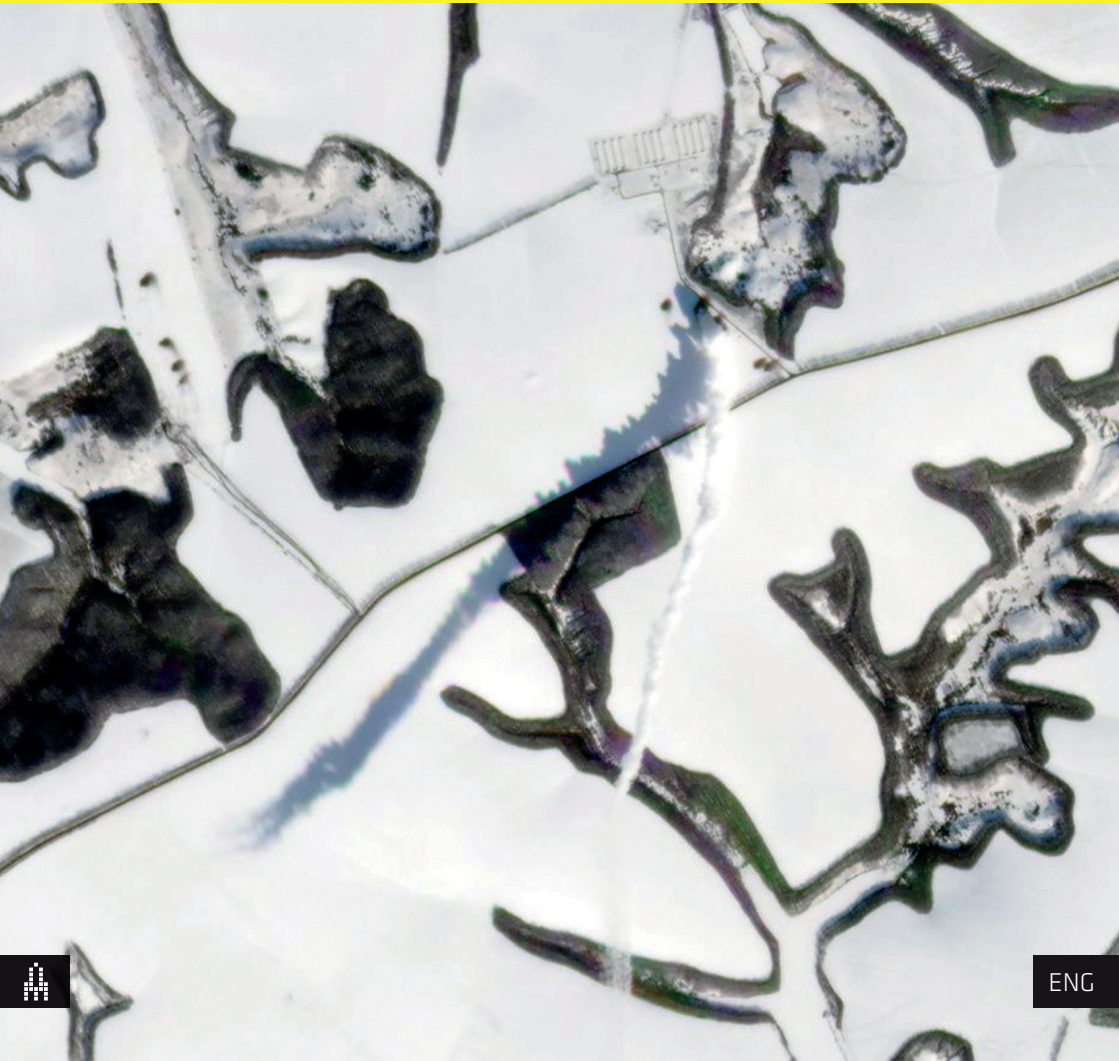
Asia Bazdyrieva

MICRO, MESO, MACRO



ENG

PostScript[UM]

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani
COBISS.SI-ID 169024515
ISBN 978-961-7173-36-9 (PDF)

Asia Bazdyrieva

MICRO, MESO, MACRO

I have now lost count of how many times I heard that the Russian military offensive against Ukraine that began on 24 February 2022 "put Ukraine on the map". To be more precise, Ukraine's unexpectedly effective resistance, I was told, put the country – and its people – on the map. This resistance inspired many. It annoyed many more. Annoyed or inspired, from that point onward, not seeing the war was only possible as a deliberate choice.

