

Visuality, temporality, and the uncertain geopolitics of the Russo-Ukrainian war

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Paul Richardson¹ , Tatiana Zhurzhenko² , Péter Balogh^{3,4} ,
Oksana Mikheieva⁵ , Svitlana Odynets⁶ , Sabine von Löwis²  and
Alina Mozolevska^{7,8} 

Abstract

This Symposium interrogates the relationship between the spatial, the temporal, and the visual in a war-affected society. Several leading researchers working on Ukraine in multiple disciplinary fields examine how combining the visual and the (unseen) temporal are vital for understanding the new and uncertain spatial configurations that emerge from the displacement and stress of conflict and bordering. These interventions aim to amplify the voices and visions of those who have been marginalised and overlooked. It brings into dialogue perspectives of displacement with those who have remained. In connecting these elements, it considers how both the visual and the temporal intersect with the production of knowledge in contemporary geopolitics. In such a way, the theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions in this symposium point to ways to theorise and approach the trauma of conflict and bordering, while also challenging hegemonic geopolitical interpretations and neo-imperial actors.

Keywords

borders, Ukraine, temporality, geopolitics, visibility

Introduction

Paul Richardson

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham

¹School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, UK

²Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), Berlin, Germany

³Transdanubian Research Department, Eötvös Loránd University CERS Institute for Regional Studies, Pécs, Hungary

⁴Department of Social and Economic Geography, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

⁵Department of Social Sciences and Public Policy, Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), Kyiv, Ukraine

⁶Department of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Mid Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden

⁷Germanic and Romance languages, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Mykolaiv, Ukraine

⁸Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Germany

Corresponding author:

Paul Richardson, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK.

Email: p.b.richardson.1@bham.ac.uk

Tatiana Zhurzhenko

Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS)

Péter Balogh

Eötvös Loránd University CERS Institute for Regional Studies; and Eötvös Loránd University, Department of Social and Economic Geography

On 12 January 2026, a remarkable milestone was passed. Russia's war against Ukraine had now run for longer than the Soviet Union's involvement in the Great Patriotic War (1941-45). This protracted contemporary conflict, "created and prosecuted by an imperial superpower with long and mostly-unaddressed histories of colonial domination and domestic repression, and enacted on the ground with a callous brutality" (Wolfe 2024, 1476), surpassed a temporal marker unanticipated in the early days of the invasion. As the war drags on, this symposium combines the lenses of the temporal and the visual to bring into sharper focus some of the myriad strategies of resistance, resilience, and defiance in Ukrainian society; the violence and power of borders in shaping identities; the implications of time on spatial displacement; and the critical role of mental mapping in navigating trauma and directing protest.

Through an engagement with visibility and temporality, understandings of the dislocation and devastation caused by the conflict are expanded on beyond Great Power politics. This symposium foregrounds the experiences of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised, who have been too often overlooked by prevailing geopolitical framings of this war. It opens up a dialogue between those who were displaced and those who remained, reflecting on how the conflict has been experienced and represented through both the visual and the (unseen) temporal. Each of these interventions reaches beyond existing analysis on the Russia-Ukraine war in geography and critical geopolitics, which has tended to centre on debates around the nature of state sovereignty, territoriality, or Russian perceptions of NATO enlargement (see, for example, Megoran 2023; Murphy 2022; Toal 2024). Instead, it points toward an engagement with negotiating the trauma of this conflict as a means to challenge hegemonic geopolitical interpretations and neo-imperial renderings of the world, giving voice to a "lived experience away from the grand narratives that circulate at global scales" (Wolfe et al., 2024, 1474).

The symposium offers a reminder that even before the full-scale war from 2022, the materialisation and dematerialisation of borders had upended everyday life in eastern Ukraine. Between 2014 and 2022, a 427 km "contact line" divided the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) from the rest of Ukraine. It was both a frontline and an internal demarcation line between Ukrainian government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas, with the infrastructural and functional qualities of a border enforced by state border guards (Tarkhanova 2023, 1392). From its inception, this was also a line riven with contradictions: an inter-state border within a state, and a violent demarcation line premised on preventing conflict (Löwis and Sasse 2021).

In the first intervention of this collection, Oksana Mikheieva captures through a series of interviews the voices from below and the everyday encounters and experiences of those locals crossing the contact line. For them, it immediately presented a tension in everyday life as its very presence made cross-border movement all but inevitable as many Ukrainian citizens living in the "DPR" and "LPR" could only receive pensions and social benefits in Ukraine-controlled territories (Zhurzhenko 2021, 158). Mobility – and immobility – came to define the social structure of the local communities on either side of the border as they were re-shaped by war and displacement. It also brought intersectional implications, as crossing the border involved negotiating active discrimination on the grounds of identity, age, disability, gender, economic status, social capital, and access to information.

The de facto border that emerged in this period was not stable, as it retained features of a mobile, frequently moving frontline, the result of a shaky compromise that was unsatisfactory to both sides

(Kolosov and Zotova 2021). It took on some of the qualities of what Ron Suny (1999) has termed “provisional stabilities”, whereby a fragile – though fortified – border becomes loaded with symbolic and ideational significance. The meanings attached to it brought material consequences and contradictions. It meant that construction of infrastructure by Ukrainian authorities, which could have facilitated and improved the border crossing, might be seen as lending legitimacy and acceptance to the status quo as a permanent arrangement. Despite some initial improvements in infrastructure after Volodymyr Zelensky’s election in 2019, such projects were not continued during the Covid pandemic, imposing further costs and inconvenience on the local residents, which in turn undermined their confidence and trust in the Ukrainian state (Zhurzhenko 2021, 148-149; Zhurzhenko, 2026a).

In 2022, this de facto border was transformed again into an active and rolling frontline, with the line swept away by a wave of military escalation, further occupation, and annexation. However, Mikheieva’s account of the contact line prior to the invasion may also offer insights into the near future and an end to the active military phase of the conflict. The lived experience of this line may once again re-emerge with the freezing of current frontlines and the creation of a new de facto border, though this time one that is even more hostile to local residents and border-crossers, and which will be accompanied by a search for ever more dangerous and circuitous routes around it.

Temporality, mobility, and immobility are expanded on by Svitlana Odynets, who traces in her intervention differing experiences of time as essential elements of displacement far away from the frontlines of eastern Ukraine. Odynets turns to the experience of those refugees who fled to the EU, where the lived experiences and everyday practices of displaced persons have become characterised by the invisible notion of time (Drangslund 2020). Her interviews reveal the ways in which temporalities of displacement have assumed a key role in shaping senses of place, belonging, and dislocation, both in terms of connections to the sites of relocation and to distant homes.

Odynets focuses on temporality as experienced in the interactions of Ukrainian displaced persons with the “EU” environment (state bureaucracy, local culture, etc.). Perceptions of the different life tempi in Ukraine and the EU have become a shared experience for displaced Ukrainians, especially young and middle-aged professionals. What emerges is a striking inversion of what was once a prevailing stereotype of the Cold War: a sclerotic Soviet economy and stagnation versus a dynamic, capitalist West, where “time is money”. This intervention relates the experience of Ukrainian refugees granted a Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) to the energy and pace of their former lives, as well as parallels and distinctions in their experiences of temporality with other groups of asylum-seekers. It captures the irrevocable changes in everyday lives, interruption of individual and family routines, suspension of plans, and the trauma of a dramatic rupture with pre-war life.

