

The Voices of Displacement: War-Driven Activism and the Remaking of Political Life by Displaced People from Ukraine in Prague

By Natalia Dziadyk

Submitted to



**Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International
Relations**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Violetta Zentai

Vienna, Austria

2025

Copyright Notice

Author: Natalia Dziadyk

Title: The Voices of Displacement: War-Driven Activism and the Remaking of Political Life
by Displaced People from Ukraine in Prague

Degree: Ph.D.

Date: September 8, 2025

Place of Submission: Vienna

Hereby, I testify that this dissertation contains no material accepted for any other degree in any other institution and that it contains no material previously written and/or published by another person except where appropriate acknowledgment is made. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Declaration of Generative AI

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) was used in this work. I, the author, have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content, claims, and references. An overview of the use of GenAI is provided below.

- I used ChatGPT and Grammarly to assist with proofreading and correcting grammatical errors. The tools were used to improve grammar and sentence structure in parts of this dissertation without altering the original meaning or influencing my conceptual and lexical choices.

Abstract

This PhD thesis examines the political activism of people from Ukraine in Prague who were displaced by Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 – their political acts, agency, and struggles. It explores what it means to engage in politics as a person displaced by war, how displacement generates political subjectivities, and how displaced Ukrainians navigate new relational and political landscapes through their activism. The analysis builds on nearly a year of ethnographic fieldwork with *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine) – an initiative founded in Prague in the summer of 2022 by young displaced women – as well as with local Czech activists working alongside them in solidarity. Through this focus, the thesis shows how displacement can be generative of new forms of political subjectivity and how activism in displacement reshapes understandings of citizenship, connecting it both to the war and moral-political obligations toward the home state, as well as to the challenges of emplacement and political visibility in the receiving society. As a cumulative dissertation, the thesis contributes not only to knowledge on war-driven displacement from Ukraine after 2022 but also to broader theoretical debates in forced migration and citizenship studies, alongside literature on migrant political struggles, solidarity, and the politicisation of migration. The first article provides an in-depth empirical account of *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s activism and conceptualises *displaced citizenship* as a dual process: enacting Ukrainian citizenship through war-driven advocacy and negotiating emerging roles as political actors within Czech society. By foregrounding the uncertainty and temporariness of protection granted to displaced Ukrainians, the urgency of the homeland's struggle, and the moral obligations felt in exile, it shows how displacement itself becomes constitutive of political subjectivities. The second article situates these dynamics within broader Czech and European migration politics by examining Prague as a *battleground* of migration, highlighting mobilisation and counter-mobilisation over displaced persons' (political) presence and rights amid wider struggles to frame and respond to the (poly)crisis.

The final article shifts attention to the political transformations that *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s activism brings about. It explores how displaced persons' political subjectivities are reconfigured through relations of solidarity, transforming the activists from claimants of rights *to* Czech society (and its institutions) into actors asserting rights *within* Czech society. Taken together, the three articles demonstrate how displacement, far from being only a condition of loss and vulnerability, becomes generative of new ways and modes of being political, redefining citizenship, belonging, and solidarity in the context of war and (poly)crisis.

Acknowledgements

These acknowledgements carry deep gratitude toward everyone who supported me through my challenging PhD journey. The reality of war in my home country makes my gratitude even stronger, as your support has meant the world in these times.

My first and deepest thanks go to my supervisor, Violetta Zentai. I can hardly find words to express my appreciation for her wisdom, kindness, and support. She was my antidote to imposter syndrome: I often arrived at meetings full of doubt and always left smiling, believing in myself again. Her gentle, patient guidance helped me think independently, write confidently, and approach research ethically and critically. Most importantly, Violetta reminded me that academia can be a space of solidarity and care. Her example of generosity and integrity will always inspire the kind of professor I hope to become.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my supervisory panel members, Andrea Krizsan and Prem Kumar Rajaram. I am grateful for their sharp insights, supportive feedback, and encouragement, which shaped my research and helped me publish my work. I am thankful for Andrea's support during the first weeks of the war, when I could barely focus on teaching, as well as for welcoming me into the DI community through the Inequalities working group. I am also grateful to Prem for the opportunity to teach at *OLive-UP* in Vienna and for showing me how education can be a space of inclusion and resistance.

I am immensely grateful to *Hlas Ukrajiny* and all the participants in my research. Their activism, words, and reflections are the heart of this thesis. I know that any recognition born from wartime suffering feels bitter, yet they deserve it fully – for their courage and tireless commitment to advocacy and solidarity. Our conversations left me both humbled and inspired.

My deepest gratitude goes to my husband, David. He is the only person, in addition to my supervisory committee, who has read my entire dissertation, and some parts of it even several times. He saw it all – the triumphs, the hesitations, the overthinking – and responded to

each one with understanding, cheerful humour (teasing my philosophising nature) and tasty meals. Sharing ideas and dreams with him has been one of the greatest gifts. I still hope we will write that book together one day.

I also owe thanks to many academics who shaped my journey: to Ayşe Çağlar, whose course on transnational migration transformed my thinking and whose kind feedback and encouragement gave me confidence; to Victoria Sereda and Oksana Mikheieva, for introducing me even closer to Ukrainian migration research and involving me in *Invisible University for Ukraine*; to Jelena Džankić, for hosting me at EUI and for inspiring discussions; to Daniela Vintila, for her generosity and the opportunity to teach a class to her students; to Olena Fedyuk, for her thoughtful comments and supportive exchanges; and to Dino Numerato, who introduced me to Czech migration politics in 2019 when he hosted me for an internship at Charles University. I also want to thank my former MA supervisors, Ian Carter and Petro Sukhorolskyi, who taught me to think critically, write clearly, and read deeply – skills that shaped my entire academic journey.

I am deeply thankful to my PhD friends and colleagues at CEU, who made this long journey not only possible but joyful, and whom I love very much. My warmest thanks to Monica Lafaire and Ingy Kassem, our brilliant DSPS coordinators, for their professionalism, efficiency, and above all, kindness. They were the invisible engine behind our progress and my friends through it all. And to the legendary (C)Loud Lab – the loudest, funniest, and somehow still productive lab at CEU – thank you for creating a true space of solidarity. I would like to thank Freya, for her warmth and careful proofreading of my first published article; Dani, for his lucky desk and hospitality in Florence; Hong, for her sense of justice and our rebellious chats; Vika, for her feminism and kindness when listening to my complaints; Monika, for the great lunch talks and fun parties; Sunna, for her sharp jokes, Arctic wisdom, and appreciation of nature; Ihor, for bringing a piece of home into the lab with his Львівська говірка; Giancarlo,

for his calm presence and sense of humour; Toma, for his perfectly timed sarcasm; Bara, for our shared adventures at IPSA in Argentina; Albert, for reminding us to enjoy ourselves.

And, of course, I am so grateful to Lilia and Memo, who were my emotional anchors. To Lilia, whose incredible intellect and brilliant suggestions inspired me, and whose warm friendship and our long voice-message “podcasts” kept me sane throughout this roller-coaster of a PhD; and to Memo, whose existential chats made my time at CEU much brighter. He was the little brother of the lab, and we all missed him when he left. I am also grateful to Dom for his mental support, tasty wine, dark jokes, and conversations on statehood that got me through 2022’s hardest months.

I am also very grateful to my dear friends Ceren and Ekin for their constant support from the first PhD days. I am thankful to Ceren for always being there for me and for our therapeutic hikes and sincere conversations. I am grateful to Ekin for our fun conference adventures and great collaboration, and for being my caretaker in Argentina. I look forward to our joint projects. I would also like to thank Connor and Dominik for our cheerful evenings.

I am grateful to the friends I made in Vienna during my IWM Fellowship, especially Julia and Nikola, for inspiring discussions, supportive feedback, and warmth; and to Masha, for coordinating the Ukrainian programme with such care and compassion.

I am thankful to everyone who was part of my fieldwork in Prague. To my parents-in-law, Lea and Martin, for welcoming me into their home, for delicious lunches and inspiring conversations. To the whole Smrček family – Šimon, Irina, Vojta, Jana, Toníček, Kubík, Eliška, Libor, and Edík – for their warmth and friendship, and to Ben and Kristýnka, for helping me lose my fear of speaking Czech. Thanks also to Justyna for joining me at my first *Hlas Ukrajiny* demonstration, and to Michal and Wanda for their solidarity and company at others. I am also grateful to Natallia Allen for introducing me to MigAct and for our collaboration on research about civic and political participation of people with migrant backgrounds in Prague.

I am also grateful to Olia, my long-time friend who kept me in touch with the real world here in Vienna (and bravely survived PhD gatherings as the lone non-PhD), and to Valia, for our shared dreams back in Ternopil that somehow led me here. I am also very grateful to my other childhood friends, whom I miss a lot and whose support always meant so much to me – to my dear Khrystia, Ira, and Olia. Even though they are so far away, they have always been a part of my life, of my struggles and achievements.

Finally, I am grateful to my other friends whom I met in Pavia – Marta, Sara, Maria, Francesca, Miglè, Paweł, and Alex – for their faith in me and enduring friendship across borders and years.

Насамкінець я хочу подякувати всім своїм рідним і близьким з Балеї 7. Моя подяка вам залишилася на сам кінець не тому, що вона найменш важлива, а навпаки – тому, що саме вам я хочу присвятити цю працю. Мої рідні мамо і тато, я дякую в першу чергу вам: ваша любов, підтримка і віра в мене були фундаментом мого бажання вчитися, пізнавати світ, цікавитися новим і водночас вірити в себе. Завдяки вам я не боялася залишити рідний Тернопіль і навчилася довіряти людям, розуміючи, що з добрим серцем завжди можна знайти своє місце в світі. Особлива подяка моєму брату Володі, який завжди був для мене опорою, і за яким я постійно сумую від того дня, як нас розділив океан. Дякую також Тані – не лише дружині брата, але й моїй сестрі, а також моїм улюбленим племінницям Аннусі та Софійці. Я дуже вас люблю і безмежно ціню вашу підтримку. Я щиро вдячна своїм бабусям і дідусям, особливо тим, хто жив разом із нами на Балея 7 і виховував мене. Бабусю Олю і дідусю Володю, ви навчили мене читати і любити книжки, розповідали стільки казок, що моя уява постійно буяла, і прищепили мені любов до політики. Моє дитинство з вами і ваша любов стали справжнім фундаментом всього, що я роблю сьогодні. Безмежно дякую!

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Research Genealogy.....	3
Who is the <i>Voice of Ukraine</i> in Prague?	7
Locating the Field <i>Multiscalarly</i>	12
Methodological Considerations	16
Participatory Research and Positionality	20
Conceptual Framework.....	25
Personhood.....	26
Statehood.....	29
Relationality.....	31
Thesis Structure	33
Article 1. Displaced Citizenship and Political Engagement of Ukrainian Activists: Duty, Refugeehood, and Diasporic Aspirations.....	38
Introduction.....	38
Citizenship Contextualised by War and Displacement	41
Political Engagement as a Duty: Diasporic Citizenship?	44
Political Engagement under Temporary Protection: Refugee Citizenship?.....	49
Displaced Citizenship	54
Conclusion	59
Article 2. The Battleground of Migration Politics in Prague Amid the (Poly)Crisis.....	62

Introduction.....	62
Research Context: (Poly)Crisis and the Reception of Displaced People from Ukraine in Czechia.....	65
Migration Politics as a <i>Battleground</i> . The Role of (Poly)Crisis	67
Methodology	71
Prague's <i>Battleground</i> of Migration Politics and the Political Activism of Displaced People from Ukraine	72
Concluding Remarks.....	81
Article 3. (Re)shaping Politics: Displaced People from Ukraine in Prague, Transfigured Political Subjectivities, and Solidarity Relations.....	84
Introduction.....	84
Critical Citizenship Studies and Political Acts by Displaced People from Ukraine	86
Acts of Citizenship and Solidarity Practices in Conversation	91
The Voice of Ukraine in Prague: Methodological Choices and Considerations in Researching with Displaced Ukrainian Activists.....	94
Political Subjectivities and War-Caused Displacement – Claiming the Right to Be Part of Politics.....	96
Solidarity Practices and Contentious Politics – (Re)Shaping Social Relations	99
Conclusion	103
Conclusion	106
From Answers to New Questions	108

What Is Distinctive About War-Driven Displacement, and How Does Engaging in Politics as a Person Displaced by War Generate Political Subjectivities?.....	108
How Do Displaced People Navigate New Relational and Political Landscapes Through Their Activism?	113
What Lies Beyond.....	117
Intersectional Positionalities, Activism, and Emplacement	117
Time and Temporality	119
Ukrainian Politics (Past and Present).....	121
Contributions and Future Directions.....	124
Bibliography	127
Appendix 1. List of Interviews	146

Introduction

While refugees often leave suddenly and expats move by choice, we face similar hurdles: language barriers, cultural adaptation, finding jobs, and building a sense of stability... For me, the hardest part was feeling like I had to constantly prove my place in society. Many foreigners in Czechia face bureaucracy, stereotypes, and the pressure to take low-skilled jobs just to survive. But integration doesn't mean losing your identity. You can build a new life while still holding onto who you are (A co-founder of the Initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny*/ Voice of Ukraine; interview on the website *Expats.cz*¹).

The author of the quote is a young woman who left Ukraine two weeks after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. As she confessed on multiple occasions, she departed with tears in her eyes after her father joined the Ukrainian Military Forces, and the war disrupted her workplace, leading to the loss of her job. She went abroad both to support her mother and sister financially and to help her father's unit with fundraising for necessities. She moved to Mladá Boleslav, a town one hour away from Prague known for its automobile industry, and started working in a factory. A few months after arriving in Czechia, she became one of the co-founders of *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine) – a political initiative formed mainly by displaced Ukrainians alongside earlier migrants, which organises war-related demonstrations, awareness campaigns, and actions countering Russian disinformation. While becoming increasingly active and visible in local political life (and by local I mean Prague's political life, the relevance of which I will explain later), for more than a year she continued working in the factory and living in Mladá Boleslav – what she often called 'a typical life of a refugee.'

As the political acts, agency, and struggles of displaced people from Ukraine in Prague were at the heart of my ethnographic fieldwork², this quote anticipates the key questions raised

¹ This quote is not referenced to preserve the anonymity of the activist.

² In accordance with the university's internal regulations, the project underwent review for ethical research issues by the appropriate bodies outlined in the Ethical Research Policy of Central European University (P-1012-1v220). This research obtained approval from the Ethical Research Committee at the author's home institution, as confirmed by the Certification of Ethical Review Compliance.

in this thesis. Rather than a strict hierarchy, these questions are interconnected and foreground the following issues:

- How do displaced people navigate new relational and political landscapes through their activism – building relations of solidarity, while also confronting those whose own dispossession, real or perceived, leads them to scapegoat refugees?
- What does it mean to engage in politics as a person displaced by war, and how does this generate political subjectivities?
- And what is distinctive about war-driven displacement, and why does it matter to acknowledge shared migrant experiences while resisting the *migranticisation* of displacement that obscures its traumatic, historical, and political dimensions?

This interview with *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s co-founder was published alongside two photos of the activist with Czech President Petr Pavel, taken on different occasions, signalling that she had indeed achieved what she aspired to: to 'prove [her] place in society' as a political actor. Yet this visibility and recognition came at a price. Just three days before the interview appeared, she was targeted in a hostile Facebook post by Tomio Okamura, leader of the Czech far-right party SPD:

Ukrainian activist [name anonymised], who immigrated to the Czech Republic two years ago, publicly calls on the media to punish Czechs who do not support Ukraine. What is there to say? If you don't like it here, go back to Ukraine! (Šídlo 2025)

I bring this example, despite the personal difficulty of seeing such a hateful attack on someone I know well, because it illuminates further dynamics explored in this dissertation. Okamura's post attracted thousands of hostile and even threatening comments from his supporters, demonstrating how struggles to claim a role in Czech society as a political actor coincided with being othered as a foreigner, a stranger, a non-citizen. His statement was also manipulative: the activist had not demanded the punishment of Czechs but had argued that every country should hold accountable those who aided Russia's war crimes and violations of

international law. However, the distortion highlights a deeper tension – opposition to non-citizens making claims about what Czech society ‘should’ do, seen as overstepping the boundaries of their political rights.

The wording in Okamura’s post is also telling, as he spoke of the co-founder of *Hlas Ukrajiny* having ‘immigrated’ rather than having been displaced. This was consistent with his frequent rhetoric portraying displaced Ukrainians as ‘economic refugees’ abusing welfare. This highlights again what this thesis seeks to convey – the importance of the term displaced person, as it foregrounds the traumatic aspects of war and its inseparability from emplacement, showing how forced mobility shapes particular ways of seeking belonging in new contexts. Importantly, multiple Prague-based civil society actors responded to the hateful post by condemning it and supporting the attacked activist, though later deleting their Facebook entries so as not to amplify the initial attack. Nonetheless, their reactions highlight the third dimension of this thesis – the acts and relationships of solidarity with displaced Ukrainians who are politically visible and vocal, with these relationships driven both by shared geopolitical views and by shared ideas of justice and human rights, including the right to voice political opinion.

Lastly, I intentionally begin with these February 2025 quotes, even though my fieldwork was conducted in 2022-2023. They show how the questions at the heart of this thesis remain deeply relevant: what it means to be displaced and political; how acts of political engagement intersect with broader social fabrics; how they generate solidarity, contestation, and othering; and what political transformations they bring about in Prague’s public life.

Research Genealogy

The full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022 disrupted not only the lives of millions in Ukraine and abroad – including my own as a woman from Ukraine whose parents, relatives, and childhood friends still live there – but also this PhD project. Originally designed

as research on circular labour migration to Czechia and the struggles of migrant workers in the face of exploitative practices, the war has profoundly altered this focus. However, I nonetheless bring the genealogy of my research ideas to the fore, as it situates the post-2022 activism of displaced Ukrainians within a broader history of labour migration.

Before 2022, migration from Ukraine to Czechia was largely shaped by circular labour mobility. By 2020, over 12% of employees in the Czech Republic were foreigners, with Ukrainian citizens forming the largest group – more than 160,000 registered at the Ministry of Interior (Martišková and Šumichrast 2020). As third-country nationals, most Ukrainian migrant workers arrived on short-term contracts, facing precarious working and living conditions within a migration regime that strongly favoured temporary labour. While this policy was presented as a pragmatic response to resource constraints regarding long-term settlement and integration, in practice, it reflected what Stojanov et al. (2022) term ‘deliberate institutional unfriendliness,’ reinforcing the perception of migrants as disposable workers rather than long-term members of society. This regime relied on intermediary recruitment agencies, creating opaque responsibilities between agencies and employers, while trade unions rarely represented migrants and often lobbied against labour migration, which they saw as threatening local wages (Martišková and Šumichrast 2020).

After the full-scale Russian invasion, the demographic balance between newly displaced Ukrainians and earlier migrants in Czechia shifted profoundly. By early September 2022, over 430,000 temporary protection permits had been issued to people fleeing Ukraine. While many later returned, around 280,000 remained in the country (Kopecký 2022) – a considerable increase compared to the pre-2022 figures mentioned above. In terms of gender composition, before the full-scale invasion, Ukrainian migration to Czechia was predominantly male, reflecting the country’s long-standing reliance on Ukrainian men in temporary and often precarious labour sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and logistics. Following the

onset of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022, this gender pattern shifted significantly. Since temporary protection was granted to those who left Ukraine after February 24, the majority of them were women (44% in July 2022) and children (35%), due to the exit ban on male citizens imposed under martial law (Klimešová, Šatava, and Ondruška 2022). Newly displaced Ukrainians also had a wider range of educational and professional backgrounds, with many experiencing significant deskilling upon arrival (Mezihorák 2025).

Despite these shifts – and although the Temporary Protection Directive granted Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war access to the Czech labour market under conditions comparable to those of EU citizens – pre-2022 infrastructures of temporary labour migration still positioned displaced Ukrainians within precarious labour regimes, much like those experienced by earlier migrant workers. This precarity was further compounded by the majority of new arrivals being women with sole caregiving responsibilities, alongside the challenges they faced in securing adequate social reproduction (Mezihorák 2025). A survey conducted in early 2024 revealed that more than half of those under temporary protection were employed in jobs below their qualification level, one in four relied on multiple jobs to make ends meet, and one in three lacked access to social insurance or paid leave (Gheorghiev 2025:4525). As the co-founder of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, whose words opened this introduction, explained, she felt ‘pressure to take low-skilled jobs just to survive’ – working eight hours a day at a factory and ‘spending the rest of her time helping Ukraine’ (Bondar 2023).

At the same time, displaced persons came to be evaluated through the same expectations applied to other migrant groups, particularly in terms of productivity through waged labour (Welfens 2023). For instance, in seeking to counter far-right scapegoating of Ukrainian refugees, the Czech government emphasised high rates of labour market integration and the economic contributions of displaced persons from Ukraine, which it argued outweighed state spending on humanitarian aid (Kopecký 2024). While this was intended as a

demonstration of the *deservingness* of displaced Ukrainians, it nonetheless remained framed in the language of employment-based productivity (Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas 2014). As a result, displaced persons' vulnerabilities and political subjectivities, both as individuals experiencing traumatic war-driven displacement and as actors resisting Russian imperialism (Hendl et al. 2024; Oksamytna 2023), were sidelined in favour of assessments of their economic contributions. Moreover, such framings reflected the continuation of earlier narratives that positioned Ukrainians as temporary workers within a hierarchy of labour and belonging in Czechia.

Even before the full-scale invasion, migrant workers from Ukraine and their working conditions did not receive much visibility, while the neglect of their rights rarely generated broader resonance in Czech society³. The war has not fundamentally changed these perceptions, and displaced Ukrainians continued to be perceived as 'suitable' for low-valued jobs and 'incompatible' with collective action and labour organisation (Gheorghiev 2025:4529). These perceptions have been reinforced by years of precarious employment through intermediary agencies, the absence of trade union support, the lack of structured opportunities for self-organisation and the risks associated with organising for those under temporary work contracts. Importantly, the lack of mobilisation amid persistent labour exploitation has further entrenched the image of Ukrainians as a silent, non-political workforce in factories, construction sites, and cleaning jobs.

Within such conditions, acts of rights-claiming among Ukrainian migrant workers, though not highly visible, could have offered an important window into migrant agency and

³ Bohdan, a Ukrainian worker at the Škoda factory, lost his leg in the summer of 2021, in an accident after supervisors prioritised saving machinery over his safety. Because he was employed through a recruitment agency, he received no compensation and was forced to return to Ukraine, where he protested by chaining his metal prosthesis to the Czech embassy in Kyiv. Despite the gravity of his case, highlighting both hazardous conditions and the lack of protection for agency-hired migrant workers, Czech media gave it no coverage.

resistance – and thus the original aim of this project was to investigate these labour-related struggles. However, the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022 radically shifted the terrain. Concerns about labour rights were suddenly overshadowed by existential threats facing both the people of Ukraine and their statehood. Social media groups, once focused on jobs and workers’ struggles, redirected their efforts toward humanitarian aid, military fundraising, and support for those displaced. For many Ukrainians in Czechia, personal experiences of labour exploitation became secondary to the urgent need to send remittances home, donate to the army, and sustain family members in the warzone.

Although no longer central to this thesis, the legacies of labour migration nevertheless continued to shape the terrain of displaced persons’ activism. On the one hand, they created pathways to employment for displaced Ukrainians. On the other hand, they reinforced notions of deservingness tied to gainful work, while ongoing deskilling and precarious labour conditions sustained an image of Ukrainians primarily as a ‘cheap’ and ‘obedient’ labour force. Displaced Ukrainians’ activism thus also involved challenging these expectations of silent gratitude and deskilled labour, as explored in this thesis.

Who is the *Voice of Ukraine* in Prague?

Thinking about how to shift away from the topic of labour relations, I arrived in Prague in September 2022. The decision not to change the field site was not accidental, as Czechia had granted more temporary protection residence permits to displaced Ukrainians per capita than any other EU member state. As labour conditions and relations became sidelined by the immediate urgency of the war, I began my research online after arriving in Prague, mapping out grassroots initiatives and NGOs responding to the arrival of displaced people from Ukraine. This search proved less than straightforward, but in early October 2022, I came across an announcement for a demonstration marking the Day of Defenders of Ukraine. The organisers used a broad definition of defenders, inviting both civil society actors and grassroots groups in

Prague that supported people in Ukraine, as well as those displaced to Czechia, making it an ideal event for my initial mapping. When I approached the organisers for information about the invited initiatives, I quickly realised that I was speaking with displaced Ukrainians themselves – newly arrived, yet already taking active roles in Czech society. The organisers of this large-scale event, *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine), had only become a more structured initiative in August 2022, formed primarily by displaced Ukrainian women, most of whom had been in Czechia for less than six months at the time.

To understand the significance of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, it is useful to look at earlier waves of political mobilisation by Ukrainians in Prague. Although the 2014 Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) mobilised Ukrainians in the Czech capital, who created an initiative together with Czech citizens called *Prague Maidan*, their activities soon shifted toward humanitarian assistance rather than sustained public political acts. Therefore, when the full-scale invasion unfolded in February 2022, aside from a couple of demonstrations organised by the local civil society movement *Milion Chvilek* at the very beginning of the war, public space largely lacked systematic, war-related advocacy – a gap that was ultimately filled by *Hlas Ukrajiny*.

As I became more acquainted with the initiative, the vision of my research shifted. Rather than mapping all grassroots efforts, I focused on understanding how this specific group of displaced people organised, how they interacted with the local society, with other Ukrainians and migrants, and whether, as a political initiative, *Hlas Ukrajiny* engaged with Czech political actors. This also meant exploring what drove their activism, how they understood politics, their own political engagement and rights in Czechia, and what transformations they believed their actions produced. Since most of the activists were relatively new to Czechia and to Prague's political space, conducting ethnographic research with them allowed me to capture not only the conditions and articulations of their political engagement, but also their experiences of

displacement and emplacement, as they acted from the positionalities of displaced persons navigating both the disruptions of daily life and political struggles in Prague.

As mentioned above, *Hlas Ukrajiny* emerged as a grassroots initiative of a small group of young activists from Ukraine, most of whom were forced to leave the country suddenly after February 2022. They gathered to protest the Russian invasion, to share grievances, to process traumatic experiences collectively, to raise awareness of the war, and to call for solidarity with Ukraine. The demands they voiced during their demonstrations targeted multiple audiences: the Czech government and foreign embassies of Ukraine's allies (e.g. to send more weapons and air-defence systems to Ukraine), Czech businesses (e.g. to stop trading with Russia), international organisations (e.g. to remove Russia from the UN Security Council), Czech activists and the wider public, including tourists in Prague (e.g. to send donations, sign petitions, and counter Russian disinformation).

Over the course of my fieldwork, their activities expanded well beyond traditional protests. In autumn 2022, one of the coordinators of the initiative presented a Letter of Appeal with 7,000 signatures at a hearing of the Czech Parliament, urging recognition of Russia as a state supporting terrorism. By November 2022, the Czech Parliament's Lower House recognised 'the current Russian regime as terrorist'. The initiative also led a successful campaign contributing to sanctions against the CEO of Tactical Missile Armament (KTRV) and his family, who resided in Czechia. They promoted *Push to Leave*, an app enabling consumers to check whether a specific company still operated in Russia, thus encouraging ethical consumption and pressuring firms to exit. They staged performative acts: covering themselves in red paint or tying their hands to draw attention to war crimes against Ukrainian POWs (Prisoners of War), or wearing disposable coveralls and throwing coloured powder to highlight the dangers of Russian attacks on nuclear plants.

During my fieldwork with *Hlas Ukrajiny*, I interviewed most of the core activists, whom I refer to as *members* throughout the text, while noting that *Hlas Ukrajiny* was an informal initiative rather than an organisation with formal membership rules. The majority were young women between the ages of 18 and 30, alongside two men who had not been displaced by the war but were living in Czechia for work or personal reasons. Many activists were studying in Prague, most of them just beginning their studies, while others were searching for employment or already working – including the two co-founders of the initiative, who worked in factories outside Prague in Mladá Boleslav and Plzeň. One member was not a Ukrainian citizen but had lived in Ukraine for many years and spoke fluent Ukrainian. Most, though not all, had left after the full-scale invasion and were holders of temporary protection residence permits. Some activists left shortly before February 2022, anticipating war; although not technically holders of temporary protection, they were nonetheless displaced due to the imminent threat of the war. By the end of my fieldwork, two activists had returned to Ukraine, and one had moved to a non-EU country.

This diversity – even within the core group, which has since grown and changed in composition – made it challenging to find a concise and inclusive term to describe the activists, especially for article-style publications where brevity matters. To address this, I chose to refer to them as *displaced people from Ukraine* (to remain ethnically inclusive), although I frequently use the phrasing *displaced Ukrainians* for readability and stylistic variation (while remaining aware of its limitations). While not all activists were legally defined as refugees or more specifically beneficiaries of temporary protection, for many the war – whether already underway or looming – was the decisive reason to leave Ukraine. Thus, referring to the activists as *displaced people from Ukraine* also underscores the war-driven nature of their decision to move.

At the same time, even for members of the initiative who had migrated to Czechia earlier, the war profoundly disrupted their daily lives and their possibilities and visions of return, often rendering their stay in Czechia effectively *war-forced*, even if their initial move had not been directly motivated by the conflict. Thus, not having to cross borders did not mean they were unaffected: they experienced other forms of displacement – taking on new social roles as caretakers for relatives and loved ones, enduring disrupted daily routines through constant exposure to the war (even at a distance), and coping with shattered expectations of return. In this sense, even when their original migration was unrelated to the conflict, the war transformed their stay in Czechia into one shaped by displacement.

Lastly, the use of the term *displaced person* rather than *refugee* also respects my participants' self-identifications and highlights the relationship between war and displacement. Although I do not argue against the use of the term 'refugee' and acknowledge its legal and historical significance (with consideration to the 1951 Refugee Convention), in many instances, using the term 'displaced person' instead better captures the nature of their movement and raises critical questions: displaced by whom and by what? This shift in terminology allows for greater attention to the war as the primary cause of displacement. At the same time, situating the displacement of Ukrainians within a longer historical frame shows how it did not begin in 2014 or 2022 alone: Russian imperialism had already displaced Ukrainians in earlier forms, through uneven economic relations, dispossession, and imperial practices that fuelled insecurity. The full-scale invasion in February 2022, however, represents the culmination of these dynamics, making displacement both a direct outcome of armed aggression and part of a broader historical continuity of colonial domination. In this sense,

speaking of displacement makes it possible to foreground the war while also tracing its entanglements with the colonial structures that produced forced mobility (Amelina 2022)⁴.

