



## 'Facebook Helped Me Do It': Understanding the EuroMaidan Protester 'Tool-Kit'

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### Abstract

This article examines the role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and, specifically, social media in the EuroMaidan mobilization process. Based on extensive data collection (surveys, interviews, focus groups, and digital archival research), this article argues that, while social media was not the only mechanism behind the mobilization of *millions* of Ukrainians, it was an important part of the larger 'tool-kit' drawn upon by protesters. Specifically, ICTs allowed activists to facilitate connectivity, coordinate the mobilization process, speed up the flow of information, and create opportunities for grassroots self-organization by 'ordinary' citizens who participated in the protests. Furthermore, the virtual nature of these tools made it possible for a wide range of Ukrainians to cross socio-economic, regional, and even linguistic boundaries to consolidate a 'new' collective civic identity. The article also highlights that these new protest 'tools' had a de-mobilizing effect: while the protest claims were not centred around Ukrainian language or nationality in 2014, but rather on civic identity and the protection of human rights, social media provided radical voices with an efficient

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vehicle to shape the terms of public discourse. The speed at which social media was used made it possible to spread misinformation, confuse protesters and international observers alike, and even hinder the very aims of the protesters.

### **Introduction: It All Started with a Status Update**

It all started with a Facebook post – or so goes the story of the 2014 EuroMaidan mass-mobilization<sup>1</sup> in Ukraine (Miller 2014; Nayem 2014). Much like analyses of the recent Arab Spring, EuroCrisis, and Occupy protests (see Khamis et al. 2012; Maronitis 2013; Trottier and Fuchs 2014), the Ukrainian EuroMaidan has been widely analysed through the lens of social media (Barberá and Metzger 2014; Onuch 2014e; Ronzhyn 2014). There's little consensus about the exact role that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) played in the formation of political preferences or the mobilization of protesters (Garrett 2006; Segerberg and Bennett 2011). Even though it is clear that new 'tools' – such as Facebook, YouTube, Ustream, Twitter, and VKontakte – were used extensively during the 2013/14 EuroMaidan protests in Ukraine, the question remains: in which ways were ICTs, and specifically social media, used during the EuroMaidan? And to what end?

On 21 November 2013, *not one*<sup>2</sup> but hundreds of activists and journalists – reacting to the announcement that Ukraine would not sign the Free Trade and Association Agreement with the European Union – took to their Livejournal blogs, Facebook, and VKontakte pages and Twitter feeds.<sup>3</sup> Within an hour the internet, in particular Facebook, 'erupted with rage, people's posts dripping with venom' criticizing the regime (Nayem 2014). People were 'posting', 'sharing', and 'liking', although beyond such virtual protests no real action followed in the first few hours. On that day the internet was used expertly to convey the information that Viktor Yanukovich had once again reneged on an electoral promise, yet, little was being done to stop him. Calls to direct action began around 19:00, as Yuriy Andreyev posted a call to head to the *Maidan*<sup>4</sup> at 22:00 on the *Korrespondent* website (Andreyev 2013). Others too took to Twitter and Facebook. One now famous example was Mustafa Nayem (2014), who posted at 20:00: 'guys, let's be serious. If you really want to do something, don't just "like" this post. Write that you are ready, and we can try to start something. Let's meet near the monument to independence in the middle of the *Maidan*.'

There were hundreds of such 'original' calls to protest and a few thousand 'shares', yet, at first, few people showed up. Those who did come to the *Maidan* that night were (for the most part) not 'ordinary' Ukrainians,<sup>5</sup> but rather, journalists and activists who, as I have described elsewhere, are in the 'business' of protest and/or public politics in Ukraine (Onuch 2014a). As the night continued and the posts increased,<sup>6</sup> the number of people present in the square rose from 'four dozen journalists and activists' (unnamed journalist/politician, 17 December 2013) to an estimated one to two thousand.<sup>7</sup> These protesters were not making ethno-linguistic or national(ist) claims but rather they were demanding governmental accountability for what they viewed as broken promises and making claims to civic duty and

dignity. Since 2010 there were several such small protest events, mainly coordinated and attended by the same individuals.<sup>8</sup> The different variables that extended this protest into a mass-mobilization included the structural opportunities of historic anniversaries,<sup>9</sup> the illegitimate use of extreme violent repression by the regime against the peaceful protesters (on 30 November), as well as the protesters' ability to disseminate and access information on the internet.