These are experiences recognised by almost all displaced Ukrainians in the EU who are enduring a new kind of collective temporality, whereby gender, cross-border mobilities, and biopolitics collide. Odynets draws out the discrepancies between Ukrainian and “EU” time, where the latter is not always ahead – complicating some of the prevailing and contested tropes that have dominated geopolitical representations of Ukraine and its cross-border relations (Pfoser 2022; Zhurzhenko 2021, 2024, 2026b). Even while located in relative safety outside of Ukraine, the anxiety of waiting is always connected to the instability, danger, and psychological and social pressure of distant but violent settings (Kratochvil 2020).

The temporality that characterises the first two interventions is reflected again in the contribution of Sabine von Löwis, which juxtaposes moments of anxiousness and immobility with the stress and speed of fleeing across borders. Here, navigating conflict and displacement is captured through the approach of mental mapping, with Löwis charting the significance of the visual in creating geopolitical knowledge (Campbell 2007; Cole 2023). This intervention explores how traumatic journeys of escape are recalled, and how the spaces left behind, traversed, and arrived at are

experienced, visualised, and remembered by those being displaced. These mental maps reveal worlds that are largely unseen by states, distant commentators, and media reports. They uncover terrains where imagined geopolitical spaces and the lived experience of fleeing conflict combine. Such an approach provides an innovative way to convey how forced displacement is lived and felt, foregrounding individual narratives on geopolitics that run counter to those often promoted by state actors.

The final contribution by Alina Mozolevska extends the theme of the visual, this time to explore how the experience and trauma of war has been represented and negotiated over time. For Ukrainians, a proliferation of geographical maps and images have come to offer powerful ways of narrating the conflict. Through a visual analysis of popular art representing borders, lines, and geobodies, this intervention reveals the connections between space and images of the self and the other. It presents artwork as both therapy and community, at the same time as revealing competing interpretations of the nation and anxiety over territorial integrity (Batuman 2010).

These last two contributions demonstrate important alternatives to the power of mapping and its long association with hegemonic practices in the service of states and armies (Harley 2008). They turn to geographic visualisations as subversive tools giving voice to both individual and collective traumatic experiences and emotions, as well as to anti-war protest. In Mozolevska's work, it is striking to note how visual representations of the territorial shape of Ukraine in its 1991 borders have become an iconic political symbol, which have been embraced by the majority of the population since the events of 2014 and 2022. This outline of the nation-state has proliferated, ranging from Facebook profiles to soldiers' graves. For some, this might be interpreted as an obsession with the "sacred values" of territory (Toal 2024) but for many Ukrainians it can be read as the realisation of a more inclusive and civic political identity – the development of which had already been accelerated by Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas from 2014 (Riabchuk 2015). It is an identity that has been consistently underestimated by the Kremlin, and this image of the nation, loaded with symbolism and meaning, has become the ultimate and defiant response to Putin's attempts to break Ukraine.

De-facto borders: Everyday lives under the violence of territorial demarcation

Oksana Mikheieva

Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), Department of Social Sciences and Public Policy

The first Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, precipitated new demarcations and boundaries, creating loci of control – lines/checkpoints/control centres – where none had existed before. It introduced new forms and modes of control that went beyond physical border infrastructure, including in relation to digital content and technologies, policies on crossing border lines, and ad hoc structures granting permission to cross borders (Gülzau et al., 2021). With a proliferation of lines, forms, and modes of control, people came to construct complex relationships across a spectrum of binaries and scales: recognition–non-recognition; acceptance–resistance; maintaining–overcoming; gain–loss; attention–neglect.

To explore such a multi-scalar understanding of the border (see Laine 2016), this intervention draws on a series of in-depth interviews with research participants whose lives and activities were impacted by the Contact Line (2014-2022) cutting through Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Interviews were conducted in 2018 in Stanytsia Luhanska, Sloviansk, and Sviatohirsk, including 16 in-depth interviews with those from parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts not controlled by the Ukrainian government at the time, 5 focus groups with IDPs living in Ukrainian-controlled

territory, and 12 interviews with experts who represented local Ukrainian government structures, businesses, as well as international and local civil society organisations (Mikheieva 2019).

The signing of the Minsk Protocol on 5 September 2014, followed by the second Minsk Agreement on 12 February 2015, resulted in a fragile compromise, which temporarily froze the intensive military conflict. The agreements undermined Ukraine's territorial integrity by dividing its territory into government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas, and the Minsk Protocol remained largely on paper as hostilities never fully ceased. For Ukraine, military operations in eastern Ukraine were described under the categories of an Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and following a series of legislative initiatives in Ukraine in 2018 (About Features of State Policy, 2018), Russia was recognised as an aggressor country, with parts of Donetsk and Lugansk regions declared as occupied.

While denying its involvement, the Russian Federation covertly stimulated internal civil conflict and supported the policy of developing quasi-state structures in the form of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republics (LPR). The Contact Line separating these entities from the rest of Ukraine divided formerly "socially and functionally integrated areas" (Löwis and Sasse 2021, 210). People who had previously lived in a unified political and common regional space were now on either side of the line. Along and around this line, bordering practices quickly began to take shape, including the regulation and filtering of flows of people and vehicles, and the checking of documents and of goods transported across the border.

Decisions by local people to cross the Contact Line were determined not only by their perception of risk but also by a need to maintain previous interactions (family, business, friendships) and to engage in new ones (communication with official structures to obtain statuses, payments, legal confirmations, and other bureaucratic tasks). In most of the interviews, participants spoke about the Contact Line as a problem, an obstacle, an artificial separation of people and structures. It was perceived as a limitation, resulting in loss of time (waiting) and money (road tolls, renting accommodation near the border, corruption, and fees for cross-border services). The materialisation of the line became a challenge and a danger, with transit depending on the decisions and moods of those in control. As one respondent explained:

[The military] have an order and they don't see anything else. They used to get in touch with people. They used to let families communicate. Five kilometres. Here I am, here she is. Here are my relatives. We used to go [across the border], we were known, we were seen. And now we are unhuman for them ... Closer to the border, we are enemies to them. We're spies for them. Inhumans. Just because of the "propiska."¹ (Territory of Luhansk oblast not controlled by Ukraine, young female, Luhansk)

This complexity and unpredictability of crossing the border meant that a significant number of people were unable to access state services on the other side. This was especially true for those who were immobile, often the elderly and with disabilities (Mikheieva and Kuznetsova, 2023), who were not able to follow the new procedures without help. Interviewees recounted such frustrations:

You have to prove everywhere that you are you, that it is your card, that you are a pensioner, and that it is your money that you want to withdraw. It's so humiliating. (Territory of Donetsk oblast, controlled by Ukraine, middle-aged male, IDP)

The new border also saw the proliferation of a number of cross-border businesses founded on providing services to facilitate crossing the border (see Feyissa and Hoehne 2010 on the border as a "resource"). These transactions included transportation of people, the issuing of documents, providing goods and services (especially where there was a differential in availability and price), "propiska"/registration in Ukrainian-controlled territory (necessary for registering the status of an

internally displaced person), a place in the queue for crossing the line of demarcation, and assistance in processing certificates and documents. However, the presence of such shadow services created almost everywhere double queues, increased social inequalities, and complicated the situation for those who did not have enough money to speed up various state procedures through illegal or informal intermediation.

