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"Elite Refugees?": Identity and Practices of Professional Self-Mobilization among Ukrainian Academic Migrants

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Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought on another wave of war-related migration to Central and Western Europe. This wave includes a large number of Ukrainian academics. They are receiving unprecedented assistance from the European academic community, allowing them to continue scholarly work, gain experience working in European institutions, establish academic connections, share research practices, and generally participate in the intellectual pursuit in the host countries. Being on the receiving end of institutional and grass-roots aid also affects the self-perception of the Ukrainian academics who have become forced migrants. Their awareness of their "special" position contributes to the evolution of their ideas about their social and professional duties. The aim of this article is to analyze manifestations of agency among Ukrainian academic migrants in the forms of self-identification and specific practices of social and academic self-mobilization. In the authors' view, considering the agency of Ukrainian academics will help initiate a discussion about the long-term consequences of assistance to displaced scholars for the academic systems of both the host countries and Ukraine. The study is based on the corpus of oral-historical interviews collected as part of the project "Moving West: Ukrainian Academics in Conditions of Forced Migration (2014-2022)." A distinguishing feature of the project is that interviews were conducted with both Ukrainian migrants and European academics involved in helping their Ukrainian colleagues.

Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian War, identity, displaced scholars, oral history interviewing, eyewitnesses of the war

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Introduction

Promoting Ukrainian science and scholarship in the European academic space should be seen as an important condition for counteracting not only Russia's pretensions to broadcast the only possible version of the historical narrative but also its claims on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In search of precedent, scholars are turning to earlier historical experiences of forced migration of Ukrainian academics and their work abroad, which were marked by the establishment of Ukrainian studies institutions across Europe: universities, departments, museums, and archives.

Today and in the near future, in addition to support from the European community, migrant scholars' initiative, self-organization, and collaboration with academic bodies in the host countries will also need to serve as the engine behind the creation of a new network of Ukrainian academic institutions, strengthening confidence in Ukrainian scholarship in general, and enriching the latter

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with new research practices. Our paper will consider the prospects for such progress through an analysis of patterns of self-awareness and self-identification as well as practices of self-organization among academics who find themselves in forced emigration. We will focus on the following questions: What kinds of identities are constructed by Ukrainian academics? Is it possible to speak of the agency of academic migrants as a group under conditions of ongoing war, and if so, on what levels? What are the possible outcomes of the practices of self-mobilization that are emerging under extreme conditions?

Scholars today view identity as something that individuals "do" rather than something that they "have," or as a process of "being" or "becoming" (Jenkins 2008, 17; La Barbera 2015, 3). Identity and agency are thus closely tied together in a dynamic system, which is defined by the given conditions in specific social contexts and determined by the system of relationships and institutional frameworks.

Indeed, identity and agency always develop in context, and some contexts promote them more than others. The current wave of forced migration, for example, has seen unprecedented support for Ukrainian migrants from the European academic community. They have opportunities to not only receive temporary benefits from governments and public bodies, but also continue their research work in European institutions, building networks and connections. At the same time, the need for these migrants — a large majority of whom are women — to make decisions without help from school administrations, colleagues, and male partners (who cannot leave Ukraine) has been a challenge. An even greater challenge is posed for our respondents by the ongoing war and uncertainty about the future, which, on the one hand, constitute a traumatic experience, but on the other, encourage Ukrainian scholars to take greater advantage of the opportunities that are emerging.

In brief, we hypothesize that the new practices of professional self-mobilization are driven by both changes in the social experience of academics and the rethinking of moral obligations in response to external challenges and internal value conflicts.

1 Methodology

Our analysis is based on interviews collected for the oral history project "Moving West: Ukrainian Academics in Conditions of Forced Migration,"[1] which explores strategies of survival and career-building among the Ukrainian humanities scholars of the first (2014) and second (2022) waves of migration caused by the Russian-Ukrainian War. To date, 31 interviews with Ukrainian academics and 14 interviews with representatives of the European academic community from Poland, Germany, Czechia, Great Britain, and Lithuania directly involved in helping Ukrainian migrants have been collected. In this article, we will focus primarily on interviews with Ukrainian respondents but will also address relevant themes from interviews with their European colleagues.