I have also lost count of how many times I have thought about maps. I looked at maps and followed maps, trying to make sense of them while staying alert to the proximity of the front and its changing lines, trying to figure out the logic of cruise missiles, and thinking of those affected. Changing my geolocation, yet carrying that specific one within me, everywhere, and in a certain sense becoming an embodied index for it.

"To put something on the map" is an idiom. It means: to make something well known, to make it enter popular consciousness and take its place there, to have a visual reference, a stable association or a defined set of categories that makes this thing familiar. A map is a useful entry point for many things I want to communicate. As a technical device, a map is designed as a navigational tool, a schematic representation of the features of a land that it's crucial to know in order not to get lost. Understanding how a map operates as an epistemic device allows us to scrutinise *how* a land, a body, or a body as a land is known. The interpretation of things on a map – and perhaps even more importantly, the things that are not there – is a question of who is looking and why. And if, over the past few decades here in Western humanities (whatever that means now), the conversations about centres and peripheries, the gendered aspect of a scientific gaze, colonial logics and their postcolonial others were well articulated and closely examined, what then

remains evasive, ever-changing and malleable are the profoundly different imageries and desires that define the ways we (as individuals, societies or more) look at – or become – a map.

It should not be news that anyone whose geographical context changes radically finds themselves in a cognitive fold: what was once set in stone becomes unfixed and often profoundly different. Yet my point here is not to reveal that multiple realities exist (not as ontologically different entities, of course, but rather through how they are seen, mediated, understood and known) but to provide an account of a very specific case of such a fold. My case.

As I exited Ukraine and crossed the perimeter of the war, I arrived in Germany. I found myself in a reality split between two seemingly excluding narratives: the one of climate, which is embedded in every possible aspect of sociopolitical imagination, and the one of the war, which is mostly maintained on the level of government decisions or by those immediately affected by such decisions. Even though both are preoccupied with maps, technically and epistemologically, they are driven by different fears to navigate different desires. So here I lend my body that moves along the lines on a map, zooms in and out to bridge scales or to show that they – as two sides of a Moebius strip – are, in fact, one.

Micro

Running towards my gates at Berlin Brandenburg Airport in January 2023, I noticed the newly built terminals were equipped with a surfeit of electrical sockets and charging stations so that all passengers could keep all their gadgets charged. In older airports, finding accessible and empty sockets is always a challenge; what was unnecessary some twenty years ago is now a pressing need, thanks to the proliferation of personal electronic devices. Many activities undertaken in the suspension of time around the gates – finishing work on laptops, downloading gigabytes of TV series, video calls, scrolling through never-ending Instagram reels and stories – require energy.

The availability and abundance of these options have produced obsessions, fixations and anxieties. Keeping all means of access well-charged at all times makes you feel just normal.

I was heading to Ukraine. Someone asked if I was flying there, and I paused, like in many other situations when I had to do the work of explanation. Ukraine is at war and under martial law.[1] Airports were destroyed within hours. Even if they had remained operational, passenger flights would not have been possible: every flying object is a target. Of course, I understand that all the realities of war might not be obvious to those not inhabiting it. Still, my reaction emerged from a fatigue developed through years of needing to explain the differences between what was casually assumed as equal access. Until six years ago, travelling from Ukraine to Western Europe (which begins with the Schengen Zone, demarcated by the eastern Polish border) was serious business. Either you had the time, money, vocabulary and enough supporting documents for a visa application (only to receive a strictly limited, usually low number of days), or you had none of the above and your entrance was arranged through the opaque logistics in place to facilitate the supply of cheap labour or other often oblique transactions. In the peculiar reality of war and its consequent disruptions, going to Ukraine means flying to Poland, Romania or Slovakia and then taking a train to reach their border with Ukraine. Or it might mean taking multiple trains from Berlin, through Poland and onward to Kyiv. It is, one might say, the environmentalist's dream. This time, the journey took me 28 hours on wheels, borders and platforms. As you travel from West to East, what is assumed to be a basic convenience gradually becomes a privilege or even a matter of luxury. However pathetic it sounds, this gap between what is assumed as given and what needs to be fought for (like life) is growing even wider. This is devastating, and needing to explain it over and over is increasingly tiring.