The Contact Line was particularly dangerous for young men, who were seen as a direct threat. The unpredictability of crossing the border was reflected in that they could be let through unhindered, or detained, stripped naked and body-checked for tattoos or marks on their skin from carrying weapons. Suspicion could be aroused either by the presence of signs of pro-Ukrainian/pro-Russian position (tattoos, posts on social networks, etc.) or their complete absence (which could lead to accusations of being too well prepared to cross the Contact Line as evidence of service in the army or belonging to the intelligence services). Young people also became a group vulnerable to corrupt transactions and human trafficking (with detention and ransoms sent to parents, relatives, and friends), which reduced their inclination and opportunity to cross the Contact Line.

A new spatial reality was created on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions from 2014. It encompassed the occupied territory of the Ukrainian state, the everyday life of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, and the space of the "Russian world", with elements of its formalisation in these territories, such as the issuing of Russian passports. People living on what was the same territory began to live in parallel realities and build relations with the surrounding environment based on their own system of values, identities, and assessment of the level of threats. The Contact Line, which marked the boundary of two different political projects, manifested itself in the everyday practices of people who identified with this or that project, and resulted in those who found themselves in the minority, and labelled as "the other", being gradually pushed out. It not only fixed the division of a formerly integrated area but also divided families, and severed friendships and professional relationships. Furthermore, the crossing of the line of demarcation became a site of uncounted tragedies, with neither side reconciling or clarifying their record of deaths on the line of demarcation. Interviewees also recounted sometimes harrowing experiences, including witnessing the death of an elderly person in a queue from exhaustion:

Once at a checkpoint a man died before my eyes. It was horrible to watch. I am an emotional person, so I won't go into details. I couldn't recover for three days after that. (Territory of Luhansk oblast not controlled by Ukraine, older female, Luhansk)

Tragedies away from the Contact Line remained even less visible – when older relatives died alone, and children never saw their elderly parents again because they could not enter the occupied territory for political reasons, for fear of persecution, arbitrary entry-exit restrictions, or refusal to obtain permits. The boundary could evoke a painful sense of powerlessness and an inability to grieve and bid farewell to deceased loved ones.² Funerals were often taken over by friends and acquaintances with whom a connection had been maintained, others were handled by neighbours of the deceased.

For many though, the struggle to cross the border continued and there was intensive movement across the Contact Line in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, peaking at around 1.4 million crossings per month in both directions in 2019 ([The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, n.d.](#)).³ However, restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic led to the bilateral closure of checkpoints in March 2020. Though several checkpoints gradually reopened, there was constant tension and mutual accusations of non-compliance with agreements ([Papina 2020](#)). These circumstances increasingly curtailed the movement of ordinary people. The pandemic and the restrictions related to it were an important catalyst in further closing these worlds from each other. When the borders shut for COVID-19, many people were trapped. Some did not have the means to stay on Ukrainian territory for an indefinite period and others remained living in tents near the checkpoints in the hope of returning. Those

in the occupied territories could not immediately return to Ukraine (Tymoshenko 2020) and the number of border crossings after March 2020 never returned to previous levels. In 2021, there were less than 90,000 crossings of the Contact Line per month (The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, n.d.).

Restricted crossing of the Contact Line sorted and fixed people on both sides of the de facto border. It closed the occupied territories in on themselves, removing the Ukrainian perspective while maintaining unlimited Russian influence. In the two days before the full-scale invasion, Russia recognised the independence of the so-called DPR and LPR, which annulled the Minsk agreements. The Contact Line, having fulfilled its function of separating territories and people, turned into a moving front line in February 2022, transforming the de-facto border area into a battlefield. While it existed, the Line was actively constructed by various state and non-state actors through their practices of interaction with the border. It became part of people's daily lives and worked to distance the positively perceived "we" from notional "others", seen as a potential threat. The restriction on border crossing associated with the COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the hybridity of communities across the line and contributed to the homogenisation of belonging in the political loci divided by the de facto border. In just a few years, the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were turned against each other along this line of demarcation. While a range of factors contributed to these deepening feelings of division, the pandemic and its consequences significantly restricted opportunities for the mobility and interactions that could counter prevailing narratives and propaganda. The line's closure meant the definitive separation of areas that were once socially and functionally unified.

Time and temporal asynchronicities in displacement after Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Svitlana Odynets

Department of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Mid Sweden University

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, millions have fled Ukraine and been granted short-term residence in the European Union under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), alongside access to work and other basic rights. The TPD did not suddenly open EU borders for this group as prior to 2022, Ukrainian citizens could enter and stay in the EU for up to 90 days within a 180-day period under the visa-free regime introduced in 2017 as a political outcome of the Euromaidan (2013-2014) reforms. However, this previous arrangement excluded the fundamental right to work (Drażkiewicz et al., 2023), which was only granted after 2022.

The activation of the TPD has largely been interpreted through the lens of "selective compassion" and "deservingness" (Sajadi, 2022), particularly in comparison to the EU's governance of other migrant populations (Bueno Lacy and Van Houtum 2023; Follis 2023). However, there has been little discussion on this collective protection status differing from all previous EU asylum categories. Its most distinctive feature is its granting of non-individualised, group-based residence rights for a specific period of time, and which does not require an individual assessment of eligibility for a residence permit as has been the case for all other asylum seeker groups (Tchermalykh 2024). The duration of this protection also remains highly indeterminate. The initially defined "maximum" period of three years has already been extended twice, most recently until March 2027, reaching a total of 5 years, with some forecasts suggesting that it may be extended further in July 2026. In line with this, EU institutions shifted from an initial formulation of granting collective protection "until the war ends" – a framing that appeared plausible in the months following the invasion – to successive extensions that now exceed the original temporal horizon of the policy.

This shift indicates a transition from an exceptional, event-bound understanding of temporariness to a more open-ended and structurally prolonged regime of provisional migration governance, which is becoming increasingly common in the EU (see, for example, Koikkalainen et al., 2026). As a result, temporariness of the residence permit becomes less a clearly bounded legal category and more a flexible

political and institutional condition that is continuously renegotiated in response to the ongoing uncertainty of migration management in Europe. While the TPD has similarities with other temporary protection systems (see [Ozkaleli 2021](#); [Sengul 2022](#)), Ukrainian transnational (mostly labour migrant) communities were already well-established in the EU before 2022. Ukraine ranked among the top countries of origin for new immigrants to the EU from non-EU states over the decade preceding the Russian invasion, ahead of Morocco and Turkey ([Eurostat 2021](#); see also [Fedyk and Kindler, 2016](#); [Lapshyna, 2022](#)). Millions of people from Ukraine lived and worked in the EU in a transnational context during this period and these existing networks played a significant role in shaping experiences across the different stages of reception in host countries after 2022.

In comparison with pre-war migration from Ukraine, which was more equally male and female, the current displacement predominantly involves women with young children who leave behind partners and elderly parents. This displacement involves transnational and deeply embedded familial dynamics and it is not a single, linear moment of movement. Instead, it is a staggered and multi-sited process in which individual family members are embedded in different temporal regimes of mobility, residence, and return expectations, producing asynchronous life courses across and within households. Another critical factor is the permissibility of mobility for visits to Ukraine, which is not only allowed but, in effect, institutionally accommodated and directly encouraged within the EU management of this displacement. This reflects an underlying policy assumption that most Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection will return once the war ends, thereby framing circular mobility as compatible with, rather than disruptive to, an anticipated temporal horizon of return.

