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From myths to memes

Transnational memory and Ukrainian social media

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Wikipedia and Second World War memory

In a 2006 essay, Roy Rosenzweig claimed that the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, launched in 2001, had the potential to become “the largest work of online historical writing” as well as “the most widely read work of digital history” (2006, p. 119). Since then, the size of Wikipedia has increased significantly – from 1 million articles in 2006 to 5 million in 2016 (in its English version only) – and its popularity among web users continues to grow. The encyclopedia’s extensive scope and accessibility turned out to be particularly appealing for history learners, who increasingly use Wikipedia as a reference for judging other historical sources, including traditional encyclopedias such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Nyrubugara, 2011, p. 140). Consequently, less than a decade after its foundation, Wikipedia has become a major educational resource, the use of which has been discussed and studied in various educational contexts including the US (Lim, 2009; Head and Eisenberg, 2010), the UK (Margaryan, Littlejohn & Vojt, 2011), Norway (Blikstad-Balas, 2015), and China (Shen, Cheung & Lee, 2013).

While the influence of Wikipedia on education, and in particular on history teaching, is widely recognized, its exact impact on remembering and learning about contentious pasts remains under-investigated. Existing assessments of Wikipedia’s role as a “global memory place” (Pentzold, 2009) vary in their opinions on the issue. A number of studies argue that the platform can be viewed as a transnational space which facilitates the production of a fundamentally pluralistic historical knowledge (Hardy, 2007), or as a digital forum which sustains consensus-building vis-à-vis contentious pasts (Dounaevsky, 2013). Yet others theorize the site as an online platform which enforces hegemonic memory narratives (Luyt, 2011), as a controversy-diffusing device (Borra et al., 2015), or even as a mnemonic battleground on which different views of the past come to clash (Rogers & Sendjarevic, 2012).

According to 2016 Alexa.com data (“Top Sites in Ukraine,” n.d.), Wikipedia is the 10th most popular internet resource in Ukraine; furthermore, a number of works (Zhyviuk, 2012; Chirkov, 2014) point to the growing use of Wikipedia by Ukrainian students at various educational levels. Currently, the Ukrainian version of encyclopedia consists of more than 630 thousand articles, which makes it the 16th largest Wikipedia language edition. However, Hale (2014), in his study of multilingual Wikipedia editors (i.e., editors who contribute to several language versions of the encyclopedia at once) points out that Ukrainian users also actively contribute to the Russian Wikipedia, which is almost twice as large as the Ukrainian one and currently stands as the 6th largest version of Wikipedia. Existing studies (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014; Dounaevsky, 2013) also suggest that these cross-language contributions between different language versions seem particularly significant in the pages dedicated to

matters of Ukrainian history, including the Second World War²².

I will thus investigate how Wikipedia is used by Ukrainophone and Russophone users for remediating Second World War memory, in the examples of the episodes of the seizure of L'viv in 1941 and the capture of Kyiv in 1943, and how they are represented in the Ukrainian, Russian, and English versions of the encyclopedia. The chapter starts by providing a review of the literature concerning Wikipedia and collective memory, and in particular the remembrance of past conflicts. It then describes the research methodology used for examining how the capture of L'viv and the seizure of Kyiv are framed in Wikipedia, and in which ways the encyclopedia's users interact with these digital narratives. It is followed by an overview of the findings, starting from the comparative analysis of the L'viv and Kyiv frames found in the Russian, Ukrainian, and English versions of encyclopedia. It then continues with an examination of the different ways in which Wikipedia users interact with these historical frames, including both passive and active manners of interaction. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion of the influence of Wikipedia on Second World War remembrance in Ukraine.

2.1. Literature review

Wikipedia is a free-access, multilingual online encyclopedia, and the 7th most visited site in the world according to another Alexa.com rating from 2016 ("The Top 500," n.d.). The reasons for Wikipedia's popularity – only in August 2016 it attracted 15.69 billion views ("Wikipedia Report Card," n.d.) – are many. Among them are the extensive scope of subjects, the ability to access Wikipedia's materials freely and without any subscription fees, and the existence of numerous language versions, which allow users to access data in their native language. Furthermore, the rate of Wikipedia's growth is incomparable with traditional encyclopedias: only in the English version of the encyclopedia hundreds of new articles are added every day ("Wikipedia: Statistics," n.d.), allowing Wikipedia, as the site itself claims, to document the latest developments "within minutes, rather than months or years" ("Wikipedia: About," n.d.).

All these reasons contribute to the significant popularity of Wikipedia among internet users, including students of various educational levels, who also constitute the target audience for the majority of existing studies on the use of the encyclopedia. According to a study by Sook Lim (2009, p. 2194), 39 per cent of college students frequently use Wikipedia for educational purposes. Another study by

²² For instance, in the study of Wikipedia articles dedicated to the figure of Stepan Bandera, it was found that more than half of the anonymous edits to the article in Russian Wikipedia were made from Ukrainian IPs (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014, p. 33). Similarly, Dounaevsky, in her survey of memory wars on Wikipedia, notes the large-scale presence of Ukrainian editors in the Russian Wikipedia, producing "the second highest number of edits by country" (2013, p. 133).

Alison Head and Michael Eisenberg (2010) suggests that an even higher number (52 per cent) of students use Wikipedia for course-related research, even though their instructors advise against doing so. The reasons for such a persistence are examined in several surveys, which indicate that students not only perceive Wikipedia as an accessible and comprehensible resource (Head and Eisenberg, 2010), but also see it as a source of relatively trustworthy, even if not always entirely accurate, information (Shen, Cheung, & Lee, 2013, p. 514).

While the growing educational use of Wikipedia by internet users is widely recognized, the consequences of this phenomenon are still being debated by educators and scholars. Neil Waters (2007), for instance, argues that Wikipedia is rather susceptible to its authors' personal opinions and, thus, should not be considered a reliable source of information, especially in academic contexts. Similarly, Knight and Pryke (2012) point to a number of reasons for the controversy among educators surrounding Wikipedia use, including the widespread use of the encyclopedia for plagiarism and the use of unreliable information which is wrongfully cited by students as coming from authoritative sources. By contrast, Infeld and Adams (2013, p. 456) argue that through the use of Wikipedia students can "become more engaged with real-world issues," whereas Piotr Konieczny (2012) suggests that the use of Wikipedia is important for developing digital literacy among students.

Wikipedia influences not only the way the past is taught, but also the way it is remembered. According to Christian Pentzold, the production of Wikipedia articles and the parallel discussions of their content on the encyclopedia's "Talk" pages can be viewed as "a discursive construction of the past" (2009, p. 264). In Pentzold's view, the process of constructing the past through Wikipedia involves a transition between fluid communicative memory and static cultural memory. A number of studies connect Wikipedia to collective memory theory by examining the interactions between the encyclopedia and alternative historical accounts (Luyt & Tan, 2010; Luyt, 2011), its impact on biography writing (Callahan & Herring, 2011; Petkova, 2012), and the use of Wikipedia for commemorating wars (Jensen, 2012; Luyt, 2015; Luyt, 2015a; Pfanzelter, 2015), revolutions (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Ferron & Massa, 2011a), and terrorist attacks (Pentzold, 2009; Ferron & Massa, 2014). The majority of these studies, however, tend to focus on Western European and American memories, and only a few, article-length exceptions explore how Wikipedia is used for dealing with the past in post-socialist countries.²³

The question of Wikipedia's influence on collective remembrance – and, conversely, of collective memory performances on Wikipedia itself – remains debated among scholars in the field of memory studies. One of the more prominent subjects of these debates is the neutrality of historical

²³ See, for instance, works by Musyevzdov (2009), Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), Dounaevsky (2013), Chirkov (2014), Fredheim, Howanitz, and Makhortykh (2014).

interpretations propagated through the encyclopedia, as well as the consistency – or lack thereof – of these interpretations across different language versions. Wikipedia declares its commitment to the neutral point of view (NPOV) policy, which calls for “representing fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without bias, all of the significant views that have been published by reliable sources on a topic” (“Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View,” n.d.). However, a number of studies (Rogers & Sendijarevic 2012; Luyt, 2013; Massa & Scrinzi, 2013) question the efficiency of the NPOV policy, arguing that Wikipedia’s interpretation of the past is not neutral and, instead, tends either to enforce predominant views in Western historiography (Luyt, 2011) or sustain conflicting historical visions originating from national historiographies (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012). By examining how the seizure of L’viv and the capture of Kyiv are represented and interacted with on Wikipedia, and whether or not these interactions are affected by recent events in Ukraine, including the Euromaidan protests and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, this chapter places the contrasting assessments of the encyclopedia’s role against the backdrop of contentious memories in Eastern Europe.

2.2. Methodology

In order to investigate how Wikipedia is used for representing the two episodes of the Second World War in Ukraine, I examined six different articles which deal with the seizure of L’viv and the capture of Kyiv. In the case of L’viv, I used articles on the seizure of L’viv by Germans and the subsequent proclamation of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state,²⁴ whereas for the Kyiv case I examined articles on the Kyiv offensive operation which led to the capture of the city by the Red Army. Both for the Kyiv and L’viv articles I examined three different language versions of Wikipedia – Ukrainian, Russian, and English; such a selection stems from the complex patterns of interaction between Ukrainian and Russian versions of Wikipedia in Ukraine which have been noted in earlier studies (Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014; Dounaevsky, 2013) as well as the unique position of the English version of the encyclopedia, which serves as a global memory platform and hosts the most diverse community of editors (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012).

For the implementation of my analysis, I used versions of all six articles as retrieved on May 10, 2012; the collected data was then updated on December 1, 2015. I started by comparing the ways both historical episodes are framed in different language versions of Wikipedia. Similarly to earlier studies (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Božović, Bošković, & Trifunović, 2014; Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014) on the representation of historical events on Wikipedia, I conducted a qualitative content analysis of the encyclopedia’s articles, rather than using more quantitative methods, such as

²⁴ Such a choice of articles for the seizure of L’viv was related to the lack of an article about the L’viv pogrom in the Ukrainian Wikipedia; consequently, unlike the other two chapters which focus on the representation of L’viv pogrom in Ukrainian social media, this chapter considers different aspects of the same historical episode.

issue-mapping:²⁵ This choice owes to my interest in the thematic differences in the way both historical episodes are represented in different language versions. Because of the significant amount of data collected, I focused on selected components of the articles which are common across all three language versions: titles, tables of content, images, intra-Wikipedia links, and categories. These components are not only concise enough to be easily compared, but they also provide a brief summary of the article's content (titles, images, references), clarify the structure of the article's narrative (table of contents), and reveal the article's position in the larger Wikipedia structure (categories and intra-Wikipedia links).