1 On 24 February 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared martial law in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Among other things, martial law includes restricting the freedom of movement of citizens and vehicles; imposing a curfew and establishing a special regime of light masking; mobilising men and resources for the defence etc.

I arrived in Kyiv's freezing winter and made it to my friend's place shortly after curfew. I suddenly found myself on the other side of the divide: while my friends and I were chatting, they said they downloaded a TV series for us to watch later. I laughed, thinking they, like many others in Ukraine, were still downloading content from pirate bays, and I asked: "Don't you have Netflix?" They paused – just like in the many other situations when they had to do the work of explanation – and then laughed: "Well, we do. But we don't have permanent access to electricity."

In Ukraine, what one can and cannot do is defined by the timeline of the blackouts. A significant percentage of Ukraine's energy infrastructure was deliberately destroyed by Russian missiles. While it was somewhat easier to count the immediate victims of the attacks, we will never know how many suffered the consequences of power outages – whether they died of cold, or their health could not be sustained, or their lives were suspended or postponed through not being able to work, to maintain routines, through constant stress and re-traumatisation – through multiple unobvious delays and exhaustion caused by the disruptions of electricity flow during that very dark winter.

In Kyiv, I had to quickly catch up with the new reality, learning to shower in under three minutes – not when I needed to but when I had the opportunity. You enter something that might look familiar, but then that reality begins to morph with the cascading array of changes that hide behind one click: once the power is off, it takes ten minutes until the mobile network is down. You cannot rearrange plans and notify people, and they can't notify you. You can't quickly check a route on Google Maps, and you may or may not be able to access transportation. You may or may not be able to work, cook or do chores. You may or may not be able to learn about the consequences of the attack and take necessary actions. For all the hours to come, all you'll think about is energy, and you must navigate spaces where everything – yourself included – is seemingly deprived of casual functions. Blackouts turn you into a nomadic body and force you to redefine your relationship with space and time.

Starlink Wi-Fi router installed in a courtyard in one of Kyiv's residential areas. Following multiple attacks on Ukrainian energy and telecommunication networks in fall–winter 2022–2023, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were seeking alternative solutions to access energy and telecom services. Photo: Asia Bazdyrieva, January 2023.

Meso

When I came to Berlin in the summer of 2022, I followed the procedures for people coming from Ukraine. First, I went to Tegel Airport. Decommissioned as an airfield just a year ago – locals may have loved this airport, but it could no longer satisfy ever-expanding operational demands – it was converted into an arrival centre for those exiting the war. It seemed strangely deserted. Sitting in one of the transfer buses that picked up people at Berlin Hauptbahnhof to bring them to Tegel, I looked at the empty runways through the lens of my memories, thinking that the history of this place was, in some ways, typical. First conceived as a training base for air reconnaissance sometime during WWI, it became a rocket testing facility when Germany was disarmed. Soon after, it became a site to hide military research that assisted the country as it started a new war, using this airfield for WWII operations. During the Cold War, it became a strategic point for Soviet deterrence strategies. With the advent of globalisation promises, it opened up to domestic and international flights that were becoming cheaper and cheaper with the introduction of low-cost carriers. After decommissioning, this place was purposefully reimagined as an anticipated *Urban Tech Republic* for hosting up to eight hundred companies, gradually becoming the largest development area in Berlin. The transitional function of this place as a shelter and a sorting station for refugees might seem like an anomaly. People fleeing Ukraine entered this space with their forms and documents proving they can live and work. Following protocol, they were informed of their new status under Paragraph 24 ("You are now registered as a war refugee; scan this QR code to read your rights and proceed to the next station where my colleague will collect your fingerprints"). Within the familiar trajectory of this place's transformation from war to market to technology, being a trace of the war here almost means moving backwards in space and time that are set for the development of the future.