This article analyses the role of ICTs and, specifically, social media (SM), in the EuroMaidan mobilization process. Drawing on twelve months of extensive primary data collection, the main argument presented here is that ICTs, while an important tool used by activists, were not the central mechanism behind the mobilization of millions of Ukrainians across the country – that is, Facebook *did not* 'make' people protest. ICTs helped to facilitate network connectivity, coordinate the mobilization process, speed up the flow of information, and create opportunities for self-organization by 'ordinary' citizens; thus, Facebook *did* 'help' *some* people protest. Very importantly, SM aided in the dissemination of a collective discourse of discontent and a cross-collective identity. While the protests were not focused on the Ukrainian language or nationality but rather were framed in a civic and human rights discourse, ICTs provided a vehicle for radical fringe groups to convey nationalist messages and distort the protest. Hence, new 'tools' made it possible for some actors to spread unintended misinformation or intentional propaganda. In some instances SM had a de-mobilizing effect and made repression easier. For this reason, although ICTs were highly influential in the EuroMaidan mobilization process, their use also created the political opportunity for social divisions, which have contributed to the ongoing Ukrainian crisis.

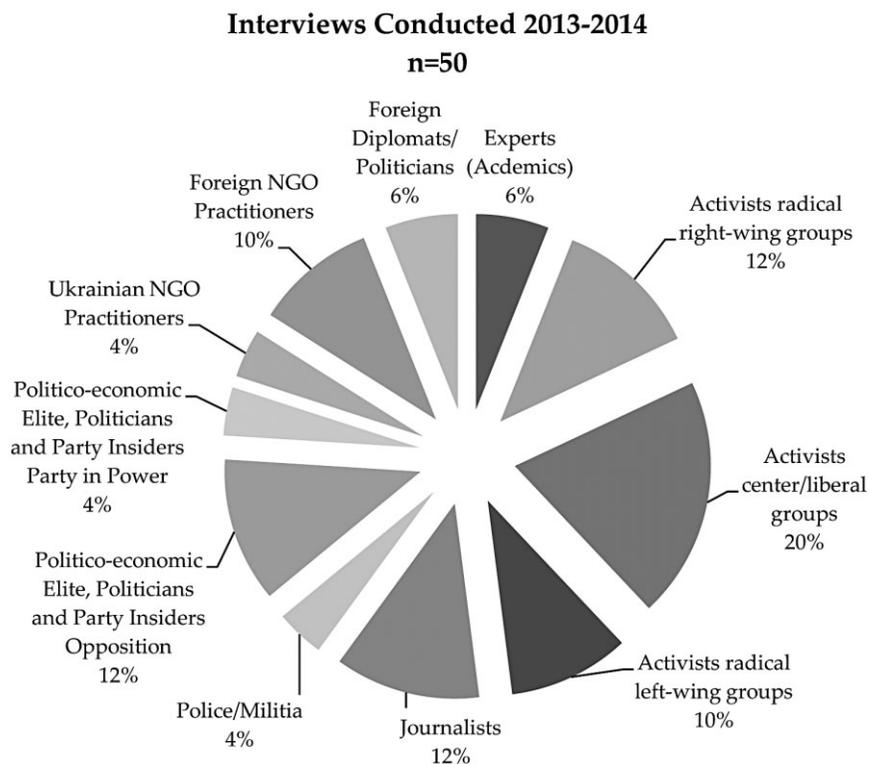
### **Outline and Questions to Be Answered**

To frame the discussion, I first address the recent literature on ICTs and their role in protest mobilization. I then turn to the EuroMaidan and assess the role and uses of ICTs and specifically SM as part of the larger protester 'tool-kit'. Focusing on Facebook, VKontakte, and Twitter, I investigate if and how the use of such 'tools' diverged between different 'types' of protesters. Next, I assess the effect of internet TV, live streaming, and iReporting. After unpacking the use of SM and live streams, the article analyses the way in which these tools were most significant in the mobilization process by exploring the positive and negative uses of SM during the EuroMaidan mobilization. While not mobilizing in themselves, ICTs facilitated the formation of a common discourse among diverse groups of protesters and thus consolidated a cross-cleavage collective identity. I explore how SM was used by radical groups to disseminate ethno-linguistic symbols and claims, which, while not the central focus of the majority of the protesters, were able to change how public discourse in Ukraine was perceived by external audiences.