Locating the Field *Multiscalarly*

This ethnographic research took place in Prague, which is not only the capital of Czechia and the seat of national institutions, but also the country's largest city, where most political events occur, with a long tradition of large-scale demonstrations drawing participants from across the republic. It is also a city with strong and autonomous governance, which, much like other European cities, has adopted more welcoming migration and integration policies than the national government (Mayer 2018; Zapata-Barrero 2024). One such example is a project run by the city government, titled *Prague for All (Praha – Metropole všech)*. This project operates as a digital platform designed to guide migrants through bureaucratic encounters, housing, employment, and healthcare. At the same time, it functions discursively: its very title highlights a narrative of inclusivity that symbolically extends belonging to all, regardless of nationality or legal status. Through such framing, Prague positions itself not only as a service provider but also as a city that actively embraces diversity and co-constructs policies with migrants.

Prague for All (Praha – Metropole všech) also provides opportunities to connect with others and engage in participatory processes that shape integration policies. These participatory structures include, for instance, the Regional Advisory Platform (RPP), organised by the Integration Centre Prague, which brings together representatives from Prague City Hall, individual city districts, NGOs, migrant associations, state institutions, educational institutions,

⁴ Admittedly, the heterogeneity of trajectories and the diverse personal motivations of those who moved within Ukraine and across borders after February 2022, as well as the varying levels of physical danger they faced, must be acknowledged. Yet despite these differences – including intersecting factors such as class and gender, which are woven throughout this thesis but will be explored more fully elsewhere (as explained in the conclusion) – speaking of *displacement* offers a conceptual angle through which to understand *shared* experiences, while also ensuring that the broader war-driven context underpinning their forced mobility is not overlooked.

and international organisations. Its members contribute to shaping Prague's integration policy and broader city concept, and any individual can request an invitation to join the meetings. Prague is also a partner in *UNITES (Urban InTEgration Strategies through co-design)*, an international project under the EUROCITIES network, which focuses on integrating foreigners through collaborative policy design.

Although members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* themselves did not take part in these participatory structures during the period of my fieldwork, they nevertheless formed part of the broader opportunity structures (Strijbis 2015; Tarrow 1996) that shaped the political environment in which displaced Ukrainians mobilised. These city initiatives created institutional openings and discursive spaces that made engagement with local authorities more thinkable and legitimate. Such an inclusive urban approach to migration and integration signalled that the city recognised migrants as legitimate political actors and helped produce a more receptive environment for displaced Ukrainians' claim-making, even if their activism unfolded in different arenas of struggle.

As a highly urbanised space, Prague also concentrates numerous grassroots and institutionalised CSOs working across a wide range of social issues. The city provides not only community venues for meetings, artistic engagements, and idea-sharing, but also iconic open-air public spaces that attract passers-by, residents, tourists, and both national and international media. Landmarks such as Wenceslas Square and Old Town Square, along with pedestrian zones like Charles Bridge, have long been stages of political visibility. In a city that attracts millions of visitors annually, these spaces allow activists to amplify their political claims to broad national and global audiences. Importantly, urban infrastructures and public spaces were not merely a backdrop for such claims; they actively co-constituted activism by shaping not only visibility but also the resonance of claims through historical symbolism, hence influencing the forms of mobilisation that were possible (Leitner and Strunk 2014).

For displaced Ukrainian activists, Prague squares carried particular significance as public spaces charged with historically constituted political meanings. Wenceslas Square, for instance, remembered as the heart of the 1989 Velvet Revolution that marked the end of Communist rule, became a reminder to Czechs of Russia's role as successor to Soviet imperialism. With this history in mind, staging demonstrations there carried additional symbolic value, building postcolonial solidarities between two nations that share the scars of Soviet domination. Thus, space is not simply a neutral backdrop, but a social product imbued with power and meaning (Mitchell 2003). Moreover, displaced Ukrainian activists re-signified even seemingly non-political sites, such as the street outside the Czech Olympic Committee, where they called for a ban on Russian athletes' participation in the Olympic Games. These examples highlight how activism can infuse diverse urban locations with political meanings, showing how space itself becomes an arena of contention (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008).

Importantly, my field site was not only localised in Prague but also constituted by multiscale relations (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021), through which actors acquired and maintained resources and defined their identities, belongings, and political positioning. Prague's situatedness as a capital city further connected localised practices of claim-making with national and international politics. *Hlas Ukrajiny's* protests addressed not only the Czech government but also other states represented by their embassies, as well as international organisations. For example, they connected Berlin to Prague, as Germany was criticised for sending Ukraine only a few helmets rather than providing larger military assistance at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, and connected New York to Prague, where activists appealed to the UN to remove Russia from the Security Council for international law violations. During the informal EU-27 summit in October 2022, *Hlas Ukrajiny* organised a demonstration outside Prague Castle, holding banners, one of which read: 'Mobilisation in Russia – more

weapons for Ukraine’. When the Latvian president approached them, read the poster aloud and affirmed its message, the encounter was widely mediatised, underscoring the multiscale reach of seemingly localised protest.

Moreover, the field was shaped by diverse networks of relations outside the statist realm (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021), with displaced people from Ukraine and their allies forming part of local and transnational solidarity networks. In addition to the joint political acts, which were at the heart of the alliance between displaced Ukrainians and Prague activists (Article 3⁵), *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s actions were embedded in wider solidarity relations with journalists, international media, and Prague civil society actors engaged in other causes. These included the Kurdish-Iranian movement *Women, Life, Freedom* or the initiative *MigAct* supporting migrants’ empowerment and inclusion in civic spaces.

Through cooperation with other initiatives involved in war-related efforts in Ukraine, such as the *Ukrainian Security and Cooperation Centre*, which aims to strengthen Ukraine’s information security and global voice by producing independent analyses of geopolitical discourses, *Hlas Ukrajiny* also traversed boundaries and scales in virtual space. By joining the *Communities Army of Ukraine* – a transnational activist network operating through digital platforms – *Hlas Ukrajiny* collaborated with initiatives worldwide to coordinate advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns. These online spaces also facilitated tactical discussions on how to ensure visibility and impact both on the streets and in digital media spaces. One example was the globally coordinated demonstrations calling for more air-defence systems to protect civilians in Ukraine, which gained coverage in outlets such as *Al Jazeera* and *The New York Times*. Yet, as members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* often noted, such global strategies were always

⁵ Published in 2024: Dziadyk, N. (2024). (Re)shaping politics: displaced people from Ukraine in Prague, political subjectivities, and solidarity relations. *Citizenship Studies*, 28(4–5), 444–461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2024.2418612>

mediated and reshaped through adaptation to the local context – whether adapting to Prague’s urban spaces, navigating access to local media, or responding to on-the-ground political sensitivities.

Methodological Considerations

I conducted my fieldwork across three phases – September 2022 to January 2023, April to May 2023, and August to September 2023 – immersing myself in the activities of *Hlas Ukrajiny*. Even when I was not physically in Prague, I followed their activities online. While in the city, I actively participated in public events organised or co-organised by the initiative, gaining insight into their practices of political engagement and claim-making. These events ranged from large demonstrations with hundreds of participants to smaller protests with as few as 15 people. There, I stood with my Ukrainian flag and banners, joined in chanting slogans, sang the Ukrainian anthem, and appeared in multiple photos and videos shared on the initiative’s social media channels. While doing so, I was simultaneously observing what unfolded around me and attending to how I felt as part of *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s activities. I noted both the reactions of passers-by to our demonstrations and the ways these responses shaped my own emotions and sense of belonging.

My approach combined participant observation and observant participation. This hybrid design was deliberate: participant observation offered opportunities for mobile positioning and outward gazing (Seim 2024), while observant participation enabled me to grasp the processes through which political subjectivities were articulated and enacted from within, and to support my interlocutors in a tangible way, as I will explain later. Such an approach also resonates with methodological debates in migration and displacement research, where scholars have emphasised the importance of embedding oneself in migrants’ everyday practices and political lives to capture the complexity of displacement (Boccagni and Schrooten 2018).

Alongside *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s activities, I also attended *Women, Life, Freedom* protests, which mobilised globally in September 2022 following the police brutality and death of the Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini. Initially, I was motivated by a desire to situate this thesis beyond Ukrainian activism alone. Although I later faced challenges in arranging interviews with organisers and realised that I could not achieve the same depth of engagement as with *Hlas Ukrajiny*, this participation nonetheless proved valuable. It allowed me to observe that some members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* also joined these demonstrations (though not everyone participated, and it appeared to be a somewhat contested issue later). At the same time, some activists from Iran joined Ukrainian protests, signalling a sense of solidarity between the two groups rooted not in nationalist causes but in broader understandings of injustice.

Interestingly, when discussing their participation in *Women, Life, Freedom* protests, members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* emphasised the importance of supporting women's rights. This was the only significant moment in which gender explicitly entered their reflections on activism. While most of my interlocutors were young women, the relative absence of a gender dimension in their activities and narratives was a surprising finding. It remains uncertain whether the timing of the research – early in the war – overshadowed gendered identities, foregrounding instead their roles as representatives of a nation at war. Though this theme is not developed in the articles comprising the thesis, it remains a potential avenue for future research.

In addition to these protests, I also joined counterdemonstrations against anti-establishment movements with far-right narratives – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First) and *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty). These groups began staging rallies in Wenceslas Square on 3 September 2022, calling for an end to 'costly' solidarity measures with Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees, as well as demanding Czechia's withdrawal from the EU and NATO. While not strictly far-right – the organisers and main speakers came from diverse political backgrounds, including members of the communist party KSČM and a

leader of a major trade union – the movements were driven by strong nationalist ideas and rhetoric similar to other far-right movements in Europe, including pronounced anti-migrant and anti-refugee discourse. Although hostility toward Ukrainian refugees was less explicit from the stage, participants in the crowds often engaged in hate speech and, at times, attempted violent encounters with Ukrainian activists.

Attending these counterdemonstrations allowed me to document the rhetoric and practices of these groups, who avoided presenting themselves as far-right or anti-refugee, though their chants and behaviour revealed otherwise. It also enabled me to experience directly what it meant to stand across the street from such an antagonistic crowd while holding a Ukrainian flag: the fear this provoked, the unpleasantness of hyper-visibility when far-right protestors shoved cameras into our faces, but also the rewarding moments of solidarity – seeing Czech citizens join us or leaving the demonstration accompanied by police officers who made us feel safe and offered reassuring words and gestures. These experiences provided crucial material for the second article of this dissertation, which examines anti-refugee mobilisation in Czechia as a *battleground of migration politics* in times of (poly)crisis.

In addition to observations, I conducted thirteen in-depth interviews with members of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, including a joint follow-up interview with both co-founders, in Ukrainian. I translated the quotes into English for inclusion in this thesis. The interviews were loosely structured around a couple of broad guiding questions: the activists' understanding of their role in Prague politics; the nature of their claims; their relationships with the local society; and the factors that helped them navigate a new political environment after arrival. However, as the interviews evolved into more open conversations and the activists' responses were often rich and detailed, there was little need to stick closely to this structure. Importantly, interviews provided an additional layer to my participant observations by capturing the activists' own reflections, meanings, and interpretations of their political engagement (Fedyuk and Zentai

2018). At the same time, being interviewed itself became a meaningful process for some of the activists. Several of them expressed pride at being asked for their perspectives or said that the questions prompted them to reflect on the initiative's mission and future. In this sense, the research not only documented but also amplified their voices in a rewarding way. This highlights how interviews can serve as a space of recognition, validation, and empowerment for participants (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

I also conducted eight in-depth interviews with local activists who collaborated with *Hlas Ukrajiny*, focusing on their motivations, the dynamics of cooperation, and their broader engagements with non-citizen groups (beyond *Hlas Ukrajiny*). Mapping out solidarity actors was challenging, as connections with Czech civil society were highly dynamic and varied across events. Ultimately, I interviewed four individual activists (mostly male Czech citizens, though one was a young Czech woman born in Moldova who later became one of the initiative's four main coordinators), two members of the Ukrainian diaspora who were Czech citizens, and two male leaders of Czech initiatives – *Kaputin!* and *Puls Evropy* (Pulse of Europe). *Kaputin!* organises performative demonstrations against authoritarianism, extremism, and populism, while *Puls Evropy* advocates for EU values, liberal democracy, and solidarity with states aspiring to EU membership. These interviews were conducted in English, except for those with members of the Ukrainian diaspora, which were conducted in Ukrainian⁶.

All interlocutors provided informed written consent, and all but four agreed to be recorded. Recorded interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo using a combination of deductive and inductive methods. For unrecorded interviews, detailed notes were coded separately. While inductive coding enabled attentiveness to participants' articulations,

⁶ These were not, however, the only interviews I conducted during fieldwork. I also spoke with several other Ukrainian women. Yet only the 21 interviews described above shaped this dissertation, as its focus is on *Hlas Ukrajiny* and the relationships formed in and around the initiative.

deductive categories supported systematisation. This combination proved particularly important given the richness and length of the interviews (typically around ninety minutes or longer). I also carefully considered anonymity, sensitivity, and the potential for re-traumatisation. While participants faced no physical risk, discussing war-related activism could evoke painful memories. I therefore drew on trauma-informed interviewing techniques (Clark-Kazak 2017), avoiding potentially traumatising questions – which I could at least partially anticipate, being from Ukraine myself and closely following war news – while leaving space for participants to share such experiences if they wished. Importantly, I interviewed only activists who had already spoken publicly about the war, which reduced the risk of re-traumatisation and aligned with their own commitment to visibility.

Participatory Research and Positionality

As noted earlier, my ethnographic fieldwork combined observations and interviews with elements of participatory research. This choice stemmed from several considerations: not only the varying degrees of ‘access to the field,’ but also my own positionality as a woman from Ukraine and my aspiration to practise reciprocity toward the activists. In this sense, participatory research enabled me to build closer relationships with members of the initiative, fostering trust and encouraging participants to articulate their experiences in greater depth (Lassiter 2005). It also offered more opportunities to observe their practices in everyday and organisational settings.

Reciprocity was another guiding concern. Interviews often lasted more than an hour – sometimes two – which was a significant commitment for activists balancing work, studies, and maintaining connections with families in Ukraine. Since I could not compensate them financially (beyond coffee or meals from my fieldwork budget), I looked for other ways to contribute: helping with small organisational tasks, sharing information about their events on social media, mobilising acquaintances to attend demonstrations, and connecting them with

other civil society actors I knew in Prague. I continued to do so even after fieldwork formally ended, sharing calls about their events and attending them whenever I happened to be in Prague.

Because the initiative was highly informal, many events ended with social gatherings, which gave me opportunities to connect in less formal settings. Eventually, I was invited into the core group's organisational meetings, where I observed the development of slogans, strategies, and task distribution. This offered deeper insight into how members perceived Czech politics and their own role within it. Yet my positionality as both researcher and activist brought challenges. For instance, I grappled with whether and how much to voice my own ideas during organisational meetings, mindful not to shape experiences I aimed to study. I tried to strike a balance: being helpful but cautious, asking more than suggesting, and ensuring members remained aware of my role as a researcher.

Although the activists were generally happy to share their thoughts and reflections with me in both formal and informal settings, whether in group conversations, one-to-one discussions, or recorded interviews – there were moments when I was explicitly told: *we can tell you this, but it is not for your research*. These instances raised important ethical questions about participatory research. I understood, of course, that I should not use information I was asked to exclude, but I also recognised the importance of transparency about what was included. For this reason, I agreed to share with the initiative any written piece I produced about them. This decision, however, brought its own dilemmas, particularly concerning how to handle potentially critical aspects of their work.

I resolved this tension by focusing my analysis on what mattered to the initiative, which ultimately did not differ much from my original focus – examining the activists' understandings of politics, their positionalities as refugees, and their relations with Czech political space (while setting aside issues I was asked not to engage with, such as their relations with members of the Russian diaspora in Prague). My careful unpacking of these themes, even when touching on

sensitive or uncomfortable aspects, was not contested when I shared draft texts with the initiative. Still, I acknowledge the limitations of this method of transparency: the articles I shared were quite conceptual and written in academic English, which is not equally accessible to all activists. To mitigate this, I always accompanied the texts with short summaries in Ukrainian outlining the main points.

Lastly, my own positionality was equally significant in shaping the participatory nature of this research. Because of the war, I would have sought civic and political engagement with war-related issues regardless. Witnessing places dear to me being bombed, knowing people from my home city were conscripted, and seeing my loved ones under constant threat, I could not have simply remained at home. In the first month of the full-scale invasion – still some months before my fieldwork in Prague – my daily life as a PhD student was ruptured. Demonstrations in Vienna gave me some sense of purpose: a way to join a collective effort of advocating for Ukraine abroad – something I could do here. From this perspective, conducting participatory research in Prague became a way to channel this impulse into scholarly practice while remaining reflexive about my dual role as researcher and someone personally affected by the conflict. Like the activists, I experienced the war from afar, in physical safety, while loved ones in Ukraine faced danger. Although I had lived abroad for several years when the full-scale invasion began, these shared experiences strengthened my connection with the activists and enabled me to grasp more fully the affective, moral, and political stakes of their struggles.

My positionality as a researcher from Ukraine was explicitly acknowledged in the articles forming this dissertation. Yet what does such acknowledgement mean in practice? On several occasions – at conferences as well as during the review process – I was asked whether I had presented an overly optimistic account of *Hlas Ukrajiny*: giving disproportionate weight to their actions, portraying them as more visible and empowering than they really were, or

overlooking potentially problematic aspects of their relations with other Ukrainians in Czechia. In other words, was I romanticising the activists and their political acts? Others asked whether I was ‘demonising’ Czech society by focusing on hateful comments and xenophobic encounters, or by highlighting the rhetoric of far-right and anti-establishment actors, hence leaving less space for the broader picture of societal and governmental support for displaced Ukrainians. Implicitly, these questions raised whether I would have written differently had I not been a researcher from Ukraine.

My subjectivity as a Ukrainian researcher inevitably shaped both my fieldwork and my analysis of interviews and observations. This influence made my writing more emotionally charged and, at times, more hopeful, while also adding invaluable nuance to the understanding of what it means to be a Ukrainian abroad during wartime (Kurylo 2023; Tsymbalyuk 2023). Importantly, however, this hopefulness was not simply my own projection: it was articulated by displaced activists themselves and grounded in my observations of their evolving relationships with Czech society. When members of the initiative acknowledged the significance and impact of their actions – ‘And then you start to realise that you are not just standing here shouting because all the Ukrainians are shouting, you are standing here shouting for something and achieving something’ (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* V) – my task as a researcher was to recognise and contextualise these reflections. My acknowledgement of *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s growing visibility and empowerment was thus not romanticisation, but a research claim based on their own articulations and my sensitivity emerging from participatory research.

The other recurring critique I encountered was that I did not address tensions within the initiative, nor those with the ‘older’ Ukrainian diaspora in Czechia. Admittedly, I am unable to elaborate on some of the internal tensions within *Hlas Ukrajiny*, as the initiative explicitly asked me not to include these aspects in my research. Providing additional detail about what

these issues were and why I cannot discuss them would already risk violating their non-consent. This is therefore an intentional ethical omission rather than a methodological oversight. Moreover, this omission does not diminish the value of this thesis or affect its core arguments, as such tensions were both rare and not of a kind that would alter the main findings.

As for the ‘old diaspora’, the anticipation of potential tensions largely emerged from comments raised at conferences rather than from my ethnographic encounters. During fieldwork, I did not observe such conflicts; if any existed beneath the surface, they would have required differently targeted research. What I did observe was, on the contrary, a strong sense of cooperation. Two long-established diaspora members I interviewed emphasised collaboration over division. As one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* noted almost a year after its founding: ‘What I am saying, and what organisations in other countries have noticed, is that we have a very friendly diaspora in terms of age groups. We do not have strong divisions, where people do not want to be friends with each other’ (Interview with two of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*). This may be explained by the temporality of my research, conducted in the first year of the full-scale invasion, when the immediacy of war acted as a powerful uniting force. It was not, however, the result of deliberate romanticisation.

Finally, regarding the alleged ‘demonisation’ of anti-Ukrainian sentiment in Czechia, the articles in this dissertation consistently acknowledge the overall positive attitudes of the majority of Czechs and Prague residents, with the third article directly exploring solidarity relations and their transformative, empowering dimension. At the same time, I underline that even displaced Ukrainians – welcomed and often framed as ‘ideal refugees,’ culturally proximate and economically productive – were at times othered and subjected to hostility, particularly when far-right forces scapegoated them during the economic crisis. Moreover, members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* themselves repeatedly described xenophobic encounters, especially during counter-demonstrations against far-right protests, as formative for their activism and

their perceptions of their role in Prague's politics. Their own articulations and experiences thus made it impossible to ignore this dimension, even while recognising the broader societal support.

In sum, my positionality as a Ukrainian researcher and my choice of participatory methods were not peripheral, but constitutive of this research. They enabled me to develop relationships of trust, gain deeper access to the initiative's practices, and remain attentive to both the affective and ethical dimensions of fieldwork. At the same time, they required a constant negotiation of proximity and distance, reciprocity and analysis, hope and critique. By acknowledging the ways in which my own experiences and commitments shaped the research process, I aim not only to be transparent about its limitations but also to highlight the value of situated and reflexive ethnography for understanding the political subjectivities of displaced Ukrainians in Prague.

Conceptual Framework

Political activism in contexts of war-driven displacement is complex, multifaceted, and deeply situated, and this PhD thesis draws on multiple streams of literature to capture these realities. Its central conceptual framework is inspired by critical citizenship studies (Ataç 2016; Clarke et al. 2014; Isin 2009, 2017, 2024; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012; Sigona 2015), while scholarship on solidarities with migrants and refugees (Çağlar 2024; Feischmidt, Pries, and Cantat 2018; Fleischmann 2020; Della Porta and Steinhilper 2021; Schwiertz and Schwenken 2020; Siim, Krasteva, and Saarinen 2019) migration politics as battleground (Ambrosini 2021; Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018), and diasporic studies (Brubaker 2017; Çalışkan 2022; Koinova 2018; Laguerre 1998; Mutambasere 2022) also informs this thesis. Although each article is driven by its own conceptual framework and core concepts – citizenship, refugeehood, and diaspora (Article 1); battleground of migration and

(poly)crisis (Article 2⁷); political transformations, subjectivity, and solidarity (Article 3) – there are two concepts that cross-cut all the papers. These are the concepts of *personhood* and *statehood*, which, in their intertwining, create the conceptual space for *relationality* – an angle necessary to understanding how displaced Ukrainians assert political subjectivity, negotiate belonging, and enact political claims. While these concepts do not appear with equal strength or explicitness in each article, their centrality will be explained here.

Personhood

In the beginning, I thought, I am a foreigner here, this is not my country, I am a refugee without rights... I should dress as a poor person and not wear makeup... but now I understand, I have rights, I am here because of the war in my country, I am grateful but also have the right not to be silent (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II).

This interview quote, which also appears later in the thesis, captures how displaced Ukrainians, while reflecting on their status as non-citizens and refugees, not only voiced political claims in Prague but also asserted their right to do so. As shown through multiple empirical examples, their courageous and creative political acts asserted that political engagement should not be confined to Czech citizens alone, and that non-nationals can act politically and articulate demands grounded in personhood and the ‘right to have rights’ (Arendt 1958). Drawing on Arendt, I understand personhood as a fundamental condition enabling political action. Based on her reflections on statelessness in the aftermath of the Second World War, Arendt (1951, 1958) argued that the most basic human right is not tied to entitlements granted by a state, but to the universal condition of being human in a political world – the right to appear, speak, and act among others. Personhood, grounded in plurality, thus grants individuals the capacity to claim rights, even when formal membership is denied.

⁷ Published in 2025: Dziadyk, N. (2025). The Battleground of Migration Politics in Prague Amid the (Poly)Crisis. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 23(3), 436–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2025.2480604>

Critical citizenship scholars, whose works have greatly inspired the core of this thesis, build on Arendt's thinking and show how migrants and refugees, despite precarious or absent legal status, claim rights and enact their political subjectivities – both by participating in collective life and by disrupting practices of exclusion and marginalisation (Isin 2009; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012). They problematise citizenship as an established category that marks a legal status and creates boundaries of membership and belonging in a state-based polity, arguing that when migrants and refugees engage in politics and constitute themselves as claimants of rights, citizenship practices and understandings of political communities become contested (Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016). Moreover, their emphasis on the *performance of citizenship* (Isin 2017) and on citizenship as practices, processes, and relationships (Clarke et al. 2014) underscores rights rather than legal status (Çağlar 2024). In this sense, migrant struggles can be seen as acts that bring previously marginalised and invisible groups into the public sphere, where they assert themselves as 'rights-bearing subjects' and contest the boundaries of neoliberal citizenship (Oliveri 2016).

Critical citizenship studies mostly focus on the claim-making acts of asylum seekers or undocumented migrants who are dominated and whose struggles disrupt established practices of exclusion (Isin 2017). For example, McNevin (2012) writes about undocumented students at the University of California, Los Angeles, who staged a mock graduation ceremony. By asserting visibility despite risk, they disrupted expectations of silence, enacting a *politics of presence* that affirmed their capacity to claim rights. Another powerful example is the literature on refugeehood and citizenship (Redclift 2013; Sigona 2015; Turner 2016). However, this literature largely focuses on the acts of discontent by refugees who make claims to have a dignified life in the refugee camps and border zones (Lewicki 2017; Momen 2005).

Displaced Ukrainians complicate these 'classic cases' of undocumented migrants or asylum seekers. Unlike other protection seekers, they were quickly granted residence permits,

as collective temporary protection was provided on the basis of Ukrainian citizenship. This eased the burden of individual eligibility assessments and formally entitled them to work (right after their arrival) and remain in Czechia. Yet, this legal recognition remained precarious and conditional: temporary protection had to be renewed every year, and the conditions governing it were often unstable – depending on the changes in local migration politics as well as broader geopolitical trends – leaving the holders of this protection uncertain about their future. Moreover, access to the labour market, while formally granted, often channelled displaced Ukrainians into deskilled positions (Mezihorák 2025), echoing previous patterns of circular labour migration from Ukraine. In this context, ‘welcoming’ was never entirely free of precarity, even when accompanied by an initial wave of hospitality. This combination of formal rights and persistent precarity illustrates how displacement creates tensions between legal recognition and social inclusion.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the government primarily framed displaced Ukrainians’ value in terms of productivity (particularly in low-status labour sectors), while sidelining their broader political subjectivities. Since national governments ultimately control humanitarian protection, expressing discontent or failing to meet expectations of *deservingness* could be risky (Moulin 2012), especially given that the possibility of returning to Ukraine was shaped by the realities of war and occupation. In navigating these uncertainties, *personhood* provided the basis to assert their rights and presence. Like asylum seekers and the undocumented students in McNevin’s (2012) example, displaced Ukrainians challenged expectations of *silent* productivity and victimhood. They staged demonstrations and made political claims grounded in universal human rights, disrupting narratives that framed them solely as ‘cheap labour’. They engaged in the *politics of presence* not only by standing with banners calling for more military support to Ukraine, but also by asserting their right to publicly express political opinions and make demands of the Czech government despite not being its

citizens (Article 3). Thus, they transformed precarious emplacement into visible claims for recognition and solidarity. By asserting their place and role in Prague's political community, they demonstrated the possibility of alternative forms of membership based on personhood and mutual recognition (Balibar 2014) – recognising each other as 'subjects-bearers of valid interest and legitimate rights' (Clarke et al. 2014:25).

Statehood

We are a civic initiative that stands not just for the people, the nation that lives on the territory, but for the territory that has its own name, its own constitution, and wants to remain so, not be occupied by another state (Interview with the two coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*).

Personhood alone, however, does not fully account for *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s political engagement. Interstate war – especially defensive war perceived and narrated as just war – reasserts the salience of statehood and sovereignty, while also prompting their reimagining – along with the vertical dimension of citizenship as the relationship between individual and the state. Even outside wartime, nation-state-centred understandings of citizenship have long structured legal and political practices by dividing insiders from outsiders on the basis of national identity (Miller 1999; Wellman 2011). In the case of Russia's war against Ukraine, this vertical dimension intensified. As Kulyk (2023) notes, the Russo-Ukrainian war reinforced a unified, citizenship-based identity centred on Ukrainian statehood and strengthened mobilisation for national defence. Therefore, the concept of statehood adds an essential dimension to understanding the political acts of displaced people from Ukraine in Prague and their initiative, *Hlas Ukrajiny*. For them, Ukrainian statehood represented not only a homeland under attack but also a community of belonging, the attachment and responsibility for which they sought to enact through their war-related advocacy (Article 1).

At the same time, displacement inevitably positioned them in relation to another state: they were not simply 'in' Czechia but under the protection of the Czech state, which was

uncertain and precarious. Thus, *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s political engagement unfolded across two axes of statehood. On one hand, it reflected loyalty to Ukraine and its sovereignty, intensified by survivor guilt and framed as a defensive struggle against imperial aggression. On the other hand, it entailed cautious, strategic interaction with Czech statehood, which was both a guarantor of their temporary protection and a normative order that imposed limits on acceptable political expression. This caution was shaped by sensitivity to state power: while rights are rooted in universal personhood, their exercise remains contingent on state laws and institutional frameworks. This tension reflects the contradiction between the normative ideal of universal individual rights, irrespective of legal membership in a state, and the understanding that such rights are secured and protected by state institutions (Balibar 2009). In this sense, Czech statehood became a political and strategic terrain that could not be ignored, even as the activists' focus remained on Ukraine and the defence of Ukrainian statehood.

War-driven displacement also led to the creation of new transborder political connections that unsettled the naturalised link between political voice, citizenship status, and territorial belonging. For refugees, political emplacement in Prague became multi-sited and relational: while grounded in loyalty to Ukraine, it simultaneously unfolded in the receiving state and within multiscalar networks of solidarity relations. Therefore, in this thesis, statehood, although returned to conversations on citizenship, is problematised and understood not as a fixed entity but as a multi-layered imaginary, contributing to the unsettling of the 'fixed bundle' of state, nation, and citizenship (Clarke et al. 2014:70). While rethinking the role of the state, the thesis does not dismiss its continued relevance, particularly in the context of imperial war (Hendl et al. 2024; Oksamytna 2023), and shows how war reaffirms the salience of statehood and intensifies the symbolic weight of sovereignty and national defence. Bringing together personhood and statehood, citizenship appears in this thesis as 'both exclusionary and aspirational' (Clarke et al. 2014), entailing both domination and emancipation (Isin 2024). It

exemplifies both an emancipatory struggle to become acting political subjects and disrupt boundaries of inclusion, and an apparatus of government through which the modern nation-state aggregates people(s) into polities (Isin 2024) while also demarking who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’.

Relationality

Even the rally that took place on Friday, the counter-rally to that pro-Russian one, I felt somehow... well, that we are not alone in this. Well, first of all, we can go to Wenceslas Square. We can stand with Ukrainian flags, with our slogans. Secondly, there are Czechs up there with European and NATO flags. So, we are no longer alone (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* I).