Tegel's transformations embody a popular imagination I have observed in Germany and the Global North for a long while: the idea that war belongs to the past and the only threat is in the future, which can still be secured with

enough technology to control changing temperatures. But the truth is that the war never ended; instead, it expanded its arsenals to markets and desires as new battlefields. This thesis is not precisely new or unique, and it would be almost too easy to hide behind the apparent simplicity of this statement to move on to other, preferred topics with higher levels of universalism and abstraction. But I do want to dwell on it. I want to mark this moment in history when German cultural institutions raised Ukrainian flags while the city spoke through graffiti that proliferated quickly, insistently: *#Das ist nicht unser Krieg* (this is not our war).

Over the past decade, while visiting Western Europe and North America, I've observed increasing climate anxiety, a preemptive grief I shared. But I could not fathom a complete detachment from my other reality – the one holding environmental disaster, war, loss, and a never-ending fight to even think about the future. This other reality of mine was never a shared one, and it was never part of the concerns of people and places who wanted to speak in no less than planetary terms. It is as if the energy transitions allowing these discursive places to flourish in an uninterrupted flow of electricity and ideas had nothing to do with the places the energy was streaming from. Here the climate conversation and the war conversation are strangely separated.

In present-day Germany, energy and climate are two central themes in media, politics, artistic platforms and mundane conversations, and they produce a specific energy consciousness. Ever since Humboldt, the slightest change in weather has concerned the minds of German scientists. His preoccupation with mapping, assembling meteorological data and making sense of climate – a notion which in its modern understanding was also conceived in Germany – produced an episteme of its own, where knowing the world means always keeping in mind its most rational use for individual and/or national wellbeing. When I relocated here, I wondered how this consciousness might emerge through the sociotechnical imaginaries inscribed into the everyday fabrics. In the year 2022 ("the year that never ended", as people in Ukraine say), while weaving myself into this geography through its

bureaucratic procedures, I developed a ritual of checking the front pages of daily newspapers, which were characteristically concerned with seasonal inconveniences for consumers of energy in Germany. Some offered strange illustrations, suggesting people might soon be freezing, and provided graphs with precise numbers, consumption rates, prices and inflation. In the meantime, brochures sent by private energy operators explaining green futures would regularly land in my mailbox, as would pre-election posters and statements from right to left proposing either to launch Nord Stream 2 (no matter the circumstances) or to cover lands (somewhere) with solar panels and hydrogen-generating facilities.

The term "energy unconscious" was first proposed to describe the strange presence-absence of energy in the lives of North Americans, even though it is saturated into all aspects of social life and enables the very possibility of human freedoms.[2] There is no place to hide from hydrocarbonated facts in today's Germany. The overabundance of this information creates an atmosphere saturated by energy – its visual and numerical interpretations enter people's minds to an overwhelming extent. What is the function of these numbers? What does this knowledge do? What is the performative power of this emerging energy consciousness?

Macro

In science, technology and societies studies, sociotechnical imaginaries are understood as "collectively imagined forms of social life and social order reflected in the design and fulfilment of nation-specific and/or technological projects".[3] They are specific sets of beliefs that constitute a vision for a future,

2 While working on this text, I was in conversation with Johannes Bruder who, among other things, suggested I think about the term and idea of "energy unconscious," coined by literary scholar Patricia Yaeger and elaborated in her article "Literature in the Ages of Wood" (2017. *Energy Humanities: An Anthology* (D. Boyer and I. Szeman, Eds.). John Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.56021/9781421421889).

3 Jasanoff, S. & Sang-Hyung, K. (2009). Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea. *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning & Policy, 47*(2). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-009-9124-4

and they contribute to the development of various technical and cultural means that are considered necessary, institutionally stabilised and performed on various scales to achieve a proposed scenario. Such imaginaries are always enablers. Starting with an idea, an image or a fixation on a snapshot of events projected on the times to come, they eventually inscribe themselves into the sociopolitical order, producing it through materialised infrastructures and rearrangements of living and non-living matter to sustain said projects. Sociotechnical imaginaries unfold along a temporal axis that starts and ends in a future that is desired, but sometimes one future is desired because a different future is feared.