Having compared the different framing patterns used for representing the two historical episodes, I then explored how the encyclopedia's users interact with those patterns. I started by using Wikipedia statistics in order to obtain data about the different forms of user interactions with the articles' contents. While the majority of earlier studies (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Keegan, Gergle, & Contractor 2011; Kaltenbrunner & Laniado, 2012) rely mostly on passive forms of user interaction (i.e. views), I also considered active forms of interaction, such as edits and comments on the articles' "Talk" pages. Based on these data, I compared the dynamics of interactions with the Kyiv and L'viv articles in different language versions in order to identify both regular (e.g. anniversary dates or commemorative practices) and irregular (e.g. regime changes or international conflicts) factors which influence interactions with Second World War memory on Wikipedia.

2.3. Findings

2.3.1. Representation

Although, formally, Wikipedia articles provide encyclopedic representations of history, these analytical texts retain narrative qualities, putting forward particular constellations of events, characters, and images. In this sense, Wikipedia articles can be viewed just like lemmas in print encyclopedias which, in turn, can be considered as Wikipedia's tendency towards what Nathan Jurgenson has labeled as "obsession with the offline" (2012), i.e. a widespread tendency to hark back to established cultural formats pre-dating the mass distribution of digital technology. The analysis of Wikipedia articles shows structural variations between them, which illustrate diverse framing strategies towards each of the historical episodes which editors have agreed upon. Below, I investigate how these strategies shape the historical interpretations of the L'viv and Kyiv events, propagated through different national/language Wikipedia versions. For this purpose, I examined those key sections of the Kyiv and L'viv articles which provide a brief summary of the article's narrative (titles, images, references), demonstrate how this narrative is structured (tables of contents), and point to how it is integrated into the larger

²⁵ For more information on the use of issue-mapping techniques for the analysis of Wikipedia, see works by Borra et al. (2014) and Niederer (2016).

Wikipedia structure (categories, intra-Wikipedia links).

Titles. All Wikipedia articles have a title which describes the main subject of that article and distinguishes one article from another (“Wikipedia: Article Titles,” n.d.). According to Wikipedia guidelines, no two articles can have the same name. Usually, the title for an article is chosen according to how the article’s subject is referred to in other reliable sources.²⁶ It would seem reasonable to assume that different language versions of Wikipedia would use the same name for articles on the same subject: however, as also in an earlier study of the memory of the Srebrenica massacre in Wikipedia conducted by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), a comparison of the respective titles for the L’viv and Kyiv articles – translated into English – pointed to the existence of significant variations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The titles of articles in different language versions of Wikipedia

	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Kyiv	<i>Kievskaja nastupatel’naja operacija</i> [Kyiv offensive operation]	<i>Bytva za Kyiv</i> (1943) [Battle for Kyiv (1943)]	Battle of Kiev (1943)
L’viv	<i>Akt provozglashenija Ukrainskogo gosudarstva</i> [Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state]	<i>Akt vidnovlennja Ukrajinjskoji Derzhavy</i> [Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state]	Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941 ²⁷

In the case of L’viv, all three articles referenced the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state, but only one of them – the Ukrainian one – used that particular formulation in the article title. The title of the Russian article, for instance, was “Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state” – instead of “Act of Restoration.” The original version of the Act, in fact, proclaimed the *restoration* of the Ukrainian state, implying its previous existence, and also referred to “the Ukrainian People’s Republic”²⁸ and “Western Ukrainian People’s Republic” – two state formations which fell during the Ukrainian Civil War (Subtelny, 1988). An attempt to change the title to “Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state” ignited a fierce editing war in 2011, which resulted in the change of the earlier article’s title “Act of June the 30th, 1941” which omitted any references to the Ukrainian statehood, to “Act of Declaration of the

²⁶ The concept of reliable source is one of the central criteria which define what kind of data can or can not appear in Wikipedia. According to the encyclopedia’s definition, reliable sources “may be published materials with a reliable publication process, authors who are regarded as authoritative in relation to the subject, or both” (“Wikipedia: Identifying Reliable Sources,” n.d.). Usually, the category of reliable sources includes the ones produced by academic institutions and/or news organizations, but there can be a number of exceptions to this rule, depending on the article’s subject.

²⁷ It is worth noting that the title of the article in the English Wikipedia experienced a number of changes since its creation in 2006. The article’s original title was “Proclamation of Ukrainian Independence,” then in 2008 it was changed to “Proclamation of Ukrainian statehood, 1941,” and in 2009 it was renamed as “Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941.” The article held this title until 2015, when it was renamed “Declaration of Ukrainian State Act.” However, as in the case of the other articles, the title presented in the table is the one the article had at the time of the original data collection.

²⁸ Commonly abbreviated as UNR, according to its title in Ukrainian (*Ukrainska Narodna Respublika*).

Ukrainian state.” The new wording of the Russian article continued to avoid references to the historical background of Ukrainian statehood, as the word “restoration” in the original title emphasized.

The title of the English article was somewhat in-between the Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedia versions, referring to the event as “Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941” (“Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941,” n.d.). To a certain extent, this formulation was in line with the Russian article title, describing the events of June 30 as a declaration – not a restoration – of the Ukrainian state; at the same time the title addressed the issue of independence rather than that of statehood. Consequently, this particular title causes potential confusion, both from the point of view of historical reference – given that the formula “Declaration of Ukrainian independence” is usually employed in relation to the events of 1991 – and in interpreting the historical meaning of the event: the claim of “independence” in relation to the events of 1941 is probably too strong, considering the circumstances of the Act’s proclamation. The former problem was addressed in the name of article by adding “1941,” thus allowing to distinguish it from the Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian Independence of 1991. The latter point, however, presumed a certain interpretation of events, which was avoided in the more ambiguous titles of the other two articles, as well as in the post-2015 English version, all of which referred to the restoration of the Ukrainian statehood, rather than to a Ukrainian independence.

In the case of Kyiv, the Ukrainian and English articles used the title “Battle for Kyiv,” the informal name for the Kyiv offensive operation which took place between November 3 and 13, 1943, and which resulted in the capture of the city on November 6. The official name – “Kyiv offensive operation” – was used for the Russian version of the article, whereas in the other two languages the informal name was preferred, with the additional indicator of “1943” used to distinguish it from the article about the Battle of Kyiv of 1941.

While distinctions between the Kyiv articles seemed to be less significant than in the case of the L’viv articles, the presence of disagreements between Wikipedia versions on such a basic level as the articles’ titles can be viewed as an indication of the considerable differences in the representations of particular episodes of the past. Similar to observations made by Rogers and Sendjarevic in their study of the Srebrenica massacre remembrance on Wikipedia (2012), these differences appear to be influenced by the persistence of contrasting historical interpretations of many episodes of the Second World War in Ukrainian and Russian national historiographies, in particular the ones involving activities of Ukrainian anti-Soviet groups such as the OUN and the UPA. In the next several sections I examine other prominent elements of the articles, in order to assess whether these variations in naming lead to substantial differences in representation of the two historical episodes, and whether they can be traced to differences between dominant war narratives in Ukraine and Russia, respectively.

Table of contents. The tables of contents in Wikipedia consist of article headings which clarify and

better organize that article's content ("Wikipedia: Writing Better Articles," n.d.). As discussed above, analyzing an article's table of contents can provide useful insights on the differences in presenting material between various language versions. Each heading points to a particular topic which is discussed in the article: therefore, the table of contents of a Wikipedia article can be used as a source of semantic information, which is of particular interest for cross-cultural research; as Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012) demonstrate in their study of contentious memories of the Balkan wars, this information can be particularly useful for investigating differences in representation of the same event across different language versions of the encyclopedia.

A comparison of the different tables of contents for the Kyiv articles showed that the Ukrainian and Russian versions have a similar structure, consisting of three parts: an introduction/background of the battle, how it played out, and the battle's aftermath. The English article, instead, elaborated on the course of the battle by dividing it into several stages – the first attempt to capture Kyiv, the Rauss counterattacks, the final stage of the second attempt, etc. – and assigned independent sections for each of these stages. Unlike the other articles, which described the whole course of the battle in a single section, the structure of the English article implied that the seizure of Kyiv witnessed many stages, and that Soviet troops required several attempts to achieve their goal. In comparison with the other articles, the English one also took a larger scope: it was the only article which described, under the "Battle of Kyiv" title, several operations which took place between the second half of November and December; these operations were explored separately in other versions of the encyclopedia.

However, it is worth mentioning that despite similarities in structuring the narrative, the Russian and the Ukrainian versions did not necessarily feature the same content; instead, my observations showed that each article allotted its own particular significance to each section. For instance, the section about the battle's background in the Russian Wikipedia emphasized the deep entrenchment of the German troops, while the introductory section of the Ukrainian article talked about the numerical superiority of the Red Army vis-à-vis the weakened German forces. Differences of this kind abounded: the Russian article, for example, was the only one which discussed in detail the numbers of losses incurred by the German side, while the Ukrainian article alone noted that German forces burned down parts of city before their retreat.

In contrast to the Kyiv articles, which all had a similar structure, the L'viv articles employed different ways of organizing their contents, similarly to what Rogers and Sendijarevic found (2012). Similarly to the Srebrenica case, where the organization of the material showed significant variations between different language versions, the table of contents of the L'viv articles pointed to profound differences in the way the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state was represented and interpreted. The structure of the Russian article, for instance, emphasizes inconsistencies in the Act of Restoration

by hinting, in several sections, to existing controversies which describe different versions of the Act; a similar strategy, as Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012, p. 38) have shown, was used in the Serbian article on the Srebrenica massacre, to undermine the validity of claims about the genocidal nature of events in Srebrenica made by other Wikipedia language versions. The Ukrainian article about the Act, however, ignored these controversies entirely: instead, it depicted the reactions of other significant parties such as the Germans, Ukrainian church officials, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, etc. to the proclamation of the Act, but without overtly questioning the consistency or legitimacy of the Act itself.

Even sections bearing the same title in different language versions of the L'viv article provided Wikipedia readers with different information and, in some cases, these distinctions were striking. Both the Russian and English articles, for instance, included sections titled "Background": the content, however, differed significantly. The Russian article described the period of 1939–1941 and paid special attention to the notion of collaboration between Ukrainian nationalists and the Nazi regime. It did not include, however, any references to earlier Ukrainian state formations – such as the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1921) or the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (1918–1919) – and omitted discussing the historical continuity of the Ukrainian state. Instead, the Russian article clearly embedded the Act of Restoration into the context of the Second World War, and reinforced the interpretation of the Act as a *proclamation*, implying the establishment of a *new* entity rather than a *restoration* of the Ukrainian state. The English article's section describing the background of the Act's declaration chose its departure point from the aftermath of the First World War. It also failed to mention earlier Ukrainian state formations, but referred, instead, to the division of Ukrainian territory among different states in the interwar period, and noted the existence of Ukrainian nationalist organizations, which "for various reasons" ("Declaration of Ukrainian Independence, 1941," n.d.) were more active in Western Ukraine.