The implementation of the TPD across different states has also produced a range of new inequalities for those seeking refuge from war. In some EU countries, displaced people are granted rights comparable to those of permanent residents after just 1 year of residence (e.g., Finland), while in others, such as Sweden, they were treated largely as asylum seekers for the first 2.5 years after the start of the war (until autumn 2024), with rights that were sometimes minimal or even more limited than those of asylum seekers. Since 2024, people from Ukraine in Sweden have had significantly different access to the welfare system depending on how long they have been in the country. Moreover, while some countries allow transitions to other types of residence permits during the period of TPD (e.g. Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic), others do not. Some states also count time spent under TPD toward the residence period required for more “stable” legal status in the future (e.g., Germany), whereas the majority do not.

Research on time and temporality in migration is a substantial field (for example: [Griffiths et al., 2013](#); [Little 2015](#); [Donnan 2016](#)), but studies on the temporality and displacement of Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion have only recently started to develop ([Otrishchenko 2023](#); [Mijic et al., 2024](#); see also [Rimpiläinen 2020](#) on the war in Donbas in 2014). Building on this work, different types of temporalities are emerging, and these are produced by the activation and varying implementation of the TPD at different legal, institutional, and individual levels ([Odynets and Shmulyar Gréen, 2026](#)). First, the temporary character of TPD introduced a novel form of institutionalized precariousness, in which temporal status is no longer defined by a fixed duration – as was always the case in “classical” refugee statuses – but instead by short, repeatedly renegotiated periods of validity of residence permit, typically extended on an annual basis (and in some countries, as in Poland, every 6 months). This ongoing indeterminacy persists, while the horizon of protection remains structurally open-ended and institutionally under-specified.

Secondly, this condition has produced circumstances whereby both state and non-state actors in host societies, as well as displaced individuals themselves, are compelled to actively construct and navigate their own temporal frameworks of stay and the positioning of themselves as part of the host society. In this sense, temporality becomes an emergent social practice rather than a fixed administrative parameter. This process is particularly visible in domains such as labour market participation – including employers’ reluctance to hire people from Ukraine due to their “temporary” protection status; the educational

trajectories of Ukrainian children, who may participate in two school systems – in the host country and in Ukraine – in anticipation of possible short-term return, or university education in Ukraine after schooling in the host country; and access to medical assessment and therapy for the elderly in one or both countries, where decisions must be made on treatment under the conditions of sustained temporal uncertainty.

Finally, at the subjective level, this temporal uncertainty generates a range of transnational practices that can be understood as forms of everyday coping and reconfiguration of the individual's place in the host society, as well as in Ukraine. Such practices emerge not only as responses to the multilayered instability in which millions of people from Ukraine now live, but also as strategies for producing subjective continuity and the partial psychological stabilization related to the conditions of life in exile. The right to mobility between the host country and Ukraine under temporary protection enables displaced individuals to oscillate between host and home contexts, using this mobility to “recharge”, affectively and socially, in relation to their place of origin, despite the conditions of the ongoing war. In this sense, transnational movement becomes a key mechanism through which individuals manage uncertainty, sustain a sense of biographical coherence, and negotiate the tension between protracted displacement and enduring attachment to their homeland.

In negotiating these temporalities, distinct patterns and strategies have emerged amongst displaced Ukrainians to manage the ongoing uncertainties of their interactions with institutional structures that can both enable and hinder their lives (Brzozowska, 2023; Maxwell et al., 2024; Mijic et al., 2024; Mozetič et al., 2023). For example, in Sweden, the relationship with state bureaucracy has become defined by an asynchrony between the rhythms of newcomers and the inflexibility and slowness of the Swedish system (Rothstein 2010). Sharma (2014) uses the concept “chronographies of power” to reflect the unequal “speed” or tempo of individuals’ interactions within societies, which resonates with migration experiences and the current displacement from Ukraine. From interviews conducted during 2023 and spring 2024 in western and southern Sweden,⁴ various strategies to cope with these circumstances emerged. While some remain in a state of waiting, refraining from pursuing alternatives to establishing themselves within the social environment of the host country, others strive to move more quickly up the “integration ladder” that the system expects of them.

These strategies are similar to those Dennler (2023) identified in her study of newcomers with uncertain status or under threat of deportation in Canada, where she noted two distinct responses to uncertainty: embracing or suspending engagement. Dennler argues that newcomers with uncertain status or under threat of deportation must decide whether it is worth investing time and resources in their new environment, or whether to suspend their lives in Canada (2023, 1865). For Ukrainian respondents, they are often striving to negotiate life in both countries and “having one foot in each” (Eastmond 2006) – going to school and undertaking often low-skilled jobs in Sweden, while still working remotely as professionals in Ukraine. By doing so, they often choose their own tempo of adaptation to the host country, which diverges from the bureaucratic regimes that create obstacles for them. This temporal dissonance in Sweden is compounded by the rigidity of the integration system and the tendency of Scandinavian welfare programs to intervene in people's private lives more extensively than in many other places (Olwig, 2011, 180). For those bound by their collective status under the TPD, they are not permitted to integrate at their own individual pace, which can lead to high levels of stress and frustration, and accelerated plans to return to Ukraine, even in the situation of an ongoing and high intensity war. Their responses to bureaucratization involve resistance, as well as hopelessness and the readjustment of personal ambitions – a scenario mirrored in studies with Afghan and Palestinian refugees in Sweden (Gren 2020, 2022; Gren et al., 2023).

Such circumstances can lead to a redefined perception of time among the displaced as a source of new agency. Time emerges as a critical resource, motivating displaced individuals to move forward. Despite the uncertainty surrounding their future residence permits, they attempt to structure their lives as a time strategy, maximizing social capital for future goals. This was supported by interviews with respondents emphasizing how quickly they needed to manage

multiple tasks and how they perceived the surrounding systems of host countries. For example, Oksana, described her experience of interacting with Swedish authorities in opening a business:

Maybe I ask in the wrong way, or maybe they are not motivated enough to help me. I ask [the consultant in the Swedish Tax Agency] whether I can open my own business as a person without personal ID and living temporarily in the country, and she doesn't have any answers to my question. But she did not seem very motivated to find them. Their mentality is different, everything is different. Everything is happening very slowly, and so slowly that in this time, I would have managed to do three times more in Ukraine. (Oksana, 41 years old, arrived from Kherson region in May 2022)

With the speed of work, travel, and social interactions a prevalent feature in popular culture, leisure spaces, and workplaces, [Sharma \(2014\)](#) emphasizes that the biopolitics of time varies for different groups, shaped by factors like class, social hierarchy, and financial assets. For displaced people from Ukraine, who arrived from a war zone and occupy the lowest rungs of social welfare in Sweden, this temporal order is experienced from the very bottom. Many feel that the precious time needed to organize their lives is slipping away as Swedish bureaucracy watches their efforts indifferently. It is a notion of time that continues to deny them the sense of normality and regularity that they experienced before the war. Respondents experiencing displacement frequently referenced the time spent waiting in Sweden for medical appointments, postal services, and the process of opening bank accounts. In contrast, a proliferation of new and rapidly created businesses in Ukraine – particularly in the hospitality and service sector – emphasises a distinction in pace between institutionalized and non-institutionalized democracies. Oleksandra, a professional from the art sector in Kyiv, described her experience of living as a displaced person in a small town in Sweden and interactions in her professional field:

I think they are incredibly slow in everything. Everything related to the banking system, money transfers, mailing, document processing, as well as many social processes... I'm just used to it. I understand that everything we are talking about today will not happen tomorrow. And it often happens that there are just conversations...And then nothing happens at all. I don't know how it works. It's as if they get some spark, in one moment they have an impulse, and then this impulse gone, and nothing happens. (Oleksandra, 45 years old, arrived from Kyiv in April 2022)

Alongside the waiting, the mobility rights guaranteed by the TPD allowing free travel to and from Ukraine, means that the lives of displaced people under protection come to exhibit distinct cycles and rhythms. Frustrated at being stuck in the host country, many respondents return to Ukraine for periods ranging from a few days to a few weeks. This allows them to recharge psychologically and to find relief in their native environment. They return to Ukraine for various reasons, such as obtaining a new passport, undergoing health checks – often involving shorter waiting times, especially for those paying for services – visiting relatives, checking on their homes, and assessing potential damage. While these movements are highly individual and motivated by multiple factors ([Uehling, 2002](#)), they can serve to alleviate the stress often caused by the perceived slowness of systems in host countries. These scenarios highlight not only cultural difference, and the challenges of navigating distinct political economies in Ukraine and Western Europe, but also people's agency and their sophisticated coping strategies in highly uncertain and anxious times.