### **Methodology and Data**

The analysis below relies on original primary data, collected as part of the on-going Ukrainian Protest Project hosted at the University of Oxford. The author

**Figure 1. Interviewee distribution**



**Table 1. Triangulation with other data sources, 2013–2014**

Type of Data	Total
Digital Social Movement Organization (SMO) documents	478
Activist private notes/ recordings	27
Personal correspondences (e-mails)	39
Video footage – streams	185

and a team of twenty research assistants collected the majority of the data between 26 November 2013 and 30 August 2014, in Kyiv, Ukraine. This includes on-site surveys (n=1475),<sup>10</sup> on-site rapid (three-to-six-question semi-structured and semi-formal) interviews with protest participants (200),<sup>11</sup> digital photos of slogans and posters held by protesters in the first four weeks of the protests, activists own digital documentary archives, and fifty interviews and correspondences with activists, journalists, and politicians, including both opposition and regime insiders (see Figure 1; Table 1).<sup>12</sup>

## ICTs and Protests

The burgeoning literature analysing the role of ICTs lacks consensus regarding their uses and consequences. While it has been observed that these new 'tools' can speed coordination between activists and facilitate the dissemination of information, ICTs can also aid in the construction, strengthening, and connecting of different diffused and weakly tied activist networks (Garrett 2006; Jungherr and Jürgens 2013). Pivotal, Segerberg and Bennett (2011) note that ICTs have enabled activists to create a cross-cleavage collective identity. On the other hand, SM can achieve the opposite to mobilization results by providing the means for passive participation Jones and Wayland (2013). Howard and Parks (2012) further note that the information posted on SM expose activists and make them vulnerable to intimidation and retribution, such as imprisonment and repression by the regime. The primary agreement in the literature seems to be that SM, in and of itself, is not the primary reason for people to get out on the streets.<sup>13</sup> However, this certainly does not mean that SM is not important. SM is widely used by protesters, and most agree that these tools are important in the mobilization process and creation of a collective discourse and identity, but they are only part of the protest 'tool-kit' and, at times, their use has unintended or negative consequences.

ICTs include all 'new' digital technologies. SM typically includes social networking sites like Facebook, VKontakte, Twitter, and OdnoKlasnyky. There is disagreement in the literature if online video sharing and streaming sites – such as Ustream, YouTube, etc. – are also included in the definition of 'social media', and, in this article, I consider them as separate (along with internet TV). As these 'tools' require internet access, I now turn to the issues of internet penetration in Ukraine.

## Internet Penetration and SM in Ukraine

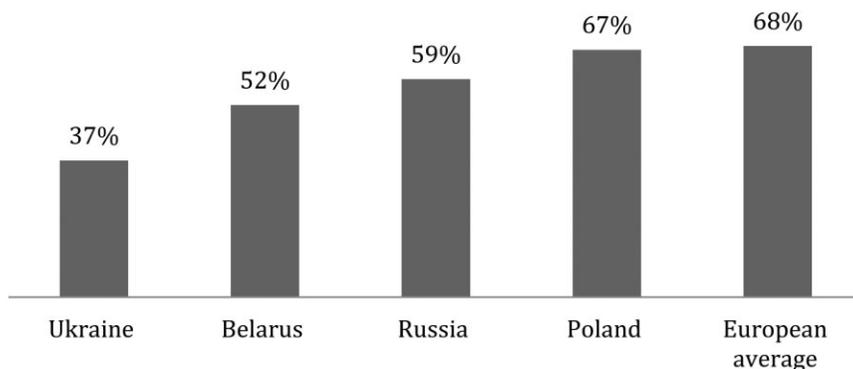
With 37.49% of the population possessing regular access to the internet, Ukraine ranks thirty-second in the world.<sup>14</sup> Yet, compared to Russia's internet penetration at 59.37% and Belarus's at 52.18%, Ukraine is lagging behind its regional neighbours (see Figure 2), and a significant portion of the population does not have access to the internet (Internet Live Stats 2014).