A brief comparison of the tables of contents of these different Wikipedia articles points to the presence of significant differences, both in the way information is structured, and the implicit meaning behind the divisions into particular sections. The articles were often structured in a different way; however, my analysis demonstrated that even article sections bearing the same name could contain different – and often divergent – interpretations of the events. For instance, different versions either emphasized the heroism of Red Army soldiers or diminished Soviet accomplishments, pointed out the massive collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists with the Nazi regime or ignored this subject altogether. This observation implies that, as in the case of Srebrenica massacre (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012), Wikipedia articles on the Second World War often provide different interpretations of the same event depending on the language version – an important evidence of cultural distinctions which do not subside in spite of Wikipedia policies of neutrality and consensus-building.

Intra-Wikipedia links. Internal links constitute an important feature of Wikipedia: they put different Wikipedia articles in relation to each other, thus establishing the encyclopedia as “an interconnected whole” (“Wikipedia: Manual of Style/Linking,” n.d.). According to the Wikipedia’s Manual of Style (n.d.), internal links are used to improve user understanding of an article’s material: in order to achieve this goal, Wikipedia users hyperlinks to connect important concepts which are mentioned in an article (e.g., a certain date, or location, or personality) to other articles dedicated to these concepts. By following these hyperlinks, Wikipedia users can navigate to pages containing additional information on specific terms, useful references, or any other material which enhances the user’s understanding of the information provided in the original article.

An internal link consists of a single piece of hyperlinked text – it can be a single word or a brief combination of words – which leads to a different Wikipedia article; consequently, the intra-Wikipedia link can be viewed as a highly-focused representation of the language which describes a particular issue (Adafre & Rijke, 2006). In this sense internal links are of particular interest for studying cultural differences, in the ways the same concept is represented in different language versions of Wikipedia. The study of these differences – also known as sub-concept diversities – was recently introduced in the work by Hecht and Gergle (2010), who argued that the collective body of internal Wikipedia links can be viewed as a more or less complete, language-independent summary of an article’s text. Therefore, the analysis of internal links can be used to assess how representations of a certain concept – or a historical episode, as in the case of the current study – differ across language version of Wikipedia.

Table 2 shows the coefficients of concept similarity – e.g., the percentage of links which lead to the same Wikipedia pages in two different language versions of the encyclopedia – among the various Kyiv and L’viv articles.²⁹ A high concept similarity indicates that two articles share similar sets of hyperlinked intra-Wikipedia elements, i.e. links to Wikipedia articles on the same personalities, geographical locations or historical events. Low coefficients suggest that editors of different versions of Wikipedia have diverging opinions of what can be viewed as relevant information for the same historical event; the presence of such differences points to the absence of a common view on the past among editors who produce the different versions of the encyclopedia.

Table 2. Coefficients of concept similarity among Wikipedia articles (Kyiv and L’viv)

		Kyiv articles	
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Russian	1	0.64	0.45
Ukrainian	0.64	1	0.53

²⁹ The coefficients were counted with the help of Manypedia – a free software tool created by Paolo Massa and Federico Scrinzi. The tool is accessible online (<http://www.manypedia.com/>).

English	0.45	0.53	1
		L'viv articles	
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Russian	1	0.43	0.27
Ukrainian	0.43	1	0.2
English	0.27	0.2	1

In comparison with the average coefficient of concept similarity 0.41 calculated by Hecht and Gergle (2010, p. 297) on the basis of a large, random sample of Wikipedia articles, the degree of concept similarity among Second World War articles was slightly larger across the Kyiv articles – 0.45 on average – but considerably lower across the L'viv articles – 0.29 on average. This observation suggests that the degree of concept similarity – i.e. shared internal links between two articles – decreases in the case of more conflictual subjects, even though, as stated previously, this runs in contradiction with the platform's basic premise of neutral representation of information. It is worth mentioning that in both cases the largest degree of concept similarity is present between those encyclopedia versions which are compiled in the closest languages – Ukrainian and Russian – which can also point to the influence of the linguistic factor. On the other hand, however, it is possible to argue that users of Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedia have more in common – including a long period of co-existence as part of the Soviet Union; such a similarity of cultural context, as Heyles (1999) points out in her work on the interplay between digital technology and literature, can be seen as implying larger similarities in the ways users from both countries view and employ digital technology for the production of Wikipedia texts.

In order to assess the underlying conditions for the existence of similarities and differences, I have moved the analysis of intra-Wikipedia links unto a more qualitative level, and scraped internal links from the texts of the L'viv and Kyiv articles. I have organized these data into several categories – e.g. “Personalities,” “Organizations and political entities,” “Geography,” “Abstract concepts,” etc. – to simplify their comparison; then, I excluded those intra-Wikipedia links which were present in several Wikipedia articles, focusing instead on those hypertext elements which were used only in one language version of the same topic. The assumption remains that the analysis of these language-specific internal links can provide valuable information about cross-cultural differences among different Wikipedia versions.

The comparison of unique intra-Wikipedia links, as shown in Tables 3 and 4, indicated that low overlap coefficients are not caused by random factors: instead, they can be attributed to the existence of deeply divergent views on particular episodes from the history of the Second World War. For instance, among all the L'viv articles only the Russian one included a considerable number of hyperlinks to German personalities – featuring, for instance, the head of German intelligence, Wilhelm

Kanaris, the head of the Brandenburg battalion, Erwin von Lahousen, and Reich Minister for the Eastern Territories Alfred Rosenberg. In contrast, other articles paid greater attention to Ukrainian personalities: the English article emphasized the role of interwar Ukrainian intellectuals and leaders of earlier Ukrainian state formations, while the Ukrainian one included information about a younger generation of Ukrainian nationalists involved in the activities of the OUN in the Second World War.

Table 3. Language-specific intra-Wikipedia links (L'viv articles)

	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Personalities (German)	Wilhelm Franz Kanaris, Erwin von Lahousen, Franz Halder, Adolf Hitler, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Alfred Rosenberg	Gans Koch	
Personalities (Ukrainian)	Richard Yaryi, Vasiliy Bandera, Oleksa Bandera	Taras Bulba- Borovets	Kost Levitsky, Yevhen Konovalets, Volodymyr Horbovy, Vasyl Kuk, Markian Panchyshyn, Vsevolod Petriv, Mykola Lebed
Personalities (Other)	Stalin		
Organizations and political entities (Ukrainian)	Druzhyny Ukrainiskih Natsionalistov, OUN(m)	Government of UNR in exile, Ukrainian liberation movement, Ukrainian National Council	Sich Riflemen, Ukrainian Military Organization, Ukrainian National Committee, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church
Organizations and political entities (German)	Supreme command of land armies (Wehrmacht), Abwehr, Roland, Brandenburg-800	Wermacht, Gestapo	
Organizations political entities (other)	Ukrainian state (1941)	ZUNR, Ukraine	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Second Polish Republic, Czechoslovakia
Abstract concepts	Ukrainian language	Occupation, batallion, tower, mitropolit	Concentration camps, Ukrainian nationalism, Ukrainian national anthem
Time	1939, 1940, 1944, September the 9 th , February the 10 th	July the 5 th , November the 25 th , October the 23 rd	
Historical events	Polish campaing of RRKA (1939)	Nurnberg process	World War I

The categories presented in the table above point to the presence of a number of semantic differences in the ways the seizure of L’viv is represented across different versions of Wikipedia. Other categories of hypertext further contribute to specific ways of representing the past, which each article uses in regard to the Second World War episode in question: for instance, the Russian L’viv article contained hyperlinks to articles about German intelligence units – such as the Roland and Brandenburg battalions – while the English article connected to the page on Sich Riflemen – a Ukrainian military unit which fought in the First World War against the Russian Empire and played an important role during the Ukrainian Civil War.

Similar differences were found in the case of the Kyiv articles: geographical categories and abstract concepts are of particular interest in this case. Of all the articles, only the Russian and Ukrainian ones contained hyperlinks to articles about the Bukrin and Lyutezh bridgeheads, the two iconic landmarks which became symbols of heroism in Soviet historiography about the Second World War (see, for instance, Utkin (1967), Moskalenko (1984), Shaposhnikov (1988)). Both these articles were also connected to pages dedicated to bridgeheads in general: this added significant emphasis to that element of the event in both Ukrainian and Russian memories vis-à-vis the Battle of Kyiv. However, unlike the Russian article, the Ukrainian one also included hyperlinks to articles on such topics as “killed in action” and “missing in action”: these were, apparently, not considered highly relevant in the Russian article. This difference may reflect the tendency, mentioned above, of contemporary Ukrainian historiography to emphasize the heavy human losses incurred during the capture of Kyiv, in opposition to the glorification of the battle endorsed during the Soviet period (see, for example, Koval (1999), Korol (2003; 2005), Ginda (2010)).

Table 4. Language-specific intra-Wikipedia links (Kyiv articles)

	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Personalities (German)			Walther Nehring, Adolf Hitler, Erhard Raus, Georg Jauer
Personalities (other)		Ludovik Svoboda	
Personalities (Soviet)			Ivan Konev, Pavel Rybalko

Organizations and political entities (German)			XLVIII Panzer Corps, 1st Panzer Division (Wehrmacht), 7th Panzer Division (Wehrmacht), 2nd Parachute Division (Germany)
Organizations political entities (Soviet)	1st Ukrainian Front, Stavka, Voronezh Front, Soviet Red Army, Soviet Union, 3rd Guards Tank Army, 38th Army (Soviet Union), 5th Guards Tank Army, 60th Army (Soviet Union), 1st Guard Cavalry Corps, 13th Army (Soviet Union)	Soviet Red Army, 1st Ukrainian Front, 3rd Guards Tank Army, 40th Army (Soviet Union), 27th Army (Soviet Union), Stavka, Stavka reserves, 2nd Air Army (Soviet Union)	Soviet Red Army, Soviet Union, 1st Ukrainian Front, Stavka, Voronezh Front, Central Front (Soviet Union), 2nd Ukrainian Front, 3rd Guards Tank Army, 40th Army (Soviet Union), 27th Army (Soviet Union), 1st Guards Tank Army (Soviet Union), 18th Army (Soviet Union)
Geography	Northern Ukraine, Kyiv oblast, Zhitomir oblast, Glebovka, Yasnogorodka, Pusha-Voditsa, Vasilkiv, Narovlya, Elsk, Ovruch, Fastovets	Ukraine, Lyutezh, Vyshgorod, Mozir, Chenyakhiv	Berdychiv, Brusilov, Kursk
Abstract concepts		Colonel, killed in action, missed in action	
Time	October the 24 th , November the 1 st , November the 3 rd , November the 4 th , November the 5 th , November the 6 th , November the 7 th , November the 13 th		
Historical events	Great Patriotic War, Battle for Dnieper		World War II
Other			Home of the Underdogs

The variations listed above are just a few of the differences between representations of the same event in Wikipedia. These observations are intended to supplement the quantitative assessment of concept similarities across different articles and indicate that results of overlaps in coefficients – both in the cases of the L'viv and the Kyiv articles – can be explained in cultural terms. The higher coefficient between the Russian and Ukrainian articles on Kyiv emphasizes a common recognition of significant aspects of the battle, the commemoration of which was deeply embedded in Soviet-era Second World

War memory practices. However, in all other cases, the examination of internal links indicates considerable differences between Wikipedia language versions.