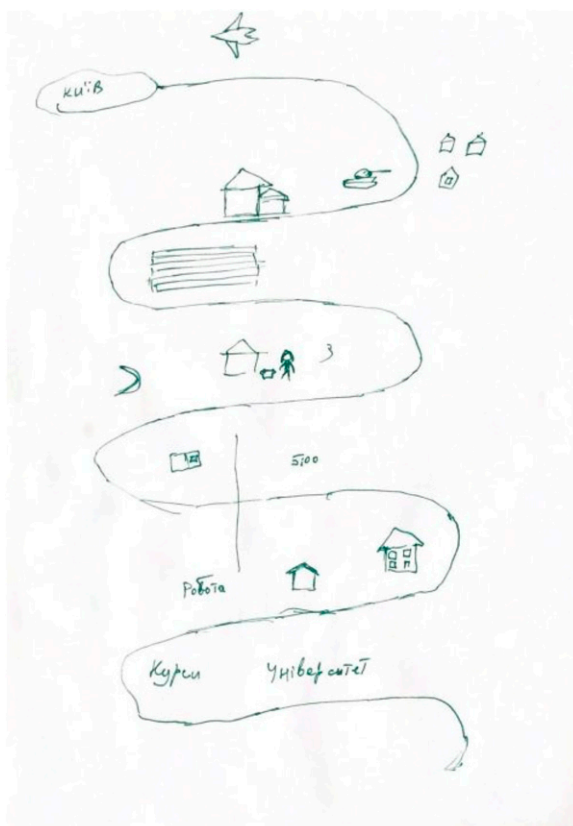
Visual and emotional geographies in the mental maps of displaced Ukrainians

Sabine von Löwis

Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS)

In migration and displacement studies, emotions and experiences of space and place are often linked to the place of departure or arrival, but have been rarely analysed on the move (Boccagni, Baldassar 2015; Campos-Delgado 2018, 2021; Van Ramshorst 2019). Most representations of displacement still focus on “linear displacement” from a particular territory but fail to capture its deviations, returns, and the prior experiences of mobility by displaced people, and the importance of the places in between. Beyond the displaced person on the move, a number of individual and collective actors play a role: the state and the place left behind; the state and the place of arrival; the states and places crossed; people along the route, including border officials; and other formal and informal actors. This intervention focuses on the entanglements of power that are reproduced and contested at different scales along the journey and which are reflected in the intimate and embodied sites of the everyday life of displacement under conditions of violent conflict. It links the emotional geographies of displacement with the feminist geopolitics of everyday experience (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Hyndman 2004; Pain et al., 2010; Van Ramshorst 2019).

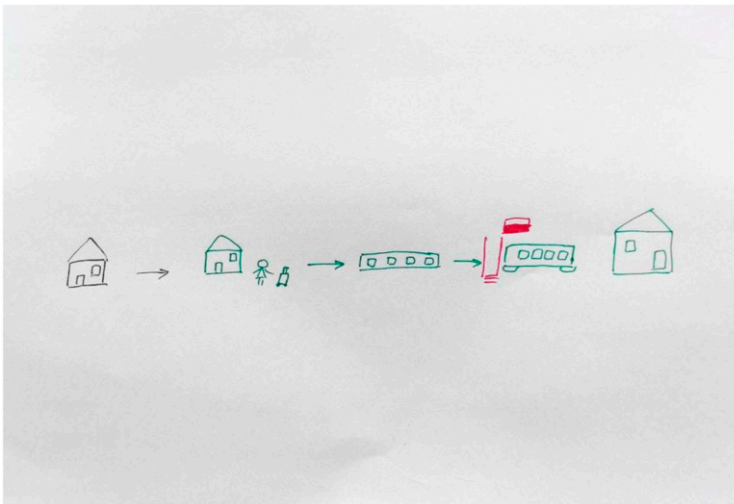
The use of the visual method of mental mapping is deployed here as a powerful means of providing insights into subjectivities and the multiple interdependencies between emotions, space and place, and geopolitics. It provides “a way of speaking visually through places what words alone cannot articulate” (Gieseeking 2013, 714). These mental maps – alongside their creator’s narratives – make it possible to analyse the experiences and emotions associated with fleeing a war zone and leaving home. This approach has the potential to draw out elements and express feelings that they may not be able to speak about (Klaus et al. 2022) and to uncover emotions, geopolitical knowledge, and decisions made on the move. All of which can deepen and diversify knowledge about displacement (Campos-Delgado 2018, 2021).



This first map, created by an 18-year-old male who fled with his mother from Kyiv to Rzeszów, illustrates the complex and multifaceted nature of displacement, encompassing a multitude of dimensions and directions. The map includes both important and experienced features of the places of departure and arrival, as well as social moments along the way. It is replete with symbols that evoke pivotal moments on their arduous journey to the border and beyond. The symbols and the curvy line reflect the uncertainty and experiences of fear and solidarity encountered during their journey. It commences in Kyiv on the day the war begins, with the young man and his mother departing the city, while his father remains behind. He delineates the journey with curvilinear strokes and symbols (for example, tanks on the road, air fighters above, houses of shelter, people helping, etc.). In using rural routes, in preference to congested highways, the travellers found themselves deviating from their intended course and ultimately lost. They traversed an agricultural field to reach a road that they had selected for their journey, despite the risk of becoming stuck in the mud. In this map, the border crossing and the process of moving from one country to another do not feature prominently. Instead, the journey from Kyiv, which was undertaken with thousands of other individuals, serves to define both his mental map and personal experience:

We stood in line for three days, the car was travelling at a speed of maybe 2 kilometres per hour, but we were very lucky that we were going through villages and there were very kind people in the villages who could feed us and give us some food, things, everything.

The curvilinear trajectory persists beyond the point of crossing the border. Until settled in Rzeszów, they resided in various locations, and the narrative he recounts and illustrates depicts the multifaceted movement and the numerous events that posed both challenges and opportunities along the way. They were experiences shared by many thousands of others making similar journeys in those days.



Another representation, by a single mother, who finally decided after months to leave Ukraine, uses colour to express emotion. It is a significant element in this mental map, with the affective and emotional connection to place and political geography experienced and expressed: “Let Mykolaiv be black ... It was from Mykolaiv that I went to my mother’s house, I want to paint it green ... It’s like an association for me.” The woman’s drawing is unambiguous and direct, not reflecting a

lengthy period of preparation and a reluctance to depart. She delineates her own figure on the map and the suitcase she is packing. She and her daughter are undertaking the journey to Lviv by rail, from where they will proceed by bus to Warsaw, where a friend is awaiting their arrival. The border is delineated in red and depicted as a significant discontinuity – a symbolism that can be read as the emotional stress connected with the border crossing. The anxiety associated with it is not the sole factor at play with the emotional attachment to Ukraine experienced consciously during the crossing:

On 23 August, on the eve of our national holiday, Independence Day, I was crossing the border, and again I was feeling so emotional, I was crying a lot, I couldn't control myself, especially when we crossed the border, when we had already crossed the Ukrainian border and when we got to the Polish border, everything was right next to us. There was just a sign saying, "Congratulations, you're safe now." Well, I remember it. It was very, very painful, because somehow you realised that you were not actually safe there [in Ukraine], it was as if you became aware of it [...]

