And after this incident a group **Revolutionary Action** made a statement and we were at the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and we saw the column of fucking queers, fucking faggots, fucking feminist who were waiving their flags of rainbow flags and we didn't see no real anarchist man. They just ran away when the aggression started, if you want to be a real anarchist join our group because we have no fucking faggots, feminists. From inside channels, I realized that this Belarusian guy was behind this whole situation. Nowadays I believe it was planned to break up the column and to depict our group as a weak bunch of queers and in order to motivate them to join their movement. I wrote a statement after this incident and I named this guy, and his plans to create a Macho-anarchist movement. That he uses lies, physical strength and conspiracy theories.

[I]

What is it with these cults of personality within the anarchist scene? Plus, this insane Macho culture, very hierarchical and are basically the opposite of 'traditional' anarchist values.

[R9]

They are Menarchists [laughs] or Brocialists.

[I]

They would match very well with some far-right activists I have met.

[R9]

After I released this statement where I called out this activist. People started arguing online and accused me like what did you do? So, I wrote all my thoughts saying that this guy tried to break-

up the movement and be like a micro-fuehrer of the anarchist scene here in Kyiv. And people from **Revolutionary Dia** started threatening me that they would spread my personal information and tried intimidating me. And they even made a fake-account to pretend to be one of my clients for my tattoo saloon. When I was supposed to meet this client, they attacked me on the center of Maidan with two people. In 2015 in the month after all of this escalation. But I wasn't hurt much because their boss failed doing his job properly. And people around it were screaming what are you doing fighting on Maidan, this is a holy place. People have died here. But they said this guy talked shit about us on the internet. Of course, I made a public statement that they attacked me and after that their recruitment process slowed down and they only received marginal elements of society. Lumpenproletariat, small criminals, anti-intellectuals and people like that. Which increased making the movement more violent and aggressive. But as I said anarchists are stupid and they quickly forgot about all these incidents and their leader started to attack different people because of homophobia or sexism. But people didn't remember that he was anti-feminist from the beginning and now he has his own little group. And the SBU now is searching for them because they are responsible for several attacks on the police and courts. Too me totally pointless actions throwing Molotov cocktails at the windows or shoot with pistols. Also, I have been informed that they are living together in a flat and if they see a strange car they move away so they behave like spies. They have money, they have cars and arms.

[I]

But where does the money come from?

[R9]

Their leader he works for apple as an IT-specialist. He is a very clever guy with a lot of money and he spends his money on the movement instead of himself. Additionally, they rob delivery guys and they use mobile internet and rob the couriers. One American guy was analysing different anarchist and leftist movements in Kyiv here in Ukraine and he decided that **RevDia** for him has 100% the footprint of Russian intelligence. Because they are anti-war, very hierarchical, super "Fuehrerist" but at the same time they have strong contempt against the army, against the army against the defensive war like they do not say what to do with the war, how to end it how to make Russia stop. They just criticize the military and citizen everything tied with the army and all their actions and activities lay down in the line of I forgot this word. You're helping to approve something like supporting. They unconsciously or consciously are supporting the Russian narrative in Ukraine and Russia's international policy.

[I]

Do they have links to other more war-critical groups here in Ukraine like **Black Flag** or **Ecological Platform** in Lviv?

[R9]

Yes, they are working with the **Ecological Platform**. I think they are extremely stupid people, they had a conflict with local Nazis in Lviv. And when I tried to interviewed them on what was going on they denied the interview saying that they have no business with our journal. I explained well okay you are not theoretically don't agree with us because we support the army and you are 100% fucking true anarchist that are not supporting anything tied with the state. Well it's okay I can accept that position but we do have a common enemy. And we have to fight that enemy and cooperate. But they rejected this proposition but shortly after that they gave an interview to a pro-Russian journal Strana.ua and Shari.net

[I]

Do you know who gave the interview for them?

[R9]

**Marta Fender** on Facebook. They didn't want to make any contact with **Nihilist** but I personally still supported them that they are not guilty for the incident. That Nazis are guilty and that I believe them that they are strange and stupid but innocent. And then I saw this interview and I took back my words. I think you guys will have a great success with Strana.ua. Strana.ua is Ukrainian but is tied up with the Party of Regions.