Images. In her work on visual images and memory of 9/11, Kari Anden-Papadopoulus (2003, p. 101) notes that the pictorial turn³⁰ in today's culture increasingly affects the way traumatic memories are represented. This "iconomania" to which media theorist W.J.T. Mitchell refers in one of his 2015 lectures, can be viewed as an overwhelming fascination with digital imagery, embodied in an "effort to create a total image of a situation or a body of knowledge" (Vesters, 2015), or, in other words, a common tendency to represent reality – including the past – through various visual forms. Unsurprisingly, images represent one of the most common types of media used in Wikipedia articles and constitute a considerable percentage of the Wikipedia Commons' storage, which by 2016 included around 30 million media files ("Wikimedia Commons," n.d.). According to the rules of the encyclopedia, editors can use only images provided under free license or produced by Wikipedia users. Existing studies show that the majority of contributors create images for Wikipedia themselves (Viegas, 2007). This principle works well in the case of articles about geography, nature and even biology, but things become complicated when dealing with historical articles – especially about non-Western history.

Images from the Kyiv and L'viv articles were not numerous and presented little variety. Many were recurrent across several articles: for instance, the photo of the printed copy of the Act published in 1941 in one of Western Ukrainian newspapers was found in Ukrainian, Russian, and English Wikipedias. The same was true for the image of the commemorative coin made for the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Kyiv, which appeared in all three articles³¹. Similarly, the image of Soviet troops marching across Khreshchatyk, one of central streets of Kyiv, was used both in the English and Russian Wikipedia versions, whereas the image of the memorial desk dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the Ukrainian state in L'viv was used in both the Ukrainian and the Russian articles on L'viv.

At the same time, it is worth noting that despite the use of the same images, different Wikipedia versions still employed them differently. For instance, the size of the above mentioned image of the memorial desk, in the Russian Wikipedia, was smaller, and it appeared in the very beginning of the article. By contrast, in the Ukrainian Wikipedia a larger version of the same image was used, closer to the end of the article, sided by a text citing the criticism of the Act by Taras Bulba-Borovets, one of the leaders of Ukraine's nationalist movement; such a positioning can be viewed as an attempt to provide a positive contrast to the latter criticism, thus balancing the two different points of view. Furthermore,

³⁰ For more information about the pictorial – or iconic – turn in culture and culture studies see works by Mitchell (1994; 2005; 2015), Burda & Maar (2004), Moxey (2008), Boehm and Mitchell (2009), Curtis (2010), Burda (2011).

³¹ The situation changed in 2015, when the image was removed from the English Wikipedia page and remained only in Ukrainian and Russian versions.

the attribution of this image varied significantly between the Russian and the Ukrainian Wikipedia versions: while the latter described the image as the “memorial plaque for the 50th anniversary of the Act’s proclamation” (“Akt Vidnovlennja,” n.d.), the former, Russian article referred to it as the “memorial plaque for the so-called ‘restoration’ of the Ukrainian state, opened on June 30, 1991” (“Akt Provozglashenija,” n.d.).

Of particular interest for my study are those images which appeared only in one particular version of Wikipedia. These were not numerous and mainly originated from the different L’viv articles. The English article, for instance, featured an image of the State Seal of the Government of the Ukrainian state in 1941; such a choice fostered a feeling of authenticity, which contributed to the encyclopedic style of writing used in the English article. By contrast, the Russian article included the image of an OUN banner from the Western Ukrainian city Zhovkva, which proclaimed the following according to the image’s attribution: “*Slava Gitleru! Slava Bandere! Da zdavstvuet nezavisimaja Ukrainskaja sobornaja Derzhava! Da zdavstvuet Vozhd’ St. Bandera! Slava Gitleru! Slava nepobedimym nemeckim i ukrainskim vooruzhjonnyim silam! Slava Bandere!*” [Glory to Hitler! Glory to Bandera! Hail the independent and conciliar Ukrainian state! Hail Leader Stepan Bandera! Glory to Hitler! Glory to the invincible German and Ukrainian military forces! Glory to Bandera!] (“Akt Provozglashenija,” n.d.). Another image from the Russian Wikipedia showed civilians in traditional Ukrainian garments, marching in front of German officers and greeting them with Nazi salutes; the caption to the image stated that it shows celebrations in Buchach in honor of the Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state.

A similarly selective choice of visuals – albeit with a different emphasis – was also found in the Ukrainian article on L’viv, which featured several unique images. One of them, attributed as “*Ljviv’jany v ochikuvanni progholoshennja Aktu vidnovlennja derzhavnosti, 30 chervnja 1941 roku*” [People of L’viv anticipating the declaration of the Act of restoration of the Ukrainian state, June 30, 1941], showed an excited civilian crowd with one or two soldiers, who could have been of either German or Ukrainian origin. Another image from the same article showed the copy of a letter from Andrey Sheptytsky, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, welcoming the restoration of the Ukrainian state. Both images served the same purposes: first, they emphasized public support for the Act’s declaration, and, second, they suggested that the declaration was an act of will of the Ukrainian people, to a certain degree clearing it from the stain of collaborationism.

Another interesting example of the use of visuals was found in the Kyiv article in the Ukrainian Wikipedia. Unlike the English and Russian versions, which used the image of Soviet soldiers marching across the liberated city, the Ukrainian article was the only one to feature the image of Soviet troops before the battle. The black-and-white photo showed Soviet soldiers building rafts to cross the Dnieper; a wooden sign displaying the words “*Daesh’ Kiev!*” [For Kyiv!] in the background provided the

context for the image. Unlike the visuals used in the other two versions, this image from the Ukrainian article showed exhausted-looking men, photographed in the midst of combat preparations, thus instilling a sense of uncertainty in the reader and directing attention to the less glorious aspects of the Battle of Kyiv.

While it can be argued that the use of imagery in all these cases contributed to a feeling of authenticity which, as we will see in the following chapters, constitutes an important element of Second World War remembrance on social media, the combination of these particular photos with their particular captions seemed to promote interpretations of events which differed across language versions. Images of festive crowds of Ukrainians welcoming Hitler and greeting German officers in the Russian Wikipedia page hinted to massive collaborationism in the country, strengthening the notion of the Ukrainian betrayal of their fellow Soviet citizens. By contrast, the Ukrainian Wikipedia stressed the hardships of the war suffered by Soviet soldiers. These examples thus show that images in Wikipedia can be used for different purposes: in some cases they can make an article feel more “academic,” but in the other cases, or even at the same time, they can be used in an attempt to impose a certain interpretation of events which often clashes with that of other language versions.

Categories. An important source of lexical and semantic information in Wikipedia is represented by the categories into which Wikipedia articles are classified (Zesch et al., 2007). According to Wikipedia’s own definition, “[t]he central goal of the category system is to provide navigational links to all Wikipedia pages in a hierarchy of categories which readers...can browse and quickly find sets of pages on topics that are defined by those characteristics” (“Wikipedia: Categorization,” n.d.). Wikipedia categories allow for the grouping of existing articles into thematic sets, on the basis of the essential characteristics of the articles’ subjects: the amount of categories used for describing a particular article may vary, but it should not exceed 200 for any one article. In short, categories are used as semantic tags inside Wikipedia and, therefore, their comparison can provide a perspective on the differences in semantics pertaining to a particular event or personality across various language versions.

While there exists an impressive body of literature dealing with the analysis of these Wikipedia categories (see, for instance, works by Voss (2006), Nastase and Strube (2008), Medelyan, Milne, Legg, and Witten (2009), Kittur, Chi, and Suh (2009)), this analysis has rarely been deployed for cross-cultural studies, and if so, only marginally.³² However, I suggest that a cross-cultural research of Wikipedia can benefit from the study of these categories: in particular, those which are used to define the same event, as well as their differences across versions. The Wikipedia category system can be viewed as a form of collaborative thesaurus tagging (Voss, 2006): unlike tagging geared towards classifying different types of

³² See, for instance, the study by Božović, Bošković and Trifunović (2014) on Wikipedia and the memory of Ratko Mladić, a Bosnian Serb general and active participant in the Balkan wars; also Fredheim, Howanitz, and Makhortykh (2014) on the digital remembrance of Stepan Bandera.

content throughout platforms, where each user can create his or her own tags for a particular page, in Wikipedia these tags are chosen from an existing thesaurus of categories defined by the Wikipedia community. Therefore, comparisons of sets of categories used to classify a particular topic can contribute to understanding existing differences between the semantic categories used by different language communities in order to explore a particular subject – in this case, episodes of the Second World War.

In order to facilitate my analysis I have grouped the existing categories into two sets, based on their semantics, as shown in Table 5. The first set – temporal indicators – includes categories related to the chronological framing of the event in question. The second set – thematic indicators – includes those categories related to the actual description of the event: these are usually the major focus of cross-cultural studies of Wikipedia in the context of memory studies (Božović, Bošković & Trifunović, 2014; Fredheim, Howanitz, & Makhortykh, 2014). This division allows to differentiate between categories which are of lesser importance for subject exploration (based on the assumption that differences in the use of time categories only marginally affect representations of the Second World War in the two cases I am examining) and more semantically relevant, thematic categories, of particular interest for cross-cultural analysis.

Table 5. Categories in Wikipedia articles (Kyiv and L'viv)

	Russian	Kyiv articles Ukrainian	English
Temporal indicators	Year 1943 in USSR, November 1943, Conflicts of 1943	Conflicts of 1943	Conflicts in 1943, 1943 in the Soviet Union, 1943 in Ukraine
Thematic indicators	Kyiv operation (1943), Great Patriotic War operations, Battles in Ukraine, History of Kyiv	Eastern European theater of WWII, Battle for Dnieper, Operations and battles of Soviet-German war, Battles for Kyiv, Battles in Ukraine, Battles in USSR, German battles, Soviet battles	Battles and operations of the Soviet–German War, Battles of World War II involving Germany, Battles involving the Soviet Union, Battles and operations of World War II involving Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovakia–Soviet Union relations
	Russian	L'viv articles Ukrainian	English

Temporal indicators	History of Ukraine 1917–1991	1941, History of Ukraine 1917–1991	1941 in Ukraine
Thematic indicators	Collaborationism in WWII, Stepan Bandera, Ukrainian state (1941)	Stepan Bandera, Constitutional law, OUN, Ukrainian national liberation movement, Declarations of independence	Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Political history of Ukraine, Ukrainian Declaration of Independence

The examination of thematic categories points to a number of differences between the Russian, English and Ukrainian versions. The Russian article was the only one to use the category “Great Patriotic War” in classifying the Kyiv article: this affective definition, which, as we saw in the introduction to this study, is steeped in Soviet war mythology, was much less neutral than the “Soviet-German War” category used in the Ukrainian and English articles. A similar tendency to use Soviet-style categorizations was found in the L’viv article from the Russian Wikipedia: again, this language version was the only one to classify the events of June 30 as an instance of collaboration – much as they were interpreted in Soviet historiography of the Second World War (see, for instance, Cherednichenko, 1970; Danilenko, 1972; Maslovskiy, 1978).