As the activism of displaced Ukrainians unsettles the conventional territorial and legal boundaries of citizenship, it highlights its relational, affective, and situational character in contexts of war-driven displacement. As shown in the thesis, particularly in Article 3, *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s enactment of political rights and claims occurred through shared discussions and everyday interactions with Czech citizens and solidarians, demonstrating how political subjectivity is co-constituted in social space. Members of the initiative acted together with Prague activists, engaging in joint political manifestations, co-creating inclusive solidarity spaces, and shaping new modes of relating. At the same time, their activism in Prague required navigating emplacement as a process of seeking and gaining a ‘position of relational worth from which people may engage in a positive sociality’ (Vigh and Bjarnesen 2016:10). This took place both through public political engagement and through the ongoing negotiation of presence in the receiving society – most notably by building solidarity with Czech allies that fostered relations of mutual recognition.

Schwartz and Schwenken (2020), through their concept of *solidarity citizenship*, demonstrate that practices of solidarity do not simply *help* migrants and refugees. They can also transform political communities by creating spaces where citizens and non-citizens act together, blurring boundaries of (non)belonging, and co-producing new collective identities. In

this sense, solidarity relations have the potential to ‘instigate change by enacting alternative modes of togetherness and belonging on the ground’ (Fleischmann 2020:18). Importantly, these transformations affect not only those receiving solidarity but also reshape the political subjectivities and imaginaries of the solidarians themselves. Social relations of solidarity, therefore, can prompt critical reflection, a reorientation of values, and new forms of political consciousness among both those offering and those receiving support.

Beyond conventionally understood solidarity, *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s activism – through their emerging relations with the local society and their synergically coordinated political acts with solidarians – exemplifies what Çağlar (2024:399) terms *commoning*: collective action in (semi)public spaces, united by common projects while maintaining multiple, overlapping alliances shaped by gender, class, ethnicity, and legal status. These practices can also be understood through the lens of the *politics of care* (Zentai and Feischmidt 2024) – a form of care inseparable from the disruptions of war-driven displacement and from the complex processes of emplacement. Care, in this sense, entails recognising and embracing the entanglement of displacement and emplacement. Caring *with* displaced Ukrainians through joint political acts, which not only pursue concrete advocacy goals but also serve as a therapeutic space and foster a sense of belonging, represents one manifestation of how they are *becoming emplaced*. Importantly, it implies not only recognising mutual vulnerabilities but also acknowledging a plurality of voices and cultivating trust and respect, which together can foster social and political transformation (Chatzidakis et al. 2020; Sevenhuijsen 2018).

These conceptual engagements with the solidarity literature highlight that political subjectivities emerge relationally, yet, as the empirics of this thesis show, not only through relations of solidarity but also through relations of conflict and antagonism (Article 2). This dynamic was particularly visible during counterdemonstrations against Czech anti-establishment far-right movements, where displaced Ukrainians and their allies collectively

resisted hostile narratives and claims. These encounters turned migration politics into a *battleground*, manifested in the dynamics of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation over migrants' and refugees' rights to be political and make claims in public spaces. Their joint resistance created a space not only for countering far-right rhetoric but also for enacting political inclusion: a space where citizens and non-citizens stood together, where being a protection seeker did not preclude political participation, and where the restrictive scripts of migration politics could be challenged. The solidarity relations formed in these inclusive spaces exemplify what Krasteva et al. (2019:289) describe as opposing 'the politics of friendship to the politics of fear, solidarity to hate, and... transforming the Others from "enemies" to neighbors'.

From this perspective, solidarity was not merely an affective stance but a constitutive practice of claim-making, strengthening displaced persons' enactment of political rights grounded in shared personhood. For displaced Ukrainians and solidararians, war-driven displacement generated both urgency and shared understandings of justice and injustice, fostering new relations of mutual recognition. At the same time, the hostility of anti-establishment movements sharpened the stakes of inclusion through solidarity, making joint political activism both protective and constitutive of new political subjectivities – where the absence of citizenship status did not limit political engagement. Importantly, these practices of solidarity affirmed displaced persons as members of Prague's political community, whose political rights and personhood were recognised and enacted in public space.

Thesis Structure

Article 1. Displaced Citizenship and Political Engagement of Ukrainian Activists: Duty, Refugeehood, and Diasporic Aspirations

The first article of this thesis examines how displaced Ukrainians navigated a dual positionality: simultaneously representing a homeland under foreign invasion and engaging as new political actors within the receiving society – that is, asserting Ukrainian citizenship through activism for the homeland while also performing non-citizen political subjectivities in Czechia. By exploring the implications of this nuanced positionality for political engagement and claim-making, the article situates *Hlas Ukrajiny* within the disruptive context of war-driven displacement, bringing statehood into the conversations on the political subjectivities of activists under temporary protection. It shows how their activism was shaped by the interplay of moral obligations (rooted in survivor guilt, loyalty, and grief) and relational awareness of the symbolic boundaries of Czech political space. This dynamic fostered careful, sometimes strategic navigation of visibility and claim-making, as activists sought to assert political voices without overstepping perceived limits of legitimacy in the receiving society.

To capture this duality, I introduce the notion of *displaced citizenship*, which encompasses the entangled practices, sensibilities, and constraints of political subjectivity formed through forced migration and war. Displaced citizenship foregrounds the traumatic immediacy of flight, the moral and political duties generated by war, and the temporal uncertainties and conditionality of temporary protection. It builds on, and extends, frameworks of *refugee citizenship* (Bentz 2023; Redclift 2013; Sigona 2015; Turner 2016) and *diasporic citizenship* (Çalışkan 2022; Laguerre 1998; Mutambasere 2022), underlining how displaced Ukrainians' political subjectivities are shaped not only by legal status but also by relational and affective dimensions of engagement – thus emphasising relationality as a crosscutting theme of this thesis. Lastly, by highlighting this dual positionality, the framework of displaced citizenship contributes to broader theoretical debates on citizenship, refugeehood, statehood, political belonging, and rights.

Article 2. The Battleground of Migration Politics in Prague Amid the (Poly)Crisis

This article situates the thesis within the broader sociopolitical conditions of the (poly)crisis (Henig and Knight 2023) and examines how these conditions were constructed through competing narratives, while further emphasising relationality as a central pillar of the thesis's theoretical approach. Drawing on the experiences of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, it examines how their activism unfolded amid rising inflation and economic precarity – conditions selectively highlighted and exploited by far-right parties and anti-establishment movements in Czechia. This selective framing obscured the complexity of the (poly)crisis and narrowly defined what was considered 'abnormal,' portraying economic hardships as the responsibility of refugees who allegedly abused welfare.

Within this political context, *Hlas Ukrajiny* pursued its activism in Prague, staging demonstrations in support of Ukraine's war effort while also joining counterdemonstrations to oppose far-right and anti-migrant rhetoric alongside local allies. By highlighting how displaced Ukrainians engaged in the *politics of presence*, the article demonstrates that their political acts were not merely reactive to far-right hostility but constituted broader claims to inclusion in the 'host polity'. Moreover, acting side by side with solidarity allies in co-created spaces of political participation, they also shaped relations of mutual trust and recognition. Thus, mobilisation and counter-mobilisation dynamics were not only about framing and responding to the (poly)crisis but also about contesting – or asserting – the *political* presence and rights of displaced persons.

Conceptually, the article advances the understanding of migration politics through the lens of the *battleground* (Ambrosini 2021; Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018), highlighting how contestation over the status, rights, and political visibility of displaced people emerges under the conditions of (poly)crisis. The conceptual framework of the *battleground* is distinctive in its attention to the intensity of tensions and the framing of migration as abnormal. Drawing on the militaristic origins of the term, contestation becomes particularly salient when actors

construct migration as a crisis, juxtaposed against ideals of stability, homogeneity, and national normality (Lindley 2014; Menjívar, Ruiz, and Ness 2019). Such framings legitimise exclusionary and othering practices while simultaneously driving counteraction – not only by those being othered, such as non-citizens, migrants, and protection seekers, but also by those standing in solidarity with them. By conceptualising migration politics as a battleground, this article emphasises how narratives of emergency, abnormality, and threat shape not only public perceptions of migrants and refugees, but also the forms, visibility, and legitimacy of their political engagement – particularly in public arenas where the claims of citizens’ and non-citizens’ intersect.

Article 3. (Re)shaping Politics: Displaced People from Ukraine in Prague, Transfigured Political Subjectivities, and Solidarity Relations

This article engages closely with both the conceptual angle of personhood and Arendt’s (1958) notion of the right to have rights. It also examines how enacting one’s political subjectivity as a rights-claiming actor is relational and embedded in the social fabric of the receiving society, where practices, relations, and acts of solidarity play a crucial role. Building on critical citizenship studies (Isin 2009, 2012, 2017; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012), the article positions displaced Ukrainians as political actors whose claim-making practices reveal both the performative and relational dimensions of citizenship. While recognising the war-driven nature of *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s political acts, it focuses on how displaced activists navigated and asserted their claims in Prague, engaging in public debate despite their temporary and conditional legal status. It highlights that the right to participate in political life extends beyond formal citizenship and that displaced persons can act as political subjects despite precarious positioning and the uncertain temporality of stay.

To capture the relational effects of these political and claim-making acts, the article brings critical citizenship studies into conversation with solidarity literature (Cantat 2016;

Feischmidt et al. 2018; Della Porta 2018; Siim et al. 2019), showing how joint political activism and collaborative practices with Czech allies (re)shape social ties and political subjectivities. In this regard, solidarians not only supported displaced Ukrainians in pursuing concrete political goals but also fostered relational transformations, co-creating inclusive political spaces and reshaping social hierarchies. By integrating insights from citizenship studies and solidarity literature, the article demonstrates that political acts and social relations are mutually constitutive: as displaced Ukrainians claim rights and recognition, solidarity practices simultaneously strengthen emerging political subjectivities and enable new ways of relating and caring. In the case of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, claiming their rights to political participation and acting jointly with Prague activists in solidarity (re)shaped their sense of political membership and belonging, transforming their political subjectivities from claimants of rights *vis-à-vis* Czech society and its institutions to active participants who claim rights *within* Czech society.

Article 1. Displaced Citizenship and Political Engagement of Ukrainian Activists: Duty, Refugeehood, and Diasporic Aspirations

Introduction

The outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shook the world with terrifying images of war crimes and the displacement of millions. For those displaced abroad, separation from the territory of their home state brought uncertainty about their place in Ukraine's struggle, survivor guilt, and a search for ways to remain connected and contribute to its defence despite the distance. Many did so through political activism – staging demonstrations, organising awareness campaigns, and writing letters of appeal – thereby acting as political subjects in their new places of residence. However, as I argue in this article, political engagement as a displaced person from Ukraine was shaped not only by war-inflected understandings of a moral and political duty to act on behalf of Ukraine, but also by the societal and interpersonal dynamics of displacement that arose from their positioning as political subjects in another state.

Drawing on ethnographic research in Prague, this article examines how displaced Ukrainians⁸ navigated a dual positionality: as representatives of a state defending itself from foreign invasion, and as new political actors in the receiving society. In doing so, I show how they enacted and negotiated citizenship in a time of war, when moral, strategic, and relational imperatives to act politically were shaped both by a sense of responsibility toward the home state and by their positioning within the 'host polity'. Their political claims were therefore guided by an intertwining of moral duty – rooted in survivor guilt, loyalty, and grief – and relational awareness of the receiving society's symbolic boundaries around who may speak

⁸ In this article, I use the term 'displaced people' instead of 'refugee' for several reasons. It respects the preferences and identities of my research participants, more accurately reflects their legal status of temporary protection, and underlines the relationship between displacement and war.

politically. This interplay fostered careful and sometimes strategic navigation of visibility and political claim-making, informed by concerns about how their activism would be perceived by members of the local society.

Displaced Ukrainians in Prague, therefore, simultaneously performed and negotiated multiple forms of citizenship: as political actors enacting Ukrainian citizenship after being displaced by the war, and as non-citizen political subjects in Czechia making claims on the Czech government and society while holding temporary protection status. To conceptualise these, I introduce the concept of *displaced citizenship*, which captures the entangled practices, sensibilities, and constraints of political subjectivity formed through war and exile. By highlighting the immediacy of sudden, war-driven flight, it shows how displacement itself is constitutive of political subjectivity, structuring activists' political engagement – the duty to act in conditions of physical safety, survivor guilt, the temporariness of protection, and the orientation toward return. The concept of displaced citizenship also recognises that citizenship is not only enacted in relation to one's home state but also negotiated in relation to the political space of their new place of residence, where presence is temporary and geopolitically conditional. In this sense, displaced citizenship builds on critical citizenship studies (Clarke et al. 2014; Isin 2024; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012), especially the conceptual frameworks of *refugee citizenship* (Bentz 2023; Redclift 2013; Sigona 2015; Turner 2016) and *diasporic citizenship* (Çalışkan 2022; Laguerre 1998; Mutambasere 2022), while extending both.

Like refugee citizenship, it foregrounds the political agency of those whose legal status and belonging are shaped by forced migration, highlighting how they claim rights and recognition in local-society contexts. Like diasporic citizenship, it captures the transnational dimension of belonging and political engagement, tracing how displaced activists act on behalf of their home state in war. At the same time, displaced citizenship adds a further layer: it offers

a nuanced conceptualisation of how war-driven displacement generates a distinctive sense of duty, shaped by traumatic experiences of war and survivor guilt, while intertwining with the constraints of political engagement in the receiving state – constraints that stem not only from the uncertain status of temporary protection but also from perceptions of fragile relations with the receiving society and concerns over how political activism is viewed locally.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine)⁹, this article contributes to migration and citizenship studies by elucidating the complexity of citizenship in displacement and by enriching the empirical literature on displacement caused by Russia's full-scale invasion. My fieldwork, spanning a year from September 2022 (with some interruptions), combined participant observation and observant participation in demonstrations, marches, performative happenings, and informal gatherings organised by *Hlas Ukrajiny*, as well as their counterdemonstrations against anti-establishment protests. I also conducted thirteen in-depth interviews with members of the initiative and eight in-depth interviews with local activists closely collaborating with them¹⁰ (see Annex 1).

This article weaves together theoretical reflection and empirical insight throughout each section. It begins by situating the analysis within key debates in citizenship studies, explaining how war-driven displacement complicates these discussions. The following sections explore the duality of positionality as representatives of a state at war and as new political subjects in the receiving society, first through the lens of diasporic citizenship and then through refugee citizenship. The final section conceptualises acting on this dual positionality as displaced

⁹ The research underwent review for ethical research issues by the Ethical Research Committee at the author's home institution, as confirmed by the Certification of Ethical Review Compliance.

¹⁰ The interviews were conducted in both Ukrainian and English, and Ukrainian quotes were translated for inclusion in this article. All of the interlocutors provided written informed consent. Most interviews (except four) were recorded.

citizenship, illustrating it through examples of political activism choices. The conclusion brings these arguments together and points to questions for future research.

Citizenship Contextualised by War and Displacement

The multiplicity of scholarly conceptualisations of citizenship has been largely shaped by what Ní Mhurchú (2014:4) calls a ‘clash between particularistic statist (‘restrictive’) and universal post-statist (‘liberal’) models of citizenship’. This clash is rooted in a fundamental contradiction: while normative ideals promote universal individual rights regardless of legal membership (citizenship status), in practice, these rights are secured and protected by state institutions based on such membership. Supporters of the statist/restrictive model underline this aspect of citizenship as an exclusive, club-like membership in a bounded community based on a shared national identity (Miller 1999; Wellman 2011). They argue that citizenship should remain limited to the confines of national (imagined) communities due to the need for mutual trust and a ‘prevailing consensus on political questions’, sustained by shared culture and modes of communication (Miller 2009).

However, transnational migration – both voluntary and forced – challenges the understanding of citizenship as a fixed status or bounded membership. The dynamism of people’s movement across borders, the practices and acts of those on the move (and after the move), the complexity of emerging identities, and the proliferation of non-territorialised political spaces and activities all challenge conventional notions of the state and its control over membership through citizenship laws (Benhabib 2004; Soysal 2000). Transnational migration has prompted new debates about how ‘political participation, rights and belonging in transnational times are challenging the national dimension of citizenship’ (De Castro and Moulin 2021). Diaspora studies have further complicated these discussions, showing that in diasporic contexts, legal citizenship may not align with a sense of belonging (Mutambasere 2022), and that political engagement with one’s (imagined) homeland transcends national

borders, shaping both transnational political spaces and forms of long-distance nationalism (Schiller 2005; Skrbiš 2017).

Critical citizenship scholars (Clarke et al. 2014; Isin 2024; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012), in their turn, focus on the political acts of those who lack legal citizenship status yet creatively perform and contest citizenship – migrant workers, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees – by making rights claims. Their acts challenge the assumption that legal citizenship status is a prerequisite for political voice or recognition as political subjects, thereby transforming both political imaginaries and citizenship regimes. This focus on the *performance of citizenship* (Isin 2017) and on citizenship as practices, processes, and relationships (Clarke et al. 2014) reasserts the centrality of rights rather than status in citizenship conceptualisations (Çağlar 2024). As Oliveri (2016:276) argues, migrant struggles create new possibilities through which ‘previously silenced and invisible people occupy the public scene, and affirm themselves as rights-bearing subjects, contesting the current rules and boundaries of neoliberal citizenship’.

While critical citizenship scholarship refuses to take legal-status-defined communities as the starting point for its conceptualisations, it also problematises the state’s centrality. This article, instead, argues that an interstate war inevitably reasserts the salience of statehood and national sovereignty while also triggering the reimaginings of these concepts – and, with them, of the vertical dimension of citizenship as the relationship between individuals and the state. A war threatening a nation-state’s sovereignty can simultaneously reinforce traditional notions of citizenship as a national institution that demarcates insiders from outsiders, as well as strengthen unity among its citizenry in defence of the state. As Kulyk (2023) observes, Russia’s war against Ukraine has indeed reinforced a more unified, citizenship-based identity centred on Ukrainian statehood. Yet even outside wartime contexts, nation-state-centric understandings of citizenship have long shaped legal frameworks and political practices, regulating access to

a bounded demos by dividing people into insiders and outsiders (or members and non-members) based on shared national identity (Miller 1999; Wellman 2011).

In this article, state and statehood are treated not as a fixed political reality but as a complex, multi-layered imaginary. For displaced Ukrainians, the state is not only a sovereign entity or legal apparatus – it is also a homeland, a community of belonging, and a project of collective survival under existential threat. War and displacement do not dissolve attachments to the state; rather, they infuse these attachments with affective and moral urgency, prompting diverse enactments and contestations of what statehood means and demands. For politically active displaced Ukrainians, the war both reaffirms the significance of the state and compels a rethinking of who belongs to it, how it can be supported from exile, and what it means to enact Ukrainian citizenship without being physically present within its borders. Yet such reaffirmations of statehood are not without ambivalence: while they can sustain collective resilience and solidarity, they may also risk narrowing the vision of nationhood, reinforcing exclusionary or nationalist imaginaries alongside civic and inclusive ones.

This ambivalence becomes even more complex as displaced persons act abroad, within receiving states that have their own nationalist imaginaries and competing visions of nationhood. In this sense, displaced Ukrainians' activism reflects not only loyalty to the home country but also a strategic and cautious engagement with the Czech state and society, where belonging and legitimacy are negotiated within complex national and geopolitical frameworks. Moreover, displaced activists from Ukraine are not simply 'in' Czechia; they are under the protection of the Czech state, the temporal dimension of which is uncertain and contingent on geopolitical developments or shifts in highly politicised Czech and EU migration policies.

Therefore, displaced Ukrainians both enacted Ukrainian citizenship through their activism *for* Ukraine and navigated complex relationships *within* Czech society – experiencing both solidarity and welcome, as well as indifference, antagonism, and xenophobia. Their moral

duty to support Ukraine in wartime was thus intertwined with the challenge of asserting a political voice without violating the unwritten rules of being a ‘guest’ (Rancière 2004). At the same time, while enacting Ukrainian citizenship during their demonstrations on the streets of Prague, displaced people from Ukraine also enacted their political subjectivities as claim-making subjects in Czechia. They connected with the local population not through claims of belonging based on a shared Czech identity, but through their claims to be recognised as members of Prague’s political community – even if temporarily – on the basis of the right to be political, rooted in shared humanity and equal moral worth (Arendt 1958; Balibar 2014).

This article, therefore, examines citizenship as constituted through war, forced migration, and political engagement. It highlights context-sensitive ‘horizontal’ practices of citizenship within and across Ukrainian and Czech society, alongside the ‘vertical’ relationships that displaced persons simultaneously negotiate with both the Ukrainian state and the Czech state (Castañeda 2024). In doing so, it explores how non-state-centric, yet state-nuanced, political communities and forms of membership can emerge through the political engagement of displaced persons. By examining the conceptual frameworks of diasporic citizenship and refugee citizenship in the following sections, this article shows how each captures an important aspect of displaced Ukrainians’ political engagement, while also arguing for a more nuanced conceptual lens of *displaced citizenship* that foregrounds the specificities of war-driven displacement and political engagement on behalf of a state at war.

Political Engagement as a Duty: Diasporic Citizenship?

Hlas Ukrajiny (Voice of Ukraine) – a political initiative that emerged in Prague in the summer of 2022 – was founded primarily by young people from Ukraine displaced by the war, though a few members had migrated to Czechia earlier. Today, their community has expanded to approximately 50 activists, including a couple of Czech citizens (with and without migrant backgrounds) who joined at different stages of its development. The initiative is predominantly

female (as is the majority of adult Ukrainian refugees), and its leading coordinators are also young women. Despite being new to Czechia and Prague's political landscape, *Hlas Ukrajiny* organised or participated in over 100 events in its first year, including more than 20 large demonstrations attended by hundreds of people that they coordinated themselves.

Through their political acts, members of the initiative made public claims to the Czech government to increase military and diplomatic support for Ukraine, embargo trade with Russia, and counter Russian disinformation, while also appealing to Czech businesses, civic actors, and broader society to contribute to these efforts. Their activism often took bold and creative forms: demonstrating with their clothes and faces covered in red paint or with their hands tied; marching across the iconic Charles Bridge carrying wooden crosses; or staging an awareness-raising action about the dangers of Russian attacks on Ukrainian nuclear plants by wearing disposable coveralls and throwing coloured powder at each other on Old Town Square. Staged amid Prague's globally recognisable landmarks and tourist-dense city centre, these performances carried visibility far beyond the local scene. As the capital city, Prague also hosted numerous national and international organisations, foreign embassies, and visiting political delegations, which further amplified the resonance of these protests, allowing them to achieve a multiscalar reach (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021).

In conversations and interviews during my fieldwork, members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* and many of those attending their demonstrations unsurprisingly described the war as the central factor shaping their activism:

For us, the main trigger and the very existence of the community essentially arose from the fact that there is a war (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II).

So far, we have devoted all our resources to the war. This is the main issue right now, because people are dying... We were founded with the desire to end this war as quickly as possible and ensure victory. My primary task now, and my task as a member of *Hlas*, is to help Ukraine win [the war]. The second is to help Ukrainians feel comfortable in Europe (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* III).

They also stressed that standing for Ukraine meant standing for Ukrainian statehood:

We are a civic initiative that stands not just for the people, the nation that lives on the territory, but for the territory that has its own name, its own constitution, and wants to remain so, not be occupied by another state (Interview with the two coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*).

Although *Hlas Ukrajiny* did not describe itself as a diasporic initiative, some of its articulations and public claims resembled diasporic mobilisation. These included the organisation of demonstrations using national symbols and state-oriented slogans, commemoration of the days of national importance, and participation in transnational awareness-raising actions that echoed those undertaken by Ukrainian communities worldwide that self-identify as diasporas (Fihel et al. 2025). Such similarities were reinforced by transnational coordination between Ukrainian initiatives and NGOS – often facilitated through social media groups such as *The Communities Army of Ukraine*. One of *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s coordinators even once described the initiative as part of the diaspora:

And we must be united now with our diplomatic front, when our... our Minister of Foreign Affairs, when our diplomats there, the President's office, other ministers go to these diplomatic meetings and say that this and that is needed... Our goal and main message is to show that the Ukrainian community, the diaspora abroad, will not sit idly by and remain silent, but will also show the values of Ukraine, despite the fact that it is now physically safe. That is, we must be one voice: Ukrainians in Ukraine, Ukrainians who travel on diplomatic missions, Ukrainians abroad (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II)

This raises the question: should we view the activism of displaced Ukrainians in Prague as an enactment of diasporic citizenship (Çalışkan 2022; Laguerre 1998) – especially if diasporas are approached as a stance rather than an entity (Alexander 2017), or as a category of practice used to make claims, articulate projects, formulate expectations, mobilise energies, and appeal to loyalties on behalf of one's home state (Brubaker 2005)? Their activism can be seen as diasporic not only because of symbolic repertoires such as national commemorations and demonstrations, but also due to its orientation toward supporting the homeland in line with

official foreign policy discourses, and their embeddedness in a broader transnational mobilisation that linked Ukrainian initiatives worldwide.

Yet, framing *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s activism only through diasporic citizenship risks overemphasising the statist dimension of citizenship and overlooking how displaced Ukrainians simultaneously negotiate belonging, rights, and recognition within the receiving society. This is where Mutambasere's (2022) conceptualisation of diasporic citizenship becomes particularly useful, as it captures the complexity and in-betweenness of (be)longing to the homeland while being emplaced in a new state of residence. Drawing on the political activism of Zimbabweans in the UK, Mutambasere demonstrates that diasporic studies can approach citizenship as a socially constructed and relational concept, highlighting its multi-sited nature rather than treating it as territorially bounded – an understanding that resonates with critical citizenship scholarship (Clarke et al. 2014; Isin and Nielsen 2008). This approach is well suited to illustrating the inevitably complex and intertwined claims of (be)longing and political mobilisation shaped by diaspora groups' situatedness between two states and two societies. Mutambasere (2022) argues that claims and struggles for migrants' and refugees' rights in countries of residence (especially in contexts of far-right politics and hostility) can be deeply connected to claims on behalf of the home state, all of which aim to (re)shape or preserve their identitarian connectedness, as well as citizenship practices.

The concept of diasporic citizenship (Çalışkan 2022; Laguerre 1998; Mutambasere 2022) is thus a useful starting point for understanding the positionality of displaced Ukrainians in Prague, as it captures a strong moral and political orientation toward the homeland while also acknowledging emplacement and claim-making in the receiving state, thereby emphasising how belonging and mobilisation are relationally constructed across these spaces. However, this framework is less equipped to address the specificities of war-driven displacement and temporary protection. While many diasporas have emerged through

displacement – with ‘dislocation’ being one of the core features in defining diasporas (Sökefeld 2006) – and many have been shaped by military conflict (Koinova 2018), these diasporas typically developed over time. In contrast, this article examines the political activism of displaced people from Ukraine during the first year following a sudden and traumatic displacement, where separation from loved ones and survivor guilt were constitutive of their political engagement. Moreover, because their displacement was perceived and legally constructed by the receiving society as temporary, and because return to Ukraine remained not only politically charged and imaginable but also actively desired (not at some distant point, but in the near future), the notion of diasporic citizenship becomes less convincing.¹¹

As one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajinny* explained, she saw herself not as a member of a diaspora organising cultural festivals, but as a refugee determined to return home once the war ends:

And I always emphasise that I am a Ukrainian refugee, that I have not been living here for 20 years, and that I have not been running an NGO for 20 years that deals with varenyky [dumplings] and artificial flower crowns. I am a refugee, and I thank you [Czechs] for what you are doing for refugees. I am a refugee, and I thank you for helping Ukraine. We have the opportunity to return home faster... (Interview with two of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajinny*)

In this sense, while diasporic citizenship resonates with the relational and transnational aspects of *Hlas Ukrajinny*’s activism, it cannot fully account for the temporal, precarious, and war-inflected conditions that shape displaced Ukrainians’ political engagement and their nuanced positioning between two states and two societies. The following section therefore turns to the concept of refugee citizenship to consider whether it better reflects the specificities of displaced Ukrainians’ political engagement in Prague.

¹¹ Since this article is being written more than three years after the start of the full-scale invasion, the perception of temporariness has diminished with time. However, during the first year of their political activism, the sense of uncertainty and impermanence was much more pronounced.

Political Engagement under Temporary Protection: Refugee Citizenship?

While driven by a perceived moral duty to act on behalf of Ukraine and those staying and fighting the war, the experiences of being refugees – or displaced persons under temporary protection – significantly shaped *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s political engagement. As one member of the initiative explained, it was easier for her and her cousin to decide to leave Ukraine because they believed they could be *useful* in Czechia by attending demonstrations and collecting donations. However, when articulating this moral duty to the state and people in Ukraine, she also reflected on what being active as a displaced person entailed, emphasising disruption in her daily life, uncertainty, and even fear:

I thought we would go to Charles Bridge, sing with some banners, and collect money for the [Ukrainian] Armed Forces. I had this plan in my head that we would go out and do something, because it felt morally wrong to do nothing... And then we arrive in Prague and realise how lost we are, how completely different life is here, how far away we are from all of this, how scared we are... And how many things there were to do... Nuances, problems, it was difficult to figure it all out... We were constantly running around, constantly dealing with housing, with some documents, with paperwork. And, like, we also wanted to learn the language. Well, it's kind of scary... You feel completely lost here, especially if you don't really understand why you are here... And really, people here are different... And I thought, when are we going to go to that Charles Bridge, why aren't we going? And then I thought, how are we going to go? God, it's so scary. Maybe we need some kind of permission, but what, where can we go? We're just little kids... well, it's so scary, a new city, a new country, Europe. How is all this supposed to be? (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* VI)

Forced displacement for people from Ukraine came with multiple struggles of emplacement, separation from loved ones, and losses of jobs, social roles, daily routines, and certainties about the future (Mijić et al. 2024). In addition to coping with these multiple losses and having to figure out where to live, work, and study, where to find a family doctor or buy a transportation card, displaced activists also had to familiarise themselves with Czech regulations on public assembly and petitioning, as well as the informal rules of Prague's political space. One of the co-founders of the initiative noted that these considerations were further complicated by concerns about how the local public would react to their

demonstrations, especially when the actions were more daring, such as tying hands and using red paint to symbolise blood and draw attention to Russian war crimes in Ukraine:

We were painted red, as an analogy to blood. We were tied up with ropes, and since it was our first time doing something like that and we didn't know how the audience would react, we were a little scared... Again, we didn't know if people would react negatively to our extravagant appearance, or if the police would arrest us and say that we were promoting violence (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny II*)

The struggles of emplacement and the uncertainties of acting politically in a new country intersected with another key challenge: navigating their position in Czech society as non-citizens under temporary protection, with its uncertain and unpredictable duration and conditions. Czechia implemented the EU Temporary Protection Directive through three government bills known as *Lex Ukraine* (Macková et al. 2024), which, within a year, had already been amended five times. Only with *Lex Ukraine VII*, in force since February 2025, did legislative changes allow persons with temporary protection to apply for a special long-term residence permit, provided they met strict criteria of residency, economic self-sufficiency, and a clean criminal record. This more secure residence option thus came three years after the full-scale invasion, while the first year of *Hlas Ukrajiny's* activities remained marked by uncertainty over whether, and under what conditions, they could stay in Czechia, with protection policies closely tied to geopolitical shifts (Adamson, Dag, and Craven 2024). Moreover, as the renewal and conditions of temporary protection were unpredictable – subject to rapid policy decisions by both the EU and the Czech government – this legal and political uncertainty exacerbated displaced activists' worries about their standing in Czech society, especially as many saw returning to Ukraine as possible only after the war.