The Russian-owned social networking sites, VKontakte and OdnoKlasnyky, are predominant in Ukraine with a total of twenty-seven and eleven million users registered, respectively, in 2014 (Yandex 2014). Facebook, the site credited for launching the protests, recorded only 3.2 million users in Ukraine in 2014 (*ibid.*). Twitter, where the #Euromaidan #revolution went viral, only has 430,000 accounts based out of Ukraine (*Global Voices* 2014; Yandex 2014). The largest spike in the number of Twitter and Facebook users in 2014 came when Yanukovych fled, Crimea was annexed, and Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) was shot down – and *not* during the protest period. Several studies have explained to varying degrees that there is a regional, socio-economic, age, and linguistic divide among the users of the internet and social networking sites in Ukraine (Bohdanova 2014; Semetko and Krasnoboka 2003). According to these studies, SM usage favours the young and middle aged as well as professional, educated Ukrainians and those

Figure 2. Comparative internet penetration in the region

## Internet Penetration

Source: Internet Live Stats (2014)



living in central and western parts of the country who are typically bilingual (Russian and Ukrainian). Interestingly, our survey suggests that the protesters in the *Maidan* were very diverse and, at least during the largest and most significant protest-events (over 100,000 one hundred thousand participants), represented a spectrum of different socio-economic classes.

### **The Protester's 'Tool-Kit': Facebook, VKontakte, and Twitter**

Facebook and Twitter were among the first 'tools' used by protesters in November 2014. According to New York University's SMaPP Lab's reports (Tucker et al. 2014), there was a clear and identifiable boom of Facebook and Twitter usage during the period of the EuroMaidan. While it is undisputable that Facebook, Twitter, and VKontakte were *seen* as important 'tools', the question remains: how were they *used*?

Inline with the literature on ICTs, our data reveals three ways in which SM was used during the EuroMaidan. First, SM allowed for speedy and efficient dissemination of information. Second, SM was important in attracting media attention and maintaining a public profile. And third, SM in part facilitated the bridging of diverse networks and individuals, helping shape a collective discourse and identity. Yet, the diverse 'types' of protesters employed these same 'tools' differently.

Experienced activists used these tools to disseminate information within and between networks. As one long-time activist explained, in 2013/14 journalists and activist coordinators 'all knew each other' and this group was made up of 'at least two generations of experienced activists'. As such, most 'had each others' private contact details . . . and did not need to use Facebook to coordinate' amongst themselves (unnamed journalist/politician, 17 December 2013). During the EuroMaidan, activists used Facebook and Twitter in place of the stickers, pam-

phlets, and posters, which, during previous protests, took up to several hours, if not days, to disseminate. Thus, experienced activists used SM less as 'coordinating' tools and more as a way to direct information and frame the protest discourse.

At first activists 'blindly relied on sending information *via* Tweets and Facebook updates', which they quickly realized would 'not be effective enough to mobilize people to join in' or support the protests. For this reason, they 'moved to set up specific Facebook pages and accounts' (EuroMaidan focus group, civic sector activists, Kyiv, 27 August 2014). Yet, leaders quickly realized that they could not necessarily count on people visiting their page. Thus, they subsequently created digital documents (posters and pamphlets) with 'information about the locations of protest activities . . . or how people could support the protests and the kinds of supplies needed to sustain . . . the *Maidan*' (unnamed civic sector activist, 26 August 2014). These digital documents were disseminated quickly and were also more difficult (than a tweet or status update) to alter. Their catchy infographic design had the potential to be hugely effective on SM channels. Thus, activists primarily used SM for logistical and educational purposes.

Moreover, activists explained that they saw the Tweets and Facebook pages as tools to aid in forming 'a heightened public profile and greater media exposure' (unnamed activist SamoOborona2, 25 August 2014). The activists reiterated that it was absolutely necessary to 'get noticed by local and global media'. The greater news coverage they received, 'the more likely they were to succeed' in their 'mission to overthrow Yanukovych' (EuroMaidan focus group, civic sector activists, Kyiv, 27 August 2014). The brevity of the information that could be disseminated meant that activists needed to establish a simple common protest discourse. As activists explained, they heard 'ordinary' citizens themselves use the language of civic duty, civic dignity, and the protection of human rights. Thus, in a symbiotic fashion 'activists reflected this rhetoric and were able to forge unity through civic identity . . . as opposed to more controversial identities which have been divisive' (unnamed left-wing group activist, 29 August 2014).