The Ukrainian respondents, representing ten different regions and cities, come mostly from the humanities (mainly history, but also ethnology, English philology, pedagogy, and sociology); 27 teach at institutions of higher education, three work at research institutes, and one is a museum employee. Six participants hold a Doctor of Sciences degree (equivalent to Habilitation), 22 a Candidate of Sciences degree (equivalent to a PhD), and three are currently in graduate school. The respondents belong to different generations of scholars, but the majority have 15 to 20 years of academic experience and represent broadly the same age cohort. At the time of interview, the respondents were scattered around several European countries: Poland, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy, France, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine. Those residing in Ukraine were internal migrants, who until 2014, had worked in the Donbas. Two of the respondents had had the experience of changing their country of temporary residence. The fact that male academics younger than 60 cannot leave Ukraine explains the gender imbalance among the Ukrainian respondents — only two out of 31 interviewees were men.

1. The project was supported by Documenting Ukraine, a project of the Institute for Human Sciences, IWM Vienna (December 2023).

Our principal research tool was the semi-structured qualitative interview, which uses a questionnaire but allows for flexibility in the number and sequence of questions, enabling the respondent to take the lead when necessary. The questionnaire for Ukrainian respondents included blocks of questions addressing the following: the decision to leave the country and choice of destination; expectations and first encounters with reality; thoughts on further professional activity; changes in the circle of communication; relations with representatives of the host country; and a vision of one's personal and professional horizons. Taking into account the serious traumatic impact of the war and related events, special attention during the interviews was given to the emotional component of the life of displaced academics. Respondents who left the occupied territories in 2014 were asked additional questions covering the events of 2014–2022, including: relocation from the self-proclaimed "people's republics;" getting a job in a new place; receiving support from colleagues or government bodies; overcoming everyday difficulties as the respondents settled in their new homes; and establishing a new circle of professional contacts in Ukraine and abroad.

Twenty-eight out of 45 interviews have been transcribed verbatim, including all exclamations, interjections, and pauses, and constitute data for our analysis. Features of oral presentation, such as short and long pauses, emphasis on certain words and phrases, stumbles, rapid speech, and changes in tone, are noted throughout the transcript, as are respondents' behaviors and reactions to questions (e.g., laughter, excitement, and confusion). Indecipherable fragments and errors are marked and commented upon, enabling the application of various methods of analysis to these oral historical sources, including linguistic, quantitative, and source criticism.

Our research employs both narrative and contextual approaches. We view the account of migration experience (biographical structure) as a meaningful whole (narrative structure) existing in the form of a complete story, recognizing that biography is a product of social interaction within specific conditions and spatio-temporal contexts (Dausien 1996, 575, 573). This, we see the recorded interviews not merely as factual accounts, but as social acts embedded within specific contexts and capable of generating both evaluative judgments and material consequences (Lezhën 2004).

This approach allows us to view the construction of identity by our respondents as both a manifestation of individual self-consciousness and a form of agency. We also consider the practices of social and professional self-mobilization as evidence of specific activity (realized agency) and as work that shapes the scope of academics' responsibilities at both individual and collective levels. By focusing on the lived experiences of displaced scholars we aim to address the lasting effects of exile on academic systems as well as on the lives and intellectual legacies of the scholars themselves (Axyonova, Kohstall, and Richter 2022, 11–32).

We believe it is productive to record changes in displaced academics' self-consciousness and practices of academic mobility over longer periods (Sikors'ka and Nykyforenko 2022). Our project uses a longitudinal approach, which involves conducting follow-up interviews with the same respondents in the future to compare their expectations with actual outcomes. As time passes, the project may serve as the basis for research on long-term changes in the European academic space, internationalization processes in academia, and the integration of Ukrainian researchers and teachers into the global academic community after the end of the war.