[I]

But did another activist disassociate from this incident? We didn't ask about this journal or media it was we just gave interviews. But their comrade in Germany told my comrade she didn't knew she was tied with me. Of course, with me, we had very good relationship with this journalist from Strana.ua and they show the connections of the Nazi junta in Kyiv. Wait a minute do you want to support this narrative and the German girl said of course this is the situation on the ground. They are 100% idiots. And I think there is a kind of conspiracy there but they are simply idiots.

[I]

And I heard about this other incident and I remember that she wrote for Ukraina.ru? Do you know about another case similar to this one?

[R9]

She wasn't writing for strana.ua but for Ukraina.ru. Yes, it was a huge scandal and I still don't believe her. Actually, she sent me her article about the Roma programs in Lviv and Kyiv and we published it. And after she was captured by the SBU she lied to me that it was police and that it was just because of the article on your side and their interested in you. And because of that they want to crack down on all of you.

[I]

What was her name again?

[R9]

Rita Bondar, she is 19 or 20 years old. Very young she was from Moldova and she was also deported back to Moldova. I still don't believe her she said like it was a half a year ago I didn't know and when I realized I stopped. You know the left-wing scene is very unclean in this meaning like they have huge connections with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung which is meddling here. And with different Russian organizations which is an issue. I mean there are some people who are more critical but they are not a huge part of it and Die Linke still makes pro-Russian policy and nobody tries to change it. You see we [here in Ukraine] have a very violent, very unclean, unconscious splattering within the anarchist and left scene. The leftist scene is very unclean especially because of the war and the different cleavages on the inside of the movement.

[I]

I mean this is basically what my research is about. How the leftist scene and movement represents this split that is also going through society right now. To a certain extent, you can see it on the far-right as well. How they are internally fragmented. In terms of ideology and in terms of how they relate themselves to the center.

[R9]

I think you should also have to speak with Eugene Leshan he is the head and writer for Nihilist. He's the head of the movement Ukrainian defence, the paramilitary organization that is making drills for left-wing activist. He is the same guy who is this former parliament member for the communist party. He established this group and I visited several drills. Very cool organization,

and as a military officer myself serving in the territorial defence of Kyiv. You know these things [these drills] have become way tougher than just running through the forest with a fake rifle. Like every time the same routine and working of small partisan groups, ... because there is a connection to more serious things. And of course, I support them because they show anarchists how they can utilize their skills, and make the military more interesting for them. **Nihilist** and this group made anarchist interested in the military and take a clear pro-Ukrainian stance. I mean we don't believe in the Ukrainian state, the Ukrainian government or even the Ukrainian army because of the prevalence of corruption. But we stand for the freedom, and we stand against imperialism and for Ukrainian independence. We will defend our values our basic freedom, right to self-determination and integrity of our territorial border because Russia does not respect them. Some Russian anarchists say we are fake anarchist because anarchists never join the war, but actually I don't give a fuck.

[I]

But of course, when you have a direct attack on your own territory I mean it's a very difficult situation. For them it's easy to say as they are not in the shoes of the activists here. It's very hard especially when activists are from those attacked territories.

[R9]

I mean they are trying to avoid this question here. To call out an aggressor. When I told you about the **Autonomous Worker's Union** which split up due to the internal scandal when one part tried to exclude the other one. This internal division was labelled as 'nationalism' because we stood up for pro-Ukrainian positions and said that the best way to combat and stop military aggression is to kill the Russians that enter Ukrainian territory with weapons. And they said you're a fascist because you want to kill Russians and no rational argument worked. I can connect you with different people from this movement if you want.

[I]

Right now, I am mostly focusing on contacts within **Avant-garde** and **Black Committee**.

[R9]

You could try talk to people from **RevDia** they are very polite to foreigners in order to recruit them. They are very cautious and diplomatic. These guys can possibly have connection with Russian Intelligence just because their overall values are so congruent with Russian foreign policy. But they explain their actions in anarchist terms. But in the end, it all looks like they

really are playing the kind of range but split up the left-wing groups and try to make people not believe to defend Ukrainian defence. But they are splitting the left-wing scene with these questions we should fight the state, in the cabinet of ministers, Ukrainian capitalists are the enemy, the war is a war between oligarchs it's not the people's war. It's not a class war, oligarchs fight with each other it's normal, the first WWI it was not people like that.