Sustainable development is one of today's most far-reaching examples of a sociotechnical imaginary. Conceived in the Global North and folded into ever-expanding environmental rhetoric, political projects and lifestyle ideologies, it is offered as a universal solution to be realised through transfers of expertise and technology. As the current version of this imaginary was first proposed in 1987, a critique of sustainability has since become well articulated, emerging from postcolonial theory. STS scholars further narrowed their focus on what is seen as a key element in the sustainability program: energy.[4] The sociotechnical imaginary of sustainability normalised the idea that to save the planet, we (humanity!) need to replace one type of energy with another. The creative solutions for this problem multiply even as I write this and as you'll read it later on. The UN's call "to rethink, and reperform, all life as a movement toward a planetary future" generated multiple, overlapping visions of energy transitions for a greener life, from phasing out older energies and disassembling their infrastructures to offshoring the production of energy to newly built energy islands.[5] Critiques have been emerging along the lines of how the imagination of sustainability creates its own constitutive outsides: caring for the environment and sustainable lifestyle *here* (within the

4 Jasanoff, S. & Simmet, H. R. (2021). Renewing the future: Excluded imaginaries in the global energy transition. *Energy Research & Social Science, 80*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102205

5 Early in their text, the authors summarise the 1987 Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future*. For more, please see: Jasanoff & Simmet, 2021, p. 2.

perimeter of the sustainability project) is bought at the extraordinarily high price of producing unsustainability *elsewhere* (the constitutive outside of the sustainability project), while "the frantic search for new advanced solutions to manage a supposedly 'sustainable' future better often serves to deepen commodification of both human and non-human matter".[6]

In the above, two things are crucial. First, sociotechnical imaginaries encode a specific imagination of socio-spatial order,[7] and second, the constitutive outside is a product of such encoding. Hence, the future has not only a temporal but also a geographic dimension. In "No Milk, No Love", I offered a specific example of a sociotechnical imaginary that produces the constitutive outside of German sustainability projects through the widespread imagery of Ukraine as the "breadbasket of Europe" or the "granary of the world".[8] This imaginary emerged through the beliefs supported by epistemic tools (cartographic and others) deployed by Western European states and the Russian Empire to pursue resources to sustain their imperial interests. In this imagination, Ukraine is a land of infinitely fertile black soil, rich with minerals. This land could easily feed the whole world because its resources are unconditionally given by nature. In this imagination, bodies and spaces are rendered into sites of material transactions, used to justify regimes of power that, today, prevail through constant reinvention. These regimes would seem to entwine and offer bodies, spaces and the fate of the breadbasket to its takers.

Speculative scenarios suggested by German media about the potential disruption of the breadbasket – free flow of grain, energy and labour – reiterate an erroneous imaginary that all of the above were easily available, frictionless resources until the escalation of the Russian war. This fear

6 Ernstson, H. & Swyngedouw, E. (2019). Politicizing the Environment in the Urban Century. *Urban Political Ecology in the Anthropo-Obscene: Interruptions and Possibilities* (Ernstson, H. & Swyngedouw, E., Eds.). Routledge.

7 Chateau, Z., Devine-Wright, P. & Wills, J. (2021). Integrating sociotechnical and spatial imaginaries in researching energy futures. *Energy Research & Social Science, 80*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102207

8 Bazdyrieva, A. (2022, May). *No Milk, No Love!* e-flux Journal. Retrieved 23 August 2023 from https://www.e-flux.com/journal/127/465214/no-milk-no-love/

of disruption produces an affective realm that is identical to the one produced by climate change – the fear that the usual lifestyle will soon be over. Both are efficiently mobilised by a technopolitics that is always already aimed at finding the solution in order to protect the population from whatever endangers their biological wellness. This mechanism is akin to the immunological drive to protect the body from potentially intrusive outsiders: CO2, waste, bacteria, refugees, viruses, ozone, you name it. It enables regimes of governing, as Roberto Esposito writes, that centre their concerns and rhetoric on the maintenance and expansion of what is seen as threatened. Such regimes always appeal to ultimately universal forms, such as "human being" and "humankind", planting the destruction of humankind into the global or national political scene to justify the most brutal and absurd countermeasures,[9] including the legitimate extermination of the Other if it seems to threaten the biohappiness – if not the survival – of the population.[10] War, too, is a disruption of biohappiness. This is where and how climate and war occupy different places in the popular imagination.