Although displaced people from Ukraine could legally demonstrate on the streets of Prague, the fabric of social relations – ‘overdetermined by questions of nationality and belonging’ (Clarke et al. 2014:176) – shaped their concerns about how to act politically as non-nationals without legal citizenship status. These considerations were deeply embedded in their

relational understanding of how protests were perceived and reacted to by local society. The experience of being ‘othered’ as Ukrainians, reinforced by the rise of anti-migrant and specifically anti-Ukrainian rhetoric from far-right parties and anti-establishment movements (Černý 2023; Pšenička and Stuchlíková 2022), also shaped their political engagement. Several members of the initiative noted that their activism made them more aware of different types of reactions:

There are a lot of people who don’t like what we’re doing in general, who don’t accept Ukrainians abroad in general, especially in the Czech Republic... and these are the moments when people don’t understand why we’re doing this... it somehow angers them, frustrates them. And so, they start to somehow attack the efforts we are trying to implement... there is a group of people who are supporters of helping Ukraine. There is a group of people who, on the contrary, protest against us living here (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* IV).

It seems to me that, as always, at any rally there are three categories of Czechs. Specifically, Czech society, who react to the fact that there is a war in Ukraine. They perceive us as people who are trying to draw attention to this [the war] and think, ‘I can’t say whether it’s good or bad, but I accept that they [Ukrainian activists] are standing here’. And well, it’s probably a neutral positive position because there are those [Czechs] who are already coming to demonstrate with us, although not in large numbers. And there are those who, even if we just stand with flags without red paint on our T-shirts and sing patriotic songs, they may walk by and spit, saying, ‘Look at these Ukrainians, they are everywhere, they talk, they demand something, we gave you benefits, we gave you the opportunity to be refugees here, and you still want something else.’ And here it’s not a question of T-shirts with traces of blood (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II).

These accounts of ambivalent or negative reactions illustrate how displaced activists’ claims were not judged solely on their content but also on their perceived legitimacy to speak politically at all. Since national governments have the final say in granting or withholding humanitarian protection for forcibly displaced people, the provision of such protection – and the legal status of those under it – is often framed as a ‘gift’ that can be given or withdrawn, while refugees are expected to show gratitude (Moulin 2012). This logic implies that protection seekers are neither expected nor necessarily welcomed to make political claims, and that expressing discontent can be risky. Political action under these conditions meant hesitant and sometimes strategic engagement with local publics they did not wish to antagonise, while also

claiming their right to a political voice as non-citizens, displaced persons, and protection seekers:

In the beginning, I thought, I am a foreigner here, this is not my country, I am a refugee without rights... I should dress as a poor person and not wear makeup... but now I understand, I have rights, I am here because of the war in my country, I am grateful but also have the right not to be silent (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II).

Foregrounding displaced Ukrainians' experiences of refugeehood, should we view their activism as an enactment of refugee citizenship? Much critical citizenship scholarship explores how refugees claim rights, exercise political agency, and reconfigure belonging under conditions of precarity (Redclift 2013; Turner 2016), even though not all of these works explicitly use the terminology of 'refugee citizenship'. Sigona's (2015) concept of *campzenship*, for instance, highlights how refugees can enact citizenship by making rights-based claims in the precarious political spaces of refugee camps. Momen (2005) expands the geographical lens beyond camps to border regions, showing how the boundaries between nations and identities are contested, and how these ongoing negotiations shape state-citizen relations.

Similarly, the case of *Hlas Ukrajiny* illustrates how displaced people challenge the assumption of refugees as passive victims by engaging in politics and negotiating belonging under conditions of uncertainty. Here, however, these dynamics unfolded not in camps or borderlands but within the urban setting of Prague, where concerns over relational dynamics and the uncertainties of temporary protection shaped their political engagement. Moreover, most of the refugee citizenship literature focuses on struggles against exclusionary migration regimes in receiving societies, while the activism of displaced Ukrainians in Prague adds another dimension: acting for a home state under threat. Thus, they not only enacted citizenship by claiming the right to be political as non-citizens under temporary protection; they also enacted Ukrainian citizenship.

From this perspective of dual political subjectivity, one of the closest aligning conceptualisations of refugee citizenship is Bentz's (2023) work on Tibetans in Canada, which first introduced *refugee citizenship* as a concept. Bentz theorises refugee citizenship as political claim-making by refugees who engage in activism and advocacy to fight for their homeland, with this struggle becoming a central part of their identity. For the Tibetan refugees, obtaining legal citizenship in Canada was closely intertwined with symbolically 'maintaining refugeehood', a stance necessary to ensure that their political claims were heard. Displaced Ukrainians in Prague similarly mobilise to defend and support their homeland, linking activism to their political identity. However, their position differs in important ways. Their legal status is more precarious, and they navigate a dual political subjectivity: they act in support of Ukraine's war effort – whose outcome is imagined but uncertain, with return contingent on victory – while also positioning themselves as political actors within Czech politics, which is itself of uncertain temporality. These dynamics point to a political subjectivity that neither refugee nor diasporic citizenship fully captures, whereas the concept of displaced citizenship better highlights these complexities, as will be shown in the next section.

While displaced persons from other contexts have also mobilised politically to advocate for their homelands, the activism of Ukrainians in Prague differs in one crucial respect: they act on behalf of a state that continues to function as a sovereign, internationally recognised, and democratically elected entity. Displaced Syrians, Afghans, or Belarusians, for instance, have likewise organised protests and transnational campaigns, but their mobilisation has typically targeted authoritarian or collapsed regimes, supporting opposition movements rather than reinforcing the state. In contrast, displaced Ukrainians mobilised in solidarity with a functioning government defending its citizens from foreign invasion, reimagining Ukrainian statehood from abroad rather than contesting it. Nevertheless, what these cases share – and what neither refugee nor diasporic citizenship fully captures, but displaced citizenship helps to

foreground – is the condition of displacement as a traumatic yet generative experience. Thus, displacement fosters both a sense of moral responsibility toward one's home, community, or place of belonging, and distinct forms of political engagement within the receiving society, shaped by the uncertain temporality and concerns over shifts in already politicised migration policies. The concept of displaced citizenship, therefore, extends beyond the Ukrainian case, offering a broader conceptual angle for understanding how people in displacement act politically across overlapping regimes of belonging, whether in defence of a functioning state under threat or in opposition to a repressive one.

Displaced Citizenship

The urgency of displacement, survivor guilt, and the ongoing experience of war through news and conversations with loved ones were central motivations for displaced Ukrainians' political activism in Prague. Already here, displacement is not only a background condition but a constitutive force shaping political subjectivity – an early indication of what I later conceptualise as displaced citizenship. For displaced activists, political engagement was not only about (be)longing to a home state at war, but about immediate fears for family members left behind and a perceived moral responsibility to defend them by advocating for increased military support for Ukraine:

You do this because you are responsible for [informing about] what is happening in front of Europe, in front of the European world. You represent Ukraine, and if you are a representative of Ukraine, then you are a representative of our war, a representative of all events, and you have the opportunity to do something here, and it is not difficult for you to do so. No one is shooting at you, you are safe. So do something. If people there are doing something under fire, then not doing anything here is irresponsible, it is undignified, it is shameful... (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* VI).

I'm sitting here, and everyone is at home, they don't have any electricity. And then you come here [join demonstrations] and you're like, 'I'm doing something about it'. It's not as if I'm just sitting here in the warmth, without any worries out there, with electricity and internet always available... (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* V).

Social media added further pressure. Posts from people who emphasised their sacrifice and pride for staying in Ukraine intensified survivor guilt and reinforced the expectation to contribute from abroad, especially as many activists hoped to return after the war. One of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* explained:

Well, generally speaking, I feel a very acute survivor guilt, and when people write in some segment of Ukrainian Twitter that those who left are bad Ukrainians, and those who stayed and do nothing are good Ukrainians... (Interview with two of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*).

This sense of duty – intensified precisely by being away from the warzone – can be read as an expression of displaced citizenship: enacting belonging and responsibility from a position of physical safety, yet under the condition of displacement. In the same interview, *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s coordinator further described how being a war refugee shaped her activism so profoundly that even moments of personal recognition felt bitter. She had become an influencer with around 7,000 followers, and while such public visibility was useful for amplifying her message, it was also painful, as it remained inseparably tied to the war:

When I arrived in Brno for the rally, people took photos with me. And I felt very uncomfortable, first of all, because if I were a singer or some kind of inventor, you know, it would be cool, because it would be recognition. But when people take photos with you because you're telling them that there's genocide in your country, I understand that I have to take photos with them because it's their way of supporting Ukraine... And I remember very well how I accidentally found an article in the Washington Post when our first rally was covered by AP Press. And I remember very clearly how I cried because, on the one hand, it's a huge success when AP writes about what you're doing... And when I read this article and see a sentence, “‘We are fighting for our right to life”, [anonymised name of the coordinator] says to the crowd’. So, when your name and surname are next to your quote that we are fighting for life, you don't perceive it as some kind of recognition (Interview with two of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*).

As citizens of a country defending itself in the war, displaced Ukrainians often viewed political activism as a duty, intensified by survivor guilt. Yet, while acting for Ukraine, they simultaneously navigated the boundaries of acceptable political expression in Czechia – the receiving state whose protection they relied on, and which could be withdrawn or not renewed. Even if displaced persons from Ukraine did not fear deportation for overstepping perceived

boundaries of acceptable political engagement, such concerns often emerged regarding the collective reputation of the Ukrainian community, especially since temporary protection was granted collectively on the basis of Ukrainian citizenship, without individual assessments of eligibility. Here, displaced citizenship comes into view as a dual negotiation: enacting duties toward Ukraine while remaining attentive to the fragility of inclusion in Czechia.

Thus, the uncertainty surrounding temporary protection not only shaped displaced people's sense of precariousness but also heightened the activists' awareness of how their actions could affect wider perceptions of Ukrainians in Czech society. One initiative member described the importance of preserving positive attitudes towards Ukrainians and avoiding discrediting themselves by appearing as a 'capricious mass... constantly shouting and demanding something' (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* VIII). One of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* also emphasised that their activism not only raised awareness about the war but also played a role in shaping public attitudes toward Ukrainians – attitudes that could influence policies on both Ukraine and the renewal of temporary protection:

By taking to the streets, by making the headlines, by cooperating with Czech initiatives, we are shaping public opinion. Politics in normal countries is shaped by the fact that the source of power is the people. If today the people like to help Ukraine, the government that is running for office or that is in power will help Ukraine. If tomorrow they vote, that is, if tomorrow the people say, 'Listen, we are tired of paying bills, we are tired of these Ukrainians, send them away.' And we will see that populists who support these very sentiments will come to power (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* I).

These efforts to safeguard public perceptions highlight how the uncertainties surrounding temporary protection also shaped the initiative's political engagement, which was often strategic and at times hesitant, moderated by concerns over how their activism might be received by the local society. Their political acts were thus driven by a dual imperative: to act politically in the name of Ukraine, and to do so in a manner mindful of their positionality as temporary protection seekers, without jeopardising the solidarities underpinning their presence in Czechia. This dual imperative captures the essence of displaced citizenship, emerging from

the interplay between homeland-oriented duties, shaped by the traumatic realities of war, and receiving-state conditionality, largely derived from the temporariness of their stay.

Displaced activists therefore imposed boundaries on their political engagement to safeguard their (collective) legal security and build relations of solidarity in Czechia. Such self-imposed boundaries surfaced in their concerns about how their activism might be perceived by the locals, worrying it could be seen as ‘foreign interference’ or attempts to ‘control Czech politics’ (Interview with two of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*). Since many of their demands addressed the Czech government and called for military aid, they both stood with banners reading ‘More Weapons to Ukraine’ and simultaneously hesitated over how far non-citizens could legitimately advocate in highly protected domains of national security and defence. When speaking about their successful public awareness campaign, which contributed to the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs sanctioning the CEO of a Russian arms-producing corporation, one of the initiative’s coordinators noted the importance of a balanced and, at times, less publicly visible approach to advocacy:

When we see an interesting topic emerging, we can sometimes offer journalists our services or information. Because it is not always necessary to be heard and seen. We are not the people who have to do that sometimes... There are some issues that it is better when they come from Czechs than from Ukrainians (Interview with one of the coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny* III).

Displaced citizenship also entailed a strong identitarian attachment to the activists’ homeland, driven not by shared cultural practices but by experiences of war (even if distant), separation, and survivor guilt – alongside a strategic navigation of new political subjectivities as claim-making actors in Prague, whose political community they aspired to join, particularly as this facilitated advocacy on behalf of Ukraine. In this regard, a few months after their establishment, *Hlas Ukrajiny* changed its self-identification from a ‘community of active Ukrainians’ (the initial description on their Telegram channel) to a ‘Czech Ukrainian initiative’ to highlight the significant role of Czech citizens in the team and to show that they acted jointly

with Czechs, thereby legitimising their engagement in Czech and Prague politics. At the same time, while aspiring to claim their belonging to Ukraine and their role in its defence, activists often wore national symbols and always displayed them at demonstrations, while taking care not to overshadow or disrespect Czech culture and state symbols (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* IV). For instance, they carried a Ukrainian flag on their shoulders while holding a small Czech flag in their hands or ensured that both the Czech and Ukrainian anthems were performed during their largest demonstrations.

In grappling with how their political engagement related to the local society, activists also carefully considered how to frame their messages and claims so they would resonate with Czech citizens and align with the national interests of the Czech state, while still serving the purpose of helping Ukraine win the war. They often invoked the dangers of Russian imperialism and Czech-specific geopolitical concerns, demonstrating with banners reading: ‘If Ukraine stops fighting, the free world ends’, ‘Get ready EU, if we’re done, they come for you’, or ‘Pokud ruský imperialismus porazí Ukrajinu, zničí i nás’ (If Russian imperialism defeats Ukraine, it will also destroy us [Czechs]). The activists also often blended gratitude with discontent: making demands to Czech institutions while preceding or following them with expressions of thankfulness – simultaneously internalising and resisting the ‘logic of [refugee] protection as gift exchange’ (Moulin 2012:61).

Thus, the concept of displaced citizenships emphasises *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s dual political subjectivity, shaped by the intertwining of duty to a homeland under foreign imperialist attack and the conditional, temporary, and uncertain positioning in the receiving state, with heightened sensitivity to the responsiveness of local publics. Moreover, because temporary protection status was not only uncertain but also collectively granted to all Ukrainians displaced by the war, displaced citizenship entailed concerns about the collective image of the Ukrainian community in Czechia and a perceived responsibility for its reputation. While it shares with

refugee citizenship (Bentz 2023; Redclift 2013; Sigona 2015; Turner 2016) the practice of making rights claims in the absence of formal political membership, it also draws from *diasporic citizenship* (Çalışkan 2022; Laguerre 1998; Mutambasere 2022) the strong moral obligation to contribute to and defend the homeland. Displaced citizenship combines and extends these dimensions, showing how they become intertwined under the specific legal, political, and social conditions of temporary protection, while also highlighting the affective burdens of displacement: the traumas of war, the pain of separation from loved ones, the weight of survivor guilt, and a constant worry not only about Ukraine's fate as a polity but also about the everyday suffering of those still living under bombardment and occupation.

Conclusion

Based on ethnographic fieldwork with displaced people from Ukraine in Prague, this article conceptualises *displaced citizenship* as a form of dual political subjectivity that emerges from the lived realities of war and forced mobility. By foregrounding the urgencies of forced migration, along with the temporal uncertainties and psychological challenges it entails, displaced citizenship presents an important conceptual angle. It highlights the immediacy of sudden war-driven flight and demonstrates how displacement itself is constitutive of political subjectivity: the duty to act while safe, survivor guilt, the temporariness of protection, and the orientation toward return all structured the activists' engagement and all emerged from being displaced by war. Displaced citizenship names this condition directly, rather than folding it into broader categories that risk obscuring its specificity.

Displaced citizenship is enacted under conditions of rupture and uncertainty, where the possibilities for participation are simultaneously expanded by the urgency of the homeland's fight and constrained by the perceived boundaries of legitimate action as non-citizens in the 'host polity'. Under these conditions, displaced Ukrainians enacted bold and creative political acts in Prague's public spaces, guided by a sense of duty not to remain passive in displacement,

and both conviction that they have the right to a political voice in Czechia and hesitations about how to exercise this right as non-citizens, as displaced persons under temporary protection. Acting within these perceived constraints, they engaged in ‘considerate’ political action, balancing between making claims and expressing gratitude, between displaying Ukrainian symbols and singing the Czech anthem, and between seeking recognition of their political subjectivities and not always wanting their role in shaping politics to be visible.

Thus, the concept of displaced citizenship captures how Ukrainian activists simultaneously enacted Ukrainian citizenship through activism *for* Ukraine, while also navigating emerging roles as political actors *within* Czech society. This dual positionality highlights how war-driven displacement reconfigures both horizontal and vertical relations of citizenship. Their enactment of citizenship is driven not only by a sense of responsibility toward their home state and those experiencing the war, nor solely by the practice of claiming space and voice in the ‘host polity’, but by the intertwining of both, performed in ways that carefully navigate the temporary and conditional nature of their protection. In this context, displacement is a condition in which the temporariness of protection, aspirations for return and heightened geopolitical stakes shape the moral and strategic reasoning behind political action.

Importantly, by examining the political acts of people from Ukraine, the conceptual framework of displaced citizenship adds nuance to theoretical debates on citizenship, statehood, political belonging, and rights. It shows how war intensifies certain dimensions of citizenship (national unity, defence, sovereignty), while simultaneously opening alternative ways of enacting political subjectivity across borders. While the notion of displaced citizenship emerges from the specific case of Ukrainians in Prague, it is not confined to it. The term delineates a broader analytical space between refugee and diasporic citizenship, defined by the immediacy of loss, the uncertainty of emplacement, and the dual imperative of acting for a home state in crisis (whether in defence of a democratic state under foreign invasion or in

opposition to a repressive one), while negotiating recognition in a receiving society. The analytical value of displaced citizenship as a concept thus lies less in replacing existing ones than in foregrounding how sudden disruptions, forced migration, and temporal uncertainty shape forms of belonging and a sense of duty that extend across multiple political and moral communities.

Admittedly, what this article does not delve into – but what could be important to consider in further conceptual and empirical reflections – is the aspect of temporality. As I write, it has been more than three years since the full-scale Russian invasion. Most activists I conducted this research with have lived in Czechia far longer than they anticipated, becoming more embedded in local society, receiving both private and public recognition from elected officials, while also facing personal attacks from far-right politicians (Šídlo 2025). Over time, questions of citizenship as formal membership, if not yet crucial, are becoming increasingly significant the longer they stay, while the legal specifics of the temporary protection status reveal uncertainties in the path toward formal citizenship. As time both blurs and intensifies the demarcations of us/them and inside/outside, it reminds us that conceptions of citizenship are always unfinished – constantly reworked and rethought (Clarke et al. 2014), contested (Ní Mhurchú 2014), and in flux (Isin 2009).

Article 2. The Battleground of Migration Politics in Prague Amid the (Poly)Crisis

Introduction

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 brought not only a devastating war but also the displacement of millions of people, both internally and across borders. EU member states responded by supporting Ukraine (its people, government, and military) and welcoming displaced Ukrainians under the framework of the Temporary Protection Directive¹². Czechia was at the forefront of these solidarity efforts, granting the highest number of temporary protection statuses per capita to those who crossed the Schengen border after 24 February 2022 (Eurostat 2022). In comparison with the previous reluctance to admit asylum seekers in 2015, Czech officials and media explained this 'unprecedented solidarity' by highlighting cultural similarities with Ukrainians, a shared history of Soviet oppression, and the geopolitical threat posed by Russia (Jelínková 2024; Zogata-Kusz, Öbrink Hobzová, and Cekiera 2023).

Although the first months after February 2022 were marked by unity in support of displaced people from Ukraine, highly publicised debates over rising gas prices and inflation challenged this unity in Czechia, fuelling welfare chauvinism by the far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party (Černý 2023). At the same time, two interconnected anti-establishment movements with far-rights narratives – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First) and *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty) – started protesting in Prague, exploiting crisis narratives and fears of poverty to mobilise support. Their rhetoric selectively focused on the economic challenges affecting 'our people' while disregarding the plurality and

¹² This article is published in the *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*: Dziadyk, N. (2025). The Battleground of Migration Politics in Prague Amid the (Poly)Crisis. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 23(3), 436–449. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2025.2480604>. Minor corrections have been introduced in the article after its publication for inclusion in this thesis, which, however, do not disrupt either the structure or the main flow of the arguments.

complexity of interconnected disruptions brought by Russia's war against Ukraine. They accused the Czech government of neglecting the growing precarity of Czechs by allocating state funds to aid Ukraine and Ukrainians under temporary protection.

Despite these anti-establishment mobilisations representing only a small segment of society, with the Czech government and the majority of the population continuing to stand by Ukrainian refugees, displaced Ukrainian activists (together with some earlier migrants) felt it was important to respond to the claims of both anti-establishment movements. Together with Czech activists in solidarity, they gathered for counterdemonstrations in the same public space, emphasising the complex spatiality of the cross-border and boundless threats posed by Russian imperialism, of which financial hardships are only one aspect. By participating in counterdemonstrations and opposing anti-establishment movements, they not only gained visibility but also enacted themselves as political subjects (Isin 2012; Isin and Nielsen 2008).

The moment displaced people from Ukraine became active in Prague's space of political contestation, the anti-establishment movements got radicalised, engaging in practices of othering and bordering. It became evident that for the anti-establishment movements, the presence and political visibility of displaced Ukrainians constituted yet another 'crisis', threatening the 'idealised national uniformity' (Menjívar et al. 2019). Their xenophobic chants and attempts at violent altercations revealed a 'battle' over the acceptance of displaced people from Ukraine and their rights to political engagement.

This article examines Prague's space of contention as a *battleground* of migration politics, formed in the context of the (poly)crisis and contested representations of normality and abnormality that made possible the othering of displaced persons as 'unwanted' political subjects (Cantat and Rajaram 2019), as well as fuelled conflict over the acceptance of their political presence. The concept of the *battleground* was introduced by Fontanari and Ambrosini (2018) to capture the complexity of migration politics, where public and private actors,

including migrants and refugees, form alliances and oppositions to influence public opinion on migration. Unlike other approaches that problematise migration politics, the *battleground* framework focuses specifically on localised conflicts and contestations.

Thus, by applying the conceptual framework of the *battleground*, this article provides an original empirical contribution to the growing literature on war-driven displacement from Ukraine while also offering a novel take on the conceptualisation of the *battleground* (Ambrosini 2021; Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018). It explores how the dynamics of conflict are shaped by the conditions of the (poly)crisis and the contestation over defining what is ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’. While acknowledging the vagueness of the term (poly)crisis, particularly in clarifying the interactions between multiple crises, I use it as a tool to contextualise the dynamics shaping Prague’s *battleground* rather than as a guiding conceptual framework. Nonetheless, drawing on Henig and Knight’s (2023) understanding of (poly)crisis as interconnected and spatially unbounded disruptions, this article highlights how actors interpret these disruptions differently, politicising certain aspects while silencing others.

Drawing on ethnographic research with *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine), a political initiative formed mostly by displaced people from Ukraine and some of the earlier Ukrainian migrants, this article examines the roles played by initiative members, solidarity activists, and anti-establishment movements in Prague’s *battleground* of migration politics. Importantly, it does not claim to provide a comprehensive account of the multiplicity of issues and actors involved in the inherently multifaceted *battleground* of migration. Instead, it examines how the contestation over displaced persons’ rights, particularly the right not only to stay in Czechia but also to engage politically there, unfolded within the scope of my ethnographic research.

Intertwining empirical research and conceptual thinking, I begin by briefly outlining the context of the (poly)crisis that has shaped Prague’s political landscape and the general reception of displaced people from Ukraine. The second section discusses the conceptual

framework of the *battleground* of migration politics. Following a short methodology overview, the fourth section examines Prague's *battleground* and the contestation between displaced Ukrainians (together with some earlier migrants) and anti-establishment movements. Finally, the conclusion raises questions for future research.

Research Context: (Poly)Crisis and the Reception of Displaced People from Ukraine in Czechia

When millions of people were displaced in 2022, the EU invoked collective protection, exempting Ukrainian citizens from individual assessments for protection eligibility. This stood in stark contrast to its response to the arrival of asylum seekers in 2015-2016, when lengthy procedures and case-by-case determinations often resulted in prolonged detention in refugee camps (although not for every group and not uniformly across the EU). The introduction of collective temporary protection¹³ for displaced Ukrainians simplified and expedited procedures for obtaining residency documents and provided more liberal rights regarding settlement, temporary return, and access to the labour market. However, as a report by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (2023:16) indicates, in other policy areas, 'rights or access to services was more restrictive for people displaced from Ukraine', for instance, in terms of integration measures, long-term financial assistance, and uncertainty regarding a path to permanent residency.

Czechia implemented the EU Temporary Protection Directive through a package of three government bills known as *Lex Ukraine* (Macková et al. 2024). According to this legislation, persons who received temporary protection were automatically covered by public

¹³ This was not the first time the EU invoked collective protection, having previously done so in 2001 during the large-scale displacement, particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, caused by the war in the Western Balkans. In 2022, the activation of the temporary protection mechanism did not only rely on the previous experience and legislation but was also necessitated by a visa-free regime with Ukraine, according to which Ukrainian citizens with biometric passports could freely enter the Schengen zone since 2017.

health insurance, had unlimited access to the labour market, and were entitled to unemployment benefits (Jelínková, Plaček, and Ochrana 2024). They also received a humanitarian allowance of 5,000 CZK per month (approximately 200 EUR), provided for a maximum of five consecutive months to those with low incomes (Ditko 2022). Importantly, it was not only the government's response that mattered, as the state could not address the arrival of nearly half a million Ukrainian citizens without the engagement of civil society, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF (Jelínková et al. 2024), as well as support from individual volunteers and solidarity households (Mezihorák 2025; Pędziwiatr and Magdziarz 2023). However, as Czech civil society was already underfunded and inflation affected the economic situation of Czech households, their role in accommodating displaced persons from Ukraine decreased over time.

Despite the Czech government's firm support for displaced people from Ukraine, many state-funded measures were also scaled back. By April 2023, *Lex Ukraine* had been amended for the fifth time, introducing stricter eligibility criteria for (already reduced) humanitarian benefits, limiting state-funded health insurance coverage to 150 days, and capping stays in free emergency accommodation centres to 150 days as well (Ditko 2023). The increasingly restrictive changes in Czech legislation reflected the highly publicised debates surrounding the (poly)crisis and how to prioritise the needs of different groups affected by it. The Czech government itself narrated the contemporary challenges facing Czechs as multiple intersecting crises – security, economic, financial, and energy-related (České noviny 2022). Indeed, within just a few months of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Czechia faced surging energy prices and was among the five EU states most severely impacted by inflation, experiencing the sharpest decline in real wages among OECD countries in 2022 (Hejl Hromková and Bartoniček 2022). Under these circumstances, as early as May-June 2022, more than half of Czechs believed that their government treated displaced Ukrainians better than its own citizens (Dražanová and Geddes 2023).

Czech anti-establishment and far-right forces capitalised on shifting societal attitudes and the intertwined challenges (economic, security, and humanitarian), although framing the (poly)crisis solely as an economic crisis. They refuted the plurality of disruptions or the ‘poly’ aspect of the (poly)crisis and blamed Czechia’s solidarity with Ukraine and the arrival of displaced Ukrainians for exacerbating economic hardships. Opposition parties criticised Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala and his government for neglecting its own citizens, labelling it the ‘Ukrainian government of Petr Fiala’ (Macková et al. 2024). Furthermore, the leader of the Czech far-right party SPD, Tomio Okamura, frequently accused displaced people from Ukraine of abusing welfare, claiming that ‘most Ukrainians are economic refugees who are draining social benefits here’ (Černý 2023).

In response, the Czech government sought to shape counter-narratives, emphasising, for instance, the high rates of labour market integration and the economic contributions of displaced persons from Ukraine, which outweigh the state’s spending on humanitarian aid (Kopecký 2024). However, countering the far-right’s rhetoric proved challenging, as their populist agenda capitalised on fostering fear and insecurity amid the energy and economic crisis. Thus, Jelínková (2024) suggests that the arrival of displaced Ukrainians was simultaneously constructed as both ‘an opportunity’ and ‘a threat’. On the one hand, protection seekers from Ukraine were perceived as bringing economic benefits and succeeding in integration; on the other, they were viewed as ‘abusers’ of the welfare system in times of the (poly)crisis.

Migration Politics as a *Battleground*. The Role of (Poly)Crisis

When actors engage in politics by interpreting (poly)crisis and disputing whether (and how) migration is a part of it, they call for institutional responses based on their interpretations, while competing to shape the political focus on the issue. This contestation – aimed at capturing public attention and influencing policy through competing narratives – is well explained by the

conceptual framework of the *battleground* of migration (Ambrosini 2021; Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018). Central to the *battleground* concept is its focus on capturing the dynamics of migration politics, emphasising how actors with varying roles and levels of responsibility interact, form alliances, and compete to influence public opinion on migration and asylum.

The *battleground* framework also effectively highlights how fractured the political and social landscape of migration governance is, where public and private actors, individual citizens and politically organised groups, social workers, and activists (Fontanari and Borri 2018:33) engage in various forms of politics-making – through mobilisations, protests, and informal practices – to present their perspectives, identities, and frames of reference. Importantly, refugees and migrants are active participants in the *battleground*, acting as agents rather than silent observers (Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018). These various actors build alliances to strengthen their positions and distinguish themselves from those with opposing stances.

Ambrosini (2021) acknowledges that studying the fractured nature of migration governance with a focus on the web of actors and their interactions is not new to the asylum and migration literature. Thus, by conceptualising the battleground in juxtaposition to the ‘venue shopping approach’, the ‘multi-level governance approach’, and critical humanitarian studies, Ambrosini (2021) highlights how this scholarship has significantly shaped the *battleground* concept, providing a foundation for understanding the variety of public and private actors involved in migration politics. Yet, if the diversity of actors and their contestations are inherent to democratic politics, especially on politicised issues like migration, what, then, distinguishes such contestation as a *battleground*?

Ambrosini (2021) has already underlined that the distinctiveness of the *battleground* lies in its focus on *localised* conflicts and tensions among diverse actors, reflected in varied responses to the arrivals of migrants and protection seekers, ranging from bordering practices

(Dimitriadis et al. 2021) to acts of solidarity (Ambrosini 2024; Filippi, Giliberti, and Queirolo Palmas 2021). This article further contributes to this conceptualisation by emphasising how the physical proximity of the actors and the entanglement of their activities intensify such tensions, making them more ‘*battleground-like*’.