While categories in the Russian Wikipedia articles indicated a clear inclination towards Soviet historiographic tropes, the categories employed in the Ukrainian articles tended to take the opposite position. Of all three L’viv articles, only the Ukrainian one classified the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state as an element of Ukrainian constitutional law. Furthermore, the Ukrainian Wikipedia was the only version to suggest a connection between the events of June 30 and the Ukrainian national liberation movement; both the Ukrainian and English Wikipedia classified the Act as a declaration of independence. These particular interpretations of the events of June 30 again find their roots in existing war historiography, but – unlike that of the Russian article – this historiographical leaning descends from anti-Soviet, pro-nationalistic narratives on the history of Ukraine (see, for example, works by Kuk (2006) and Serhiichyk (2001; 2002)).

In contrast to the Russian and Ukrainian articles, the English ones usually tended to avoid either of the two stances and used less affectively biased categories. The English version of the Kyiv article attempted to give due recognition to all the parties involved in the battle: besides the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, which were naturally mentioned in the other articles, it added Czechoslovakia, by referring to Ludvik Svoboda’s brigade, which participated in the Battle of Kyiv on the Soviet side. Similarly, the English article on the seizure of L’viv was classified as being related to Ukrainian political history as

well as directly to that of the OUN; neither of those categories imposed any specific interpretation of the event *per se*. At the same time, the last category used in the English article on the Act of Restoration – “Ukrainian Declaration of Independence” – suggested a specific interpretation of the event, the one imposed by the article’s title in the English Wikipedia.

Similarly to the study of Wikipedia and memory of the Balkan wars conducted by Božović, Bošković and Trifunović, my observations indicate that the way in which Wikipedia categories are used opens up a space for “clear political stances and rhetorical manipulation” (2014, p. 86). The extent of such rhetorical manipulations varies among different Wikipedia versions; however, in one form or another it is present in all language versions. The differences between language versions are particularly significant in the case of the L’viv articles: depending on the version, the declaration of the Act is presented as an act of collaborationism (Russian Wiki), an important milestone for the national liberation movement (Ukrainian Wiki), or a step towards Ukrainian independence (English Wiki).

References. References – also known as citations – constitute an important component of Wikipedia, not limited to the identification of the sources on which a particular article is based (“Wikipedia: Citing sources,” n.d.). The role of references in Wikipedia is in fact manifold: they allow an article to be verifiable, identify the encyclopedic relevance of an article, and support the editor’s arguments in discussing the article’s contents (Sundin, 2011, p. 25–28). For these reasons a number of studies (Devgan, Powe, Blakey, & Makary, 2007; Clauson, Polen, Boulos, & Dzenowagis, 2008; Stankus & Spiegel, 2010; Haigh, 2011; Wilson & Likens, 2015) have examined the role of references in Wikipedia, including those pertaining to articles of a historiographical nature (Rector, 2008; Luyt & Tan, 2010; Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012).

Along with suggestions for further reading which are appended to some articles, references provide users with hyperlinks to external sources, connecting Wikipedia with other parts of the World Wide Web. Unlike intra-Wikipedia links, which, as we have seen, establish connections *inside* the encyclopedia, references are thus used to establish connections with *external* resources. Existing studies on Wikipedia frequently assess these sources so as to evaluate the quality of information provided in the encyclopedia (see, for example, works by Devgan, Powe, Blakey, & Makary (2007); Clauson, Polen, Boulos, & Dzenowagis (2008); Haigh (2011)). In this study, however, I focused on how often articles on the same subject – but from different language versions of Wikipedia – referenced the same sources. A high percentage of cross-referencing among articles would support the argument of transnational representations of memory in Wikipedia, while a lack of such connections, would, instead, indicate that editors use different and potentially conflicting external sources, a practice which runs counter to Wikipedia’s declared ideal of reflecting a global consensus.

Similarly to the observations made by Luyt and Tan (2010) on the basis of a large sample of

historical articles on Wikipedia, the majority of references in the articles I analyzed referred to internet sources. Thus, in order to evaluate how frequent cross-referencing was among the chosen articles I decided to focus on hyperlinked references both on the page and on the host levels. For this I used the digital tool Link Ripper and compared the resulting lists of URLs using the Triangulation tool.³³ The comparison showed that six articles from the study sample used altogether 23 unique links, originating from 19 unique hosts.³⁴ The largest amount of references for the L'viv articles was found in the Russian Wikipedia – 11 out of 14 unique links; the same was true for the Kyiv articles, where the majority of unique links – 5 out of 9 – originated from the Russian article.

One striking result of the comparison of references used in the L'viv and Kyiv articles was the total absence of shared links. While to a certain degree it can be explained by the lack of references in some of the articles examined (for instance, the English L'viv and the Ukrainian Kyiv articles did not include external references at all), the examination of links used suggests that the choice of references reflects the same fundamental distinctions between Wikipedia versions which were mentioned above. For instance, the Russian L'viv article was the only one to reference materials of the Holocaust History Project³⁵ in the context of the Act of the Restoration; such a choice of reference was another evidence of the tendency in Russian Wikipedia to view the Ukrainian nationalistic movement through the prism of collaboration with Nazi, as well as to emphasize the involvement of Ukrainian nationalists in Nazi atrocities. By contrast, the Ukrainian L'viv article referred to the web page of the L'viv State Archive, where the scanned version of the Act was located (“Akt Vidnovlennya Derzhavnoi Nezalezhnosti Ukrainy,” n.d.); by doing so, the article emphasized the importance of the document together with its recognition in the context of Ukrainian statehood.

Only two articles – the Ukrainian and the Russian articles on L'viv – referred to a common resource: a website of ZUSTRICH, the Ukrainian organization for newly-arrived immigrants in Canada. However, both articles referred to different sources provided on the website: the Ukrainian article linked to the book by Taras Bulba-Borovets (1981), which was focused on the struggle for independence during the Second World War. By contrast, the Russian article referred to the works by Knysh (1960) and Rebet (1964) on the confrontations within the OUN in 1940–1941 and the collaboration with Germany; such a choice of sources articulated differences in interpreting the Act,

³³ Both tools were designed by the Digital Methods Initiative of the University of Amsterdam and available in free access (<https://www.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase>)

³⁴ When calculating these numbers I considered only external links, and excluded hyperlinks to different Wikipedia services like WikiData, MediaWiki or Creative Commons.

³⁵ The Holocaust History Project is a US-based non-profit organization which established a free online archive of documents, photographs, and recordings related to the Holocaust. Among the declared purposes of the organization was to foster knowledge about the Holocaust and counter Holocaust denial. Originally, the archive was available at the following address: <http://holocaust-history.org/>; however, currently it is available through the Internet Archives digital library (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150801181752/http://holocaust-history.org/>).

which was considered as an important milestone on the road to independence in the case of Ukrainian Wikipedia, and as an example of collaboration between Ukrainian nationalists and Nazi in the case of Russian Wikipedia.

These findings align with observations made by Rogers and Sendjarevic (2012, pp. 41–43) in their study of the representations of the Srebrenica massacre in Wikipedia, according to which articles from different language versions mostly referred to unique external resources. The lack of cross-referencing indicates that editors from different versions of Wikipedia do not generally use common resources when writing articles on the same subject. In some cases intersections occur – at least on the host level – but these are of a limited nature and tend to constitute only a small portion of the references. While this can be explained by several factors, including Wikipedia’s policy of encouraging references in the same language as the article (Luyt & Tan, 2010), the comparison of unique references as well as published works referred to in the articles points to the presence of what can be viewed as a source bias, articulating a certain historical interpretation. For instance, the Ukrainian article about the seizure of L’viv mostly refers to sources which unilaterally support the declaration of the Act and interpret it in the frame of the nationalistic narrative of the Second World War. A similar – if less apologetic – stance is observed in the English article, which mainly refers to works by Ukrainian emigre historians, works which are often characterized by antagonism towards the Soviet Union. By contrast, the Russian article includes a wide range of sources, both pro-nationalistic and pro-Soviet.

Together with the analysis of other elements of Wikipedia articles, the study of references in the Kyiv and L’viv articles indicated considerable cultural differences between language versions. Almost all of them provided their own interpretation of the same episodes of the Second World War, and these differ significantly from each other. The differences were particularly pronounced in the case of the L’viv articles, which provided a wide range of interpretations across versions: from the glorification of the event in the Ukrainian Wikipedia, to the accusations of Ukrainian collaborationism in the Russian Wikipedia. While the existence of such divergences in views of the past is well-recognized in public memories of post-socialist states, their transfer to digital space – and, particularly, to Wikipedia – compels us to question the validity of claims about the transformation of conflicted memories into cosmopolitan discourses of the past through digital media (Levy & Sznajder, 2002; Trubina, 2010; Dounaevsky, 2013). At the same time, however, by allowing the co-existence of such divergent narratives in the same public space and facilitating their comparison and discussion, Wikipedia can be viewed as a platform which does facilitate, to some extent, the transnational remembrance of historical events in the post-socialist space.

2.3.2. Interaction

In this section I examined another important aspect of remembering the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv online: the ways Wikipedia users interact with the digital representations of both events within the encyclopedia. In line with earlier studies on user interactions with Wikipedia narratives, I considered both non-verbal (i.e. view counts of the encyclopedia's pages) (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Keegan, Gergle, & Contractor, 2011; Kaltenbrunner & Laniado, 2012) and verbal forms of interaction (i.e. editors' comments and discussions on "Talk" pages) (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Božović, Bošković, & Trifunović, 2014; Luyt, 2015). In doing so, I attempted to measure not only how popular individual articles on the Second World War were, but also what – if any – were the common sources of controversies between Wikipedia editors and users.³⁶ Furthermore, I examined whether Wikipedia users' interest vis-à-vis certain subjects associated with the Second World War changed through time, and whether or not these changes could be related to recent developments in Ukraine, such as the Euromaidan protests and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

General dynamics. As already mentioned earlier, view counts, edits and discussion posts are the main indicators of user activity in Wikipedia. The amount of views (also known as pageview statistics) indicates how frequently a particular article of Wikipedia has been viewed by internet users. As Andreas Kaltenbrunner and David Laniado (2012) show in their study of Wikipedia discussions, articles with a large number of views are often those which deal with subjects of popular interest – for instance media platforms, celebrities and films³⁷ – or refer to events which are currently trending in offline media as well. It is also assumed that more frequently viewed articles also receive more edits – though this assumption does not hold true in all cases ("Wikipedia: Pageview Statistics," n.d.).