The colours convey the specific emotional nuances associated with each stage of the narrative. The black outline of her home in Mykolaiv stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the journey: "Yes, look, everything is in green and the destination is." Subsequently, the journey continues to Warsaw, where they reside with her acquaintance. The colours and symbols encapsulate her displacement experience – from the grief of Mykolaiv to the comfort of her mother's home, to the hope of the journey and destination – each stage evincing a distinctive attachment to place while moving across space.



The third map illustrates the experience of displacement of a young woman with her child, departing Kherson with the ultimate destination of Berlin. She departed Kherson, which was under occupation at the time, for Odesa. Despite the relatively short physical distance between Kherson and Odesa, she was compelled to traverse numerous block posts and extensive distances to reach the latter destination. After the successful departure from the occupied territories, the family then decided to move on from Odesa.

This mental map illustrates the remarkable feature of overcoming spatial distances and the passage of time in order to reach Odesa from Kherson. The lengthy journey and the time spent on the road illustrate the considerable challenges faced in leaving a territory under Russian occupation.

The journey is fraught with uncertainty and numerous obstacles. A second aspect of the map is the journey through Europe with the planned destination of Berlin. The journey is undertaken by car, with scheduled stops in each country. It is noteworthy that Hungary is not included among the countries where they made stops – instead it is reduced to a narrow strip on the map. In her narrative, she elucidates that they were uncertain about Hungary and its political landscape at the time, deciding to make a stopover in Romania at the border and proceed with haste through Hungary.

And then we spent the night at the border with Hungary because we were a bit afraid to spend the night there. [...] Because we don't understand their state policy very well. And we decided that we wouldn't stay overnight in Hungary. We'd better drive through. And we made it all the way to Bratislava.

This mental map represents an individual assessment and experience of geopolitical configurations. It demonstrates the emotional impact of geopolitical conflict when traversing a nation perceived as complex and insecure in its stance towards Ukraine (cf. [Balogh and Kovály 2024](#)). This experience of displacement serves to illustrate – visually and narratively – the interdependence of emotions, space, and everyday geopolitics, revealing a broader spectrum of perspectives on the choices made in leaving ([Van Ramshorst, 2019](#): p. 901). The three examples recount the overcoming of space, its relationship to the temporal, and the associated emotional and affective processes. Furthermore, it reflects geopolitical characteristics and perceptions of place and space, which are both embodied and socially situated.

As these representations reveal, the experience of displacement does not necessarily offer a straightforward exit from the country or the war zone. The visualisation of migration is not simply a linear movement, a concept that has been previously critiqued by other scholars ([Campos-Delgado 2018, 2021](#); [Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020](#)), but instead a circuitous journey between spaces and experiences. Displacement encompasses a multitude of sentiments and emotions, including feelings of security and insecurity, fear and trust, help and hope, stress and relief. The journeys are characterised by a series of diversions, dead ends and new routes that are forged as the journey progresses. The three cases illustrate how displacement routes and experiences differ depending on time of departure, place of origin, and individual circumstances. The young man fleeing Kyiv with his mother shortly after the outbreak of war reflects the chaotic nature of mass flight. By contrast, the woman leaving Mykolaiv with her daughter months later follows a planned and direct route. The third case, involving departure from occupied territory after several months, required detours and more complex movements.

Space is differentially experienced and delineated in its imaginative structure (e.g. through geopolitical assignments), and also in its material features when traversing space (e.g. tanks, waiting, intersecting, getting lost and deviating from intended routes, crossing fields). The social aspect of displacement is also evident in instances of solidarity and the formation of networks for protection or in situations of apprehension. The perception of a state's geopolitical position, and lack of trust in that state, can result in avoiding it, as evidenced by “jumping” across Hungary. In addition, the emotional states of relief and pain experienced when crossing the border give rise to a tangible border space, encompassing both the physical territory of the nation state and the imaginative constructs associated with it. This border space, in turn, can evoke a complex array of emotions, encompassing a sense of belonging and home, alongside feelings of insecurity.

The approach of mental mapping can reveal previously overlooked aspects, providing insights to bridge the gap between everyday geopolitics and emotional geographies. It also enables the researcher to adopt a less central role and to gain a deeper insight into the participant's vision of the world and the ways in which it is expressed. Furthermore, this technique enhances comprehension of the decisions made, and the experiences and geopolitical knowledge gathered in the context of

displacement. It makes visible what otherwise would not have been seen, revealing a unique worldview formed by the intense experience of escaping violent conflict.

Geo-imaginaries of violence: Spatial representations of the Russo-Ukrainian war in popular visual culture

Alina Mozolevska

Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Germanic and Romance languages; and Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

This is a map Ukrainians see daily (Figure 1). It is available online on the app Povitriana Tryvoha and it is regularly shared widely on social media platforms such as Viber and Telegram. Red areas mark Ukrainian regions under Russian attack. The map's colours change from day to day, reflecting the dynamic nature of the war. Often, there are days when the entire territory of Ukraine is coloured red, indicating the scale of Russian missile threat. For many Ukrainians, tracking these attacks through maps and the visualisation of targeted regions or monitoring frontline developments via images and animations has become an integral aspect of life during the war.

However, the use of maps and cartographic representations is not limited to recording Russian advancements, air raids, or Ukrainian counterattacks. Since the beginning of Russia's invasion, maps, borders, and geographic symbols have become central to constructing a visual landscape of war. The violence, brutal bordering, and the material and spatial destruction of spaces and communities compel a search for a clear visual language to frame the experience of these reconfigurations.

Geographic imagery provides a powerful tool to visually shape and convey the multiplicity of war-related experiences. Because of its ability to represent certain territories, as well as convey cultural messages and senses that involve emotions and embodied experiences of places, mapping

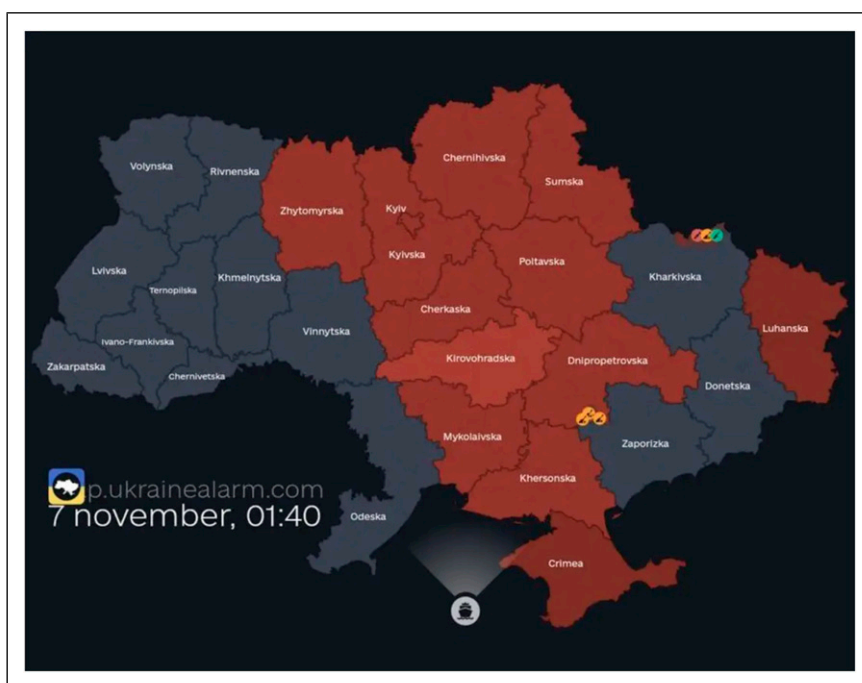


Figure 1. Map of Air Alarms, November 7, 2024. Available at: <https://map.ukrainealarm.com/>.