Saunders et al. (2012) distinguish protest participants as 'novices' (with little or no protest experience), 'returners' (some protest experience) and 'repeaters' (who protest more than once), and 'stalwarts' (who protest almost – if not – every day). While 'ordinary' citizens are not central to the coordination or organization of the protests, they certainly can still be active participants as 'repeaters' or even 'stalwarts'. Our data shows that 'ordinary' protest participants, classified as 'novices' and 'repeaters', relied more frequently on SM for information and news. While they were more likely to get the information about protest logistics from their friends and family (and they were more likely to join when their friends and family accompanied them), they spent a great deal of their time scouring social media. Members of one focus group conducted in August 2014, explained that that their 'day began with checking Facebook for updates and ended with [them] posting a picture from the *Maidan*' (EuroMaidan focus group 'ordinary' citizens, Kyiv, 25 August 2014). Protest participants would 'mimic' the slogans used by journalists and activists in posts. In rapid interviews, protest participants explained how they thought that this protest would work 'because it is a about citizenship and

duty and not just region or language' whilst showing a sign printed off the internet 'European Rights = Human Rights and Dignity for all Ukrainians'.

The participants of a group discussion were concerned that 'some people think that when they "like" an article, "share" a post, or simply say they will attend an event on Facebook it is as if they actually participated in the protests' (EuroMaidan focus group, 'ordinary' citizens, Kyiv, 26 December 2013). These protest participants were annoyed that Facebook gave individuals 'the feeling of having done something, of having contributed, without actually doing anything much at all' (ibid.). This point was also frequently mentioned by activists, who feared that a portion of 'potential protesters' already felt that they had participated or belonged to the 'collective' of the EuroMaidan without ever leaving their homes. We found that for most 'ordinary' Ukrainians who participated in the protests, 'liking' and 'sharing' on Facebook were part of their personal protest repertoire.

Many protest participants repeated that they 'felt good when many people "liked" a post they "liked" or "shared" an item about the protests that they "shared"' (EuroMaidan focus group, 'ordinary' citizens, Kyiv, 26 December 2013). This gave them a 'sense of belonging to something bigger' and of being 'united into a collective goal'; it made them 'feel like the EuroMaidan could be a success' and gave them a shared identity regardless of language, creed, or region (EuroMaidan focus group 'ordinary' citizens, Kyiv, 25 August 2014). Several activists also agreed that the level of 'ordinary' citizen self-organization was linked to the way in which SM was able to provide citizens with a 'voice' and channel through which they could quickly organize with friends. Thus, oddly enough, our findings show that SM use had both a unifying effect, creating a collective identity and shared language of a civic struggle for rights, but also made free-riding easier and more satisfying – since 'liking' a protest-event gave individuals the feeling that they had contributed to the cause. It is not clear if these individuals would have participated under different circumstances, but it is clear that many individuals who joined the 'virtual *Maidan*' did not take part in any direct action.

Social networking sites were influential but played a divergent role in the lives of different types of protesters. And while the majority of both media and academic attention has been on the Facebook messages that started the EuroMaidan #revolution, few (with the exception of Dyczok 2014) have provided any adequate insight into the role of internet TV and live-streaming sites.

### **Internet TV and On-Line Live Streaming**

According to our data, internet TV and live-streaming sites played a major role in the way both activists and 'ordinary' citizens experienced the EuroMaidan as compared to the 'Orange Revolution'. One activist claimed 'the real revolutionary aspect here was the ability to live stream, to share images of the protests and of repressions in real time to hundreds of thousands of people across Ukraine' (unnamed civic sector activist, 26 August 2014). The nearly twenty-four-hour independently-run internet TV sites like HromadskeTV, EspressoTV, SplinoTV, and RadioSvobodaTV provided consistent coverage of all the events as they unfolded. Previously the ruling regime had the ability to control access to opposition chan-