Moreover, given the militaristic origins of the term *battleground* and its association with abnormality – contrasting war with the presumed normality of peace – the analytical value of the *battleground* of migration politics can be enhanced by examining how migration is narrated as abnormal, as a crisis. Treating migration as a crisis, juxtaposed with an ideal of stability defined by economic development, demographic consistency, and cultural homogeneity, shifts blame for disrupting this ideal onto migrants and refugees (Lindley 2014; Menjívar et al. 2019). These narratives encourage practices of othering and ‘the ongoing fabrication and visibilisation of otherness’ (Cantat and Rajaram 2019:185), sharpening the discursive ‘tools’ of contention and transforming the arena of political deliberation into a *battleground*. Thus, the *battleground’s* distinctiveness lies not only in the localised nature of contestations but also in the intensity of tensions shaped by the narratives of emergency and abnormality.

While the term (poly)crisis can be critiqued for being overly broad or lacking clarity, particularly regarding the mechanisms through which multiple crises interact, it remains useful for describing these disruptions. As Henig and Knight (2023:4) write, ‘polycrisis adds a layer to the crisis trope for seeing the world through a lens of what we suggest calling *knotted eventedness*’ (emphasis in original). They define polycrisis as simultaneous crises that interact unpredictably, having unbounded causes and effects. This article deliberately spells (poly)crisis with ‘poly’ in parentheses to emphasise how some actors strategically reject the ‘poly’, downplaying the plurality of intertwined disruptions to politicise certain issues while silencing others (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak 2018; Triandafyllidou 2018).

Fontanari and Ambrosini (2018) introduced the concept of the *battleground* of migration in their article titled ‘*Into the Interstices: Everyday Practices of Refugees and Their Supporters in Europe’s Migration “Crisis”*’. However, while their analysis positions the ‘migration crisis’ as the backdrop, this article examines the interplay between ‘objective’ disruptions, the ‘subjective’ sociopolitical construction of crises, and the dynamics of Prague’s *battleground* of migration politics. This research demonstrates how intertwined disruptions (multiple crises) – perceived and constructed differently by various actors – can open the possibility to frame protection seekers as ‘undesirable others’ who disrupt the ‘national order of things’ (Cantat, Pécoud, and Thiollot 2023), especially as their activism becomes visible in political spaces previously prevailed by citizens.

In 2022, Czechia welcomed hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war in Ukraine. However, the initial atmosphere of unity and hospitality soon gave way to tensions fuelled by the far-right’s rhetoric, which portrayed Ukrainian refugees as a burden on the Czech welfare system in times of crisis. These developments coincided with the reduction of state support for displaced people from Ukraine and the rise of anti-establishment movements. By articulating and performing their interpretation of the (poly)crisis, these movements criticised Czechia’s perceived neglect of its citizens while othering and scapegoating refugees. To them, forced migration and the arrival of displaced Ukrainians, especially their political activism, represented a component of the (poly)crisis – a threat to the presumed ‘homogeneity’ of Czech national identity and the nativist political agenda derived from it.

In response, displaced Ukrainian activists gathered with their Czechs allies for counterdemonstrations, challenging these narratives and asserting their right to be political in Prague’s public space. The tensions and conflicts between the two groups, detailed in the empirical section, shaped not only the narratives of what constitutes normality within and beyond Czechia but also debates about the rights that protection seekers should be granted or

denied in ‘abnormal’ times. Thus, the (poly)crisis and its inherent assumptions of ‘abnormality’ were important enabling factors for Prague’s *battleground* of migration politics to unfold in such a visible way, sharpening the narratives and practices of contestation over the acceptance and rights of displaced Ukrainians.

Methodology

This article draws on ethnographic research conducted in Prague with the political initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine), which was formed in August 2022 by displaced people from Ukraine, although a few members had migrated to Czechia earlier. Predominantly female (reflecting the majority of adult Ukrainian refugees), its leading coordinators are also young women. Within a year of my fieldwork, *Hlas Ukrajiny* had grown into a community of around 50 active members, including Czech activists who joined at different stages, while many of their events were attended by hundreds of people. Through their political engagement, *Hlas Ukrajiny* also formed ‘solidarity alliances’ with multiple local civil society actors.

As my ethnographic fieldwork started in September 2022, I had the opportunity to follow *Hlas Ukrajiny*’s activism almost from the very beginning. My fieldwork was divided into three periods: September 2022 to January 2023, April to May 2023, and August to September 2023. Each time, I joined demonstrations organised by the initiative and their partner organisations, counterdemonstrations to the anti-establishment protests, as well as organisational meetings and informal gatherings with members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* and their friends. The ethnographic research was based on a combination of participant observation and observant participation to deepen my understanding of Prague’s political space and the lived experiences of those shaping it.

I conducted thirteen in-depth interviews with members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* (including a joint follow-up interview with both co-founders) and eight in-depth interviews with local

activists closely cooperating with the initiative. The list of interviews is given in Appendix 1. They were conducted in both Ukrainian and English, and Ukrainian quotes were translated for inclusion in this article. All of the interlocutors provided written informed consent. Most interviews (except four) were recorded, transcribed, and coded in NVivo, using a mix of deductive and inductive coding strategies. For the four participants who declined recording but allowed notetaking, the notes were coded separately.

While inductive coding enabled a more exploratory approach, deductive codes were applied for initial organisation. Broad themes of interest – such as refugeehood, political participation, and far-right rhetoric – were identified deductively, drawing on ethnographic observations and relevant literature. As I worked through the transcripts, I used open coding to capture emerging sub-themes, such as ‘contentious political space’, ‘practices of othering’, ‘crisis narratives’, and ‘politics of presence’. Given the in-depth nature and length of the interviews, which typically lasted between one and two hours, this dual coding approach was essential for ensuring a comprehensive analysis.

These interviews, in combination with the ethnographic observations, helped me gain a more nuanced understanding of how members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* perceived their role in Prague’s political space. Admittedly, my position as a Ukrainian activist made it unfeasible to conduct interviews with representatives of the anti-establishment movements. Thus, my understanding of Prague’s *battleground* of migration politics is based on observing their demonstrations and participating in counterdemonstrations. In addition, I analysed the movements’ websites, leaflets, and social media to gain a better sense of their political agendas.

Prague’s *Battleground* of Migration Politics and the Political Activism of Displaced People from Ukraine

In 2022, when Czechia welcomed hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war in Ukraine, they were neither racialised nor securitised compared to protection seekers in

2015-2016 (De Coninck 2023; Shmidt and Jaworsky 2022). However, as Czechia faced inflation and an energy crisis, and the shock of the war began to fade, the unprecedented unity in welcoming displaced Ukrainians also started to wane. As Jelínková (2024:126) explains, against the backdrop of inflation, the percentage of Czechs in favour of accepting refugees from Ukraine decreased significantly after the first months of ‘unprecedented solidarity’ from 97% to just over 50%. However, one should be careful not to attribute this shift solely to economic hardships, while recognising that the majority of respondents still supported accepting displaced people from Ukraine.

As public attitudes toward displaced people from Ukraine began to shift and frustration with the government grew among Czech citizens, two anti-establishment movements – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First) and *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty) – started organising protests on Wenceslas Square in Prague. Although these movements do not fit neatly into the category of far-right movements, as their members include representatives of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and large trade unions, they share narratives found in other far-right groups. The two movements also have a common base of supporters (Strakatý and Albrechtová 2023), building on a legacy of protests against COVID-19 restrictions (Pehe 2022). The chronology of their protests is as follows:

September 3, 2022 – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First)

September 28, 2022 – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First)

October 28, 2022 – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First)

January 21, 2023 – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First)

March 11, 2023 – *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty)

April 16, 2023 – *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty)

May 6, 2023 – *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First)

September 16, 2023 – *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty).

Both anti-establishment movements framed the (poly)crisis as an economic crisis caused by Czechia's military support for Ukraine, sanctions (particularly those reducing the fossil fuel trade with Russia), and financial assistance provided to displaced Ukrainians. They emphasised how rising energy prices and inflation affected Czech citizens, bringing precarity to their lives (Pehe 2022). This articulation was driven by nativist narratives, claiming that 'our interests' (the interests of ethnic Czechs) should take priority. Admittedly, these movements attempted to present themselves as anti-governmental, focusing more on criticising the Czech government and Czechia's membership in the EU and NATO, while their anti-migration claims were not at the top of their agendas. However, looking at the political programs of both movements, it became obvious that although their anti-migration stance may not have been at the top of the list, it certainly was not hidden.

The political program of *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First), available on their website (Plán Česká republika na 1. místě! n.d.), includes a point titled 'The End of Identity Suppression', which argues that 'To preserve the Czech Republic, it is desirable not to plan any further transfers of refugees "permanently" from other countries'. Therefore, Czechia should prevent the permanent settlement of displaced Ukrainians and refrain from granting them extensive rights, such as family reunification. As for the movement *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty), now renamed to *Za Českou republiku* (For the Czech Republic), their leaflet included provisions to revoke temporary protection status for Ukrainian citizens and replace it with the non-preferential 'standard asylum procedure', which could allow for greater non-admission of protection seekers. The leaflet also reaffirmed their opposition to the EU's asylum policies, declaring that Czechia would not participate in any mandatory solidarity measures.

It may be difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to speculate on the prioritisation of issues within the political agendas of both anti-establishment movements. Nevertheless, their framing of the (poly)crisis and their proposed responses included migration as a ‘problem’, calling for its ‘control’ in order to address what they perceive as the abnormal conditions currently faced by Czechs. Even if the leaders of both movements were cautious not to make overtly anti-refugee claims on stage, there were exceptions. Already during the first rally on 3 September 2022, one of the speakers called from the stage to ‘end the planned dilution of the [Czech] nation by Ukrainian refugees’ (Pšenička and Stuchlíková 2022). More prominent, however, was the strong anti-refugee sentiment and rhetoric among the supporters of these movements. Their discourse drew on xenophobia that had existed before the 2022 arrivals, when Ukrainians were already one of the largest migrant groups in Czechia and were often ‘othered’ as an uneducated, cheap labour force.

Importantly, the movements’ xenophobic attitudes became particularly visible when displaced Ukrainians began participating in counterdemonstrations in the same public space. Starting from the second anti-establishment protest at the end of September 2022, displaced Ukrainian activists regularly gathered on the stairs of the National Museum across the street from Wenceslas Square to contest the movements’ narratives. While the initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine) did not intend to assume the role of the main organiser of the counterdemonstrations (these were primarily led by Czech initiatives such as *Kaputin!*, *Puls Evropy*, and *NAFO*), they participated in every counterdemonstration and often helped with organisational tasks. At the same time, having gained trust within the Ukrainian community, *Hlas Ukrajiny* successfully mobilised many people to attend in support of the counterdemonstrations. As the initiative emphasised on their social media, although the two anti-establishment movements represented only a part of the Czech population and did not

reflect the views of the majority, it was crucial not to remain passive but to respond to their political claims.

To provide more detail about the goals of *Hlas Ukrajiny* and the aforementioned Czech initiatives with which they have formed a solidarity alliance: *Kaputin!* focuses on staging performative demonstrations against authoritarianism, extremism, and populism; *Puls Evropy* (Pulse of Europe) advocates for EU values, liberal democracy, and solidarity with EU-aspiring states; and *NAFO* is an association of volunteers combating Russian propaganda and disinformation. *Hlas Ukrajiny*, meanwhile, primarily aims to advocate for solidarity with Ukraine, its government, army, and people, while raising awareness of Russia's war crimes. The initiative was not created specifically to counter the two anti-establishment movements, as it was officially formed a month before their first demonstration. However, participating in the counterdemonstrations quickly became an integral part of their broader political advocacy.

In contrast to the anti-establishment movements' reluctance to extend their interpretation of the (poly)crisis beyond Czech borders, *Hlas Ukrajiny* and their solidarity alliance emphasised the complex spatiality of the (poly)crisis, raising awareness of transborder geopolitical and humanitarian threats posed by authoritarian regimes with imperialist policies – threats to international law, democracy, and human rights. They often demonstrated with banners reading, 'Pokud ruský imperialismus porazí Ukrajinu, zničí i nás' (If Russian imperialism defeats Ukraine, it will also destroy us) or 'Silná Ukrajina = silné Česko' (Strong Ukraine = Strong Czechia), underscoring the problematic nature of viewing disruptions and crises as confined within national borders without acknowledging their transboundary causes and effects.

Admittedly, even though displaced Ukrainians did not directly engage with narrating their stance on migration or protection seekers' rights, focusing instead on solidarity with Ukraine, they engaged in the 'politics of presence' (De Genova 2010; McNevin 2012). By

attending counterdemonstrations and making political claims, they took up public space and enacted themselves as political subjects (Isin 2012), asserting the legitimacy of their political presence and actions. This activism appeared to radicalise the anti-establishment protesters, revealing their xenophobic and anti-refugee stance.

When participating in the counterdemonstrations together with Ukrainian and Czech activists, I witnessed how the practices of othering and bordering were enacted by the anti-establishment demonstrators. On multiple occasions, they spat at us, shouted at us, gave us the middle finger, and shoved cameras in our faces. In September 2022, a supporter of the anti-establishment movement pulled a girl by the Ukrainian flag on her bag, causing her to fall to the ground. During the protest a month later, police officers detained two men who had aggressively tried to reach the counterdemonstrators standing on the stairs of the National Museum.

In March 2023, a group of men with a megaphone called on the crowd to march to the stairs of the National Museum and remove a large Ukrainian flag from its wall. As they tried to do so, several young men chanted xenophobic slogans such as ‘Bohemia for Czechs’ and ‘We are at home here’, thus adding tropes of nationalism to the theme of poverty (Šplíchal 2023). As a result, 18 of them were detained for aggressive behaviour toward the police (Kořínek 2023). Such an intensity of the anti-establishment protesters’ attempts to ‘other’ activists from Ukraine and violently push them out of the public space revealed that this site of conflict was indeed a *battleground*.

Thus, the contestation between the anti-establishment movements and the solidarity alliance acted as a litmus test, demonstrating that while the presence and political activism of displaced Ukrainians were not contested by the government or most Czech citizens, they were challenged by a loud and visible part of the population. As one Prague activist emphasised

during our interview, these were the mobilisation and counter-mobilisation dynamics that exposed the anti-refugee stance of the anti-establishment movements.

The second impact was that we unmasked, unmasked their intentions because they told – we are not anti-Ukrainian, we are not pro-Russian, we are only a social movement, and we are only poor people, and we are interested in social things and salaries, etc. And when this crowd walked next to us, there were tens of thousands of people, people who argued against Ukrainians. Yes, and it was the demasked reality. (Interview with Prague activist IV)

At one of the last anti-establishment protests I observed, in April 2023, some of the demonstrators interacted more directly with Ukrainian activists, telling them that ‘Czechia should stop feeding Ukrainians’, or ‘If you support Ukraine that much, why don’t you just go straight from here to the main train station’. At the end of the demonstration, as the anti-establishment protesters marched toward the Czech government building, they shouted at the counterdemonstrators, ‘You are not home’, further marking them as ‘undesirable others’. However, when Czech activists shouted back, ‘We are home here’, many Ukrainian activists joined in within seconds, shouting together, ‘We are home here’.

This was one example of how the counterdemonstrations created a space not only for countering xenophobic narratives but also for enacting political inclusion. In this space, the status of being a migrant or protection seeker did not preclude political participation, and the scripts of exclusionary migration politics could be challenged. This space was shaped by friendly conversations among participants and the display of Ukrainian, Czech, EU, and NATO flags. As the same Czech activist said, each of their counterdemonstrations was ‘very positive... a colourful action with different kinds of flags, and different kinds of people – Ukrainians, Czechs, young, old...’ (Interview with Prague activist IV). The solidarity relations that formed in this inclusive space exemplify what Krasteva et al. (2019:289) describe as opposing ‘the politics of friendship to the politics of fear, solidarity to hate, and ... transforming the Others from “enemies” to neighbours’.

As displaced persons from Ukraine participated in counterdemonstrations together with Czech activists in solidarity, they challenged conventional understandings of migrants' and protection seekers' rights and membership. Although supporters of both anti-establishment movements attempted to 'other' displaced Ukrainians and push them out of the public space, the more Ukrainians resisted (especially as part of the solidarity alliance), the more they asserted their right to be *present* and *political*. One of the members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* told me that they not only felt empowered to hold banners in public spaces but also gained the courage and conviction that doing so was the right thing.

In fact, there have been many cases when even at our counter rallies, when we stand and he spits at your feet, but he runs away, he will not stand and prove his point, and we stand and prove our point. Spitting at your feet and running away is all they can do. And by doing so, they humiliate themselves, not humiliate us. (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* VI)

Importantly, this *battleground* over migrants' and refugees' rights to be political and make political claims was not only localised on Prague's main square but also constituted by multiscale relations (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021), through which the actors acquired and maintained resources, as well as defined their identities and positions in migration politics. Thus, Prague's *battleground* was shaped by diverse networks of disparate power (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021), with displaced people from Ukraine and their allies forming part of local and transnational solidarity networks, while anti-establishment movements aligning with far-right parties across the EU.

Both movements, *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First) and *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty), were supported by the German party Alternative for Germany (AfD), with Christine Anderson, a Member of the European Parliament from AfD, delivering a speech at their joint protest in September 2022. Meanwhile, the leader of *Česká republika na 1. místě*, Ladislav Vrabec, gave a speech at the European Parliament, following an invitation from Mislav Kolakušić, co-founder of the populist European Alliance for Freedom and

Democracy (Hovorková 2023). Domestically, the two anti-establishment movements are connected to the previously mentioned Czech far-right party SPD, while Jindřich Rajchl, the leader of *Česko proti bídě*, also serves as the chair of the right-wing non-parliamentary party Law, Respect, Expertise (PRO).

On the other side of Prague's *battleground* of migration politics, the alliance between displaced Ukrainians and Czech activists was also part of multiscalar solidarity relations with journalists from local and international media, as well as civil society actors engaged in other struggles, including migrant inclusion (e.g. *MigAct*, an NGO supporting migrant-led initiatives). At the same time, as members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* engaged in politics, they built personal relations with Czech politicians, such as when a member of parliament joined them for a drink after a counterdemonstration in October 2022. One of the co-founders of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, who later became the public spokesperson for the initiative, shared how she communicated with Czech politicians and received personal endorsements from them both online and in person.

We were at the Independence Day... and the Czech Governmental Commissioner for the Reconstruction of Ukraine told me, 'I am a fan of yours, you know, I read your Twitter all the time, I like the way you write so much' ... Or the European Parliament Member Tomáš Zdechovský can give me a like, share, or write a comment. We have a very good relationship with Dana Drábová [Chair of the State Office for Nuclear Safety]. She once reposted my tweet and wrote, 'The way this girl does it, this is really the voice of Ukraine for me, and I like her'. (Interview with two coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*)

Admittedly, such support from public political figures is also influenced by shared geopolitical perspectives and Czechia's position in the Russo-Ukrainian war. Nevertheless, through their interactions with the local politicians and by constituting themselves as acting political subjects, displaced Ukrainian activists challenged the boundaries of *the political* as well as conventional understandings of rights and belonging within political communities (Isin 2012).

Thus, while the Czech government and the majority of the population remained supportive of displaced people from Ukraine, the *battleground* of migration politics manifested in the specific dynamics of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation over migrants' and refugees' rights to be political and make political claims in public spaces. By examining these dynamics and the multiscalar alliances shaping the *battleground*, this article demonstrates that the 'battle' on Prague's main square was not only about whether the arrival of displaced Ukrainians constituted a crisis or was part of the (poly)crisis, but also about debates over the rights that protection seekers should be granted or denied in 'abnormal' times.

Concluding Remarks

By examining Prague's movement-counter movement dynamics in relation to migration politics, this article contributes to the conceptualisation of the *battleground* of migration (Ambrosini 2021; Fontanari and Ambrosini 2018) by demonstrating how a simultaneously localised and multiscalar conflict over migrants' and refugees' rights unfolded in the context of the (poly)crisis and contested sociopolitical constructions of normality. Although the initial months following the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war were marked in Czechia by 'unprecedented solidarity' toward displaced persons, seen both institutionally and in the widespread support offered by individual households (Pędziwiatr and Magdziarz 2023), the intensity of this solidarity began to wane over time. The diminishing sense of urgency surrounding the war, combined with the complex entanglements of the (poly)crisis – including transnational geopolitical threats, the energy crisis, and inflation – increasingly impacted the lives of Czech citizens.

Despite the Czech government's unwavering support for Ukraine and the majority of society continuing to stand with displaced Ukrainians, this period of hardship saw the rise of large-scale demonstrations by anti-establishment groups in Prague's main square. These groups framed the (poly)crisis as an economic crisis that primarily harms 'ordinary' Czechs and

enacted their understanding of normality, where the interests of ‘our people’ were to be prioritised over those of ‘others’ – migrants and refugees. In response, displaced Ukrainian activists articulated counternarratives of (poly)crisis, highlighting its boundless dimensions and underscoring the cross-border threats posed by Russia’s imperial war, as well as the need for continuous transnational solidarity in the face of an aggressor. At the same time, by engaging in the ‘politics of presence’ (De Genova 2010; McNevin 2012), Ukrainian citizens enacted their political subjectivity and asserted the legitimacy of their political presence in Prague’s main square. Once they gained visibility through counterdemonstrations, the anti-establishment movements became radicalised and began engaging in practices of othering displaced activists from Ukraine, positioning them outside the citizenship- and ethnicity-based boundaries of belonging.

Although the displacement of people from Ukraine was not typically referred to as a ‘refugee crisis’ (Cantat et al. 2023), the contestations in Prague’s main square revealed that, for Czech far-right and anti-establishment movements, migration was a component of the (poly)crisis, and displaced Ukrainians were perceived as a threat to ‘idealized national uniformity’ (Menjívar et al. 2019). In their efforts to exclude ‘others’, protesters from these movements framed their position within broader shifts in migration politics, effectively utilising far-right narratives and their ‘politics of fear’ (Wodak 2015). Therefore, Prague’s movement-counter movement dynamics uncovered a deeper conflict: a *battleground* of migration politics cantered on questions of what constitutes the ‘norm’ of the national community, who is deemed an acceptable or unacceptable political subject, and what rights protection seekers (non-citizens) should have within what is perceived as normal.

Admittedly, while this paper addresses migration politics, it does not directly engage with migration and integration policies. Further studies could explore how the interplay between crisis narratives, broader migration *politics* (extending beyond governmental

institutions), and *policies* interplay in the context of forced migration and the multiple disruptions of (poly)crisis. Further research could also adopt a more temporally sensitive approach, particularly given that displaced people from Ukraine were granted *temporary* protection status. Examining issues such as ‘solidarity fatigue’, the diminishing sense of emergency, and the protracted nature of crises could illuminate and problematise the temporality of (poly)crisis, including how time influences the sociopolitical construction of (poly)crisis and contestations of narratives integral to migration politics.

Lastly, while the multiscalar analytical approach (Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2021) elucidates how networks of power shaped Prague’s *battleground* of migration politics, highlighting broader shifts toward the securitisation of migration, future research could explore not only the relationships between political actors but also the entire machinery of parallel media spaces created by far-right forces. These networks and spaces of ‘alternative knowledge’ (Castelli Gattinara 2018:279) play a significant role in connecting far-right leaders across the globe around the politicisation of migration. While far-right movements and parties engage in the production and dissemination of ‘alternative knowledge’ that critiques multiculturalism and pluralism, they simultaneously construct an image of migrants and protection seekers as existential threats, particularly in times of (poly)crisis (Nawyn 2019). At the same time, pro-migrant rhetoric rarely occupies a central position in the campaigns of other political parties, highlighting how migration and asylum remain asymmetrically mobilised in formal politics.

Article 3. (Re)shaping Politics: Displaced People from Ukraine in Prague, Transfigured Political Subjectivities, and Solidarity Relations

Introduction

Since Russia waged a full-scale war against Ukraine in February 2022, millions of people have been displaced¹⁴. As Ukrainian citizens crossed borders, their actions in defence of their homeland's territorial integrity, democratic values, and practices also extended abroad. At the same time, the diversity of actors involved in war-related efforts, their claims, and the political settings in different localities led to a range of united and distinct political acts. This article focuses on Prague, Czechia, where displaced people from Ukraine and earlier Ukrainian migrants, along with Czech activists, made various claims in support of Ukraine and its military. Prague's context is particularly intriguing due to the significant role played specifically by displaced persons – those who found themselves in a new political environment and decided to act there despite the rise of far-right forces and the legacies of circular labour migration (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2017; Gheorghiev 2023) that marked Ukrainian migrants as 'temporary' and 'nonpolitical'.

Drawing on ethnographic research with the Prague-based initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny* (Voice of Ukraine), which emerged in the summer of 2022, this article raises the question of what perspective would be appropriate for analysing their political acts performed together with local activists in solidarity, and the political transformations they have brought about. By addressing this question, I offer not only an original empirical contribution to the emerging body of literature on displacement caused by the Russian full-scale invasion and the lived

¹⁴ This article is published in the *Citizenship Studies* journal: Dziadyk, N. (2024). (Re)shaping politics: displaced people from Ukraine in Prague, political subjectivities, and solidarity relations. *Citizenship Studies*, 28(4–5), 444–461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2024.2418612>. Minor corrections have been introduced in the article after its publication for inclusion in this thesis, which, however, do not disrupt either the structure or the main flow of the arguments.

experiences of displaced persons but also contribute to the theoretical debates on migrant and refugee political struggles by highlighting the significance of focusing on their transformative nature. I argue that focusing on transformations can highlight how identities, relationships, and political spaces change, even if these changes are not immediately traceable in policies or media discourse. Furthermore, this approach challenges the divide between citizens and non-citizens by showing how both become ‘acting subjects’ (Isin 2012) capable of change, without underplaying power disparities stemming from citizenship as a legal status.

To demonstrate the complexity of political transformations resulting from displaced Ukrainians’ political acts, I bring into conversation critical citizenship studies (Isin 2009, 2012, 2017; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012) and literature on solidarity with refugees (Cantat 2016; Feischmidt et al. 2018; Della Porta 2018; Siim et al. 2019). While critical citizenship studies provide a conceptual framework of citizenship acts (Isin and Nielsen 2008) for understanding how non-citizens become political and enact their political subjectivities as claimants of rights, they do not fully capture changes in social relations. Literature on solidarity with migrants and refugees complements this by focusing on transformations in social relations and how they relate to other transformative effects of claim-making acts (subjectivities and modes of being political).

Building on the interrelatedness of social movement and migration struggles literature (Ataç et al. 2016) and discussions on citizenship and solidarity (Schwartz and Schwenken 2020), this article further emphasises the need for theoretical approaches that engage in conversation with each other to capture complex empirical realities. Specifically, it contributes to these discussions by showing how the intertwined nature of citizenship acts and solidarity practices in migrant and refugee political struggles drives further political change. As non-citizens claim their right to participate in politics, they reshape social relations and forge new alliances. Concurrently, solidarity practices that challenge citizenship-based power hierarchies

and enact the inclusion of political ‘outsiders’ further reshape or strengthen new political subjectivities, social ties, and the structural conditions of political activism.

This article explains the rationale behind this scholarly conversation through the lived experiences of the initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny* in the context of war-caused displacement, many aspects of which have broader relevance beyond Prague. Importantly, my focus on how critical citizenship studies and solidarity literature complement each other is not aimed at stressing the limitations of the two approaches but at underlining their value. By intertwining empirical research and theory in the following sections, I begin with a short overview of critical citizenship literature and how it can explain the political acts of displaced Ukrainians. In the second section, I bring solidarity literature into conversation with critical citizenship studies. I next provide an excursus into my methodology and introduce the *Hlas Ukrajiny* initiative. The fourth section examines the transformations related to the emergence of new political subjectivities, and the final section, followed by the conclusion, focuses on the solidarity practices that reconfigured these subjectivities by fostering more synergetic relations between *Hlas Ukrajiny* and local activists.

Critical Citizenship Studies and Political Acts by Displaced People from Ukraine

The terrifying and highly mediatised images of the Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022 shook Europe and led to ‘unprecedented solidarity’ with Ukraine and refugees displaced by the war. This included opening Schengen borders and setting up fast registration procedures for temporary protection. Central Eastern European (CEE) states were at the forefront of EU solidarity efforts due to their geographic proximity to Ukraine, with Czechia granting the highest number of temporary protection visas per capita (Eurostat 2022). This stance differed from the non-admission of asylum seekers in 2015-2016 and was often justified by the shared history of Soviet occupation, ‘cultural proximity’, linguistic similarities, a visa-free regime with Ukraine since 2017, and an already significant number of Ukrainian citizens

residing in Czechia – approximately 166,000 registered at the Czech Ministry of Interior as of December 2020 (Martišková and Šumichrast 2020).

Until February 2022, work migration was the dominant type, with temporary labour contracts often leading to protracted circular migration, enabling exploitative labour practices, and preventing the development of networks of labour activism (Martišková and Šumichrast 2020). Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine broke this pattern, although the arrival of refugees, their daily lives, and the activism itself were still significantly shaped by the legacy of circular labour migration and expectations of political inactivity. To be heard and seen in public spaces, displaced activists had to disrupt previously existing narratives about Ukrainians coming to Czechia as a 'cheap labour force'. Thus, they took to the streets and made visible their claims in support of Ukraine, despite being newcomers with limited resources. By doing so, displaced persons from Ukraine (together with some earlier migrants) enacted themselves as political actors – as acting political subjects.

Making sense of their new political subjectivities and the transformations that followed, I argue that critical citizenship literature (Isin 2009, 2012, 2017; Isin and Nielsen 2008; Nyers and Rygiel 2012) provides a strong theoretical framework to understand how refugees become politically active. Critical citizenship scholars problematise citizenship as an established category that marks a legal status and creates boundaries of membership and belonging in a state-based polity. They argue that when migrants and refugees (who are not expected to be political) engage in politics and constitute themselves as claimants of rights, citizenship practices and understandings of political communities become challenged and contested (Ataç et al. 2016). The central concept in explaining such claim-making processes is the 'acts of citizenship' introduced by Isin (2008). According to Isin (Isin 2013:41), citizenship acts are understood as acts that bring ruptures to established practices of political engagement and 'transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers,

outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new subjects as activist citizens (claimants of rights) through creating or transforming sites and stretching scales’.

Critical citizenship studies mostly focus on the claim-making acts of those who are dominated and whose struggles disrupt established practices of exclusion (Isin 2017). Several scholars have examined the political claims of undocumented migrants or non-status migrants who challenge the expectations of their silence and invisibility and make public claims about their rights despite the risks of being deported (McNevin 2012; Nyers 2011). Another powerful example is the literature on refugeehood and citizenship (Redclift 2013; Sigona 2015; Turner 2016). As Bentz (2023) rightly points out, this literature is largely focused on the acts of refugees who stood for their rights and made claims to have a dignified life.