appeals to diverse contemporary artistic practices in order to “say things about our society and its values” (Perkins 2009, 6). It has come to serve as an important political instrument for commentary and intervention (Watson 2009). With the rise of digital media, the power of the map has proliferated with cartographic images repeatedly reproduced and used as a device for meaning-making, knowledge-production, and as tools for transferring national narratives to wider international audiences. In times of military conflict, borders and collective bodies of states are used not only as physical demarcations of territories but also as symbols that narrate the story of violent re/bordering while visually representing identity, sovereignty, or the lost geographical integrity of the nation-state and the trauma of separation. This intervention offers an analysis of the use of geographic imagery in Ukrainian cultural productions to convey the traumatic experience of living through the war.

The symbolic and cultural dimensions of the Russo-Ukrainian war have garnered significant attention from academics, as scholars aim to understand the implications of various cultural representations and their impact on public opinion, political communication, and the construction of collective identity (Boyko 2023; Cherniavska 2022; Horbyuk and Orlova 2023; Kolesnyk 2024; Kolsto 2016; Munk 2023; Zabirko 2022). In 2014–2022, the main focus of research analysis was on the protest art during and after the Maidan revolution and the study of its role as a booster to the development of civil society and the consolidation of Ukrainian national identity (Bazdyrieva 2017; Kozak 2017; Lazarenko 2020; Yekelchuk 2015).

After February 2022, Ukrainian online cultural practices as a means of political communication and war mediatization gained significant media and academic attention. More recent research interrogates the role of visual popular culture as a tool of international diplomacy and geopolitics (Budnitsky 2023; Horbyk and Orlova 2023; Saunders 2024), and as a form of resistance, resilience or visibility in the participatory dynamics of war in digital environments (Boyko 2023; Kolesnyk 2024; Korowin 2023; Kot et al., 2024; Munk 2023). Researchers have also explored the geopolitical changes and spatial disruptions of Ukrainian territory through the prism of re-bordering and mapping practices with a special focus on lived experiences of displacement and occupation (Kuznetsova 2021; for a broader context see: Zhurzhenko 2024, 2026b; Löwis 2015; Seegel 2023), as well as trauma processing through art (Herashchenko 2024). Yet, none of them offers a detailed analysis of the cartographic imagery of the Russo-Ukrainian war in the digital environments of new media.

The full-scale Russian invasion was accompanied by a surge of creative works attempting to make sense of a new reality and the violence endured by Ukrainians. These included stories of displacement, aggression, and suffering, which found their embodiment in many of the artworks created since February 2022. It is not surprising that many geographic visualizations also focus on depicting the violence of war, symbolizing the scale of the aggression and the brutal spatial, physical and psychological transformations brought about by the war.

The map of Ukraine and its geographic contours of the nation-state have become an artistic instrument for reflecting the trauma of war and conveying the collective wartime experiences of Ukrainians. Artists use this visual symbol to tell the stories of massive missile and drone attacks, war crimes, occupation, electricity blackouts, and violent border transformations. The map of air raid alarms mentioned earlier has become an integral part of the visual language of contemporary wartime art. Another striking example is Oleksandr Grekhov’s illustration from May 2022, which combines a map of air raid alarms with the bodies of Ukrainians, symbolizing the physical aggression and sexual violence endured during the war (Figure 2). The image overlays the bodies of undressed young Ukrainian women in embryonal position with the red map of alarms, evoking a strong emotional reaction. This combination of geographical imagery and the visualization of human suffering transforms the map into a deeply emotive artifact, encapsulating feelings ranging from collective pain and grief to resilience and anger in the face of danger.



Figure 2. Oleksandr Grekhov's illustration, posted on May 4, 2022. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cdl9p1xNfD3/>.

The mass physical destruction of places is also encapsulated through geographic imagery, which was especially intensive during the initial months of Russia's full-scale invasion. While the regions of Ukraine have experienced varying levels of destruction, the use of the map as a recurring visual trope seeks to create a sense of shared collective experience of loss and dispossession. In this case, the map is combined with images of destroyed houses, devastated cityscapes, or ruined nature. An illustrative example is the artwork by Alyona Zhuk, where the contour of Ukraine is seamlessly inscribed into the shape of a residential building, a structure archetypal of many Ukrainian cities (Figure 3).

This visual choice resonates deeply with a multitude of mediated photos and videos from the war, documenting Ukrainian homes struck by Russian rockets, missiles, and drones. These images of residential buildings have become visual symbols of the war, firmly embedded in the memory of Ukrainians. Zhuk's caption, "We will not forgive the lives taken, the homes destroyed," reinforces the enduring significance of the living spaces as both physical and emotional markers of loss and resilience. It not only symbolizes physical spaces but also represents the everyday existence Ukrainians knew before the war, emphasizing their profound sense of loss and disconnection. The imagery highlights the deep bond Ukrainians share with their homes, portraying the entire territory of Ukraine as a literal homeland. This emotional resonance demonstrates that the pain inflicted by Russian attacks is not confined to any one place – it is felt equally whether the strikes target the capital or a distant village. At the same time, such imagery and textual messages also convey anger and the will to resist the aggressor, portraying a resilient attachment to one's homeland alongside emotions of vengeance.

Colour symbolism also plays a crucial role in conveying the violence of the invasion. Colours such as red and black are often used to represent aggression, bloodshed, and loss. These colours are combined with visual elements like missiles, rockets, or drones, targeting the collective body of Ukraine. For example, Kaminska Daria's artwork⁵ vividly conveys the chaos of war by depicting



Figure 3. Alyona Zhuk's illustration, posted on March 22, 2022. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CbaBkvTtr_k/.

mass missile attacks as black floods, targeting Ukraine's territorial integrity. The illustration powerfully captures the devastation and sense of helplessness brought by these attacks. The map of war, when infused with these symbols and colours, becomes a powerful visual tool, underscoring the magnitude and personal impact of the invasion on the affected population. The artwork of Stas Kolotov (Figure 4) illustrates such imagery.

