

MAPPING COORDINATED NETWORKS THAT CIRCULATE PROBLEMATIC INFORMATION ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COORDINATED LINK SHARING BEHAVIOUR?

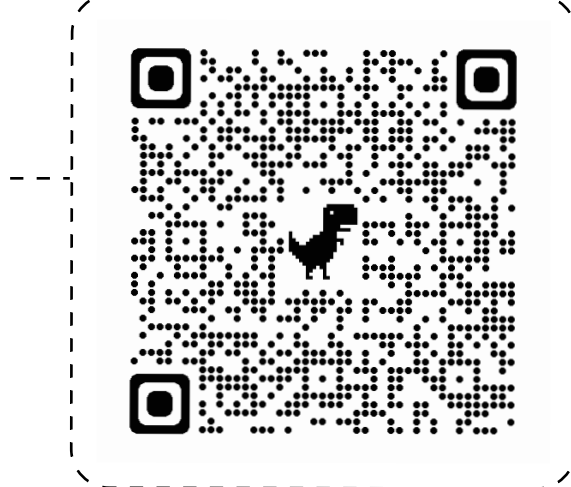
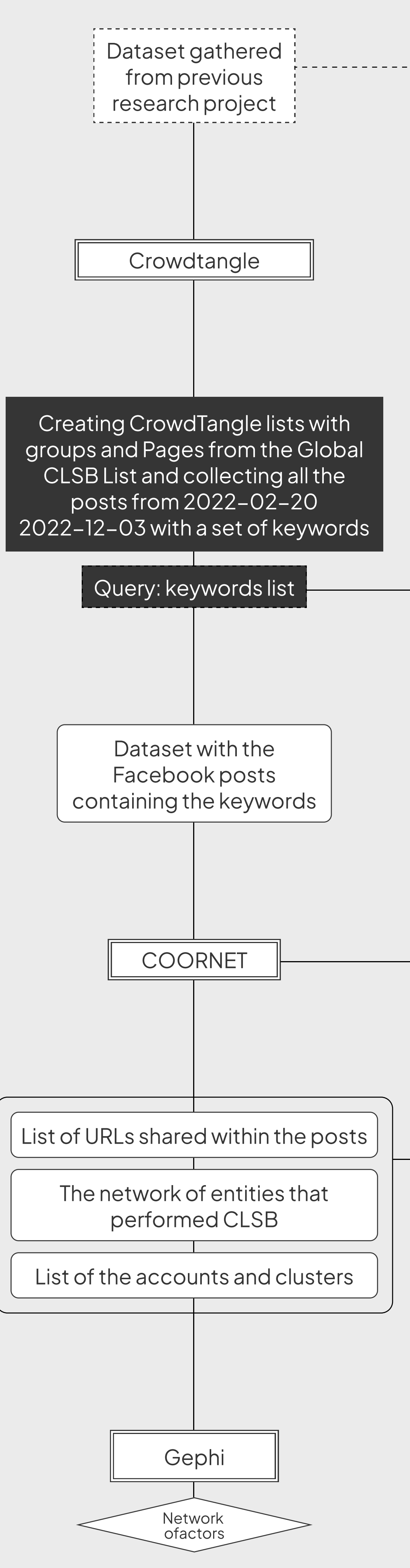
CLSB refers to a specific coordinated activity performed by a network of Facebook pages, groups and verified public profiles that repeatedly shared the same news articles in a very short time from each other. To detect such networks, we designed, implemented and tested an algorithm that detects sets of Facebook accounts which performed CLSB by (1) estimating a time threshold that identifies URLs shares performed by multiple distinguished entities within an unusually short period of time (as compared to the entire dataset), and (2) grouping the entities that repeatedly shared the same link within this coordination interval. The rationale is that, while it may be common that several entities share the same URLs, it is unlikely, unless a consistent coordination exists, that this occurs within the time threshold and repeatedly.

THE A-B-C FRAMEWORK AND CYCLE

The **A-B-C framework** (François, 2019) is an integrated approach we applied in our workflow to fully recognize CLSB activities and understand the interplay between manipulative **Actors**, deceptive **Behaviour**, and harmful **Content**.