[I]

So, they pull the debate on a different level? But for me in general it's interesting to talk to them because I want to hear all ideological positions present within the Ukrainian spectrum. Trying to talk to people from all groups that I can access. I will try and compare these groups and what are their cleavages. What do they prioritize? Is it being anti-oligarchic and anti-capitalist or do they prioritize the anti-imperial element in their political activism. How do they define what it means to be a contemporary far-left activist? And what are the connections between groups associated with the far-right. I mean there are definitely some connections, and as a foreigner that's a strange thing to witness. While I have realized it's necessary to understand what is going on in the Ukrainian political scene from a Western perspective. So, I am trying to hear out all sides, learn more about Ukraine's history and which claims the different groups make in regards to history. This American researcher you talked about do you have his contacts? He's not the guy who made the documentary on **RevDia**.

[R9]

Don't know about this documentary. I think it's about **RevDia** they are trying to .. they have their own underground army this small vector. What are you fighting with? Who are you fighting with? With Russians?

[I]

Haven't watched it myself but this guy is from where?

[R9]

They know each other from Twitter. They debate each other but the guy who made the movie who is a 100% on the side of **RevDia** I was trying to debate with him. But it was like poison bot and some kind of bots began arguing. Like you are not an anarchist in your articles you wrote once .... And according to Peter Kropotkin blablabla. Or like you were criticizing anarchism so you're not an anarchist.

[I]

I guess then it helps to not self-label yourself in these cases.

[R9]

I mean they would like me to get there. To not identify as an anarchist. So, I read in the chat on Telegram from **RevDia** that very often they are discussing about or debating with articles on **Nihilist**. But in a very unintelligent way, they are fucking idiots and morons or take a quote out of context and try to misconstrue it. And some young anarchists within **RevDia** think about us **[Nihilist]** that we are Nazis. Within **Nihilist** we don't accept grants because they will try and sway your opinion. Because they will throw money at you to hear a certain tune, that's why we try to be as independent as possible. In Ukraine, it is a very closed grant structure, and people that get it, or someone wants to get it for Ukrainian research they don't spread this information very well. And they try to only recruit people they know, so if you want to make a research for a grant it's very difficult. We with **Nihilist** can write an article everyday how we want it.

[Informal Conversation]

### Transcript Interview: Kyiv [R10]

Color-coding based on different group affiliation

**Red** = labour initiatives, 'traditional' anarchist groups

**Yellow** = 'nationalist'-anarchist organizations

**Green** = ecologically oriented anarchist groups

**Dark Blue** = Foreign anarchist groups

**Dark Green** = Stalinist organization, Communist, 'Old-left'

**Blue** = Human Rights Organizations, 'liberal organizations', LGBT-interest groups, Media

**Dark Green** = Nationalists, classified fascist groups

**Purple** = 'Traditionalists', far-right affiliated

**Magenta** = Key individuals

**Grey** = Autonomous space

**Dark Grey** = Sport facility connected to activist group

**Dark Red** = Paramilitary Organization

[I]

The research I am doing, I am interested in his work for 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет? As part of my dissertation research on Ukrainian political fringe groups. So, I am interested in the far-left in the wider scheme of things and the far-right. I have done couple of interviews already with some activists from 'Autonomous Resistance' Avtonomyi Opir/АВТОНОМНИЙ ОПІР? And I am mostly interested in this new phenomenon of trying to marketing themselves as a new type of left alternative. Being left with patriotic in its core values. Maybe we can start with how 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет was founded and what its core values and principles are.

[R10]

'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет was founded in 2009 and it was the time of president Yushchenko and it was the organisation or union of some nationalistic organisations and some leftist organisations. These organisations tried to find themselves in new situations. They combined patriotic views on one side. On the other side, they combined values as social equality, people's rights and so on. So, they tried to combine all these values in one movement, in one organisation.

[I]

Could you explain a little bit more in detail about what were the exact patriotic values? In which way would that take shape in the activities?

[R10]

The problem of previous leftist organisations was that they tried to produce some pro-Russian views and co-Russian conspiracy agenda in Ukraine. But they haven't had any patriotic pro-Ukrainian agenda or any pro-Ukrainian views. So, that is their try to change the situation.

[I]

Were they most active in trying to fight against these anti-Russian sentiments in 2011? Like with the formation of Borotba/Боротьба what? Or how has this developed?

[R10]

They haven't had any confrontation with Borotba/Боротьба or any other organisations. But they tried to produce a pro-Ukrainian discourse in Ukraine. Because none rightist organisation in that times had actual values for Ukraine and was actual for Ukraine's situation and nor a leftist organisation. So, they were trying to find new versions something to fit to that situation.