Viewing an article is usually considered a passive contribution, as opposed to editing or posting on a discussion page. While such an assumption can be somewhat misleading³⁸, a number of studies suggest that edits and posts often have higher interpretative value compared to page views (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Luyt, 2015). Editing is the most basic feature of Wikipedia, and, arguably, the most important one. The term covers a wide range of user activities: from correcting mistakes to making useful additions and improving articles in numerous other ways ("Wikipedia: Tutorial/Editing," n.d.). Each edit should be followed by an edit summary – an explanation behind the user's intervention – which is particularly important when the user reverts previous edits or deletes parts of an article's text

³⁶ For more information on controversy mapping in Wikipedia see works by Borra et al. (2014; 2015). For examples of qualitative studies of the ways historical controversies are dealt with in Wikipedia in the context of contentious war memories see works by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012) and Kaprans (2015; 2016).

³⁷ See, for instance, the list of most visited Wikipedia pages for 2012 ("Most viewed articles," n.d.).

³⁸ As Espen Aarseth (1997) argues in her study of cybertexts, the hypertextuality which is one of the intrinsic features of Wikipedia pages does not only enhance the consumption of the text in question, but also makes it more complicated. Consequently, compared with printed encyclopedias, Wikipedia requires a non-trivial effort on the part of readers to traverse its articles.

(“Help: Edit Summary,” n.d.).

The basic assumption behind Wikipedia’s editing culture is the following: each edit has to add to or correct an existing article in such a way that the articles constantly improve over time (Swarts, 2009). However, the process of editing does not always go smoothly: sometimes editors have opposing opinions on what should be called a “good” article on a particular topic, which results in so-called “edit wars” (“Wikipedia: Edit Warring,” n.d.). Sometimes, these edit wars are resolved through discussion on the “Talk” pages, but in other cases the so-called power editors – i.e. editors who have proven to adhere to Wikipedia standards and are responsible for their promotion and enforcement (Rogers, 2013, p. 170) – are compelled to intervene.³⁹

Similarly to edits, discussion posts are viewed as an active contribution to Wikipedia (Rogers & Sendijarevic, 2012; Luyt, 2015). Posts are usually produced by editors, who communicate with each other through “Talk,” or discussion, pages. The “Talk” pages are intended to facilitate communication among editors who want to discuss certain changes to an article (“Wikipedia: Talk Page Guidelines,” n.d.). Large amounts of posts can serve as an indicator of controversies related to the article in question – in particular, disagreement among editors on references or on the neutrality of other editors (“Wikipedia: A Researcher’s Guide to Discussion Pages,” n.d.).

As Table 6 demonstrates, different versions of Wikipedia showed different dynamics of interaction. While the English and Russian articles contained relatively large amounts of edits compared to the articles in Ukrainian, these did not always result in a larger amounts of views. The same was true when comparing the number of edits and posts on the discussion pages: for instance, the Russian article on L’viv was edited more often, but discussed less frequently than the English one. A discussion page was absent for the Ukrainian article of Kyiv and, in general, both Ukrainian articles witnessed the least amounts of edits. However, the lack of editing did not diminish the amount of attention received: for instance, the Ukrainian article on L’viv was the most frequently visited of all three articles on the topic.

Table 6. Numerical summaries of user interactions with Wikipedia articles (Kyiv and L’viv)

	Kyiv articles		
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Views	94 350	51 000	202 625
Edits	92	56	280
Posts	4	0	33

³⁹ For an example of edit wars resolutions in the case of contentious pasts see works by Rogers and Sendijarevic (2012), Dounaevsky (2013), and Kaprans (2015).

	L'viv articles		
	Russian	Ukrainian	English
Views	57 838	95 007	55 673
Edits	133	125	312
Posts	3	5	78

In contrast to Wikipedia articles about recent traumatic events such as mass protests (Ferron & Massa, 2011) or terrorist attacks (Pentzold, 2009), the examination of articles about the capture of L'viv and the seizure of Kyiv indicated a limited amount of active participation on the part of internet users, especially when compared with viewing activity. In some cases – such as the Ukrainian L'viv article – the level of so-called “passive” involvement (i.e. views) was rather high, though it did not translate into active participation such as editing or discussing. This observation falls outside of Pentzold's (2009) framework of cultural memory formation, which was applied to earlier studies of Wikipedia representation of the London bombings and the Arab Spring (Ferron & Massa, 2011; Ferron & Massa, 2011a): according to his framework, Wikipedia facilitates the transmission of communicative memory into stable cultural representations by allowing the encyclopedia's editors to actively discuss and share their views on the past through discussion and edit pages, with the final result of producing a stable narrative of the past.

One possible explanation for these distinctions between representation of more recent (i.e. the Arab Spring) and less recent (i.e. the Second World War) events on Wikipedia is the lack of real-time memorialization in the latter cases. Unlike memories of recent events, which are converted into Wikipedia articles “within minutes” (“Wikipedia: About,” 2016) of their occurrence, Second World War memories in Wikipedia do not appear spontaneously, but are documented according to existing secondary sources. In the case of the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv, the transition between communicative and cultural memory which, according to Pentzold (2009), occurs on Wikipedia, has already taken place; this, however, does not mean that various online communities will interpret it the same way. The lack of discussion and minimal amount of edits in the Ukrainian Wikipedia articles may be taken as an indicator of an existing consensus on these particular episodes of the past, originating from a greater familiarity with the history of the Second World War in Ukraine. The opposite situation can be found in the English Wikipedia, where users are less familiar – and less burdened – with that particular past and, therefore, perhaps, feel freer to explore and discuss it.

The modes of interaction involved in Second World War memory practices on Wikipedia differ from those observed in the context of more recent traumatic events. Unlike iconic episodes of our time – such as 9/11 or the demonstrations on Tahrir square – which are still discussed and explored on a

regular basis, in attempts to comprehend and localize them in the contemporary context, events of the Second World War are invoked by Wikipedia users at specific moments in time. More often than not, memories of the Second World War remain outside of that domain which Aleida Assmann (2011) labeled as “functional memory” – a set of active and identity-shaping recollections of past – but, rather, belong to the realm of storage memory, which is activated during certain times of year, or in reaction to some prominent event. At those particular moments, memory about prominent Second World War episodes is experienced in a passive – almost ceremonial – way, which rarely involves active participation in the form, for instance, of editing or discussing the past.

Patterns of interaction. In this section I review data on both passive and active forms of user interaction with Wikipedia articles, in order to identify regular (e.g. anniversary dates or commemorative practices) and irregular (e.g. regime changes or international conflicts) factors which influence interactions with Second World War memory on Wikipedia. For this purpose, I examined the annual dynamics of users’ interactions with Wikipedia articles on a month-to-month basis, and looked for correlations with anniversary months: May/June for the L’viv articles and May/November for the Kyiv articles. Of all three indicators, only view counts provide enough information for the analysis of dynamics on a day-to-day basis, so I used them to check if an increase in these articles’ views corresponds to exact anniversary dates: June 30 (the German seizure of L’viv) for the L’viv articles, November 6 (the Red Army’s capture of Kyiv) for the Kyiv articles, and May 8–9 (Victory Day in Western/Eastern Europe) for both of these.

Tables 7 and 8 show that passive forms of interaction (i.e., viewing a particular article) were closely correlated with anniversary dates. Peaks of views occurred during anniversary months in all Kyiv articles and two of the L’viv articles – the Ukrainian and the English ones. In some cases these peaks were significant, such as, for instance, in November 2011, when the Kyiv article in the Ukrainian Wikipedia witnessed more than 800 views, constituting 28% of its total views for that year. Day-to-day examination, however, suggests that anniversary dates and monthly peaks of views did not necessarily coincide. Both the Russian and Ukrainian articles on Kyiv show a relation between monthly peaks and the anniversary date in November, but only the Russian article experienced the largest amount of views on the anniversary dates in May. The peaks of views for the L’viv articles did not correlate with the anniversary dates in May, but such correlations were present for the month of June in the case of the Ukrainian article.

Table 7. Anniversary dynamics for Wikipedia views (Kyiv articles)

Year	Date of peak		Date of supposed anniversary		Number of views during peak		Number of views per supposed anniversary		Average number of views	
English Wikipedia										
	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov
2008	05.05	11.11	08.05	06.11	70	89	48	61	51	52
2009	20.05	19.11	08.05	06.11	205	89	69	86	70	56
2010	09.05	19.11	08.05	06.11	92	130	65	101	67	72
2011	13.05	06.11	08.05	06.11	92	130	71	130	63	79
2012	15.05	19.11	08.05	06.11	156	109	99	96	87	74
2013	09.05	06.11	08.05	06.11	103	304	82	304	81	93
2014	09.05	04.11	08.05	06.11	130	141	111	136	95	76
2015	02.05	06.11	08.05	06.11	153	111	106	111	78	68
Russian Wikipedia										
	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov
2010	23.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	23	175	-	175	16	21
2011	09.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	66	242	66	242	21	22
2012	09.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	60	179	60	179	22	41
2013	29.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	379	1980	320	1980	98	294
2014	09.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	250	940	250	940	90	136
2015	05.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	173	842	164	842	89	136
Ukrainian Wikipedia										
	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov	May	Nov
2010	-	06.11	-	06.11	-	17	-	17	-	6
2011	10.05	13.11	09.05	06.11	13	66	9	43	6	26
2012	31.05	05.11	09.05	06.11	140	83	48	82	23	32
2013	09.05	04.11	09.05	06.11	71	1582	71	1125	28	225
2014	14.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	95	195	58	195	41	51
2015	21.05	06.11	09.05	06.11	131	171	73	171	56	50

These distinctions in the ways users interact with Wikipedia indicate the varying degrees of significance of certain memories among users of different language versions of the encyclopedia. Russian Wikipedia users were the only ones who clearly identified the Battle for Kyiv as an integral part of the Great Victory – celebrated on May 9 – and consider it an event of substantial importance, as shown by the repeated peaks of views on the anniversary dates. The same pattern of interaction was observed in the Ukrainian L'viv article, which is visited in massive numbers on the anniversary date, June 30. Both cases can be viewed as evidence of online acts of memory, which are repeated regularly every year.