The authors of the article are themselves forced migrants who left Ukraine after February 24, 2022. We thus employed participant observation, which is reflected both in the interview methodology and the interpretation of the results. Our research has become not only a component of our and our respondents' professional lives, as happens when scholars study the experience of their colleagues from another academic sphere (Bielska, Kurek-Ochmańska, and Łuczaj 2021, 127), but also a manifestation of our shared experience. Identification with our respondents allows us to consider the transmission of memory of migration experience as a "communicative tradition." Interpretation – the search for the meaning of experience – allows biographical stories to be integrated into collective experience (Portelli 1997), connecting the past, the present, and the future through the search for meaning (Rozhdestvenskaya 2012, 49–50).

This is especially important because we are dealing with testimony about ongoing events, which directly impact on the personal narratives of witnesses. As Jennifer A. Cramer observes, "recent-based event narratives are more fragmented and focus on the details of the how and the what,

whereas past-based events are more cohesive and looped into causal explanations focusing on why" (Cramer 2020, 206). Moreover, testimony concerning unfinished events is continually reinvented during narration (Welz 2016, 105-106). The ongoing war, with its still unknown political, economic, and social consequences, determines both the respondents' perception of events and their understanding of their own role in the context of various life choices. Therefore, participant observation and the recording of changes in our emotional reactions to ongoing events are deliberate aspects of our research position. We drew conclusions about individual statements as facts of shared experience based on the principle used in ethnology: if a phenomenon occurs at least three times, it reveals a socially structuring principle (Pushkareva 2010, 46).

2 The self-identification of Ukrainian academics

With respect to the self-identification of Ukrainian academic migrants, we observe a wide range of self-nominations. These include markers of professional status ("historian," "candidate/doctor of sciences," "employee," "researcher"); national ("we," "Ukrainians") or European identity; beliefs ("feminist," "patriot"); and gender identity ("historian" or "historienne," in the feminine). We are particularly interested in forms of self-identification that mark the narrators' perception of themselves as objects or subjects of action — such as "refugee" and "academic" — which reflect the will of Ukrainian migrants to be agents of change.

It is noteworthy that many respondents explicitly stated their conscious refusal to identify as "refugee."[2] In one case, a respondent who left the country in the first days of the war experienced an identity crisis when crossing the border. This experience later influenced her behavioral strategies: refusing a temporary asylum status and focusing on finding an academic scholarship.

> Well, he [a British diplomat] was very much in shock, like, what's happening? He kept repeating this word: "Refugees. Those are Ukrainian refugees." He's like, "You are also a refugee, aren't you?" (interviewee laughs) I look at him, "I'm not a REFUGEE!" And he's like "What are you, then?" And I "Well, I…" And here was the first shock for me: "What am I?" I'm not actually a tourist. It's not like I wanted to drop everything, take my family and go somewhere. But I really would not like this word "refugee" applied to me. That is, I looked at him, well, sort of unkindly even, and kept saying, "No! I am not a refugee! I'm just going to Poland.[3]

Notably, the decision to go "anywhere at all" was made only by those refugees who crossed the border in the early days of the war or fled the occupied territories, and whose main concern was the safety of their children and relatives.

Academics leaving Ukraine later in the war usually had invitations from European institutions. One respondent directly attributes her decision to leave the country to her desire to continue her work. While this step was accompanied by a strong sense of guilt, which many respondents mention, it was also seen as an opportunity for professional growth:

> I just needed a place where I could keep up… some kind of ACTIVITY because… basically, I wanted very much to do something and not just sit and… THIS could be done abroad… although of course a very strong… FEELING, that I was leaving Ukraine, of GUILT, remorse.[4]

2. ZSRO, 31.08.2022. For ethical reasons, the names of Ukrainian respondents are encoded as follows: form of recording, surname code, place of residence abroad and in Ukraine, date of interview. All interviews are deposited at the Museum of History of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Ф. 7. Оп. 21).

3. ZKRK, 04.08.2022. To align the spoken and written language as closely as possible, our transcription marks all the following: exclamations and hesitations by the interviewee; short (comma) and long (full stop and ellipsis) pauses; emphasis on certain words and phrases (capital letters); quick combinations of words (equals sign); stumbles (fragment of a word followed by a hyphen, for instance *si- sit*); illegible fragments that cannot be deciphered and abbreviations (ellipsis in square brackets). The interviewee's behavior and reactions to the questions (laughter, excitement, embarrassment, etc.) are also commented on.