The fear of disruption allowed many to largely ignore the war for nine years in exchange for a convenient energy supply. This fear has also become an instrument for communicative strategies of state and non-state actors to lobby various agendas under the label of energy security and energy sovereignty, both of which have been presented as mostly environmentally friendly sustainable solutions. Here, suppose the current version of sustainability implies fixing the temporal order (saving the future) by spatial means (production of constitutive outsides) through acts of geopolitics ("a geographical schematisation of diplomatic-strategic relations with a geographic-economic analysis of resources"[11]) and a reordering of space. In that case, this is exactly the moment when we can clearly see that energy has long been weaponised.

9 Levinson, B. (2010). Biopolitics in Balance: Esposito's Response to Foucault. *CR: The New Centennial Review, 10*(2). https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2010.0033

10 Swyngedouw, E. (2019). The Anthrop(Obs)cene. *Keywords in Radical Geography: Antipode at 50* (The Antipode Editorial Collective, Ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

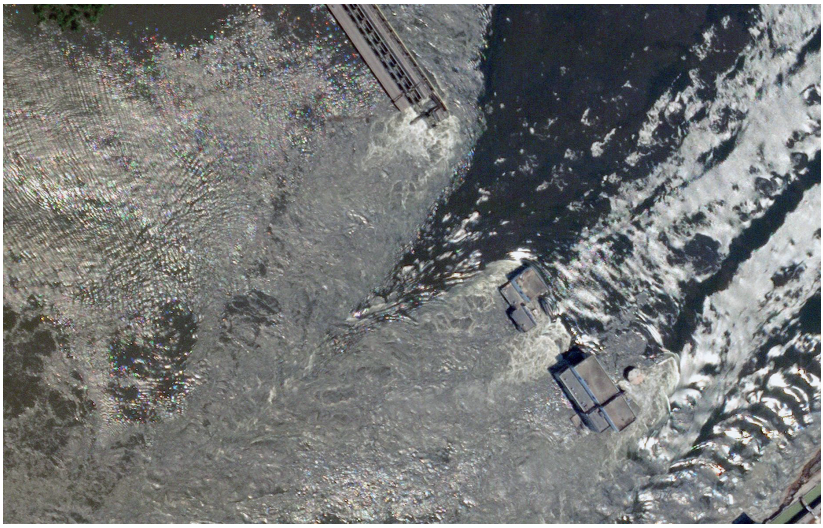
11 Jairus Victor Grove refers to sociologist and philosopher Raymond Aron on page 44 in: Grove, J. V. (2019). *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World*. Duke University Press.

Now I want to scale down again to this body – my body – that has, at times, been struggling to cope. I wonder how it is possible that now when the face of Russian fascism is fully unveiled, this same country (whose intelligentsia repeatedly took the liberty of educating Ukrainians on the matter of fascism) and these same people (who chanted "Never again!") are marching the streets of Berlin with their peace signs. They signed letters demanding Germany not supply Ukraine with weapons (though they had no problem being a major weapons supplier to Russia for many years). They relativise the war. Or they are silent, which, when it comes to fascism, is a position that has consequences.

The war on Ukraine is not exclusive. It is one of the largest actualisations of imperialism in recent history, and it is part of a much longer and vaster war that has been erasing the peoples of Syria and Chechnya and is aligned with the history of organised genocides against the Tatars, Circassians and others. How is it possible that the anti-imperial and anti-fascist resistance that Ukraine – as a political entity and as a group of both individuals and communities – currently and painfully does through actual fighting and decentralised, extraterritorial forms of solidarity is often purposively and thereby productively ignored by the very same people who claim the same agenda of anti-imperialism, of anti-fascism, or both?