nels, such as 5-Tyi Kanal, but in 2013/14 anyone with an internet connection could see the coverage. A journalist from Donetsk (the largest city in the far east of the country) said that, as his friends and family were for the first time able to access consistent televised coverage critical of regime, 'the rules of the information game' had changed (unnamed journalist *Ukrains'ka Pravda*, 20 July 2014). Activists from the eastern oblasts (provinces), specifically, stressed that while 'Facebook and Twitter were still an elite [capital city] activity, live televised coverage was easier to access and understand' (EuroMaidan focus group mixed SMO activists, Kyiv, 28 August 2014). The live-stream sites such as SpilnoTV and independent streamers that employed Ustream and YouTube live feeds shaped the way people in more rural regions understood the protests and motivated them to join in, especially in more extreme instances (for example, when they saw students being beaten).<sup>15</sup> This was especially important for protest participants who did not initially believe that the non-signing of the Association Agreement was that important. In focus groups, these participants explained that when they saw 'the live videos of the students getting beaten' they 'could not believe their eyes' (EuroMaidan focus group, 'ordinary' citizens, Kyiv, 26 December 2013).

The live streams helped create a collective identity among Ukrainians. The shared experience of state-led violence made them feel a sense of civic duty to defend the dignity of ordinary Ukrainians. Activists and 'ordinary' citizens agreed that it was the live streams that helped unite people with different political views and from different regions. The easy twenty-four-hour access to unedited and graphic violence, which would typically not make it on to the evening news, highlighted the indifference of the regime to Ukrainian citizens. Yet, the streams were still unable to compete with the most popular TV channels. Moreover, once the protesters turned violent, the image became more difficult to translate to a broader audience. During these later phases of the protest movement, the streams still conveyed an unedited version of the events, but as one activist suggested 'it became less clear to a distant observer who was at fault, the regime or those throwing the [Molotov] cocktails' (unnamed left-wing group activist, 29 August 2014). This brings us to the final sets of questions: did ICTs have de-mobilizing effects and create an opportunity for the exacerbation of conflict?

### **De-mobilization and the Problem of Direct 'Inaction'**

One of the main problems identified by the protesters is that SM users obtained a sense of 'belonging' and having contributed to the protests by 'liking', re-posting, and sharing, 'without actually doing much at all'. While participation through SM can make individuals feel like they are part of a collective struggle, this form of engagement and demonstrative support does not place them at the same level of risk than if, for example, they engaged in protests outside their homes. Therefore, it is possible that SM impeded social activity for some members of society by creating conditions for *direct inaction*. The broader political benefits of this engagement, however, have yet to be determined.

### *Persecution and Repression*

As the violence escalated, activists were keenly aware that their own safety as well as the safety of their friends and family might be jeopardized. One ethnic Russian activist explained that he ‘worried that “bandits” [*bandyty*] could find pictures of my family in the “east” [of the country] or in Russia and could intimidate them’ (unnamed activist SamoOborona, 25 August 2014). Activists admitted that they were careful about the messages they posted as violence spread. Some activists reduced their online activity, while others felt that ‘previous posts [they had made] might be enough’ to use against them and, thus, ‘they had nothing to lose’ (EuroMaidan informal group interview, mixed SMO activists, Kyiv, 27 August 2014). Activists agreed that the benefits of open access to information has its limits and they noted that they had to be mindful of what to post online for mass-consumption (and the media), and what might make them vulnerable to persecution by the regime.

### *Misinformation?*

Numerous protesters said that it was difficult to know for certain what was a rumour and what was true. Thus, family and friends were viewed as more reliable sources of information. Journalists, activists, and politicians often highlighted the problem of *Maidan* rumours and misinformation and complained that they quickly lost the ability to direct and control how information was used. Furthermore, the activist coordinating committees were often confronted with logistical and tactical confusion (unnamed civic sector activist, 26 August 2014). Reportedly, this led to loss of life and created opportunities for radical right-wing groups to use violent tactics.

Correcting rumours was also difficult. Several activists directly expressed annoyance with foreign media who disseminated ‘sensational images’ or ‘misunderstood the situation’ and amplified the messages of fringe radical groups ‘by tweeting before confirming’ (unnamed civic sector activist, 26 August 2014). The radical right-wing group ‘Right Sector’ (*Pravyi Sektor*) (RS) was one such media phenomena.<sup>16</sup> One HromadskeTV insider detailed that prior to when their image was posted, shared, and re-tweeted across the globe by foreign journalists, RS was the name of a location of the *Maidan* rather than a political collective (see Figure 3). After SM and journalists highlighted RM as a significant presence in the *Maidan* protests, they became ‘a real force to be reckoned with’ and ‘had an identifiable name and leader’ – who unsurprisingly, was ready to take credit for a significant portion of the protest activities (unnamed HromadskeTV insider, 30 August 2014). These groups were seen by many protesters as misusing their media fame and drew upon SM to disseminate nationalist symbols and rhetoric. In this way they were able to promote the theme of ethno-linguistic identity as a paramount to the protests although little other data corroborates this. Thus, while SM allowed many different types of people feel that they could unite around a common civic identity, it also had an amplifying effect for radical voices, which were then used to create broader social divisions.