[I]

I understand. And what were the exact policies, for instance, or the exact measurements that 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет would take in order to create this pro-Ukrainian sentiment?

[R10]

About these patriotic views, he said that Ukraine has such neighbours as Russia. And Russia is trying to re-capture Ukraine and to occupy Ukraine. And it is not only the occupation, but it is anti-democratic values, it is authoritarianism and so on. This patriotic process means for him to protect Ukraine from Russia. Because Ukrainians are very freedom-loving people. It was traditionally for them and it was their last elections ... The majority voted for him to protect the Ukrainians from Russia, from Russian occupation, from Russian political system.

[I]

So, it is in the core an anti-imperial struggle?

[R10]

Yes.

[I]

I would also like to ask, does 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет draw a lot upon the values of this early circle of Ukrainian nationalists from the Shevchenko period, that were like socialist but also nationalist? Or where does their ideological foundation come from?

[R10]

Nikovsky is the founder of Ukrainian nationalist ideology in the times of Zarist Russia. He wrote the first manifest of Ukrainian independence Ukraina naselaya? .

[I]

Do you know which year was that exactly?

[R10]

It was in 1900. In the beginning of the twentieth century he wrote the manifest. He talks about Nikowskys constitution. He wrote a project about the Ukrainian constitution and described very wide civil rights, it was a very progressive constitutional project at that time. So, they used it as a prototype or example for their future...?

[I]

The next question would be, what are the exact influences from Machno? Because R7 told me that 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет also organises the March Machno. How do they re-interpret Machno?

[R10]

Machno is an example of real Ukrainian tradition. Because Machno demonstrates the ideas of decentralization and anti-authoritarianism. These are core elements of the Ukrainian tradition. This freedom-love. So, the use again Machno's views. The traditional Ukrainian values of freedom-love and anti-authoritarianism.

[I]

I read those principles, which were posted by **Avantgard/Авангард** a couple of days ago. I was wondering, what would his assumptions be about the state of left-wing activism right now in Ukraine. Is this the way to strategize?

[R10]

Now the situation with leftists in Ukraine became worse than before the revolution. Because many left-wing activists took part in the pro-Russian side in this conflict and in this war. So, there was some reputation loss for leftist ideas in Ukraine, because of this collaboration of some leftist activists with Russia. So, the situation is worse.

[I]

So, they were compromised in the sense that they lost some part of their credibility?

[R10]

Some parts of the leftists activists, like ... for example, joined the pro-Russian separatists and leftist ideas organisations lost reputation. Their reputation became even lower than before the revolution.

[I]

Is this also one of the reasons that there is this need to form a coalition between some of the organisations that are more patriotic, like **'Autonomous Resistance' Avtonomy Opir/АВТОНОМНИЙ опір 'Black Committee'/Chornyi Komitet/Чорний Комітет, 'Black Rainbow'/Chornaya Raduga/Чёрная Радуга** that doesn't exist anymore, to strengthen their base?

[R10]

Traditional leftists in Ukraine is a small organisation with not many members, who discuss the political situation of the Kitchen? The biggest problem of Ukraine leftist activists is that they ignore the core problems in Ukrainian society, for example patriotism, occupation, and the conflict with Russia. Many leftist activists, after the war with Russia started, started to produce pacifist views and ideas. But they don't label themselves as leftists. They have some left ideas, principles, and ideology, but they don't label themselves as left. So, they try to stay out of this traditional left and this discussions, who is a Trotskyist or who is a Stalinist, and try to find a new way.

Summarizing their ideas, they want a strong Ukrainian state on foreign affairs on international level and a solved and restricted state on the internal level. So, decentralisation. That's why they try to combine patriotic and leftist views in their organisation. Avantgard is trying to combine these views.

[I]

When was **Avantgard/Авангард** founded?

[R10]

November 2010 ...

[I]

How many members are there? Can you say it's successful in the way that people are recruited?

[R10]

They have 20 members in Kiev and 20 more in Lviv. Biggest number of members does the organisation have in Vynnytsa. Without funding and without financial support they managed to organise really big marches gathering hundreds and more participants. He describes this as a success.

[I]

Which marches or actions, for example?