Two recent articulations are productive in understanding the contradictions mentioned above. The first articulation is to analyse this war, following Svitlana Matviyenko, along two distinct vectors: inter-imperial and colonial-imperial. The inter-imperial vector operates through deterrence with negotiations between the large colonial powers (Russia, China, USA and Western European states that hold onto major spheres of influence due to their colonial pasts). The colonial-imperial vector operates through terror that excludes communication (Russia articulates that Ukraine has no right to exist; therefore, it cannot be a subject in negotiations). Deterrence strategies – pressuring, escalation and nuclear blackmail – are the strategies of negotiation. Terror strategies – murder, humiliation, deterioration, pollution, torture – are not only acts of imperial erasure but communicative strategies

which transform every act of terror into information that becomes content and then further circulates, generating affects and triggering specific responses. The interdependence of these two vectors, according to Matviyenko, creates the complexities of war: successful negotiations between imperial powers are achieved through the success of colonial terror.[12] While many people worldwide recognise the inter-imperial politics of the current war, they refuse to recognise the colonial-imperial aspects. Moreover, they fail to recognise the interconnectedness of the two. Here, a successful analysis is not one that encapsulates a larger scale, but, instead, one that is capable of recognising the very transscalarity of the war.



Satellite imagery showing the collapse of the Kakhovka Dam and subsequent flooding of cities, farmlands and infrastructures. June 6, 2023. Nova Kakhovka, Ukraine. Source: Planet Skysat. CC BY-NC 2.0. Retrieved September 25, 2023, from https://www.planet.com/gallery/#!/post/destruction-of-the-kakhovka-dam

The second articulation is compatible with this vectored thinking, but it is even more provocative, as it points to a certain provincialism within the critique of fascism exercised in Europe. These blindspots now occlude the

12 Matviyenko, S. (2023, March). *Speeds and Vectors of Energy Terrorism*. e-flux Journal. Retrieved August 23 2023 from https://www.e-flux.com/journal/134/525421/speeds-and-vectors-of-energy-terrorism/

fascism exercised by Russia and allow us to understand the mechanism behind the strange symbolic separation of the realms of climate change and war in order to prioritise one over the other. In WWII and the interwar period, democratic European powers saw fascism as an anomaly in the very core of liberal European values.[13] In the meantime, these same democratic states were pursuing imperial ambitions elsewhere, exercising violence on a scale compatible with one of the fascist states. By looking at anti-imperial and anti-fascist movements outside of Europe, historian Michael Ortiz proposed fascism should be understood as an imperial phenomenon, demonstrating that fascism and liberal imperialism appear interrelated in pursuing imperial interests: "Whether fascist, democratic, or imperialist, Europe's great powers (Britain, France, Italy, and Germany) collectively negotiated the fate of smaller nations. Together, they resembled a constellation of synergetic yet antagonistic nation-states with one thing in common: the procurement and maintenance of empire. [...] The old liberal empires (particularly Britain, France, and the United States) adopted conventional methods of coexisting with rival colonial empires – negotiation, intimidation, association, or isolation."[14] Russia – I can pick up from here – was a perfectly negotiable large power until just over one year ago. And peoples, governments, artistic and academic platforms across the Global North, instead of joining forces in understanding, articulating and stopping imperialism, hope to preserve the benefits of Russia's imperial resources, trying (still) to nudge Ukraine into peace talks, despite the sheer terror that is non-negotiable.

Ukraine's resistance has put the country on the map. This means that the manifestation of political will – the subjective will to live and to act – can no longer be ignored by the places that, for a very long time, understood "smaller nations" as sites for negotiations between big imperial powers. Ironically enough, those who prefer not to take a stance in the war because they see it as a war between Russia and the West internalise the imperial standpoint

13 Ortiz, M. (2023). *Anti-Colonialism and the Crises of Interwar Fascism*. Bloomsbury Academic.

14 Ortiz, 2023, p. 14.

by refusing to see the anti-imperial and anti-fascist aspects of Ukraine's struggle. They refuse to acknowledge the subjective wills of Ukrainian individuals, communities and a sovereign state to exist and to speak. As I argued earlier, Western European disagreement with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the breach of international law is still paralleled by a deeply extractivist colonial approach to Ukraine as a resource enabling the smooth flow of energy and labour.

The rhetoric of energy sovereignty and energy security embodies the politics of space and scale at play in each energy transition. Energy sovereignty means being independent of an imperial power with nuclear weapons – from the power that is a recognisable threat within the inter-imperial arrangement. Energy security means procurement and maintenance of energy needs and is achieved through imperial colonial means. In this constellation, the fear of a disrupted energy supply which merges with the idea of a disrupted future has prioritised opaque transactions folded into environmental rhetoric over human rights elsewhere. Here, former and current imperial powers, including Germany, militarise the discourse around climate change. The climate conversation is also a war conversation. And it is a planetary one.