**Figure 3. First known photo of the location of the *Maidan* referred to as 'Right Sector' meeting point**



(Photo taken November 2013, Copyright of the Ukrainian Protest Project, Tamara Martsenyuk and Olga Onuch)

### **Can Social Media Create Opportunities for Conflict?**

The final point of concern raised by activists was that once released into the digital universe, the posts, even if 'fake', can eternally circulate and misinform citizens and be used at a later date by 'enemies' of the protesters. The concern over the viral speed with which the misinformation spread was the most significant difference between the interviews and focus group discussions conducted during the period between 26 November 2013 and 21 February 2014 and after July and August 2014 when the protests took place. In the later focus groups, protest participants repeatedly stated that 'those people do not understand', 'they were not there', 'they saw one or a few pictures', and it was easier to believe the propaganda (EuroMaidan focus group 'ordinary' citizens, Kyiv, 25 August 2014). All individuals interviewed believed that the 'efficiency of social media' fuelled distrust, divisions, and conflict in Ukraine. One protest participant, originally from the eastern oblast of Donetsk, lamented that no matter how many times she showed the local Donetsk residents her own photos where they could see her protesting along with her family and friends, people still believed that the majority of protesters were radical 'west Ukrainian' nationalists and that the *Maidan* could not be trusted (unnamed protest participant, 28 August 2014). Like her, other protesters were surprised with how powerful the images – disseminated via the internet – could be. Activists explained that they 'would have to be more aware about how images can be used' and how important it is for them to be able to control the quality of information (EuroMaidan focus group, civic sector activists, Kyiv, 27 August

2014). Much has been written about the role that the simplification of the identity of the threatening group (or enemy) can have on exacerbating social divisions (Kelman 1999; Northrup 1989), and while the creation and reproduction of divisions in Ukrainian society along ethno-linguistic identity lines today cannot be solely blamed on the role of SM in acting as an enabler for radical groups, it is possible that these tools had an important part to play in this process, if not creating and consolidating hostile ethno-linguistic identities among at least some portion of the Ukrainian population in the Donbas and Crimea.

### **Conclusions**

The EuroMaidan may have been launched with posts and tweets, and activists certainly benefited from the efficiency and speed of these new ‘tools’. Yet, the ICTs did not necessarily change the ‘rules of the protest game’. Moreover, instantaneous spread of information was not always effective, with many un-intended consequences.

The speed of the internet made it possible for accidental rumours or intended propaganda to spread swiftly, creating confusion among protesters, misinforming, or, worse, dividing the society. While ‘ordinary’ citizens, described that they felt a sense of unity from seeing how many people ‘liked’ what they ‘liked’ online, they also spoke frequently about the difference between taking action in the real world and showing support in the virtual world. While all activists praised Facebook, VKontakte, internet TV, and online streaming, they acknowledged that they personally felt over-exposed and that in the future Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) will have to develop SM policies like any other organization. Finally, although SM aided in the consolidation of cross-cleavage, civic-duty-based identity for protesters and those sympathetic to the protests, it also facilitated and amplified ethno-linguistic symbols and rhetoric, which were used by some groups to frame the central unifying identity of the protesters. Further systemic and mixed method assessment of the use of ICTs more broadly is needed, and, thus, this article presents mixed findings of the two sides of the social media coin. It is important not to jump to conclusions about the role of these ‘tools’ in or their effect on social mobilization. SM were and will continue to be part of the Ukrainian protester ‘tool-kit’, but as explained by one activist who was part of the Revolution on the Granite, Ukrainian without Kuchma, Orange Revolution, and EuroMaidan protest movements, seeing some of their pitfalls ‘activists will have to use SM more “intelligently”, Facebook will not make people protest but it can help them do it’ (unnamed activist turned politician, 27 August 2014).