The act of territorial aggression is symbolically expressed in various ways. For instance, a generalized depiction of Russian soldiers by artists, such as in Kateryna Vasechko's illustrations, represent them physically assaulting the collective body of Ukraine.⁶ In Vasechko's work, the soldiers are shown burning, mutilating, and plucking wheat sprouts that grow across Ukraine's territory. The golden wheat symbolizes Ukraine's peaceful life, brutally disrupted by the invasion. The stark contrast between life before and after the war is strikingly visualized. Vasechko often addresses geographic imagery in her art and in another of her works the geo-body of Ukraine is violated by bears, a recurring symbol of Russia.⁷

Since 2014, the image of Putin has served as the most recurring synecdochical representation of Russian aggression (see Kot et al., 2024). This figure is frequently combined with geographic motifs to emphasize the destructive impact on Ukraine's territory and people. For example, in Andriy Dankovych's illustration, he is shown reaching out his bloody hands to violate Ukraine's collective body, a metaphorical act that underscores the invasive and destructive nature of Putin's actions.⁸ Similarly, Daria Kaminska portrays Putin devouring Ukraine, which leaves open wounds on the geo-body of the country. These artists deliberately draw parallels between injuries to the human body and violations to Ukraine's collective territorial body. Through such visual metaphors, the artworks convey the shared trauma experienced by millions of Ukrainians during the war. In this way, the wounds inflicted on the geographical body of Ukraine mirror the physical and emotional suffering endured by its people. In Artem Gusev's artwork, Putin is depicted as

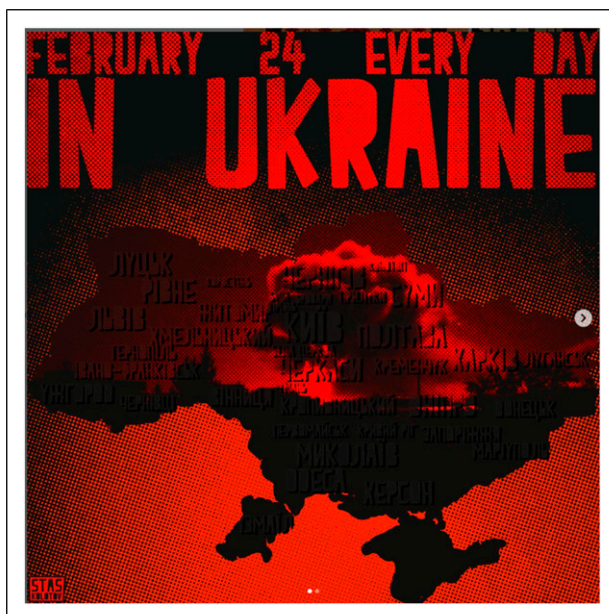


Figure 4. Stas Kolotov October 11, 2022. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CjkgfRt7Q7/?img_index=1.

encapsulating the invasion itself, embodying the entirety of the military and ideological assault on Ukraine (Figure 5). This representation emphasizes the central role of Putin's leadership in perpetuating the war. These symbolic portrayals blend geographic and human imagery, merging the personal with the collective to highlight the scale and depth of the aggression.

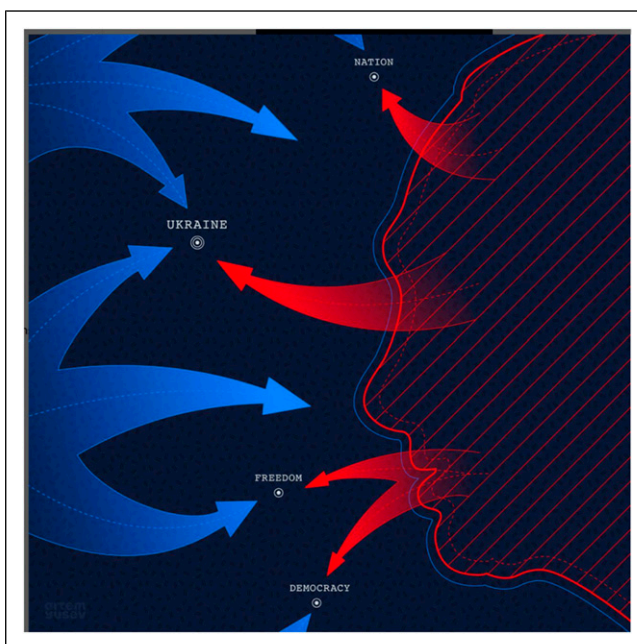


Figure 5. Artem Gusev illustration. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cc0yi79N8xq/>.

By intertwining the contours of Ukraine's map with the physical and emotional experiences of its people, all of these artworks transform cartographic symbols into profound expressions of collective suffering, feelings of belonging, and resilience in the face of threat. Whether through depictions of missile attacks, violated homes and landscapes, or symbolic portrayals of aggressors, each visual representation emphasizes the interconnectedness of personal and territorial injuries, portraying the war not just as a military conflict but as a profound assault on the essence of everyday life.

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ORCID iDs

Paul Richardson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4220-9964>
 Tatiana Zhurzhenko  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8158-6274>
 Péter Balogh  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8220-3220>
 Oksana Mikheieva  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3789-2415>
 Svitlana Odynets  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5575-1018>
 Sabine von Löwis  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1814-872X>
 Alina Mozolevska  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1550-8734>

Ethical considerations

The research in the contribution 'Time and Temporal Asynchronicities in Displacement after Russia's invasion of Ukraine' was approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority [Reg. No. 2023-01083-01] on 20 February 2023. The research in the contribution 'De-facto borders: Everyday lives under the violence of territorial demarcation' involved a research toolkit reviewed and approved in accordance with PAX internal procedures, 2018 (<https://paxforpeace.nl/>). The research in the contribution 'Visual and Emotional Geographies in the Mental Maps of Displaced Ukrainians' was approved by the ZOiS Research Ethics Committee on November, 30, 2022.

Consent to participate

De-facto borders: Everyday lives under the violence of territorial demarcation: All participants gave written informed consent for the interview to be recorded and quoted anonymously (indicating age, gender, locality, status).

Time and Temporal Asynchronicities in Displacement after Russia's invasion of Ukraine: All participants provided written or verbal informal consent to participate in the research, and participant information was anonymized by name and geographic location.

Visual and Emotional Geographies in the Mental Maps of Displaced Ukrainians: Participants provided a written informed consent to be involved in the study, publish the findings, and have any images they created used. Participant information has been anonymized.

Author Contributions

Introduction

Richardson, Zhurzhenko, and Balogh

De-facto Borders: Everyday lives under the violence of territorial demarcation

Mikheieva

Time and Temporal Asynchronicities in Displacement after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Odynets

Visual and Emotional Geographies in the Mental Maps of Displaced Ukrainians

Löwis

Geo-imaginaries of Violence: Spatial representations of the Russo-Ukrainian war in Popular Visual Culture

Mozolevska

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Notes

1. Propiska – registration at the place of permanent residence. In Ukraine, registration in most cases is related to home ownership rather than to the actual place of residence.
2. A research participant, a middle-aged man based in Donetsk, described burying the mother of his friend, a well-known Donetsk journalist, who was brutally murdered in her flat in 2015. Her son had not been given permission by the DPR authorities to enter territory to say a final farewell to his mother.
3. The data shows the intensity of movement across the line of demarcation but does not give an indication of the actual number of people as some residents of the de-facto border areas crossed the Contact line on a regular basis.
4. The fieldwork comprised two projects conducted in the period 2022–2024: one is titled "Forced migrants from Ukraine in transnational Europe: A case of the Swedish reception", University of Gothenburg, funded by the Centre for European Research of the University of Gothenburg, and led by Oksana Shmulyar Gréen. Another project was a 2-year ethnographic study of the reception of people from Ukraine in Ystad Municipality in southern Sweden, organized and conducted by the author.
5. Daria Kaminska, March 6 2022. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CawxoCzgyU6/>.
6. Kateryna Vasechko, June 13 2022. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CevNfA4tyCk/>.
7. Kateryna Vasechko, April 21 2022. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ccm4oG4t2OR/>.
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