Regarding displaced Ukrainians, it must be noted that their arrival and reception differed from those seeking protection in 2015-2016, who were often detained in refugee camps. Due to the implementation of collective temporary protection, Ukrainian citizens were not required to undergo individual assessments to determine their eligibility for protection, which led to simplified and faster processes of receiving residency documents and access to the labour market (although this did not mean easy employment or sufficient financial support from the state). Temporary protection also meant uncertainty of future residency status, as its years do not count toward permanent residence¹⁵.

The different conditions of displacement and arrival shaped distinctive political claims – from the right to stay in the EU and live in dignified conditions in 2015-2016 to the right to

¹⁵ According to the report by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, in 2022, the European response to the influx of displaced Ukrainians was more unified than in 2015, although significant cross-national differences remained in the rights and restrictions for this group. Some countries adopted more liberal policies, granting easier and faster access to protection and exemptions from restrictive policies, such as accommodation, temporary return, and work access. However, other countries imposed stricter policies on Ukrainians compared to other protection seekers, particularly in areas like permanent residency, integration, financial assistance, and healthcare, leading to uncertainty about long-term solutions (Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research 2023).

be politically present and advocate for military support for their country in 2022. The claims of displaced Ukrainians also differed from what critical citizenship scholars would call ‘claims to have rights they do not have’ (Isin and Nielsen 2008). As documented residents, Ukrainian citizens exercised their right to assembly under Czech and international human rights law, holding protests and demonstrations under police protection and with necessary permits from the city hall. At the same time, although they could legally demonstrate on the streets of Prague, they faced exclusionary practices driven by nationalism, with its restrictive imaginaries of politics being only for nationals, and far-right political forces with their ‘politics of fear’ (Krasteva, Saarinen, et al. 2019). The earlier mentioned legacies of circular labour migration also played a role in constituting the perceptions of Ukrainians in Czechia and the power disparities in their relations with locals. Under these conditions, displaced people from Ukraine made claims to have rights to be *visibly* political and express their political views in Prague’s public space without fear of being subjected to xenophobic hatred. Even if the chanted slogans and displayed posters did not directly say ‘We want to be part of politics’, by chanting ‘Send more weapons to Ukraine’ the activists enacted their claim to have the right to be part of politics, the right to stand in public space and call on the Czech government to send more weapons to Ukraine.

Admittedly, Isin’s acts of citizenship are not the only way of conceptualising displaced persons’ political acts, as both social movement literature and diaspora studies can also provide useful analytical tools, especially in the case of displaced Ukrainians and their mobilisation in support of their homeland. Diaspora literature helps understand transborder connections with the home country that shape political engagement (Koinova 2018; Sökefeld 2006). However, it does not focus on more localised spatial transformations and the complexity of the processes of becoming political in an unfamiliar environment, focusing instead on the political acts of those who already have resources necessary for political engagement. Social movement

scholars, in their turn, have made significant contributions to explaining the structural conditions that mutually constitute mobilisation strategies and repertoires of actions (Eggert and Giugni 2015; Steinhilper 2021). In comparison with social movement literature, critical citizenship studies provide a stronger conceptualisation of the dynamic nature of political activism, seeing migrants' and refugees' political acts not only as a response to injustices but as a part of transformative processes that (re)shape political spaces, identities, imaginaries, and futures, therefore, being the most suitable theoretical framework to make sense of the political transformations coming through the acts of displaced Ukrainians.

I acknowledge that critical citizenship literature can be criticised as putting an overly strong emphasis on the citizen/non-citizen divide, neglecting how new political subjectivities can transcend it and connect to other structures of subjectivity. However, I would like to highlight that critical citizenship studies do not centre their discussions on citizenship as a legal status, but conceptualise citizenship as a collective form of recognition, independent from a nation-state and based on Arendt's (1958) right to have rights (Isin 2009). Thus, they focus on rights making and the constitution of political subjectivities that challenge our understandings of political communities and the *political*.

Importantly, displaced people from Ukraine did not make claims to obtain the legal status of a Czech citizen, nor were the claims of refugees in 2015-2016 driven by the need to obtain a citizenship status. In both cases (although differently framed and performed under different circumstances), these were citizenship acts based on claims to be members of society with equal moral worth, questioning 'the contingency of citizenship' (Ataç et al. 2016) in producing boundaries of belonging and inclusion in the (political) community. Therefore, by thinking with critical citizenship scholars, I do not frame this article in terms of how citizenship as a legal status is directly impacted, but focus on how political acts by non-citizens transform

the notions of being political and disrupt ‘political borders upon which notions of traditional citizenship, as both a legal status and a political identity, are based’ (Ataç et al. 2016:539).

Acts of Citizenship and Solidarity Practices in Conversation

Solidarity practices and relations play a significant role in challenging and redefining political borders and imaginaries of what constitutes a political community. Since critical citizenship literature does not specifically focus on these changes in social relations, bringing it into conversation with the literature on solidarity with displaced people (Cantat 2016; Feischmidt et al. 2018; Della Porta 2018; Siim et al. 2019) enhances the analytical depth of both, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of political shifts. As Schwiertz and Schwenken (2020:412) explain, ‘through practices and relations of solidarity, a political community and thus citizenship can be enacted beyond established contexts by those who already belong to them and have a relatively legitimate position’. Admittedly, the concept of solidarity has taken on different meanings, with scholars focusing on diverse practices and selected aspects of solidarity relations. Bauder and Juffs’s (2020:60) typology of solidarity in migration and refugee literature shows that ‘the use of this concept is complex, multi-dimensional, and normative’, whereas many academic works do not always conceptualise nor explain the meaning of solidarity they adopt.

With consideration of the plethora of meanings that the concept of solidarity is charged with, my take on solidarity and how it relates to citizenship acts builds on Schwiertz and Schwenken’s (2020) concept of *solidarity citizenship* and their view of solidarity as mutual modes of relating and caring based on social and political practices. *Solidarity citizenship* highlights an intertwined nature of solidarity practices and citizenship acts. In the introduction to their special issue, Schwiertz and Schwenken (2020:417) explain that the practices of solidarity can ‘renew, challenge, and shift the ways we define ourselves and act as citizens, particularly regarding our social relations and relationships’. They claim that citizens

themselves, through their solidarity practices, can contribute to transforming political communities by facilitating the recognition and inclusion of non-citizens. Even merely by engaging in solidarity practices, citizens contribute to changing society's understanding of who is considered part of it and to whom solidarity is owed (Kirchhoff 2020).

Admittedly, solidarity can reproduce the citizen/non-citizen divide when those who are 'in' act on behalf of the 'outsiders' using paternalistic frames and reinforcing hierarchies. However, solidarity practices *with* displaced persons and migrants based on more horizontal and cooperative ways of relating can blur the boundaries between citizens and non-citizens, reinforcing new subjectivities of the claimants of rights. Solidarity relations 'instigate change by enacting alternative modes of togetherness and belonging on the ground' (Fleischmann 2020:18). Thus, solidarity adds an important relational aspect to conversations on citizenship acts by showing how differently positioned subjects relate to each other, and how these relationships contribute to changing the structural conditions of political activism by challenging who can be the agents of change and how the boundaries of political communities are constituted.

Bringing solidarity into conversation with critical citizenship studies is both conceptually sound, as illustrated by the above discussion, and necessitated by my empirical observations. This integration helps elucidate how mutually constituted citizenship acts and solidarity practices are, and how this intertwined nature is reflected in transformations within Prague's political space. When displaced people from Ukraine enacted their new political subjectivities in public and highly visible places, despite their limited resources, they drew the attention of local activists, marking the beginning of the development of their relations of solidarity. Thus, their initial steps of taking to the streets and making claims were constitutive of solidarity relations, while later practices of solidarity further empowered displaced Ukrainians, making them feel more included in Prague's political space. Their new political

subjectivities were both a foundation of solidarity relations and were reshaped by them, as more horizontal and inclusive ways of relating had an empowering effect.

The interrelatedness of the transformative potential of solidarity practices and citizenship acts lies at the heart of this article, which seeks to capture how *politics* and the *political* are (re)shaped through displaced persons' political activism. When displaced people enact their new political subjectivities as acting political subjects, they not only challenge who can be political but also enter and transform political spaces, build new relations and alliances, and contest established practices and narratives. When they do it together with local activists in solidarity, new ways of relating to each other are formed – becoming acting political subjects in a shared and co-constituted site of contestation, despite being differently situated, and 'constructing commonality in difference' (Schilliger 2020:536). These processes significantly (re)shape politics by shifting practices of inclusion and exclusion, and by reconfiguring social ties and ways of belonging.

Finally, when looking at solidarity relations through the concept of commoning, the transformative potential of such joint struggles between displaced people and local activists becomes even more evident. As Çağlar (2024:399) underlines, activists 'recognise themselves as political subjects in and through their commoning activities' – through the process of acting and coming together in public space around shared ideas and projects, rather than through the content of their demands or identitarian divisions (although acknowledging power disparities). This perspective not only underlines the interrelatedness of the emergence of new political subjectivities with solidarity relations (especially when seen through commoning), but also shows how such relations disrupt the exclusionary and binary scripts of citizenship by fostering mutual trust and a shared sense of implicatedness in each other's lives.

The Voice of Ukraine in Prague: Methodological Choices and Considerations in Researching with Displaced Ukrainian Activists

Hlas Ukrajiny – a new political initiative that emerged in Prague in the summer of 2022 – translates not only as the Voice of Ukraine but has also become the Voice of Ukraine in Czechia. The initiative was created mostly by young Ukrainian citizens displaced by the war, although a few members had migrated to Czechia beforehand. Predominantly female (reflecting the majority of adult Ukrainian refugees), its leading coordinators are also young women, which inevitably shaped both their claims and how they were perceived in Prague. In a year, *Hlas Ukrajiny* grew into a community of around 50 active members, including Czech activists who joined at different stages. Strong cooperation and friendships were built through their joint political acts, transforming *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s self-identification from the 'community of active Ukrainians' (the initial description on Telegram) to the 'Czech-Ukrainian initiative' (as they now describe themselves on social media). Having the opportunity to join different events to which *Hlas Ukrajiny* was invited, I noticed how the coordinators of the initiative explained the reasons behind being a 'Czech-Ukrainian initiative', emphasising that Czech society was the target audience of their claims and expressing pride in having Czech citizens on their team.

Beginning my ethnographic fieldwork in September 2022 allowed me to closely observe the early transformations of *Hlas Ukrajiny*. The fieldwork was divided into three phases: September 2022 to January 2023, April to May 2023, and August to September 2023. During each phase, I participated in demonstrations, marches, performative happenings, and informal events organised by *Hlas Ukrajiny*. Wanting to be helpful and experience what it was like to be a member of the team, I volunteered with small logistical tasks and helped brainstorm ideas for slogans during organisational meetings. As a woman from Ukraine, I could relate to their anxiety about their loved ones and the survivor's guilt, which helped create a solid

foundation for our friendly relations and sincere conversations. However, living abroad before the full-scale war meant that my experience of it was remote and safe, primarily through conversations, news, and social media – vastly different from the displaced activists who fled the horrors of war. My subjectivity as a researcher from Ukraine, albeit with a remote experience of the war, inevitably influenced both my field stay and the analysis of the interviews and observations. This did make the research more emotionally charged and somewhat more hopeful, but most importantly, it added invaluable nuances to the understanding of what it means to be a Ukrainian abroad during the war (Kurylo 2023; Tsymbalyuk 2023). Aware of my positionality, I offer a nuanced perspective on displaced Ukrainians' political activism, rich with interviews and observations, which I hope will do justice to their lived experiences.

During my field stay, I conducted thirteen in-depth interviews with members of *Hlas Ukrainy* (including a follow-up interview jointly conducted with both co-founders) and eight in-depth interviews with local activists closely collaborating with the initiative (Annex 1). Mapping out the individuals and organisations in solidarity with *Hlas Ukrainy* proved challenging since establishing ties with local civil society was a dynamic process, while the constellation of actors cooperating on specific demonstrations and performances depended on the nature of each event. Thus, I conducted interviews with four individual activists (Czech citizens, some of whom later became integral members of *Hlas Ukrainy*), two members of the Ukrainian diaspora who are Czech citizens, and the leaders of two Czech initiatives – *Kaputin!* and *Puls Evropy* (Pulse of Europe). *Kaputin!* organises performative demonstrations against authoritarianism, extremism, and populism, while *Puls Evropy* advocates for upholding EU values, liberal democracy, and solidarity with EU-aspired states.

The interviews were loosely structured, allowing participants to steer the conversation towards topics meaningful to them. They were conducted in Ukrainian and English, with

Ukrainian quotes translated for this article. Most interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded in NVivo using both deductive and inductive methods. For participants who declined recording but consented to note-taking, notes were coded separately. Coding was primarily inductive, allowing for openness of inquiry; however, deductive codes were used for initial systematisation. Overarching themes of interest (e.g., refugeehood, political participation, solidarity) were identified deductively from ethnographic observations and literature insights. As I read through the transcripts, I open-coded emerging sub-themes like ‘non-refugee identities’, ‘contentious political space’, and ‘linguistic solidarity’. The combined coding approach was crucial given the depth and duration of the interviews (typically around or over one and a half hours), ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the volume of knowledge shared by research participants. Combining these interviews with ethnographic observations helped me understand how members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* and the activists in solidarity perceived Prague’s political space, their standing, and their ways of relating.

Political Subjectivities and War-Caused Displacement – Claiming the Right to Be Part of Politics

Hlas Ukrajiny was one of the multiple actors in Europe and across the world that took an awareness-raising and political advocacy role after the full-fledged Russian invasion began. However, the scale and speed of transformations within *Hlas Ukrajiny* and the political spaces around them make their story especially inspiring for conceptual thinking. The majority of the initiative’s members had resided in Czechia for less than a year before the initiative’s formation. They had to familiarise themselves with various aspects of daily life – from health insurance and transport systems to the laws on public gatherings and petitioning. It is impressive how quickly they learnt, for instance, how to announce protests at the police office and whom to send press releases to. Solidarity practices by local activists who shared their knowledge and experience played an important role in these speedy transformations. In a couple of months,

members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* grasped the nuances of the local political environment and became visible in Prague's public spaces. They organised or participated in more than 100 events in one year, including more than 20 big demonstrations coordinated on their own. In their protests, marches, and performative happenings, *Hlas Ukrajiny* made claims about their political belonging in Prague and voiced demands that targeted:

- The Czech government and the governments of other states represented in Czechia by their embassies (e.g., sending more weapons to Ukraine),
- Czech businesses (e.g., no trade with Russia),
- International organisations (e.g., the exclusion of Russia from the UN Security Council),
- Czech activists, broader society, and tourists visiting Prague (e.g., sending donations, signing petitions, and countering Russian disinformation).

It is important to underline that there were active Ukrainians in Czechia before *Hlas Ukrajiny*. An NGO, *Prague Maidan*, was created in 2014 by members of the Ukrainian diaspora together with Czech activists to support the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity. However, their activities soon shifted from public appeals to charity and collecting donations. At the same time, Ukrainian activists in other Czech cities did not always receive much visibility since the largest media and central political institutions are mostly Prague-focused. Therefore, even these images of politically active Ukrainians that existed after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 faded with time, and with intensified temporary labour migration, migrants from Ukraine started being perceived more and more as a 'cheap labour force'. Such an 'invisibility' of Ukrainian migrant workers constituted conditions in which displaced Ukrainians had to create their own scripts of actions and modes of being political, bringing ruptures with established practices and expectations of their political inactivity.

One of the coordinators and co-founders of *Hlas Ukrajiny* agreed that Ukrainians had been engaging in social and political life in Czechia before them, ‘but not in the format of *public activism*’ (Interview with two coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*), appearing less in mass media and not being active on social media. Thus, members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* wanted to challenge this lack of *public activism* to raise awareness about the atrocities of the Russian government and army, as well as to give visibility to the political consciousness of migrants and displaced people from Ukraine. In their interviews, members of the initiative often spoke about the importance of engaging in politics as a displaced person to challenge the assumptions of silence.

In the beginning, I thought, I am a foreigner here, this is not my country, I am a refugee without rights... I should dress as a poor person and not wear makeup... but now I understand, I have rights, I am here because of the war in my country, I am grateful but also have the right not to be silent (Member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II).

If we talk about refugees who have arrived now [including the author of the quote], who have left physical danger to be here, to save their lives, the lives of their children... they [people living in Czechia] may have the impression that I am safe here, the state gives me payments, I do not need anything else. I will just sit here quietly so that I do not get kicked out of the country, that is enough for me. This is a stereotypical... maybe this is the impression that is created, but it is absolutely wrong. Because if it were so, then Czech society would think that these are freeloaders who are happy with everything. The Czech government would be like, well, diplomats are making appeals to us, but Ukrainian people are happy, they are assimilating here, most of them will be a relatively large workforce, so it is even economically beneficial that we give them this multi-visa. We cannot allow people to have such an idea in their minds (Coordinator of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II).

Despite being new to Prague’s political space, *Hlas Ukrajiny* disrupted the expectations of silent gratitude to the Czech government and society. Members of the initiative made themselves visible in the public space and articulated their claims to be included in shaping politics. Making claims as acting political subjects meant for displaced Ukrainians enacting their new political subjectivities with specific positionality – as ‘representatives of our war’ (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* VI). The role of the war should not be underestimated. Survivor guilt and the continuous experience of the war through exposure to

news and conversations with loved ones made it impossible for displaced Ukrainians in Prague not to be(come) political. At the same time, their claim-making acts (re)shaped the relations between *Hlas Ukrajiny* and other members of Prague's political space. The more active, present, and visible they became, the more their positionality went beyond being 'representatives of the war'. Several members of the initiative joined collective political acts that did not directly concern the Russian war against Ukraine, such as pride events and feminist protests *Women, Life, Freedom* organised by activists from Iran (although the latter was a topic of disagreement within the initiative). Solidarity relations with Czech citizens played a significant role in constituting these more transversal subjectivities, while broader engagement with various active communities in Prague also strengthened solidarity relations.

Solidarity Practices and Contentious Politics – (Re)Shaping Social Relations

In comparison to places with larger and 'older' Ukrainian diasporas that took the lead in war-related political advocacy, in Prague, the role of mobilising people was taken on by displaced Ukrainians. Without diasporic resources such as social networks, language skills, and knowledge of local political institutions, solidarity practices played an important role in shaping an environment where Ukrainian activists could become political not only faster but also *more visibly*. Considering the brief time displaced Ukrainians had resided in Czechia, local activists supported them in terms of logistics, translations, and guidance through the legal regulations on public gatherings and petitions. Sometimes, Prague activists contacted the media themselves and provided linguistic support in translating or proofreading press releases (Interview with a coordinator of *Hlas Ukrajiny* II). One of them, a young Czech woman born in Moldova, very quickly became an integral member of the core team of *Hlas Ukrajiny*. In our interview, she reflected on providing linguistic support and how important it was for her that *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s protests were 'seen as Czech and Ukrainian, and not as only Ukrainian'.

It was, I think at that protest ... The girls had microphones, they had written the speech, and I realised that they have Czech with a very strong accent, and it would help the Czech people who are passing by that someone who is fluent in Czech is reading the Czech [text] because then... It looks like... not only Ukrainian protest... I said to [anonymised name] that... if they want, I can read the Czech part next time... (Prague activist I).

It may initially seem that offering linguistic support was a way of signalling one's foreignness and (re)producing power hierarchies, but my observations of the relations between this Prague activist and the members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* point in a different direction. Their relationship was based on friendship and learning from each other, and such legitimisation through language embedded in peer and friendly relations was not done to emphasise power hierarchy or non-belongingness. Instead, it was a way to challenge the initial power imbalance and show the demonstrators and passers-by that the messages of the 'predominantly Ukrainian initiative' were welcomed and upheld by the 'host society'. Such linguistic solidarity practices were powerful tools in helping newcomers build bridges and connections with the local audience (García Agustín and Jørgensen 2021).

Prague activists saw political solidarity with *Hlas Ukrajiny* not only as an inclusive practice aimed at opening political space for non-citizens but also emphasised synergetic cooperation and shared goals. During our interview, a leader of the initiative *Kaputin!* talked about their joint actions of demanding more support for Ukraine and its army as a way to target authoritarian regimes (Interview with Prague activist II). In the case of *Puls Evropy*, their cooperation with *Hlas Ukrajiny* was based on the shared values attached to European integration and the aspirations of both Ukraine and civil society activists from Ukraine to defend these values against Russian imperialism. Individual activists did not have institutionalised agendas but based their cooperation on joint opinions about international politics and also personal reasons, such as having Ukrainian friends or having visited Ukraine.

Shared goals and views created a foundation for solidarity practices that were not unidirectional but cooperative and synergetic. Having contact with a broad audience of people from Ukraine, as well as their trust, *Hlas Ukrajiny* could mobilise more participants for joint actions. In her interview, the same Prague activist, who later became an integral member of the core team, described the support given by *Hlas Ukrajiny* to an influential civil society organisation *Milion Chvilek*.

So, at the point when *Milion Chvilek* was doing the programme [event], and they just said, ‘We need someone to sing the anthem’ – here is the person... ‘We need someone [from Ukraine] to tell the story [about the invasion]’ – here is the person. You know, and it was... everything was because [anonymised name of a co-coordinator of *Hlas Ukrajiny*] built the trust from the community, and [anonymised name of a co-coordinator of *Hlas Ukrajiny*] did the protests, so they can... you know sing in front of people and so on ... (Prague activist I).

Thus, having common goals, exchanging resources, and legitimising each other whenever a Ukrainian or Czech voice was needed led to more equal relationships and synergetic solidarity that laid a foundation for further transformations in Prague’s politics. These mutual support practices changed how members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* saw themselves and transfigured their political subjectivities from claimants of rights *to* Czech society and its institutions to claimants of rights *within* Czech society. At the same time, solidarity relations were transformational for Czech activists too, as for some of them, acts of solidarity were also the moments of enacting more transversal political subjectivities by making claims to recognise and include ‘political outsiders’. Moreover, the new ways of relating to each other challenged understandings of what could be considered a political community and who can belong to one.

One of the remarkable outcomes of such transformation was the co-creation of an *inclusive solidarity space* by *Hlas Ukrajiny* and Prague activists in response to the anti-governmental protests with xenophobic and far-right narratives¹⁶. The first anti-governmental

¹⁶ I do not strictly categorise this movement as far-right, as the organisers and speakers come from diverse political backgrounds, including members of the *Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* (Communist Party of Bohemia and

demonstration *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic in the 1st Place) took place on September 3, 2022, when up to 70,000 people gathered at Wenceslas Square. There were five more demonstrations at the same place in the next half a year, with the last two having a different name due to the contestation in the leadership – *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia against Poverty). The usual demands of the organisers were similar to other far-right movements in Europe – direct purchases of ‘cheap’ Russian gas, independence from the EU and NATO, and the discontinuation of military assistance for Ukraine (Pehe 2022). These demands were rooted in the narratives that Czechia should put the interests of its citizens at the fore (Pšenička and Stuchlíková 2022).

In response to the xenophobic anti-governmental protests, *Hlas Ukrajiny* and local activists co-created an *inclusive solidarity space* by regularly attending the counterdemonstrations at the stairs of the National Museum facing Wenceslas Square. This space was shaped by friendly conversations among the participants, banners with inscriptions calling to support Ukraine (‘If Russian imperialism defeats Ukraine, it will also destroy us’ or ‘Strong Ukraine = Strong Czechia’ – translated from Czech to English), and the display of Ukrainian, Czech, EU, and NATO flags. Prague activists and members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* reflected during our interviews on how such an inclusive space of joint political acts helped them feel confident in standing against exclusionary far-right narratives.

And you could see, our action, even if it was a counter-manifestation, it was very positive and funny. Yes, because we simply waved to these people, and we waved with flags, and it was a colourful action with different kinds of flags, and different kinds of people, Ukrainians, Czechs, young, old, and... it is simply our style (Prague activist IV).

Even the rally that took place on Friday, the counter-rally to that pro-Russian one, I felt somehow... well, that we are not alone in this. Well, first of all, we can go to Wenceslas Square. We can stand with Ukrainian flags, with our slogans. Secondly, there are Czechs

Moravia) and a leader of a major trade union. Nonetheless, members of the movements are united by strong nationalist ideas and rhetoric akin to those found in other far-right movements in Europe.

up there with European and NATO flags. So, we are no longer alone (Member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* I).

During the demonstration in April 2023, when the far-right protesters were marching towards the building of the Czech government and shouting to the counterdemonstrators, ‘Nejste doma’ (You are not home), Prague activists shouted back, ‘Jsme tu doma’ (We are home here). Within seconds, many Ukrainian activists joined in, shouting ‘Jsme tu doma’ (We are home here) together with their Czech friends, signalling an inclusive solidarity space where one’s citizenship and nationality did not prevent participation in politics. Therefore, seeing political subjectivities and social relations in their interconnectedness does not only show how social relations become transfigured with the emergence of new subjectivities but also how these subjectivities are further reinforced and (re)shaped in the course of the dynamic development of social relations. Such processes inevitably shape politics and bring political transformations that signify shifts in our imaginaries about who can be political and together with whom.

Conclusion

War, displacement, and the political activism they spur are intricate processes shaped by specific spatiotemporal conditions. Understanding these processes is a challenging task that requires complex theoretical engagement. Therefore, in this article, I bring into conversation critical citizenship studies with the literature on solidarity with refugees to demonstrate how political subjectivities and solidarity relations are mutually constituted, and how their interrelatedness drives further political transformations. By doing so, this article contributes to the emerging body of literature on the lived experiences and agency of displaced persons from Ukraine, addressing the question of the most suitable theoretical approach for understanding their experiences.

In February 2022, the shocking realisation of the brutal war nearby influenced how displaced persons from Ukraine were received in Czechia. Strong empathy, strengthened by ‘cultural proximity’ and perceptions of the transborder geopolitical threat from Russia’s imperial agenda, also played a role in creating conditions under which Ukrainian activists were in a somewhat favourable position (as much as this word can be used in the context of war) for acting politically and establishing solidarity relations. They did not face the same xenophobia that those seeking protection in 2015-2016 were exposed to, although mostly indirectly through political discourses, as Czechia did not admit nearly any asylum seekers at that time. However, welcoming displaced Ukrainians to get protection in Czechia did not necessarily mean treating them as equal members of Prague’s political space – such inclusion started to materialise only after their initial acts of claim-making, in which they challenged the expectation of Ukrainian citizens being silent and compliant workers.

As the initial shock of the war intertwined with daily routines and displaced people from Ukraine learned to navigate life in Czechia, goal-oriented and friendly interactions with local activists reinforced their feeling of being accepted in Prague’s political space. Sharing common objectives, exchanging resources, and mutually endorsing each other’s voices whenever a Ukrainian or Czech perspective was needed fostered more horizontal relationships and *synergistic solidarity*. This, in turn, transformed their political subjectivities from claimants of rights *to* Czech society and its institutions to claimants of rights *within* Czech society.

As solidarity is a ‘contingent and temporary phenomenon’ (Schilliger 2020:534), the practices and relations of solidarity change over time. As one reads this article, multiple shifts might have occurred in Prague’s political space, from geopolitical changes related to the war to changes in the temporary protection regime, including its possible suspension and the uncertain implications of such a suspension for millions of Ukrainian citizens in the EU. Far-right ideological forces might gain momentum, pushing restrictive migration policies and

practices of exclusion. Time might lead to the loss of emergency, activist burnout, ‘solidarity fatigue’ or ‘solidarity switch’ (refocusing on other catastrophic events in the world).

This raises the question of what further reconfigurations of displaced Ukrainians’ political subjectivities might occur. How will their social relations with local activists change when solidarity practices become less frequent? Will they have to abandon more visible and resource-intensive political acts and engage in less conspicuous daily practices? What will these changes signal to the broader society – political inactivity of migrants and refugees, or shifted sites of political struggles? Will displaced people start connecting more with other structures of subjectivities, shifting their struggles from war-related activism to labour and housing issues, or will they remain the staunch advocates of solidarity with Ukraine? It is essential to remember that the constellation of conditions that mutually constitute political transformations is always complex and dynamic, and recognising this complexity is crucial for grasping the multifaceted and evolving nature of politics and political change.

Conclusion

The war, unfortunately, separated families, took away sons and daughters, and at the same time united us into one big family. And on February 24, we made a choice. And the cold, emotionless truth of the war's realities is that this choice was different. Someone stayed here, in Ukraine, someone fled, someone was besieged, someone evacuated their children, someone went to the front, someone rescued others, someone saved their family, someone left and stayed there, and someone left and returned home. To Ukraine. And these are stories of people, stories of men and women. Those who could not stay at home and went to the front. And those who could no longer stay abroad, somewhere far from home, and returned. After realizing and saying to themselves: 'I do care. I am needed. Needed for victory, needed for Ukraine'. Those who proved: I am stronger than fear. Those who proved: I am stronger than doubts. Because I know that one day I will have to ask myself: who am I? *To make a choice about who I want to be. A victim or a winner? A refugee or a citizen?* (President Zelenskyy, December 31, 2023)

Listening to President Zelenskyy's speech on the eve of the New Year 2024, I kept asking myself why leaving Ukraine was framed as a *choice*, and why *refugee versus citizen* was presented as a binary. Indeed, people had to decide whether to leave or stay, but this decision was made under the enforced conditions of war. Wars, with their disruptive and traumatic nature, produce not only forced mobility but also immobility (Vigh and Bjarnesen 2016): while some flee affected regions or states, others remain either voluntarily or under constraint. These dynamics generate both new forms of societal support and grievances, practices of shaming, and moral justifications. From my ethnographic research with the initiative *Hlas Ukrajiny*, I knew how painful the decision to leave was – marked by separation from loved ones and deep feelings of guilt. In our later conversations (after my fieldwork ended), displaced Ukrainians also reflected on how upsetting it was to be framed as *non-citizens* in the president's speech, only because they sought refuge abroad, especially when they were doing so much to support Ukraine through political activism.

As a researcher, this stark binary of refugee versus citizen caught my eye. Some scholars have conceptualised refugeeeness and citizenship as two poles of a continuum (Bentz and Goreau-Ponceaud 2020), particularly in relation to host states, where refugees aspire to

become citizens as a pathway to full rights, certainty, and unconditional protection (Marucco 2022). Later, however, Bentz (2023) rejects this dualism, showing how Tibetans in Canada simultaneously reclaim both ends of the spectrum by holding Canadian citizenship while self-identifying as refugees to mobilise for their homeland. Yet these debates largely concern citizenship in host states. Zelenskyy's framing implied something different: that leaving Ukraine during war was a conscious act of *abandoning citizenship* as a moral and political responsibility. In this view, 'true citizens' do not become refugees; they remain in the state to defend it.