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> I have previously defined mass mobilization as protests 1) ‘proportionally larger than other protest events’; 2) where ‘the balance of participation shifts away from activists . . . to a . . . majority made of “ordinary” citizens’; 3) where ‘“ordinary” citizens . . . form cross-class and cross-cleavage coalition’; and 4) ‘are more extemporaneous . . . undirected and lack a clear leadership’ (Onuch 2014a:3–4).

<sup>2</sup> Typically in both journalistic accounts and academic analyses only Mustafa Nayem's posts are mentioned; our research team, however, identified hundreds of posts and messages.

<sup>3</sup> For examples, see Yak Facebook Vidreahuvav Na Vidmovu Vid Yevrointehratsiyi, YouTube, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> The Maidan Nezalezhnosity (Independence Square) is the main public square located in Kyiv city centre.

<sup>5</sup> I use the terms 'ordinary' Ukrainians or 'ordinary' citizens to denote the non-activist, non-politicized citizens of a polity, who tend to be regularly disengaged from politics, other than when (and if) they vote in elections. Generally, they have not been active members of a social movement organization, nor have they consistently participated in previous protests. Also included are individuals of all socio-economic, employment, and education levels. 'Ordinary' citizens draws on Nancy Bermeo's (2003) use of the term 'ordinary people'. The term is used to avoid 'the masses', 'average people/citizens', or even 'voters', as they depict a different concept of actors.

<sup>6</sup> Our research team has traced over 250 original status updates and tweets from several opposition insiders. For instance, Arseniy Yatsenyuk tweeted for people to join the protests and his team created a Facebook page advertising the 24 November 2014 All-Ukrainian Viche (see [https://twitter.com/Yatsenyuk\\_AP/status/403453433648148481](https://twitter.com/Yatsenyuk_AP/status/403453433648148481)).

<sup>7</sup> See Newsru.com (2013).

<sup>8</sup> These include the tax Maidan in 2010 and protests against educational reforms in 2010, constitutional reforms in 2010 and 2012, the 2012 language policy reforms, the extension of the Black Sea Fleet agreements with Russia, the imprisonment of Yuliya Tymoshenko from 2010 to 2013, the Euro-Cup football tournament in 2012, and the sexualization and discrimination of Ukrainian women (ongoing by FEMEN).

<sup>9</sup> The EuroMaidan commenced on the same weekend as the nine-year anniversary of the 'Orange Revolution' and the eighty-year anniversary of the Great Famine (*Holodomor*) considered by Ukrainians as a genocide perpetrated by Stalin.

<sup>10</sup> For more detailed information about the survey and data collection, see Onuch (2014b, 2014c, 2014d), Onuch and Martsenyuk (2013). The analysis has also been informed by interview (n=98) and focus group (n=15) data collected by the author between 2005 and 2010. For more information about this data and its collection, see Onuch (2011, 2014a).

<sup>11</sup> Onsite surveys of, and rapid interviews with, protest participants were conducted on the Maidan in Kyiv, between 26 November 2013 and 10 January 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Due to the ongoing nature of the geopolitical crisis and recent attacks on activists, most of the names of interviewees have been anonymized in accordance with the Chatham House Rule (see <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about/chatham-house-rule>).

<sup>13</sup> I have identified social networks, past experiences of protest, the type and salience of triggers, and susceptibility to rights rhetoric or framing as the most influential variables in 'ordinary' citizens' mobilization (see Onuch 2011, 2014a, 2014c, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> 'Elaboration of Data by International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Population Division, Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), World Bank. July 1 2014 Estimate. Internet User = individual, of any age, who can access the Internet at home, via any device type (computer or mobile) and connection'. Source: Internet Live Stats ([www.InternetLiveStats.com](http://www.InternetLiveStats.com)).

<sup>15</sup> In rapid interviews conducted on the Maidan in December 2013, 'ordinary' citizens (specifically those who never participated in protests before, who were from eastern Ukraine, or even those who voted for the regime party) stated that they were most moved by the live and unedited videos and photos of the blatant repression of peaceful protesters by regime militia.

<sup>16</sup> RS was a small group made up of a loose coalition of several very different radical organizations (unnamed Pravyi Sektor activist, 10 February 2014).

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