Table 8. Anniversary dynamics for Wikipedia views (L'viv articles)

Year	Date of peak		Date of supposed anniversary		Number of views during peak		Number of views per supposed anniversary		Average number of views	
English Wikipedia										
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
2008	09.05	18.06	08.05	30.06	15	36	5	4	7	12
2009	13.05	11.06	08.05	30.06	15	25	7	8	6	7
2010	15.05	04.06	08.05	30.06	19	17	11	9	8	7
2011	18.05	30.06	08.05	30.06	32	77	11	77	16	18
2012	30.05	11.06	08.05	30.06	97	43	26	30	21	40
2013	23.05	06.06	08.05	30.06	41	29	26	2	19	17
2014	05.05	30.06	08.05	30.06	101	62	69	62	58	35
2015	27.05	01.06	08.05	30.06	35	27	34	22	24	16
Russian Wikipedia										
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
2010	08.05	05.06	09.05	30.06	60	15	24	8	14	5
2011	10.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	88	105	66	105	32	19
2012	13.05	01.06	09.05	30.06	20	48	12	28	11	11
2013	10.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	59	117	36	117	25	24
2014	09.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	117	88	117	88	63	40
2015	04.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	101	69	55	69	40	20
Ukrainian Wikipedia										
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
2008	09.05	12.06	09.05	30.06	11	7	11	2	4	3
2009	27.05	16.05	09.05	30.06	17	57	5	12	8	11
2010	01.05	04.06	09.05	30.06	13	9	10	5	7	4
2011	31.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	39	58	9	58	13	16
2012	07.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	20	19	7	19	11	11
2013	21.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	82	316	54	316	48	62
2014	12.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	77	202	42	202	47	45
2015	20.05	30.06	09.05	30.06	101	324	39	324	48	50

Anniversaries, however, were not the only factor influencing interactions of Wikipedia users with Second World War memories. The data on article views pointed to the influence of external factors, in particular ones related to memory politics in Ukraine. Illustrative of this influence was the dramatic increase in the number of views of the L'viv articles in the Ukrainian and English versions of Wikipedia after the granting of the title of Hero of Ukraine to Stepan Bandera, in January 2010. Until that time, both articles had received much less attention, and the peaks of their viewing occurred at the end of summer/beginning of autumn – fact which allows us to suspect that many users had confused the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state in June 1941 with the Declaration of Ukrainian Independence in August 1991. However, the controversial decision made by then President of Ukraine Victor

Yushchenko to grant Bandera the title of Hero, was followed by a growth in users' interest in the Ukrainian and English articles about the past event, establishing distinct peaks of views during the anniversary date in June.

Another example of the influence of external factors on patterns of user interaction with Wikipedia was found in the Kyiv articles, which experienced a significant increase in the number of views in November 2013, on occasion of the 70th anniversary of the city's capture by the Red Army. This change was particularly illustrative in the case of the Ukrainian and Russian Wikipedias, where the average number of views for the anniversary month of November increased seven-fold compared to the previous year. Such a change was related to the public celebrations of the anniversary both in Ukraine and Russia, which were extensively covered by mainstream media in both countries; by contrast, the lack of attention towards the event in Anglophone mainstream media can explain the lack of significant changes in user interaction patterns in the English Kyiv article.

In contrast to view counts, active forms of interaction – i.e. edits and comments – seemed to be less dependent on anniversary dates, showing, rather, numerous peaks at different times of the year in all three language versions of Wikipedia. This was particularly true for discussion posts: because of the small amount of user contributions to discussion pages, which were completely absent for the Kyiv article in the Ukrainian Wikipedia, the available data were too limited to connect increases in comments on the articles' content with any particular event. The second active form of interactions – edits – provided a bit more information: regular increases of edits in the Kyiv articles were observed in November for all three Wikipedia versions – Russian, Ukrainian and English. Similar peaks were found in the editing of the L'viv articles in May, though in this case only for the Russian and English versions.

The limited nature of active contributions to the Kyiv and L'viv articles differentiates them from Wikipedia pages which deal with more recent traumatic events. Unlike articles about 9/11 or the London bombings (Pentzold, 2009), Wikipedia pages dealing with the two episodes of the Second World War experienced more erratic trends of active contributions from the side of Wikipedia editors. These active contributions fit only to a limited extent into the framework of anniversary dates: as opposed to view counts, edits and posts are less predictable and arguably less motivated by the proximity to the anniversary date of the event.

However, the analysis of active interactions within Wikipedia frames can be of particular interest when dealing with the processes *opposite* to commemoration. My study suggests that Wikipedia can be subjected not only to processes of deliberate remembrance, but also of deliberate forgetting – the process which Andreas Huyssen labeled as “cultural amnesia” (1995). According to Huyssen, memory and amnesia should always be considered together, as both phenomena are constantly present in different spheres of human life, including politics and culture; Huyssen (1995, p. 9) also argues that

technological advancement, in particular the development of communication technology, has a profound impact on how the past is remembered, and forgotten, today⁴⁰.

In the case of Wikipedia, the dialectics of remembrance and forgetting can be traced by looking not only for interactions with memory narratives which are present on the platform, but also for ones which are absent. For instance, of all six articles, only the L'viv article in the Russian Wikipedia had not experienced view increase during the anniversary months. Unlike the Ukrainian and English articles, which, after 2010, experienced peaks of annual – and, in some cases, monthly – activity around their anniversaries, the Russian article did not indicate such a change. Instead, it continued to follow its own dynamics of commemoration, which differed from what can be assumed to be the regular Wikipedia pattern.

One possible explanation for this divergent pattern can be drawn from the work of memory expert Paul Connerton on the different kinds of collective forgetting (2008). Of all seven types of forgetting, one particular kind – forgetting as a “humiliated silence” – is of particular interest for my study. Connerton describes this as a mass silence, and a “widespread pattern of behavior in civil society” (2008, p. 67). Two western European examples of such mass silence caused by collective shame are the memory of the bombings of German cities towards the end of the Second World War, and Western European societies' lack of acknowledgment of the mutilated veterans from the First World War. The seizure of L'viv can also be viewed as fitting such a pattern: unlike the Ukrainian discourse on the June 30 events, which emphasizes the heroic – even martyr-like – restoration of the Ukrainian state, the Russian interpretation of that particular episode focuses on other aspects of the story.

The sense of betrayal from the side of a “brotherly nation” is also present in the Soviet/Russian narration of the June 30 events, emphasizing that only traitors could ally with the Nazi regime at such a fateful hour of struggle against foreign aggression (see, for instance, Maslovskiy (1991), Chyev (2006), Dyukov (2007)). That feeling coincides with the memory of the humiliating defeats suffered in 1941, which caused incredible human and territorial losses: this subject had remained a taboo topic almost until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What was worse, the seizure of L'viv in 1941 became for Soviet Union not only a humiliating defeat, but also provided evidence of the crimes the Soviet authorities had committed in Western Ukrainian prisons (Musial, 2000).

Attempts to forget past humiliations result in specific dynamics of commemorative activities, which in this case differentiated the Russian article on the seizure of L'viv from the Ukrainian and English ones. In the case of the Russian article, an increase of views occurred in October: it can be

⁴⁰ For more information on the phenomenon of cultural amnesia, see works by Bertman (2000), Young and Braziel (2007), Breyer (2007), Connerton (2008).

argued that these peaks corresponded to the celebration of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army days in Western Ukraine, which were extensively covered in Russian media, online and offline.

The analysis of different forms of interactions in Wikipedia indicates that in the case of the Second World War, viewings of articles' content are most likely to coincide with anniversary dates. The predominance of such passive interactions suggests that the framework used for previous research on memory dynamics in Wikipedia, whether in the context of the recent traumatic memories of the 2004 London bombings (Pentzold, 2009) or of the Arab spring (Ferron & Massa, 2011), is less suitable for those memories which have already experienced a transition from communicative to cultural memory, as is the case for the Second World War. The concept of storage memory – i.e. memory which stores currently nonfunctional cultural knowledge (Assmann 2011) – seems to be better applicable in that case, but its application in the study of Wikipedia memories may challenge the initial assumption about the universal and neutral nature of this form of remembrance. However, it also gives us an opportunity to question if any kind of universal memory can exist – or should one perhaps talk about Russian, English or Ukrainian universal memories?

Verbal interactions. In the last part of this chapter, I examined the contents of “Talk” pages associated with the articles on the two episodes. As it was already mentioned earlier, these pages offer “the ability to discuss articles and other issues with other Wikipedians” (“Wikipedia: Tutorial/Talk Pages,” n.d.); consequently, the use of these pages often facilitates communication among editors who want to discuss changes to specific articles. In the context of Wikipedia articles related to contentious memories, as Dounaevsky (2013, p. 133) notes in her study of memory wars on Wikipedia, “Talk” pages provide “extremely rich source material” for examining online memory conflicts by providing opportunities to trace the course of each conflict in details, including individual contributions of Wikipedia users. Thus, in this section I attempted to investigate both which aspects of the events were viewed as particularly controversial by Wikipedia editors and how different editorial communities searched for consensus regarding contentious pasts.

As already noted in the earlier section, the amount of verbal interactions between Wikipedia users on the two events' pages was not found to be significant. Table 6, which summarizes data on user interaction with the articles in question, indicates that articles in the Russian and Ukrainian Wikipedias provoked less active discussions than the ones in the English Wikipedia. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the majority of verbal interactions occurred before the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in 2013: in the case of English article on L'viv, for instance, the period of the most active discussion was in 2008, whereas the Russian article on Kyiv was most actively discussed in November 2013, but a few weeks before the outbreak of the crisis, in relation to the 70th anniversary of the seizure of city by the Red Army.

The differences in consensus-building strategies employed in the different Wikipedia language versions can be illustrated in the ways editorial communities dealt with the main controversies related to the two historical episodes. In the case of the Kyiv articles in the Russian and English Wikipedias, these controversies were related to the counting of fatalities on both the Soviet and German sides. In the Russian article, a number of editors expressed dissatisfaction with the article's tally of fallen Soviet soldiers, which they considered too high: for instance, an anonymous editor who called himself Andrey left the following comment on December 3, 2012: “*Znachit, nemcy v bitve za Kiev poterjali 389 ubitymi? Bred sivoj kobyly, pardon. Kak vseгда, nashih zavysbaem, a ihnih zanizhaem... Chto zhb oni proigrali-to?*” [So, that means the Germans lost 389 soldiers killed in the Battle for Kyiv? It is just nonsense, sorry. As always, we heighten our losses and decrease theirs...How did they lose then?] (“Obsuzhdenie: Kievskaja Nastupatel'naja Operacija,” n.d.). Similarly, another user, D2306, criticized in a post from July 3, 2013, the use of German sources for estimating casualties on the German side, which, according to D2306, were much higher than the ones mentioned in the article “*Sushbestvujut umniki, kotorye otkryli dlja sebja sajto s 10-dnevnimi raportami vermahtha i vse, kopirujut vezde kak zheleznyj fakt. Proverit' teoriju s faktami oni ne udosuzhivajutsja. Ochevidnyj lag vo vremeni, kogda nemcy schitajut paru nedel' poteri, i ih pozzhe pisat', kogda kazalos' by uzhe boev net - jetimi 'jeksptami' ignoritsja*” [There are some smartasses who found a web site with 10-day casualty reports for Wehrmacht and now think that it is it, so they cite those reports everywhere as an ironclad fact. They do not care to compare their theories with actual facts. The obvious time lag, when Germans counted losses for a couple of weeks, and then listed these losses – even while the battle is over already – is ignored by these ‘experts’] (“Obsuzhdenie: Kievskaja Nastupatel'naja Operacija,” n.d.).