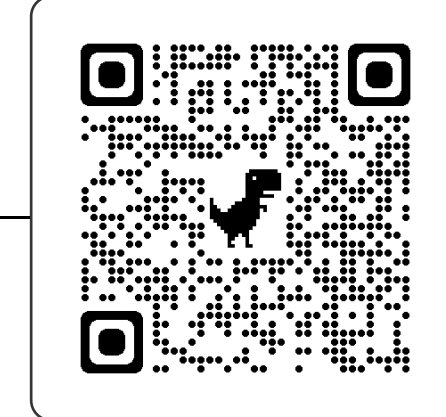
We use what we called the **A-B-C cycle**, a cycle starting from harmful content and detecting deceptive behaviour to identify manipulative actors. Once a list of such actors has been identified, the next cycle uses the content produced by these actors to initiate a new iteration of deceptive behaviour detection that, in turn, leads to identifying an updated set of manipulative actors. The A-B-C cycle thus takes into account the dynamic of information operations that relies on news outlets, domains, social media actors.

OUTPUTS THE NETWORK OF ENTITIES THAT PERFORMED SUCH BEHAVIOUR



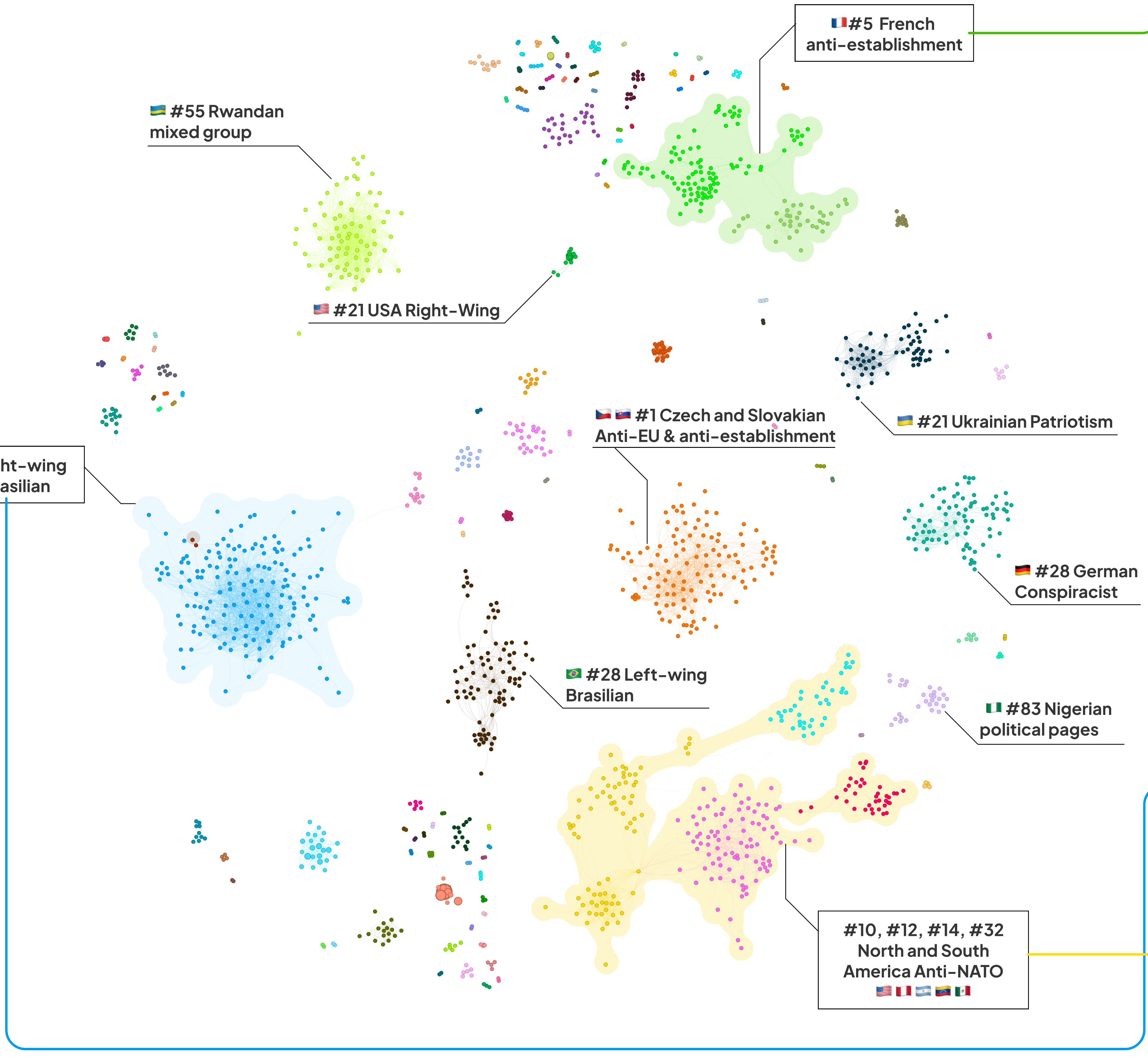
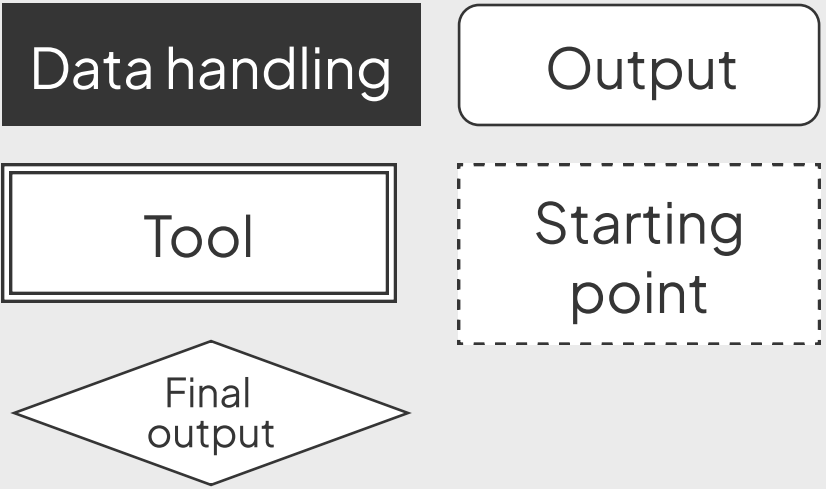
Ukraine, Russia, Putin, Zelensky, Kiev, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Mariupol, Kharkiv, Kherson, Luhansk, Saporischschja, Donezk, Charkiv