This PhD thesis, however, challenges the binary Zelenskyy implied¹⁷ by showing what it means to be a Ukrainian citizen in war-driven displacement: to act politically from abroad, driven by a duty toward Ukraine, while striving for inclusion in the new place. The activists with whom I conducted my fieldwork, although increasingly embedded in Prague's and Czechia's political landscape, did not abandon Ukrainian citizenship. They sought ways to remain connected, to stand for Ukrainian statehood from abroad, and to alleviate the suffering of those left at home. The phrase '*kozhen na svoiemu misti*' ('everyone in their own place'), which widely circulated in political and media discourse, captured this ethos: that everyone could contribute to Ukraine's victory, wherever they were – and this is precisely what members of *Hlas Ukrainy* did.

Thus, when writing about displaced activists who enacted Ukrainian citizenship from abroad while simultaneously claiming belonging in Prague's political community, I approach citizenship and refugeeness not as opposite ends of a spectrum but as intertwined concepts, gaining new meanings in contexts of war-driven displacement. Across its three articles, this

¹⁷ Whether Zelenskyy intended the exclusionary connotation of his speech is difficult to say. However, his following New Year's address struck a different tone: 'One day Ukraine will return, for all of us to be together again. The only thing that will stand between Ukrainians will be a generous table. I know that all of our people will meet at this table, including those who are abroad now but who have preserved Ukraine in their hearts'.

thesis foregrounds the complexity and relationality of this positionality: from the duality of personhood and statehood, to the contestations of migration politics as a battleground, and to the reconfigurations of political subjectivity and belonging through solidarity relations. The next section reflects on how these analytical threads address the overarching questions of the thesis, as posed in the introduction.

From Answers to New Questions

What Is Distinctive About War-Driven Displacement, and How Does Engaging in Politics as a Person Displaced by War Generate Political Subjectivities?

Displacement is a key concept of this thesis, not only as an empirical condition but as a constitutive factor in the political engagement of displaced Ukrainians. For both those who fled after the full-scale invasion of February 2022 and those who had migrated to Czechia earlier, the war profoundly disrupted daily lives, shaping both their possibilities and visions of return. Displacement entailed not only involuntary movement but also the loss of familiar roles and positions in society. It is inseparable from what Vigh and Bjarnesen (2016:13) describe as ‘unsettledness and estrangement’ and ‘experience of hardship related to mobility and change’. Many displaced Ukrainians, regardless of when and how they left, had to assume new social roles as caretakers for relatives and loved ones (sometimes from afar by supporting those who stayed in Ukraine financially or emotionally), endure disrupted routines through constant exposure to the war, and cope with shattered expectations of return.

Displacement thus emerges as constitutive of Ukrainian activists’ political subjectivity: the urgency of sudden flight, survivor guilt, uncertainty about the future, the temporariness of protection, and the orientation toward eventual (but war-conditioned) return all shaped their political engagement. For some, however, displacement was experienced not through movement but through immobility: those who were already in Czechia before the invasion

became displaced when returning to Ukraine became difficult. This redefinition of their status likewise influenced their engagement with the receiving society, where they might end up remaining longer than anticipated. Thus, placing displacement at the centre, this thesis shows how practices, sensibilities, and constraints of political subjectivity were forged in the immediacy of war, sudden forced migration, as well as forced immobility. It develops the concept of *displaced citizenship* to demonstrate how activism stemmed from a perceived moral duty to act politically in support of Ukraine and those fighting the war, while also being shaped by the symbolic boundaries of Czech political space.

When making claims as non-citizens under temporary protection, displaced Ukrainians articulated their right to be political from a particular positionality – as ‘representatives of our war’ (Interview with a member of *Hlas Ukrajiny* VI). Their activism reflected both loyalty to Ukraine – with the defensive war reaffirming the significance of Ukrainian statehood – and a strategic, cautious engagement with Czech society and state institutions. Displaced Ukrainians were not simply *in* Czechia; they were under the protection of the Czech state – a protection conditional on shifting geopolitical dynamics and the politicisation of migration at both the Czech and EU levels.

At the same time, the modes of political engagement and positioning of displaced Ukrainians in Czechia were shaped not only by the specifics of their temporary protection status but also by the responsiveness of local publics, which ranged from solidarity through joint political acts to antagonism. Although displaced persons from Ukraine could legally demonstrate on the streets of Prague, experiences of being othered as non-nationals, alongside the rise of anti-migrant and specifically anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in Czechia (Černý 2023; Pšenička and Stuchlíková 2022), further shaped *caution* in their political engagement. Thus, displaced Ukrainians’ activism involved careful navigation of visibility and claim-making, as concerns about how their demonstrations would be perceived by Czech society strongly

influenced decisions about when, where, and how to act. Importantly, since temporary protection was granted collectively to Ukrainians as a group, this fostered a sense of shared responsibility for how their political acts represented the Ukrainian community. Considering that their actions might affect broader societal attitudes toward Ukrainians, *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s engagement was shaped by a dual negotiation: fulfilling moral and political duties toward Ukraine, while safeguarding fragile inclusion in Czechia.

Moreover, in their pursuit of political inclusion and recognition as claim-making actors, displaced activists also had to challenge both the expectations of silent gratitude embedded in the logic of temporary protection (Moulin 2012) – conditional and potentially withdrawable – as well as long-standing narratives that cast Ukrainians primarily as ‘obedient’ and ‘cheap labour’. Despite being new in Prague’s political landscape, still processing the traumas of war and displacement, they mobilised on the streets of Prague to voice demands in support of Ukraine, even when these demands conflicted with parts of the Czech society or directly addressed such ‘state-guarded’ issues as military spending and national defence.

While *Hlas Ukrajiny*'s chants did not explicitly state, ‘We demand political inclusion and recognition’, their calls to ‘Send more weapons to Ukraine’ enacted precisely this: the right to participate in political life, to be political subjects in Prague’s public space, and to address the Czech government directly. Through these acts, displaced Ukrainians claimed recognition not through appeals to a shared Czech identity but as members of Prague’s political community, grounded in shared humanity and equal moral worth. Thus, displaced Ukrainians performed and negotiated what I term *displaced citizenship*. They enacted Ukrainian citizenship from the positionality of persons displaced by the war, while also positioning themselves as non-citizen political subjects making claims on the Czech state and society under an uncertain protection regime. Their moral duty to support Ukraine was, therefore, inseparable from the challenge of speaking politically as non-citizens.

Yet despite this empirically grounded conceptualisation of displaced citizenship, a question remains: could alternative theoretical approaches outside the language of citizenship offer further insights? It is evident that displaced Ukrainians engage in politics, that their actions and claims are political, and that they enact political subjectivity. Yet perhaps these subjectivities need not always be framed through the lens of citizenship. The conceptual framework of citizenship, even in its critical approaches, can obscure other modes of being political by remaining anchored in the logic of statism and the citizen/non-citizen binary. As a result, it risks reproducing the very exclusions it seeks to critique by overlooking more fluid positionalities and shifting forms of belonging and moral orientation. In the final article, I acknowledge critiques of critical citizenship literature for its tendency to overemphasise the citizen/non-citizen binary in conceptualising migrant and refugee political struggles, as well as for overlooking how new political subjectivities may transcend or unsettle these categories.

By showing what it means to act politically as persons displaced by war, could *Hlas Ukrainy*'s activism invite a rethinking that decentres citizenship itself? Even though their activism was in support of Ukraine, moving beyond the lens of citizenship could allow us to understand their perceived moral duty in times of war not through the logic or language of the state, but as a form of moral action and responsibility – guided by shared ‘concerned-ness’ for other human beings suffering from war and an ‘implicated-ness’ in the lives of others (McNevin et al. 2022:791). At the same time, relations formed in the receiving society, especially those of solidarity, might also appear differently when not framed as solidarity between citizens and non-citizens. Rather than viewing Ukrainians primarily as non-citizens acting in displacement with the support of Czech citizens, we might instead see these relations as grounded in care and commoning (Çağlar 2024). Thus, further engagement with alternative theoretical and conceptual approaches could shed light on how to move beyond, or work in

parallel with, the current framework to better capture the more relational and affective dimensions of political action and belonging.

Rancière's (1999) notion of political subjectification, for instance, goes beyond citizenship by showing how those invisible or excluded from politics – 'those who have no part' (Rancière 1999:30) – constitute themselves as political actors by occupying the public scene and showing that they must be taken as members of society with equal moral worth, 'despite their differential exclusion' (Schwartz 2022:294). In the context of displaced Ukrainians in Prague, this perspective could draw attention to how they enacted political voice and claimed membership in Prague's political community through a *politics of presence* in public spaces rather than through appeals to formal rights or institutional inclusion.

Alternatively, focusing on the notion of *membership* rather than citizenship could help move away from statist frameworks and rigid insider/outsider distinctions by underlining even more strongly the relational and processual meanings of political acts and subjectivities (McNevin et al. 2022). Although membership still signifies exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics, seeing it as a form of *activity* can shift the focus to interactions and relations of recognition and collaboration. This could highlight even more the relational aspects of mutuality and solidarity that are so central to displaced Ukrainians' political activism. Moreover, membership could also give more space to multiscalarity (McNevin et al. 2022:788), emphasising how displaced people from Ukraine simultaneously inhabited multiple, overlapping forms and claims of belonging – as residents in Czechia under temporary protection, as actors transforming political spaces in Prague, as members of transnational activist networks of solidarity with Ukrainians resisting the war, and as citizens acting on behalf of a state under attack.

Importantly, these future directions do not negate the conceptualisation advanced in this thesis. I have demonstrated that the concept of citizenship remains useful for capturing the

duality of personhood and statehood outlined in the introduction: on the one hand, as an enactment of rights-bearing subjectivities that redefine the boundaries of political community; on the other, as an enactment of a moral duty toward the home state in wartime. In this way, the thesis conceptualises the intertwined experiences of citizenship and non-citizenship, where legal, political, and identity dimensions interact in configurations shaped by war and displacement, producing specific constellations of rights, duties, membership, and belonging. By centring displacement and foregrounding this duality of personhood and statehood, the thesis makes a valuable contribution to critical citizenship debates.

Thus, exploring alternative approaches beyond the language of citizenship does not necessarily mean abandoning the citizenship framework. On the contrary, a more reflexive engagement with the fieldwork materials through the lens of political subjectification or membership may strengthen the analytical value of displaced citizenship by showing its relevance even when juxtaposed with other conceptual approaches. At the same time, when considered alongside the citizenship literature, these perspectives could enrich theoretical debates by adding nuance to the processes through which displaced persons become political subjects through acts, relations, and practices. In this way, the search for alternative perspectives becomes not a departure but an opportunity to question, refine, and potentially strengthen the conceptual framework developed in this thesis, while also laying the groundwork for a broader book-length project.

How Do Displaced People Navigate New Relational and Political Landscapes Through Their Activism?

Displaced by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, most members of *Hlas Ukrainy* had lived in Czechia for less than a year before forming the initiative. They had to navigate a new environment: from housing and health insurance to the legal frameworks governing public

gatherings and petitions. It is striking how quickly they learned, knowing, for example, how to notify the police about demonstrations or where to send press releases. These transformations were not achieved in isolation: solidarity from local activists, who shared their knowledge and practical experience, played an important role, shaping an environment where Ukrainian activists could become political not only faster but also *more visibly*.

At the same time, displaced Ukrainians were far from ‘resource poor’, especially as they brought with them intimate knowledge of the war and Ukrainian politics. Thus, through shared goals, pooled resources, and mutual recognition, Ukrainian and Czech activists forged relationships of synergetic solidarity that laid the groundwork for broader transformations in Prague’s politics. For members of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, these relationships reshaped their self-perceptions: from outsiders making claims *to* Czech society to participants making claims *within* it. For Czech activists, acts of solidarity became moments of enacting more transversal subjectivities by recognising and including ‘political outsiders’.

One of the clearest outcomes of this cooperation was the creation of an inclusive solidarity space in response to two interconnected anti-establishment movements: *Česká republika na 1. místě* (Czech Republic First) and *Česko proti bídě* (Czechia Against Poverty). These movements mobilised far-right and populist framings of the (poly)crisis, scapegoating Ukrainian refugees for economic hardship and portraying their visible (political) presence as ‘identity suppression’ (Plán Česká republika na 1. místě! n.d.). Already at the first protest in September 2022, speakers called for an end to the ‘planned dilution of the [Czech] nation by Ukrainian refugees’ (Pšenička and Stuchlíková 2022), while participants displayed overt xenophobia.

At a demonstration in April 2023, some of the protesters directly confronted displaced Ukrainians – who participated in the counterdemonstration together with their Czech allies – telling them to ‘go home’ and that ‘Czechia should stop feeding Ukrainians’. As the march

ended, anti-establishment protesters shouted at counterdemonstrators: ‘You are not home’. In response, Czech activists shouted back, ‘We are home here’, quickly echoed by many Ukrainians. Such moments showed how counterdemonstrations became spaces not only to resist far-right narratives but also to perform inclusion, where refugee or temporary protection status did not mean non-membership. From this perspective, solidarity was not merely an affective stance but a constitutive practice of claim-making, empowering displaced persons in their enactment of political rights.

These solidarities also extended into broader activist networks. As *Hlas Ukrajiny* grew more active and visible, its positionality extended beyond being ‘representing the war’. Many of the initiative members joined collective political acts not directly tied to Russia’s invasion, such as Pride events and the *Women, Life, Freedom* demonstrations. These engagements not only fostered new sociabilities of political potential but also broadened the very notion of political community – who can belong to it and what struggles or injustices could connect its members. Lastly, the solidarity practices between displaced Ukrainians, Prague activists, and other migrant groups affirmed that personhood, rather than legal status, formed the basis of mutual recognition and political inclusion, at least for a significant part of Prague’s political community.

At the same time, this thesis recognises that solidarity with Ukrainians was, in many respects, an ‘easy’ solidarity for Prague activists and broader society. But what about more ‘difficult’ solidarities? After all, standing with ‘culturally similar’ Ukrainians, who were seen as fighting the same geopolitical enemy, was far less challenging than solidarities across deeper lines of difference. By contrast, more ‘genuine’ solidarities may emerge when it is not straightforward to identify with another’s struggles but solidarians nevertheless choose to stand alongside them – through openness, dialogue, and the ‘collective forging of commonalities’ through differences (García Agustín and Jørgensen 2021:859).

Although my ethnographic inquiry mainly focused on solidarity with displaced Ukrainians, it quickly became clear that many solidarians I interviewed were motivated by broader commitments to justice and equality. Through their engagement in, and reflection on, solidarity practices, they revealed that their actions were not guided by a logic of deservingness that singles out specific groups, but by mutual respect and a recognition of human interdependence, where justice and care are owed to all. One of the Prague activists who had been involved in civic and political organising for several years explained how his engagement stemmed from a long-lasting opposition to broadly framed injustice. One of his ways of extending solidarity to all groups – and of ensuring their inclusion in the political space – was by sharing knowledge and information about how to be *visibly political* in Prague. Together with friends, he created the webpage *Občanský rozcestník* (Guide for Citizens), providing resources on how to organise petitions, understand the rights associated with public assembly, and engage politically. Interestingly, the name of the guide includes the term ‘citizen’; however, by being available to everyone and being most often shared with migrant communities and activists, this practice also challenged the understanding of formal citizenship as a prerequisite for political engagement.

Many of the solidarians I interviewed had supported other causes – from the Civil March for Aleppo with asylum seekers in 2017, to protests against Belarusian repression in 2020, and against the Iranian regime in 2022. The latter was especially prominent at the time of the fieldwork: since the *Women, Life, Freedom* movement began in September 2022, many Prague-based activists supported both the Kurdish-Iranian movement and the war-related advocacy of displaced Ukrainians. For solidarians engaged in both struggles, this was a meaningful way of connecting two differently positioned communities: Ukrainian activists, who were initially publicly embraced but increasingly hyper-visible and politicised by the

far right; and Iranian activists, who remained largely invisible and affected by racialised forms of othering.

The solidarians' involvement in diverse struggles shows that their practices of care were shaped less by hierarchies of deservingness and more by a broader commitment to justice. While Czech society broadly constructed displaced Ukrainians as deserving (at least in early 2022), this moral hierarchy mattered less within the solidarians' practices. Their support was not guided by questions of who was more deserving, but by an ethic of political responsibility. Although these reflections were not central to the articles of this thesis, they emerged in interviews and fieldnotes. These ethnographic observations thus point toward a promising direction for future research – one that could build on this thesis to think more broadly and complexly about solidarity, and that may become an important aspect to be included in a longer project.

What Lies Beyond

Intersectional Positionalities, Activism, and Emplacement

Looking at displaced Ukrainians' activism through an intersectional lens brings into focus how emplacement and political engagement were shaped by overlapping positionalities: gender, class, age, legal status, language, and caregiving responsibilities (Anthias 2013; Crenshaw 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006). While the current articles only partially capture these intersections, for displaced Ukrainians, emplacement and political engagement were not simply shaped by their status as non-citizens in Czechia or as holders of temporary protection, but also by diverse categories of difference that intertwined in their everyday lives. Factory workers commuting long hours and students navigating their first year at a foreign-language university experienced activism differently, while these divergences shaped their emplacement in Prague

in uneven ways. In expanding this research, I aim to more fully explore how such intersectional differences inform political engagement, activism, and experiences of displacement.

Both co-founders and coordinators of *Hlas Ukrajiny*, for example, worked in factories outside Prague (at the time of my fieldwork) – in Plzeň and Mladá Boleslav, both around 1-1.5 hours away from the capital. Their political engagement was threaded into exhausting shifts and long commutes to Prague. For them, refugeehood was articulated not only through displacement itself but also through this juggling of labour and political organising. Commuting positioned them both inside and outside the city's activist rhythms, making sustained participation in other solidarities difficult simply because of distance and time.

Students, by contrast, balanced academic demands with activism: studying in a foreign language under heavy workloads, while also trying to sustain political involvement. Czech-language skills further marked differences in visibility and confidence among members of the initiative, shaping subtle hierarchies within solidarity spaces. At the same time, whether workers or students, *Hlas Ukrajiny* provided a space where displaced people could gather around shared traumas, hopes, and political aspirations, creating new forms of sociability.

Many of those who joined protests but were not part of the core organising group were women who had arrived with their children alone, as their male partners were unable to leave Ukraine due to conscription rules. For these women, navigating sole caregiving responsibilities and employment without established support networks was already difficult. Political mobilisation thus added another layer of responsibility, one that reflected both a moral-political duty to stand for Ukraine (Byelikova and Mykhailenko 2025) and the ongoing demands of reproductive labour (Andrews et al. 2023; Rock and Yanaşmayan 2025).

Even survivor's guilt was gendered. As some of the core members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* reflected, their guilt might have been easier to bear had they left Ukraine as mothers, as leaving

with children carried a stronger justification in their eyes. For the few male activists, guilt was configured differently, embedded in war-shaped expectations of manhood that equated good citizenship with military service. In their case, activism became both a remedy for failing to meet these expectations and a way of pre-empting blame. Participation in demonstrations became moments of visibility where they could show their contribution to Ukraine's struggle. Yet visibility was double-edged: being photographed at protests in Prague also meant being seen by Ukrainians at home as absent from both the battlefield and the territory of Ukraine. For some, this exposure may have deepened feelings of guilt even as it simultaneously affirmed the value of their ongoing political engagement.

Intersectionality is threaded through this thesis, but a deeper engagement could go further – examining not only how these intersecting positionalities constrained activism but also how they opened spaces for connection and generated new solidarities. Within *Hlas Ukrainy*, displaced people discovered grounds for a political community across divergent life situations. In this sense, intersectionality could complement the thesis's emphasis on relationality by highlighting how political subjectivities are co-constituted not only in relation to the receiving society and solidarity allies but also across lines of difference and commonality among displaced people themselves.

Time and Temporality

When displaced Ukrainians were granted collective protection under the EU Temporary Protection Directive, which expedited access to the labour market and the acquisition of residence permits, this was widely welcomed and praised as an alternative to the lengthy screening procedures that had previously left protection seekers in protracted periods of waiting. Yet this initial optimism overlooked other dimensions of temporary protection: its uncertain duration and, above all, the absence of a clear path to long-term settlement. This

created a sense of '*protracted temporariness*' – a condition that Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey have experienced even more acutely (Yıldız and Uzgören 2016; Yılmaz Eren 2019).

In Czechia, a legal path beyond temporary protection emerged only with the adoption of *Lex Ukraine VII*, which entered into force in February 2025. This legislation allowed holders of temporary protection to apply for a special long-term residence permit, provided they met strict criteria regarding length of residency, economic self-sufficiency, and a clean criminal record. However, this more secure residence option was introduced only three years after the full-scale invasion, leaving displaced Ukrainians in prolonged uncertainty about the conditions under which they could remain in Czechia.

Although this thesis engages with the meaning of temporariness, particularly in the first article, it does not examine in depth how the experience of temporariness – and the legal and geopolitical uncertainties surrounding the future – shaped processes of emplacement among displaced Ukrainians. Temporariness was not only a legal condition but also an affective one, producing hesitation in long-term planning and carrying the psychological weight of waiting (Hage 2009). This added another layer of difficulty, as displaced Ukrainians navigated not only activism in a new political environment but also the burden of prolonged uncertainty.

At the same time, the longer displaced persons stayed in Czechia, the more embedded they became in local society. Most of the activists I interviewed have now lived in Czechia much longer than they initially anticipated, reshaping the perceived temporariness of their stay. This temporal extension also shaped their political engagement. Whereas the early urgency of mobilisation was fuelled by the shock of war and the expectation of a quick return to Ukraine, over time, this changed. The protracted nature of displacement, as well as the growing realisation that the war might last much longer than expected, generated new dynamics, including fatigue, adaptation, and the search for more sustainable forms of political activism.

Moreover, questions of citizenship as formal membership with full political rights are becoming increasingly significant the longer displaced Ukrainians remain. This is especially evident at the time of writing, ahead of the Czech parliamentary elections in October 2025. Members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* have already been engaging with the topic of elections on social media. They stress that the results will matter not only for the war in Ukraine and the broader European geopolitical landscape, but also for the daily lives of Ukrainians in Czechia, as the far-right party SPD has further weaponised anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in its increasingly popular campaign.

In this light, the question of citizenship as a legal status, and how and when this might become possible or imaginable, is growing in relevance. With the recent adoption of the law on multiple citizenship in Ukraine (signed by the president on 15 July 2025), the possibility of acquiring Czech citizenship has become more tangible, while still allowing displaced Ukrainians to preserve a moral-political orientation toward Ukraine. These developments suggest that the nexus of temporariness, emplacement, and citizenship could be explored even more deeply as a continuation of this research, tracing how prolonged displacement reshapes Ukrainians' orientations toward membership and belonging.

Ukrainian Politics (Past and Present)

Although this thesis shows how displaced Ukrainians acted from a dual positionality – as representatives of a state defending itself from foreign invasion and new political actors in the Czech society – it does not examine how their political views and actions related to *internal* Ukrainian politics. While I discussed it with members of *Hlas Ukrajiny* – talking about cabinet reshuffles, corruption investigations, the mobilisation law, and its implementation – these issues were not brought onto the streets in Prague. Understandably, their activism focused on the war: raising awareness about atrocities committed by the Russian army and calling for

strong and sustained solidarity with Ukraine. It would have been overwhelming both for the Prague public to follow the intricacies of Ukrainian politics and for the activists themselves to carry the burden of informing local audiences about all its developments.

This dynamic shifted in late July 2025, when Ukraine's first major wave of protests brought thousands to the streets despite martial law restrictions on public gatherings. The protests followed President Zelenskyy's signing of a law abolishing the independence of two anti-corruption bodies – the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO). In response, *Hlas Ukrajiny* held its first protest in front of the Ukrainian embassy in Prague, publicly criticising the state government. Attending this protest, I observed how the activists' dual positionality (as 'representatives' of a state at war and as actors outside its borders) became even more complex.

As 'representatives' of the Russo-Ukrainian war, activists felt responsible for ensuring that the Czech government continued its solidarity with Ukraine. They therefore had to balance their discontent carefully: if Ukrainians in Czechia were seen as not supporting their own government, why should the Czech state feel compelled to do so? They resolved this by emphasising their support for Ukraine, its government, and the President, while stressing that they protested in defence of independent anti-corruption institutions as the foundation of Ukrainian democracy and the fulfilment of EU accession requirements.

This positionality, being embedded in Ukrainian politics yet constrained by their role as advocates of solidarity in Czechia, highlights an important dimension not fully explored in this thesis. Since my ethnographic research occurred at the war's outset, a period marked by unity against the aggressor and little space for criticism, future research could investigate how prolonged war may open more spaces for discontent and critical engagement with Ukrainian politics.

Moreover, the series of protests against the attack on Ukraine's anti-corruption bodies also illustrates another aspect underexplored in this thesis: the political inspiration drawn from earlier Ukrainian revolutions. Both NABU and SAPO are legacies of the 2013-2014 Euromaidan protests (the Revolution of Dignity), and defending them in 2025 revived the imaginaries and claims of that revolutionary movement. While most core members of *Hlas Ukrainy* were too young to have participated directly in the Revolution of Dignity, its legacy nonetheless shaped the political consciousness and values of Ukrainian citizens (Kulyk 2016). It provided, even if indirectly, a powerful source of inspiration for their war-related activism, for instance, in chants heard at every demonstration: 'Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!' This older greeting, revived during the Revolution of Dignity, became widely adopted by the public and gained new resonance in the context of the war against Russian invasion.

Both Euromaidan and the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005 demonstrated how activism *in support of* and *by* people from Ukraine was enacted from transnational political spaces. In Prague, the NGO *Prague Maidan* emerged during the Revolution of Dignity, initially engaging in public demonstrations before shifting its focus to humanitarian aid. Still, the organisation left important marks on Prague's political space, not least by charging city squares with new meanings as legitimate venues for transnational solidarity demonstrations. As members of *Hlas Ukrainy* noted, *Prague Maidan* was no longer active in public advocacy by 2022, creating the need for displaced Ukrainians to step in. Nonetheless, some of the Prague-based activists who later joined them (whom I refer to in this thesis as solidarians) had first been mobilised during Prague Maidan. Tracing this historical continuity and its transformations, while also emphasising the specific forms of activism shaped by war-driven displacement, represents another promising avenue for future research.

Contributions and Future Directions

To conclude, although I have outlined several avenues for further elaboration, the thesis in its present form already makes a substantive and original contribution to the literature on migration, displacement, and citizenship. By examining displaced Ukrainians' political engagement as relational and multi-layered, I show how their activism opens up possibilities to rethink citizenship as shaped by war and by a moral and political duty toward the home state; how displacement is both traumatic and generative of political subjectivities through the enactment of this duty; and how emplacement through political engagement is shaped by rights claims and solidarity practices.

By foregrounding the war-driven nature of displacement, the thesis extends citizenship and forced migration scholarship that has largely centred on undocumented migrants or asylum seekers in camp settings, offering new insights into the specificities of temporary protection status granted to displaced people from Ukraine, with its securities and uncertainties. It further contributes to theoretical discussions of belonging by demonstrating how political subjectivities are enacted both through identitarian attachment to the home state and through new modes of commonality arising from solidarity-based relationships in the host society (including those forged in resistance to antagonism). Lastly, the thesis advances a relational and situational understanding of war-driven displacement, showing how it unfolded within broader EU migration politics, whose dynamics ranged from 'unprecedented solidarity' to the rise of populist and far-right rhetoric portraying displaced Ukrainians as 'unwanted others' in times of (poly)crisis. At the same time, it shows how, despite such anti-refugee rhetoric, solidarity with displaced Ukrainians and with war-torn Ukraine persisted in the EU, even if less united and less urgent than in the first days of the full-scale invasion.

Although structured around three articles, the arguments and empirical insights developed here open pathways for a broader book-length project. Expanding this work into a

book would allow for a fuller exploration of the relational, affective, and political dimensions of displacement that could not be addressed within the article format. A book could first situate displaced Ukrainians' activism in Prague within a deeper historical and political context, engaging with Czechia's migration regimes, its position within Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Ukraine's democratic history and the culture of political mobilisation shaped by two revolutions.

It could also further explore displaced Ukrainians' political activism in relation to broader experiences of displacement and emplacement. A deeper engagement with intersectionality would make it possible to capture how political engagement was differently shaped across gendered experiences of guilt, across occupational roles (from factory workers to students), and at the intersection of political participation and motherhood under sole caregiving responsibilities. Such an approach could also open space to move beyond citizenship as the central frame, extending or working in parallel with it. One possibility would be to draw on alternative perspectives on political subjectivity that better account for these intersectional dimensions and for the entanglements of displacement and emplacement that both shape and exceed political activism.

Rethinking citizenship could go hand in hand with rethinking solidarity. This thesis has shown how solidarity was enacted in ways that challenged citizenship-based understandings of membership. Yet it has focused primarily on solidarities with Ukrainians, who were widely constructed as culturally proximate and geopolitically aligned. Further research could instead turn to the complexities of 'difficult solidarities' that emerge across greater lines of difference, where questions of deservingness and justice emerge more forcefully. Finally, a broader project could delve further into questions of time and temporariness. Although this thesis has addressed temporariness as both a legal and affective condition, future work could examine more closely how prolonged uncertainty reshapes political positioning and transforms subjectivities. Taken

together, these extensions point toward a book that would not only refine the contributions of this thesis but also expand them: from a critical engagement with citizenship to a broader theorisation of political subjectivities, solidarities, temporalities, and intersectionality in contexts of displacement.