Post Script

In Ukraine, protection of life is not a figure of speech. It is literal and is enacted through an enormous effort by individuals and self-organised entities. It is sustained through decentralised rhizomatic networks of action and distribution. The cases of outstanding solidarity are yet to be articulated in ways that resist convenient categories, such as nationalism. One of the examples of solidarity provides an account of a different type of energy consciousness. As Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructures intensified at the beginning of the cold season in October 2022, people in Ukraine deliberately limited their use of electricity even when it was available in order not to overload the network. They considered the whole chain of relations that make the energy flow possible. This chain of relations

moved from micro to meso to macro: every household whose residents are a part of the economy and labour relations under martial law; a municipality responsible for the maintenance of a grid; essential workers, most of whom stayed at their workplace despite the immediate danger, for every part of critical infrastructure is targeted daily by Russia; workers of the department of prevention of emergency situations, who are there to rescue people and retrieve bodies from under the rubble; electricians who restore damaged facilities in a matter of hours; networks of people, self-organised entities and institutions that mobilise their efforts to sustain life and maintain basic functions; and, lastly, the territorial defences and the armed forces – everyone who has put their lives on hold to stop the aggressor. This energy consciousness is not based on the fear of disruption. It is based on the will to participate by sharing pain, responsibility and resources, and it is achieved by one's deliberate disruption or withdrawal from their processes.

War is not a phenomenon of the past. It is not a remote event that occupies designated fronts. Its beginnings and ends are always in someone's home, however distant or close, safe or endangered. While navigating between the two as I cross the skinny river separating war from non-war, I think about the profoundly different realms that this separation produces. The realm of being in pain and the realm of trying to prevent it at all costs. Both of them make perfect sense, and yet I still think power manifests itself by appealing to humanity when it wants to transcend topographic imagination for its benefit and by delineating borders to conceal the pain. I found a quote from *Nomadic Theory* on my phone, where Rosi Braidotti wrote: "A certain amount of pain, the knowledge about vulnerability and pain is actually useful. It forces one to think about the actual material conditions of being interconnected and thus being in the world. It frees one from the stupidity of perfect health and the full-blown sense of existential entitlement that comes with it."[15] I don't know why I took a screenshot of it a few months before the big invasion. Still, I remember that her idea of ethics as freedom that comes with the

15 Braidotti, R. (2012). *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*. Columbia University Press, pp. 316–317.

understanding of our bondage, however different we may be, resonated with my experience of life in Ukraine. Now I find it again on my Instagram, which keeps track of my movements while landscapes around me change irreversibly. The pain – and the knowledge about vulnerability and pain – is right here with me, for this is my war.

Asia Bazdyrieva
MICRO, MESO, MACRO

PostScript[UM] #48
Series edited by Janez Fakin Janša
Electronic edition

Publisher: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana
www.aksioma.org | aksioma@aksioma.org

Represented by: Marcela Okretič

Proofreading: Miha Šuštar
Design: Luka Umek
Layout: Sonja Grdina

Cover image: Satellite imagery showing the collapse of the Kakhovka Dam and subsequent flooding of cities, farmlands and infrastructures. June 6, 2023. Nova Kakhovka, Ukraine. Source: Planet Skysat. CC BY-NC 2.0. Retrieved September 25, 2023, from https://www.planet.com/gallery/#!/post/destruction-of-the-kakhovka-dam

(c) Aksioma | All text and image rights reserved by the author | Ljubljana 2023

Supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia
and the Municipality of Ljubljana

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

City of Ljubljana

Published in the framework of the programme
Tactics & Practice #14: Scale
aksioma.org/scale

Originally published online in the October 2023 issue of the transmediale journal in both German and English. Edited by Elise Misao Hunchuck.
transmediale.de/en/scale-issue

tactics &practice

transmediale

ISBN 978-961-7173-36-9 **0€** PostScript^{UM} #48, Ljubljana 2023