COORnet
Given a set of URLs, this package detects coordinated link sharing behaviour (CLSB) and outputs the network of entities that performed such behaviour.



- List of URLs shared within the posts
- The network of entities that performed CLSB
- List of the accounts and clusters

HOW TO READ THE PROTOCOL SCHEME



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT CLSB EMPLOYED FOR SPREADING PROBLEMATIC INFORMATION ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE?

PACIFIST CONTENT ABOUT THE WAR IN UKRAINE IS THE PROXY TOPIC BETWEEN EXTREME RIGHT AND POPULIST LEFT MOVEMENTS/GROUPS

An unexpected convergence between far-right and far-left/populist accounts emerged from the analysis. Bridges between the two are anti-establishment conspiracy groups, already and globally very active during the pandemic in spreading COVID-skeptic and no-vax theses. These accounts have anti-NATO and pro-Russian positions. These positions have been coordinately shared by groups of both far-right and far-left political subcultures. This is evident in **cluster 5**, where far-right pro Le Pen French groups and no-vax positions implemented CLSB along with groups supporting far-left Mélenchon. This pattern surfaces even within **component 10**, composed of leftist Spanish-speaking clusters from South American (Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, Mexico) and a US-based conservative pro-Trump cluster. All these clusters have shared content supporting pro-Russian/ Putin positions.

RELIGIOUS ENTITIES/CONTENT ARE WIDESPREAD IN CLUSTERS AND THEY LINK DIFFERENT COUNTRIES GROUPS OF ENTITIES

A "religious approach" to war often conceals rhetoric favorable to Russian positions. Many accounts implementing CLSB activities publish content in which they ask for prayers for Ukraine and criticize the war using religious arguments. Such content probably represents a precise strategy to create a climate of opinion favorable to Russian positions. Prayers for a ceasefire, along with the pacifist rhetoric conveyed by this side end up favoring Russia, which would benefit enormously from Western disinterest in the war in Ukraine. This rhetoric emerges prominently in **cluster 9** and **component 10**, where these kinds of entities and the religious pacifist narratives are the bridges among different political groups and even countries, for example, Brazilian pro-Bolsonaro and US extremely conservative. In the case of the United States, a religious group is even the node that connects the U.S. cluster with the Mexican one.

PARTICIPANTS

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WE'RE HIRING!