Bibliography

- Adamson, Fiona B., Veysi Dag, and Catherine R. Craven. 2024. "Multi-Scalar and Diasporic Integration: Kurdish Populations in Europe between State, Diaspora and Geopolitics." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 37(2):518–33. doi:10.1093/jrs/feae027.
- Alexander, Claire. 2017. "Beyond the 'The "Diaspora" Diaspora': A Response to Rogers Brubaker." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(9):1544–55. doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1300302.
- Ambrosini, Maurizio. 2021. "The Battleground of Asylum and Immigration Policies: A Conceptual Inquiry." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44(3):374–95. doi:10.1080/01419870.2020.1836380.
- Ambrosini, Maurizio. 2024. "Humanitarian Help and Refugees: De-Bordering Solidarity as a Contentious Issue." *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 22(3):517–30. doi:10.1080/15562948.2022.2059823.
- Amelina, Anna. 2022. "Occupied Ukraine Between Colonialities of War and the Migrantization of Dispossession." <https://nccr-onthemove.ch/blog/occupied-ukraine-between-colonialities-of-war-and-the-migrantization-of-dispossession/>.
- Andrews, Josephine, Jakub Isański, Marek Nowak, Victoriya Sereda, Alexandra Vacroux, and Hanna Vakhitova. 2023. "Feminized Forced Migration: Ukrainian War Refugees." *Women's Studies International Forum* 99(May). doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2023.102756.
- Andrijasevic, Rutvica, and Devi Sacchetto. 2017. "'Disappearing Workers': Foxconn in Europe and the Changing Role of Temporary Work Agencies." *Work, Employment and Society* 31(1):54–70. doi:10.1177/0950017015622918.
- Anthias, Floya. 2013. "Intersectional What? Social Divisions, Intersectionality and Levels of

- Analysis.” *Ethnicities* 13(1):3–19. doi:10.1177/1468796812463547.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1951. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ataç, Ilker. 2016. “‘Refugee Protest Camp Vienna’: Making Citizens through Locations of the Protest Movement.” *Citizenship Studies* 20(5):629–46. doi:10.1080/13621025.2016.1182676.
- Ataç, Ilker, Kim Rygiel, and Maurice Stierl. 2016. “Introduction: The Contentious Politics of Refugee and Migrant Protest and Solidarity Movements: Remaking Citizenship from the Margins.” *Citizenship Studies* 20(5):527–44. doi:10.1080/13621025.2016.1182681.
- Balibar, Étienne. 2009. *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Balibar, Étienne. 2014. *Equaliberty: Political Essays*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bauder, Harald, and Lorelle Juffs. 2020. “‘Solidarity’ in the Migration and Refugee Literature: Analysis of a Concept.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46(1):46–65. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2019.1627862.
- Benhabib, Seyla. 2004. *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bentz, Anne-Sophie, and Anthony Goreau-Ponceaud. 2020. “To Be or Not to Be a Refugee? Reflections on Refugeehood and Citizenship among Sri Lankan Tamils in India.” *Citizenship Studies* 24(2):176–92. doi:10.1080/13621025.2019.1706446.
- Bentz, Anne Sophie. 2023. “Refugee Citizenship: Citizenship as a Means to Make a Claim about Refugeehood.” *Citizenship Studies* 27(4):427–45. doi:10.1080/13621025.2023.2202897.

- Boccagni, Paolo, and Mieke Schrooten. 2018. "Participant Observation in Migration Studies: An Overview and Some Emerging Issues." Pp. 209–25 in *Qualitative research in European migration studies*, edited by R. Zapata-Barrero and E. Yalaz. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Bondar, Yulia. 2023. "«Голос України»: Як Українки в Празі Протидіють Російським Впливам у Європі." <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/chekhiya-bizhentsi-initsiatyva-holos-ukrayiny/32480686.html>.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2005. "The 'diaspora' Diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(1):1–19. doi:10.1080/0141987042000289997.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2017. "Revisiting 'The "Diaspora" Diaspora.'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(9):1556–61. doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1308533.
- Byelikova, Yuliya, and Olena Mykhailenko. 2025. "Transforming Survivor Guilt into Social Activism: Ukrainian Women Refugees in Germany." *Migration and Diversity* 4(1):21–35. doi:10.33182/md.v4i1.3510.
- Çağlar, Ayşe. 2024. "Citizenship beyond Solidarity and Belonging: Commoning and Sociability." *American Ethnologist* 51(3):397–99. doi:10.1111/amet.13316.
- Çağlar, Ayşe, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2021. "Relational Multiscalar Analysis: A Comparative Approach to Migrants within City-Making Processes." *Geographical Review* 111(2):206–32. doi:10.1080/00167428.2020.1865817.
- Çalışkan, Gül. 2022. *Forging Diasporic Citizenship: Narratives from German-Born Turkish Ausländer*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Cantat, Celine. 2016. "Rethinking Mobilities: Solidarity and Migrant Struggles beyond Narratives of Crisis." *Intersections East European Journal of Society and Politics*

2(4):11–32. doi:10.17356/ieejsp.v2i4.286.

Cantat, Céline, Antoine Pécoud, and Hélène Thiollet. 2023. “Migration as Crisis.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 1–23. doi:10.1177/00027642231182889.

Cantat, Céline, and Prem Kumar Rajaram. 2019. “The Politics of the Refugee Crisis in Hungary: Bordering and Ordering the Nation and Its Others.” Pp. 181–96 in *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises*, edited by C. Menjívar, M. Ruiz, and I. Ness. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castañeda, Heide. 2024. “Spaces and Challenges of Citizenship.” *American Ethnologist* 51(3):402–3. doi:10.1111/amet.13313.

Castelli Gattinara, Pietro. 2018. “Europeans, Shut the Borders! Anti-Refugee Mobilization in Italy and France.” Pp. 271–298 in *Solidarity Mobilizations in the “Refugee Crisis,”* edited by D. Della Porta. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

De Castro, Flávia Rodrigues, and Carolina Moulin. 2021. “Nationhood and Citizenship: From Producing States to Enacting Rights.” Pp. 36–46 in *Handbook on the Governance and Politics of Migration*, edited by E. Carmel, K. Lenner, and R. Paul. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Černý, Václav. 2023. “Většina Uprchlíků z Ukrajiny Tu Jen Vysává Dávky. Na Čechy Pak Vláda Nemá Peníze, Zuří Okamura.” <https://cnn.iprima.cz/vetsina-uprchliku-z-ukrajiny-jen-vysava-davky-je-to-na-ukor-nasich-obcanu-tvrdi-okamura-376395>.

České noviny. 2022. “Fiala: Rozhodnutí, Zda Pomáhat Ukrajině, Bylo Velmi Jednoduché.” <https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tiskove/zpravy/zive-konference-kam-kracis-cesko-evropo-2022/2289382>.

Chatzidakis, Andreas, Jamie Hakim, Jo Litter, and Catherine Rottenberg. 2020. *The Care*

Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence. London/New York: Verso Books.

Chauvin, Sébastien, and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas. 2014. “Becoming Less Illegal: Deservingness Frames and Undocumented Migrant Incorporation.” *Sociology Compass* 8(4):422–32. doi:10.1111/soc4.12145.

Clark-Kazak, Christina. 2017. “Ethical Considerations: Research with People in Situations of Forced Migration.” *Refuge* 33(2):11–17. doi:10.7202/1043059ar.

Clarke, John, Kathleen Coll, Evelina Dagnino, and Catherine Neveu. 2014. *Disputing Citizenship*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

De Coninck, David. 2023. “The Refugee Paradox During Wartime in Europe: How Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees Are (Not) Alike.” *International Migration Review* 57(2):578–86. doi:10.1177/01979183221116874.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):1241. doi:10.2307/1229039.

Dimitriadis, Iraklis, Minke H. J. Hajer, Elena Fontanari, and Maurizio Ambrosini. 2021. “Local ‘Battlegrounds’. Relocating Multi-Level and Multi-Actor Governance of Immigration.” *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales* 37(1–2). doi:10.4000/remi.18552.

Ditko, Jan. 2022. “Czech Republic: ‘Lex Ukraine’ Law Package Enters into Force.” https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/czech-republic-lex-ukraine-law-package-enters-force_en.

Ditko, Jan. 2023. “Czech Republic: Fifth Amendment to ‘Lex Ukraine’ Law Package.” https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/czech-republic-fifth-amendment-lex-ukraine-law-package_en.

- Dražanová, Lenka, and Andrew Geddes. 2023. "Attitudes towards Ukrainian Refugees and Governmental Responses in 8 European Countries." Forum on the EU Temporary Protection Responses to the Ukraine War. ASILE project. <https://www.asileproject.eu/attitudes-towards-ukrainian-refugees-and-governmental-responses-in-8-european-countries/>.
- Eggert, Nina, and Marco Giugni. 2015. "Migration and Social Movements." Pp. 165–66 in *The Oxford handbook of social movements*, edited by D. della Porta and M. Diani. Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford.
- Eurostat. 2022. "Temporary Protection for Persons Fleeing Ukraine - Monthly Statistics." https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Temporary_protection_for_persons_fleeing_Ukraine_-_monthly_statistics.
- Fedyuk, Olena, and Violetta Zentai. 2018. "The Interview in Migration Studies: A Step towards a Dialogue and Knowledge Co-Production?" Pp. 171–88 in *Qualitative research in European migration studies*, edited by R. Zapata-Barrero and E. Yalaz. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Feischmidt, Margit, Ludger Pries, and Celine Cantat, eds. 2018. *Refugee Protection and Civil Society in Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fihel, Agnieszka, Kseniya Homel, Marta Jaroszewicz, Magdalena Lesińska, and Anne-Sophie Bentz. 2025. "Diaspora at War: Mobilization of the Ukrainian Diaspora in the First 2 Years of the Russian Full-Scale Invasion." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 38(3):704–21. doi:10.1093/jrs/feaf006.
- Filippi, Davide, Luca Giliberti, and Luca Queirolo Palmas. 2021. "From Lampedusa to the Susa Valley: Solidarity Networks in Two Border Battlegrounds." *Journal of Modern*

- Italian Studies* 26(5):608–26. doi:10.1080/1354571X.2021.1953776.
- Fleischmann, Larissa. 2020. *Contested Solidarity*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Fontanari, Elena, and Maurizio Ambrosini. 2018. “Into the Interstices: Everyday Practices of Refugees and Their Supporters in Europe’s Migration ‘Crisis.’” *Sociology* 52(3):587–603. doi:10.1177/0038038518759458.
- Fontanari, Elena, and Giulia Borri. 2018. “Introduction. Civil Society on the Edge: Actions in Support and against Refugees in Italy and Germany.” *Mondi Migranti* (3):23–51. doi:10.3280/MM2017-003002.
- García Agustín, Óscar, and Martin Bak Jørgensen. 2021. “On Transversal Solidarity: An Approach to Migration and Multi-Scalar Solidarities.” *Critical Sociology* 47(6):857–73. doi:10.1177/0896920520980053.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2010. “The Queer Politics of Migration: Reflections on ‘Illegality’ and Incurability.” *Studies in Social Justice* 4(2):101–26. doi:10.26522/ssj.v4i2.997.
- Gheorghiev, Olga. 2023. “Economic Migrants in the Czech Segmented Labour Market: Covid-19 as a Magnifying Glass.” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 43(3/4):370–83. doi:10.1108/IJSSP-06-2022-0162.
- Gheorghiev, Olga. 2025. “From ‘Migrant’ to ‘Refugee’: What Changed? Working Lives of Ukrainian Women in the Czech Republic.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 51(17):4524–41. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2025.2492348.
- Hage, Ghassan. 2009. *Waiting*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Hejl Hromková, Dominika, and Radek Bartoníček. 2022. “Nečekám Každodenní Potlesk. Provedli Jsme Zemi Krizí, Začneme s Reformami, Říká Fiala.” <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/petr-fiala/r~1c2f86d672c811ed9ae20cc47ab5f122/>.

- Hendl, Tereza, Olga Burlyuk, Mila O'Sullivan, and Aizada Arystanbek. 2024. "(En)Countering Epistemic Imperialism: A Critique of 'Westspaining' and Coloniality in Dominant Debates on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine." *Contemporary Security Policy* 45(2):171–209. doi:10.1080/13523260.2023.2288468.
- Henig, David, and Daniel M. Knight. 2023. "Polycrisis: Prompts for an Emerging Worldview." *Anthropology Today* 39(2):3–6. doi:10.1111/1467-8322.12793.
- Hovorková, Johana. 2023. "Dezinformátor Vrabel Mluvil v Europarlamentu. Prý Byl v Česku Souzen pro Politické Názory, Řekl Několika Přítomným." <https://www.forum24.cz/dezinformator-vrabel-mluvil-v-europarlamentu-pry-byl-v-cesku-souzen-pro-politicke-nazory-rekl-nekolika-pritomnym>.
- Isin, Engin F. 2008. "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship." Pp. 15–43 in *Acts of citizenship*, edited by E. F. Isin and G. M. Nielsen. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Isin, Engin F. 2009. "Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen." *Subjectivity* 29(1):367–88. doi:10.1057/sub.2009.25.
- Isin, Engin F. 2012. *Citizens without Frontiers*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Isin, Engin F. 2013. "Claiming European Citizenship." Pp. 19–46 in *Enacting European Citizenship*, edited by E. F. Isin and M. Saward. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Isin, Engin F. 2017. "Performative Citizenship." Pp. 499–523 in *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*, edited by A. Shachar, R. Bauböck, I. Bloemraad, and M. Vink. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Isin, Engin F. 2024. *Citizenship: New Trajectories in Law*. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Isin, Engin F., and Greg M. Nielsen, eds. 2008. *Acts of Citizenship*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Jelínková, Marie. 2024. "Czech Republic. The Splendor and Misery of the Czech Welcome to

- Ukrainian Refugees.” Pp. 125–31 in *A World Order in Transformation? A Comparative Study of Consequences of the War and Reactions to these Changes in the Region*, edited by N. Mörner. Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, CBEES, Södertörn University.
- Jelínková, Marie, Michal Plaček, and František Ochraňa. 2024. “The Arrival of Ukrainian Refugees as an Opportunity to Advance Migrant Integration Policy.” *Policy Studies* 45(3–4):507–31. doi:10.1080/01442872.2023.2289576.
- Kirchhoff, Maren. 2020. “Differential Solidarity: Protests against Deportations as Structured Contestations over Citizenship.” *Citizenship Studies* 24(4):568–86. doi:10.1080/13621025.2020.1755178.
- Klimešová, Magdaléna, Jiří Šatava, and Michal Ondruška. 2022. “Situace Uprchlíků z Ukrajiny.” *MPSV ČR, Praha. Kment, Š., Kořínek, A., Gargulák, K., Korbel* 2022:255–72.
- Koinova, Maria. 2018. “Diaspora Mobilisation for Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Contextual and Comparative Dimensions.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(8):1251–69. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354152.
- Kopecký, Josef. 2022. “Kolik Je v Česku Reálně Uprchlíků Před Válkou z Ukrajiny? Minimálně 281 Tisíc.” https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/uprchlici-valka-na-ukrajine-vizum-o-docasne-ochrane-humanitarni-davka.A220818_145514_domaci_kop.
- Kopecký, Josef. 2024. “Ukrajinci Přinášejí Víc Peněz, Řekl Fiala. Okamura Ho Napadal, Že Lže.” https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/snemovna-interpelace-uprchlici-valka-na-ukrajine-fiala-jurecka-humanitarni-davka.A241121_053740_domaci_kop.
- Kořínek, Ondřej. 2023. “Demonstranti Se Pokusili Vniknout Do Národního Muzea, 18 Lidí Skončilo v Poutech.” <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-na-vaclavskem-namesti-se-protestuje-proti-bide-40425569?fbclid=IwAR2oYmkyoXhbPAFCQluCPsmCtnccZEuj->

AYDKyfKMfw_-o4SYIKnMkBR59A.

- Krasteva, Anna, Aino Saarinen, and Birte Siim. 2019. "Citizens' Activism for Reimagining and Reinventing Citizenship Countering Far-Right Populism." Pp. 265–92 in *Citizens' Activism and Solidarity Movements*, edited by B. Siim, A. Krasteva, and A. Saarinen. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Krasteva, Anna, Evelina Staykova, and Ildiko Otova. 2019. "Being a Citizen in Times of Mainstreaming of Populism: Building Post-Communist Contestatory and Solidary Citizenship." Pp. 213–41 in *Citizens' Activism and Solidarity Movements*, edited by B. Siim, A. Krasteva, and A. Saarinen. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Krzyżanowski, Michał, Anna Triandafyllidou, and Ruth Wodak. 2018. "The Mediatization and the Politicization of the 'Refugee Crisis' in Europe." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16(1–2):1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2017.1353189>.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. 2016. "National Identity in Ukraine : Impact of Euromaidan and the War National Identity in Ukraine : Impact of Euromaidan and the War." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68(4):588–608. doi:10.1080/09668136.2016.1174980.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. 2023. "National Identity in Time of War: Ukraine after the Russian Aggressions of 2014 and 2022." *Problems of Post-Communism* July:1–13. doi:10.1080/10758216.2023.2224571.
- Kurylo, Bohdana. 2023. "The Ukrainian Subject, Hierarchies of Knowledge Production and the Everyday: An Autoethnographic Narrative." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 26(4):685–97. doi:10.1057/s41268-023-00310-5.
- Kvale, Steinar, and Svend Brinkmann. 2009. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

- Laguerre, Michel S. 1998. *Diasporic Citizenship: Haitian Americans in Transnational America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lassiter, LukeEric. 2005. "Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 46(1):83–106. doi:10.1086/425658.
- Leitner, Helga, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin M. Sziarto. 2008. "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33(2):157–72. doi:10.1111/j.1475-5661.2008.00293.x.
- Leitner, Helga, and Christopher Strunk. 2014. "Spaces of Immigrant Advocacy and Liberal Democratic Citizenship." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104(2):348–56. doi:10.1080/00045608.2013.875806.
- Lewicki, Aleksandra. 2017. "'The Dead Are Coming': Acts of Citizenship at Europe's Borders." *Citizenship Studies* 21(3):275–90. doi:10.1080/13621025.2016.1252717.
- Lindley, Anna. 2014. "Exploring Crisis and Migration: Concepts and Issues." Pp. 1–23 in *Crisis and migration*, edited by A. Lindley. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Macková, Lucie, Agnieszka Zogata-Kusz, Ondřej Filipec, and Nikola Medová. 2024. "Temporary Protection for Ukrainian Refugees in the Czech Republic and Poland." *Nationalities Papers* 1–20. doi:10.1017/nps.2024.61.
- Martišková, Monika, and Adam Šumichrast. 2020. *Bargaining for Working Conditions and Social Rights of Migrant Workers in Central East European Countries (BARMIG). National Report Czechia*. <https://phavi.umcs.pl/at/attachments/2022/0321/133827-barmig-czechia-final.pdf>.
- Marucco, Camilla. 2022. "Temporalities of Citizenship among Finnish Somali Women: Simultaneities, Disruptions and Accelerations along the Refugee-Citizenship

- Continuum.” *Citizenship Studies* 26(1):107–26. doi:10.1080/13621025.2021.2010655.
- Mayer, Margit. 2018. “Cities as Sites of Refuge and Resistance.” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 25(3):232–49. doi:10.1177/0969776417729963.
- McNevin, Anne. 2012. “Undocumented Citizens?: Shifting Grounds of Citizenship in Los Angeles.” Pp. 165–83 in *Citizenship, migrant activism and the politics of movement*, edited by P. Nyers and K. Rygiel. London: Routledge.
- McNevin, Anne, N De Genova, Julia Eckert, and Nadita Sharma. 2022. “Membership.” Pp. 787–94 in *Minor keywords of political theory: Migration as a critical standpoint*, edited by Nicholas De Genova and M. Tazzioli. EPC: Politics and Space 40(4).
- Menjívar, Cecilia, Marie Ruiz, and Immanuel Ness. 2019. “Migration Crises: Definitions, Critiques, and Global Contexts.” Pp. 1–18 in *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises*, edited by C. Menjívar, M. Ruiz, and I. Ness. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mezihorák, Petr. 2025. “Ukrainian Female Refugees in Czechia after the Russian Full-Scale Invasion: Social Reproduction of ‘(Low) Skill’?” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 51(5):1371–89. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2024.2393680.
- Mijić, Ana, Michael Parzer, Olena Tkalič, and Yelyzaveta Zolotarova. 2024. “Experiencing Forced Migration: Challenges of Arriving after Displacement from Ukraine.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 50(14):3396–3414. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2024.2323666.
- Miller, David. 1999. “Bounded Citizenship.” Pp. 60–80 in *Cosmopolitan Citizenship*, edited by K. Hutchings and R. Dannreuther. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Miller, David. 2009. “Democracy’s Domain.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37:201–28. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2009.01158.x>.
- Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New

York: Guilford Press.

Momen, Mehnaaz. 2005. "Are You a Citizen ? Insights from Borderlands." *Citizenship Studies* 9(3):323–34. doi:10.1080/13621020500147632.

Moulin, Carolina. 2012. "Ungrateful Subjects? Refugee Protests and the Logic of Gratitude." Pp. 54–72 in *Citizenship, migrant activism and the politics of movement*, edited by P. Nyers and K. Rygiel. London: Routledge.

Mutambasere, Thabani Golden. 2022. "Diaspora Citizenship in Practice: Identity, Belonging and Transnational Civic Activism amongst Zimbabweans in the UK." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(3):732–49. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2021.1916450.

Nawyn, Stephanie J. 2019. "Refugees in the United States and the Politics of Crisis." Pp. 163–80 in *The Oxford handbook of migration crisis*, edited by C. Menjívar, M. Ruiz, and I. Ness. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ní Mhurchú, Aoileann. 2014. *Ambiguous Citizenship in an Age of Global Migration*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research. 2023. *Governance and Policy Changes during Times of High Influxes of Protection Seekers. A Comparative Governance and Policy Analysis in Eight European Countries, 2015-June 2023*. https://oda.oslomet.no/oda-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/3112660/NIBR_Report_2023-8.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Nyers, Peter. 2011. "No One Is Illegal Between City and Nation." *Studies in Social Justice* 4(2):127–43. doi:10.26522/ssj.v4i2.998.

Nyers, Peter, and Kim Rygiel, eds. 2012. *Citizenship, Migrant Activism and the Politics of Movement*. Oxon/New York: Routledge.

- Oksamytna, Kseniya. 2023. "Imperialism, Supremacy, and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine." *Contemporary Security Policy* 44(4):497–512. doi:10.1080/13523260.2023.2259661.
- Oliveri, Federico. 2016. "Struggles at the Boundaries of Neoliberal Citizenship: Theorizing Immigrant-Led Movements in Contemporary Europe." Pp. 263–79 in *An Anthology of Migration and Social Transformation*, edited by A. Amelina, K. Horvath, and B. Meeus. Cham: Springer.
- Pędziwiatr, Konrad, and Wiktor Magdziarz. 2023. "The Reception and Integration of Refugees from Ukraine in Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary – the New Immigration Destinations of Central Europe." *Problemy Polityki Społecznej Studia i Dyskusje* 59(4):345–77. doi:10.31971/pps/162968.
- Pehe, Jiří. 2022. "Protiústavní Demonstrace Za „Česko Na Prvním Místě“." <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/34463-protiustavni-demonstrace-za-cesko-na-prvnim-miste>.
- Plán Česká republika na 1. místě! n.d. <https://cr1.cz/index.php/home/plan-ceska-republika-na-1-miste>.
- Della Porta, Donatella, ed. 2018. *Solidarity Mobilizations in the 'Refugee Crisis.'* London/New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
- Della Porta, Donatella, and Elias Steinhilper. 2021. *Contentious Migrant Solidarity: Shrinking Spaces and Civil Society Contestation.* Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Pšenička, Jiří, and Lucie Stuchlíková. 2022. "„První Den Našeho Vítězství.“ Desetitisíce Lidí Žádaly Demisi Vlády." <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-politika-je-nejvyssi-cas-demonstranti-se-sjizdeji-na-protest-proti-vlade-213178?fbclid=IwAR3PXrGE3f9AExyn9tmvdgGkaSex8zn5Wo264twPRADNsGGylgTvdnQFXJ8>.

- Rancière, Jacques. 1999. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2004. "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103(2/3):297–310.
- Redclift, Victoria. 2013. "Abjects or Agents? Camps, Contests and the Creation of 'Political Space.'" *Citizenship Studies* 17(3–4):308–21. doi:10.1080/13621025.2013.791534.
- Rock, Jonna, and Zeynep Yanaşmayan. 2025. "Motherhood on the Move: Forced Migrant Women from Ukraine." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 38(3):690–703. doi:10.1093/jrs/feae084.
- Schiller, Nina Glick. 2005. "Long-Distance Nationalism." Pp. 570–80 in *Encyclopedia of diasporas*, edited by M. Ember, C. R. Ember, and L. Skoggard. New York: Springer.
- Schilliger, Sarah. 2020. "Challenging Who Counts as a Citizen. The Infrastructure of Solidarity Contesting Racial Profiling in Switzerland." *Citizenship Studies* 24(4):530–47. doi:10.1080/13621025.2020.1755176.
- Schwartz, Helge. 2022. "Radical Democratic Theory and Migration: The Refugee Protest March as a Democratic Practice." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 48(2):289–309. doi:10.1177/0191453721996398.
- Schwartz, Helge, and Helen Schwenken. 2020. "Introduction: Inclusive Solidarity and Citizenship along Migratory Routes in Europe and the Americas." *Citizenship Studies* 24(4):405–23. doi:10.1080/13621025.2020.1755155.
- Seim, Josh. 2024. "Participant Observation, Observant Participation, and Hybrid Ethnography." *Sociological Methods & Research* 53(1):121–52. doi:10.1177/0049124120986209.

- Sevenhuijsen, Selma L. 2018. "Care and Attention." *South African Journal of Higher Education* 32(6):19–30.
- Shmidt, Victoria, and Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky. 2022. "The Ukrainian Refugee 'Crisis' and the (Re)Production of Whiteness in Austrian and Czech Public Politics." *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics* 16(2):104–30. doi:10.2478/jnmlp-2022-0011.
- Šídlo, Jindřich. 2025. "Šťastný Oběžník: Okamura Svolává Lync. Terčem Je Mladá Ukrajinka." <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/nazory-komentare-stastny-obeznik-okamura-svolava-lync-tercem-je-mlada-ukrajinka-270683>.
- Sigona, Nando. 2015. "Campzenship: Reimagining the Camp as a Social and Political Space." *Citizenship Studies* 19(1):1–15. doi:10.1080/13621025.2014.937643.
- Siim, Birte, Anna Krasteva, and Aino Saarinen, eds. 2019. *Citizens' Activism and Solidarity Movements*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Skrbiš, Zlatko. 2017. *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities*. Oxon/New York: Routledge.
- Sökefeld, Martin. 2006. "Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora." *Global Networks* 6(3):265–84. doi:10.1111/j.1471-0374.2006.00144.x.
- Soysal, Yasemin Nuhoglu. 2000. "Citizenship and Identity: Living in Diasporas in Post-War Europe?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23(1):1–15. doi:10.1080/014198700329105.
- Šplíchal, Pavel. 2023. "Akce Česko Proti Bídě Skončila Skandováním „Čechy Čechům“." <https://denikalarm.cz/2023/03/akce-cesko-proti-bide-skoncila-skandovanim-cechy-cekum/>.
- Steinhilper, Elias. 2021. *Migrant Protest: Interactive Dynamics in Precarious Mobilizations*.

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Stojanov, Robert, Radka Klvaňová, Aneta Seidlová, and Oldřich Bureš. 2022. “Contemporary Czech Migration Policy: ‘Labour, Not People’?” *Population, Space and Place* 28(4). doi:10.1002/psp.2533.

Strakatý, Čestmír, and Eva Albrechtová. 2023. “Bartkovský: Rajchl Přecenil Síly, Lidé Od Něj Dávají Ruce Pryč, Demonstrace Byla Jasně Protiukrajinská.” <https://www.reflex.cz/clanek/prostor-x/118388/bartkovsky-rajchl-precenil-sily-lide-od-nej-davaji-ruce-pryc-demonstrace-byla-jasne-protiukrajinska.html>.

Strijbis, Oliver. 2015. “Beyond Opportunity Structures: Explaining Migrant Protest in Western Europe, 1975–2005.” *Comparative Migration Studies* 3(1):5. doi:10.1007/s40878-015-0005-8.

Tarrow, Sidney. 1996. “Social Movements in Contentious Politics: A Review Article.” *American Political Science Review* 90(4):874–83. doi:10.2307/2945851.

Triandafyllidou, Anna. 2018. “A ‘Refugee Crisis’ Unfolding: ‘Real’ Events and Their Interpretation in Media and Political Debates.” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16(1–2):198–216. doi:10.1080/15562948.2017.1309089.

Tsymbalyuk, Darya. 2023. “What My Body Taught Me about Being a Scholar of Ukraine and from Ukraine in Times of Russia’s War of Aggression.” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 26(4):698–709. doi:10.1057/s41268-023-00298-y.

Turner, Simon. 2016. “What Is a Refugee Camp? Explorations of the Limits and Effects of the Camp.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29(2):139–48. doi:10.1093/jrs/fev024.

Vigh, Henrik, and Jesper Bjarnesen. 2016. “Introduction: The Dialectics of Displacement and Emplacement.” *Conflict and Society* 2(1):9–15. doi:10.3167/arcs.2016.020104.

- Welfens, Natalie. 2023. “‘Promising Victimhood’: Contrasting Deservingness Requirements in Refugee Resettlement.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49(5):1103–24. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2022.2117686.
- Wellman, Christopher Heath. 2011. “In Defense of the Right to Exclude.” Pp. 13–56 in *Debating the Ethics of Immigration: Is There a Right to Exclude?*, edited by C. H. Wellman and P. Cole. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage.
- Yıldız, Ayselin, and Elif Uzgören. 2016. “Limits to Temporary Protection: Non-Camp Syrian Refugees in İzmir, Turkey.” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16(2):195–211. doi:10.1080/14683857.2016.1165492.
- Yılmaz Eren, Esra. 2019. “Is Temporary Protection Eternal? The Future of Temporary Protection Status of Syrians in Turkey.” *Border Crossing* 9(2):125–34. doi:10.33182/bc.v9i2.718.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2006. “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 13(3):193–209. doi:10.1177/1350506806065752.
- Zapata-Barrero, Ricard. 2024. “Resilient Cities and Migration Governance: When Developing Migration Governance Capacity Becomes a Policy Priority for Cities.” *Frontiers in Political Science* 6. doi:10.3389/fpos.2024.1448589.
- Zentai, Violetta, and Margit Feischmidt. 2024. “Solidarity Work, Duty to Care, and Commoning during the Pandemic Crisis.” *Intersections East European Journal of Society and Politics* 10(3):179–98. doi:10.17356/IEEJSP.V10I3.1298.
- Zogata-Kusz, Agnieszka, Milena Öbrink Hobzová, and Rafał Cekiera. 2023. “Deserving of

Assistance: The Social Construction of Ukrainian Refugees.” *Ethnopolitics* 1–20.
doi:10.1080/17449057.2023.2286779.

Appendix 1. List of Interviews

- (1) Interview with one of the coordinators of Hlas Ukrajiny I. October 28, 2022
- (2) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny I. October 30, 2022
- (3) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny II. November 1, 2022
- (4) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny III. November 3, 2022
- (5) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny IV. November 7, 2022
- (6) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny V. November 9, 2022
- (7) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny VI. November 9, 2022
- (8) Interview with a Prague activist I. November 10, 2022
- (9) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny VII. November 17, 2022
- (10) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny VII. November 19, 2022
- (11) Interview with a member of Hlas Ukrajiny VIII. November 21, 2022
- (12) Interview with one of the coordinators of Hlas Ukrajiny II. December 5, 2022
- (13) Interview with a Prague activist II. December 10, 2022
- (14) Interview with a Prague activist III. April 14, 2023
- (15) Interview with a Prague activist IV. April 20, 2023
- (16) Interview with a Prague activist V. April 20, 2023
- (17) Interview with a Prague activist VI. April 20, 2023
- (18) Interview with two of the coordinators of Hlas Ukrajiny. September 9, 2023
- (19) Interview with a Prague activist VII. September 12, 2023
- (20) Interview with one of the coordinators of Hlas Ukrajiny III. September 13, 2023

(21) Interview with a Prague activist VIII. September 20, 2023