[R10]

March Machno in Vynnytsa last year. The day when **Avantgard/Авангард** was founded. First May. The march on the day when Ukrainian Rebels Army was founded, October 14. They tried to conduct marches in different places, to provide development on the local unions, not to centralise all members in one place, for example in Kiev.

[I]

And is there a plan to go also to other bigger cities like, for instance, Kharkiv? And to go more towards the east?

[R10]

When they announced the founding of **Avantgard/Авангард**, many special service and pro-government organisations tried to restrict their ability to recruit other members. He thinks, now after this election after changes after this 1<sup>st</sup> May, they will more actively recruit members. He positively estimates the changes after this election. He is going to recruit more actively after 1<sup>st</sup> May.

[I]

What were the reasons that the SBU was targeting **Avantgard/Авангард**? And how?

[R10]

The SBU tried to control the street activity and unofficial political organisations. But some organisations had to cooperate with special services, some were destroyed, some were restricted. But when **Avantgard/Авангард**, an untraditional project which combines left patriotic ideas and can organise big marches without funding and without support, arose SBU realized that it could be a danger for them. An uncontrolled organisation, which is critical towards political authorities was dangerous for special service. This is why, they were interested in them.

[I]

What is the composition of activists within Avantgard/Авангард? Which groups do they belong to? Because there seems to be an overlap within Avantgard/Авангард of people from different groups? Which ones would that be?

[R10]

Avantgard/Авангард is now a confederation of different organisations.

[I]

Is there a representative of the organisations? Like there is individuals?

[R10]

All members of all the organisations which are part of Avantgard/Авангард are also members of Avantgard/Авангард. But they are still members of their own organisations. They don't want to rebrand their organisations because, for example in Lviv, many locals know 'Autonomous Resistance' Автоному Опір/АВТОНОМНИЙ ОПІР positively. So, if some people with a new brand came to the people in Lviv, the people could be confused. That's why they decided not to change the brand, but just to coordinate common actions. But each organisation continued to work with locals on their own areas. It's like a confederation of organisations which provide some common actions for example. But all of them still exist separately.

[I]

Do they meet in regular intervals? Do they have something like monthly meetings or conferences?

[R10]

They are communicating with each other regularly in the internet. But they meet to discuss some strategy or, for example, to manage marches, for example the 1<sup>st</sup> of May.

[I]

Where will that be? In Kiev?

[R10]

In Vynnytsia. But now they are trying to develop the brand of Avantgard/Авангард. They try to make it more popular.

[I]

Does he have the feeling that it is already working? Are they increasing a lot in membership?

[R10]

He told, that Avantgard/Авангард is now a successful project. It's a very young project, only six months old. But more people join Avantgard/Авангард, in some cities there were created so called new working groups. These are not unions, just groups of activists who would like to join Avantgard/Авангард. But they don't describe them as unions. After this election campaign, they are waiting for an increase in membership.

[I]

So, the majority of people, that are supporters of **Avantgard/Авангард**, are very anti-Poroshenko?

[R10]

Yes, of course! Anti-Poroshenko. They published an announcement for the first tour of election, that people who want to participate in the election, should not vote Poroshenko or a Russian candidate. Anyone, but not Poroshenko.

[I]

In how far are there activists from other far-right groups involved or interested working within the framework of **Avantgard/Авангард**? What are the ideological boundaries of the group? Which kind of political ideologies are tolerated in the group? Are there any linkages to far-right organisations at all?

[R10]

He himself was from a right nationalist organisation.

[I]

Which one?

[R10]

Youth nationalistic congress.

[I]

Is it an organisation from Vynnytsia?

[R10]

So, there is some nationalist organisation, whit which they coordinate the activity. For example, the organisation of Ukrainian nationalists, Nikoli Konevsky he was the founder of Battalion east. And they coordinate their activity for example against Russian business in Ukraine or Russian organisations in Ukraine. They coordinate and communicate and they will do this in the future. But some nationalist organisations, which coordinate with special services are dangerous for them. Like **C-14** and other organisations which cooperate with special services.

[I]

So, they would probably also not cooperate with some groups like **Katehon** or **Zentropa**?

[R10]

He knows someone from those organisations. With those guys they could communicate, but not cooperate in their activity. So, it's more communicational.

[I]

So, in terms of developing the organisation, does he expect that there will be more from the side of the political spectrum joining the movement or will they mostly focus on trying to recruit

from already existing left-wing organisations? Where are recruiting from most? More from the right or more from the left side?