These kinds of emotional expressions found on the “Talk” page of the Russian article were contrasted by more reserved reactions in the respective section of the English article on the Battle of Kyiv. While there, too, the question of fatalities, as well as of the decisiveness of the battle, ignited discussions, these were framed differently. For instance, the user Counterstrike69 initiated a discussion on the matter by posting the following question on March 8, 2007: “Any ideas on the casualties on both side?” (“Talk: Battle of Kiev (1943),” n.d.). Such a formulation contrasted significantly with more affective statements by editors of the Russian version, who were more interested not in the number of casualties *per se*, but why the encyclopaedia presented Soviet fatalities as larger than those from the German side. Similarly, the discussion of the decisiveness of the battle initiated by the anonymous user Kurt, opened with a call for “civilized discussion” which should have been able to clarify whether or not the Battle for Kyiv should be referenced as a decisive combat operation (“Talk: Battle of Kiev (1943),” n.d.).

These differences in the way the same episode was approached in various Wikipedia versions had

immediate consequences for the interactions between editors. In the Russian article, the majority of comments left on the “Talk” page were strong statements leaving little space for discussion; consequently, instead of dialogue, the Russian “Talk” page mostly hosted a collection of isolated monologues. Under these circumstances, the idea of collaborative production of the past seems dubious; instead, the content of the article itself seemed to be more dependent on the decisions of a few editors who were not particularly interested in debating their views on the event with others. By contrast, the English “Talk” page actually hosted some discussions which included attempts to accommodate different points of view and reach a degree of consensus.

These observations were further supported by the examination of the comments for the L’viv articles. As in the case of Kyiv, various language versions tended to deal with the same controversial aspects; in the case of L’viv, it was mainly the title of the Act itself. Both in Ukrainian and Russian versions a number of comments referred to the restoration vs. declaration debate, which has been briefly noted in earlier sections. For instance, user Ragnarok left the following comment in the Ukrainian version on February 8, 2015: “*U dokumenti z’b napysano – ‘Akt progholoshbennja Ukrajinsjkoji Derzhavy.’ Chomu stattja nazyvajetsja ‘Akt vidnovlennja Ukrajinsjkoji Derzhavy?’ Stattja ne je istoryčnoju. Ce ne skiljky vikistattja, a skiljky vikidzherela ta vikicytaty*” [The document states – ‘The Act of Declaration of the Ukrainian state.’ Why is the article titled ‘The Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state?’ This article is not historical. It is not a Wiki article, but a Wiki source or Wiki citation] (“Obhovorennia:Akt Vidnovlennia Ukrainskoi Derzhavy,” n.d.). In a similar manner, user Abarmot criticized the attempts to re-name the Russian article by referencing to the photo of the Act’s original version which was published in a Western Ukrainian newspaper; according to Abarmot, it is “*...jasno vidno, chto ni o kakom ‘vosstanovlenii’ rechi ne idjoť*” [...it is clearly visible that it is not possible to speak of any ‘restoration’] (“Obsuzhdenie:Akt Provozglashenija Ukrainskogo Gosudarstva (1941),” n.d.).

Similar to the Russian Kyiv article, comments left to the Ukrainian and Russian L’viv articles tended to be rather harsh and left little space for acknowledging different interpretations. This monologue-style approach to discussion led to a lack of incentive to discuss historical matters; consequently, changes made to the articles seemed to be the result of individual decisions and not collaborative work. Again, these verbal interactions contrasted with the ones in the English article on L’viv, where discussions between editors were more strongly encouraged and, thus, developed in a more constructive manner. An example of such approach is the post by Gregger from March 11, 2008, who initiated a discussion on the title of the English article: “When I first read the title I thought it would be about the events of 1990–91. I think the title needs to be more precise. It could be Proclamation of Ukrainian Statehood or Act of Proclamation of Ukrainian Statehood according to the actual name of the act. It should not be confused with Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine

and Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine” (“Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act,” n.d.).

At the same time, not all debates in the English Wikipedia were as peaceful as the one just noted. An examination of the “Talk” page of the Act article in English pointed to the presence of a number of comments questioning the neutrality of the article and the historical accuracy of the information cited within it. The majority of those comments were left by the user Jo0doe⁴¹, who condemned other editors for what he saw as “clear attempts to use WP as a Nazi collaborators propaganda” (“Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act,” n.d.). In his attempts to “denazify” the article, Jo0doe engaged in an edit war with two other editors – Bandurist and Faustian – which resulted in both sides blaming the other for hoaxing and vandalism.

The way the edit wars ran their course in the English Wikipedia was rather different from the Ukrainian and Russian ones. Unlike the latter two versions, where users tended to present their arguments axiomatically and without references to the encyclopedia’s rules, debates in the English Wikipedia involved frequent citations of Wikipedia’s policies (commonly abbreviated as WPs), such as WP: NPOV, WP: RS, WP: ISNOT, and so on. An example of such quasi-academic debating style can be found in a comment left by Jo0doe on 5 September, 2008, in the debate with Faustian, in relation to discrepancies between different versions of the Act “[these discrepancies] hidetrough WP:bad faith tactic applied for a long time and in many accuracies by user:Faustian in article UPA – by adding ref to not RS or not WP:V or book which does not exist or which never was at editor possession” (“Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act,” n.d.).

Despite a more sophisticated code of conduct in the English Wikipedia, the debate about the seizure of L’viv quickly turned into interpersonal attacks. Both Faustian and Bandurist expressed doubts in their opponent’s ability to contribute to the encyclopedia on the proper level by pointing out to “numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes” (“Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act,” n.d.) committed by Jo0doe. In his own turn, Jo0doe argued that his opponents were using vandalism and selective quoting of historical sources to whitewash the OUN and “to pose Nazi temporary project as exceptional event and collaborators as a victims” (“Talk: Declaration of Ukrainian State Act,” n.d.). The obvious unwillingness of both sides to make concessions or revise their views led to the same result as in the case of English article in Srebrenica (Rogers & Sendjarevic, 2012, p. 36): the intervention of one of Wikipedia’s power editors, who was able to calm the passions; however, the decisive end of the confrontation came with Jo0doe’s ban for persistent disruption and tendentious editing (“Block log,” n.d.).

The examination of comments on the “Talk” pages of the articles related to the two episodes

⁴¹ For more information on Jo0doe’s activity in the context of history-writing on Wikipedia see works by Dounaevsky (2013) and Kaprans (2016).

indicates the limited use of Wikipedia's potential for transnational dialogue vis-à-vis contentious memories. Instead of engaging in discussion, users tended to produce their reactions to the Second World War events as monologues, usually presented axiomatically and often containing strong emotional judgments. Not only does this tendency leave little space for any actual exchange of opinions, but it also suggests that articles are often produced not as a result of collaborative history-writing as Dounaevsky (2013) suggested, but, instead, experience a disproportionate influence of certain users, who are not necessarily interested in cooperating with other editors. At the same time, the scope of memory appropriation in the context of the modern political situation and, especially, the Ukraine crisis, a process which was a rather strong feature in the case of YouTube and VKontakte, remained relatively low in the case of Wikipedia. This distinction can be traced back to the Wikipedia's status as a "knowledge site" that encourages less multilinearity in the way narratives are presented; while users still can circumvent it in various ways (e.g., by linking news pieces and initiating the discussion), I observed only a few such cases (mostly, in the context of the English L'viv article) in the course of my study. Consequently, the majority of discussions on Wikipedia focused on matters of historical accuracy and avoided drawing parallels between the past and the present to the same extent users of other social media platforms did.

2.4. Conclusions

My observations suggest that the ways in which the Second World War is represented in Wikipedia are largely driven by existing cultural constructs – first and foremost, specific national memories of the conflict. The presence of profound differences in the ways the Second World War is remembered in post-socialist states, in particular Ukraine and Russia, translates into rather divergent representations of the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv across different language versions of Wikipedia. The Russian Wikipedia, as we have seen, promotes an interpretation of the Second World War which is steeped in the narrative of the "Great Patriotic War"; by contrast, the Ukrainian and, to a certain extent, the English Wikipedia versions, rely on more revisionist trends in war historiography in their representations of the two events under study. These differences permeate Wikipedia narratives of the Second World War on different levels, varying from the articles' titles and visual images deployed in them, to intra-Wikipedia links and descriptive categories which bring different parts of the encyclopedia into an interconnected whole; together, these elements promote images of the past which demonstrate the existence of significant differences in the ways the Second World War is remembered in different parts of the post-socialist space.

Similarly, the patterns of interaction with the Wikipedia articles examined point to the complex interplay between public remembrance and digital media in post-socialist countries. The rise of interest

in Second World War narratives on Wikipedia coinciding with the anniversaries of the respective historical episodes can be viewed as further evidence that, in the post-digital age, the line between offline and online developments is increasingly blurred. While in the majority of cases Wikipedia activity seems to be reactive rather than proactive vis-à-vis developments in traditional media or in the offline public sphere, an analysis of user interactions with Wikipedia narratives points to the presence of processes which can be related to intra-platform dynamics. One particular example of those processes is represented in the collective amnesia phenomenon we have seen in the case of the Russian Wikipedia, where users try to forget the seizure of L'viv by Germans and the subsequent declaration of the Act of Restoration of the Ukrainian state.

The chapter's findings suggests that different language versions of Wikipedia promote divergent views on the Second World War. These differences depend mostly on the way these events are interpreted by national historiographies, but some of them can be also attributed to personal preferences of Wikipedia's authors. Even though the encyclopedia explicitly positions itself as a platform for dialogue and consensus-building, my findings – similar to those of a number of other studies (Rogers & Sendjarevic, 2012; Luyt, 2013; Massa & Scrinzi, 2013) – question the assumption that Wikipedia's representation of history is neutral, and demonstrates that the encyclopedia provides, instead, a significant amount of opportunities for “clear political stances and rhetorical manipulation” (Božović, Bošković & Trifunović, 2014, p. 86). The examination of articles on the seizure of L'viv and the capture of Kyiv suggests that Wikipedia does not necessarily help to negotiate historical controversies related to the Second World War, and, in some cases, can even exacerbate them, by providing different views on a contentious past. At the same time, however, while the use of Wikipedia does not always lead to the formation of new, cosmopolitan narratives of the past, it does lead to a democratization of remembrance, by offering a public space in which different narratives can be compared and (potentially) discussed.