[R10]

They are more oriented towards people without subcultural ideas and restrictions in their minds. It doesn't matter if they are from left organisations or from right ones. They have to have a new mind and be without subcultures.

[I]

One of my last questions would be. How would he explain the Ukrainian fringe political scene to a foreigner? Because for me sometimes it's hard to understand what is meant in the Ukrainian context with nationalists or anarchists. How would he explain this phenomenon of patriotic anarchism?

[R10]

The main reason is the aggression to Russian policy. Without the Ukrainian state it would be a Russian state. They want that the state of Ukraine will be soft and doesn't restrict any political rights. the power will be decentralised and so on. But the state has to exist to protect the Ukrainians from the Russian aggression.

[I]

Has he heard about this Intermarium project? Does he have any opinions on that?

[R10]

For him personally, as Ukraine hasn't joined the European Union it has to find new coalitions. For example, Intermarium or a coalition with some Arab State. Although we always forget about them, they are very interesting for coalition building. But this is his personal view. Because in **Avantgard/Авангард** they have not discussed these geopolitical issues, yet. But he thinks, that Ukraine should find some new form of coalition. Not with Russia, but with others.

[I]

But also, not outright pro-European. They are quite distanced.

[R10]

Yes, not in European Union. But maybe some alternative project and coalition.

[I]

I was wondering, whether he has any points that he thinks might be relevant and interesting for me in terms of the activism that they are doing. Because I don't have any specific further questions.

[R10]

There is a possibility for bigger organisation after these elections. The new situation after this election will provide new opportunities for **Avantgard/Авангард** and other organisations. He

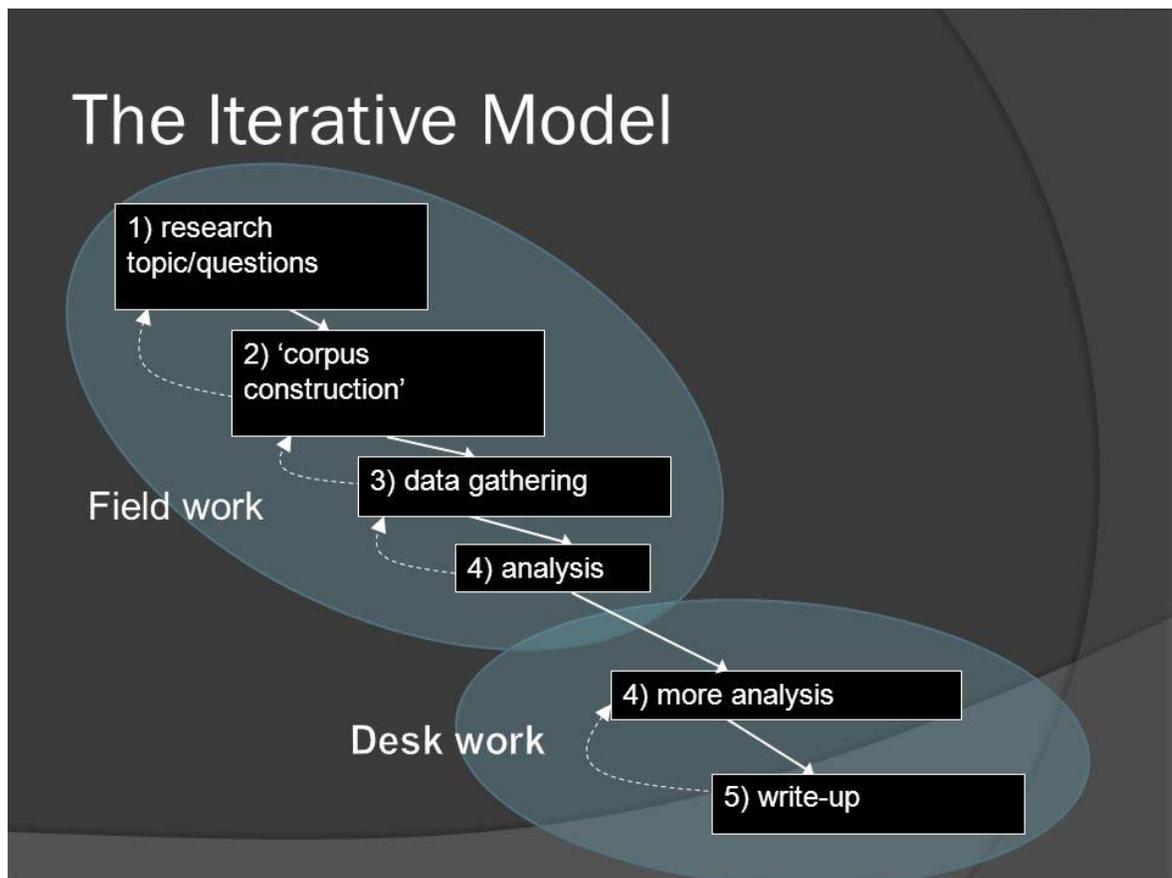
said that, Poroshenko tried to built some sort of provincial Putinism in Ukraine. He used this patriotic rhetoric, he founded patriotic organisations to support him and always labelled his enemies as Russian agents. But after Poroshenko will leave, his hierarchy will be destroyed. This will open new opportunities for the civil society. He has no illusions about Zelensky, he is waiting for new opportunities for his organisation and civil society.

[I]

Does he think the attacks on civil activists would be less, now under Zelensky?

[R10]

More freedom in Ukraine after this election.



Model of the Qualitative Research Circle (Figure 1.0)

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Plain Language Statement

**Title: The Radical Left in Ukraine since Maidan: The Case of the National Anarchist Movement**

**By:**

**Alexandra Wishart  
Master Student of CEERES International Master in Central and Eastern European,  
Russian and Eurasian Studies**

**In cooperation, with the National University of Kyiv – Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA)**

**Dear reader,**

'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 us 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.

The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how civil society groups operate within contemporary Ukraine. This means that your participation in this research is entirely voluntary which means you are able to withdraw from it at any given moment without giving a reason or expecting consequences for doing so. It is my role as researcher to make sure all information is given in confidentiality and the necessary measurements are being taken to anonymize your information whenever needed. If you are not comfortable of giving your name an alias will be constructed a referred to throughout the whole research procedure and the final thesis. That also means that sensitive information, will stored in a safe place with the correct precautions taken in advance.

The data obtained will be used only by myself and for the purpose of writing my Master dissertation and presenting it as well as a potential publication of the article after obtaining my Master. The storage during the research procedure will be only on my personal laptop with a back-up of the data on an external hard-drive. After the research data has been collected and the thesis finalized I will move all my data obtained to the external hard-drive which will be stored at my home in Germany. Moreover, there is no external organization or institution funding my research which means it entirely independent of any research agency.

In the case of this particular research the participation involves one interview of approximately 45 minutes. Moreover, I will also ask you to provide additional information on group interactionism in the form of a network analysis. This particular part of the research will take approximately 25 minutes and will be explained in detail during the interview procedure. Please be aware that the presence of the researcher means that all activities observed and all events attained with the researcher in question can potentially be used to generation information for the final dissertation.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

Reading this sheet means that confirmation has been given by the College Research Ethics Committee of the University of Glasgow. Therefore, any complaints in regards to my project should be directed at the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, **Dr Muir Houston, email: [Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)**

\_\_\_\_\_ End of Participant Information Sheet \_\_\_\_\_



### Consent Form

Title of Project: The Radical Left in Ukraine since Maidan: The Case of the National Anarchist Movement

Name of Researcher: Alexandra Wishart

Glasgow University Supervisor: Huseyn Aliyev

National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA) Supervisor: Ivan Gomza

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent to interviews being audio-recorded (interview)

I consent/ do not consent to additional information obtained during the social network analysis (PA)

I consent/ do not consent additional information obtained during participant observation (PO)

(I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym if particularly indicated.

I wish/ do not wish for the usage of an alias during the whole research

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised if they wish for anonymization
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research

- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
- I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.
- I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant ..... Signature  
 .....

Date .....

Name of Researcher ..... Signature  
 .....

Date .....

..... End of consent form  
 .....

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.



Alexandra Wishart

*/ signature of author /*

The defence will take place on ..... / *date* / at ..... / *time* /  
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Opponent ..... / *name* / (..... / *academic degree* /),  
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Alexandra Wishart

A handwritten signature in black ink on a blue textured background. The signature is highly stylized and cursive, starting with a large loop and ending with a long horizontal stroke. The background has a faint, repeating pattern of the words 'REPUBLIK DEUTSCH'.

*author's name*

**02/09/2019**

Appendix 3