4. ZHBK, 02.10.2022.

However, even those who initially doubted they would be able to continue their professional activities found such opportunities quickly enough. Only one of the respondents had the experience of purely volunteer work for a scholarly project.[5]

Awareness of the unique nature of one's migration experience is reflected in how our respondents refer to different groups of refugees and describe specific actions. In interviews we encounter various forms of self-identification, including contrasting oneself with other categories of refugees ("they," "Ukrainians")[6] or identifying with colleagues who have remained in Ukraine and are documenting the events as they unfold ("we made," "we came to understand," "we launched this exhibit")[7].

Interestingly, in one case, although the respondent openly referred to herself as a "refugee," she mentioned that migrants from other countries viewed Ukrainians as "elite" refugees who receive unprecedented opportunities. Her subsequent narrative focuses on these opportunities: the word "opportunities" occurs more than 30 times, while "trauma" or "traumatic" appears eight times, "fear" seven times, and guilt five times.[8] Furthermore, those respondents who found themselves abroad with refugee status viewed receiving a scholarship as a *change* in status:

> And I just received this grant for which I applied and I… am staying here not, you know, as a refugee anymore, but as a scholar who does research and this for me, this is very important, this status.[9]

Further, the vast majority of our respondents repeatedly emphasized their desire to solve the *challenges* they faced independently, thus demonstrating that their behavior is different from that of other war refugees:[10]

> . . . I know that here many Ukrainians simply get help with everything, even what they can do on their own, yes, and… I, for example, can't. I mean, I understand, if I can do it myself, why bother, like, uh, people. And sometimes it's hard for me to perceive myself as… an emigrant or, or, or, a refugee.[11]

Such stories demonstrate the narrators' refusal to accept the role of the victim, with all its negative and personally destructive consequences (Papadopoulos 2021, 35). Women academics do not want to feel helpless; they stress their desire to assume full responsibility for their own lives and professional growth.

In turn, those who received such help from colleagues and friends may call it "superfluous" and express mixed feelings of gratitude and inner protest:

> It's probably, yes, very bad, kind of like pride, yes, when you somehow feel UNCOMFORTABLE with the fact that you get this help, and I try to fight it somehow, because I do understand that people do it from the heart, but sometimes I feel that, in a way, this help may be SUPERFLUOUS for me, right, that is, now I still CAN to some extent count on my own MEANS, on my SAVINGS, yes… And maybe someone needs this help MORE.[12]

Furthermore, some migrants refused to apply for papers confirming their status or applied only for the bare minimum necessary to legalize their stay.[13] This desire for independence was sometimes supported by family members. For instance, one respondent specifically noted her son's refusal to

5. ZPBL, 15.08.2022.
6. PKWK, 05.08.2022.
7. ZRGK, 20.06.2022.
8. ZHBK, 02.10.2022.
9. ZVML, 11.09.2022.
10. ZKRK, 04.08.2022; PKWK, 05.08.2022.
11. ZKRK, 05.10.2022.
12. PILK, 18.04.2022.
13. PDLR, 17.06.2022; ZGBK, 04.11.2022.

enroll in a Polish school.[14] and another mentioned her eldest son's insistence that she seeks employment, which became the impetus for getting a scholarship at a European university.[15]

This emphasis on independence, however, is nuanced. Prioritizing their self-reliance, our respondents also acknowledge that they have used their colleagues' help both professionally (e.g., grant seeking) and practically (e.g., organizing the arrival, finding accommodation). They also accepted support from locals, attributing this to the psychological distress ("the state of being lost").[16] In this regard, characteristic is the story of one respondent, who stressed that the only help she accepted had to do with finding a qualified therapist.[17] Our respondents indicated that this psychological state also caused difficulties in resuming professional activity, particularly noticeable early on, and could affect their work over time.

> Really there was this MORAL state also, of such dejection that… you did virtually nothing.[18]

> . . . conferences, they are… more oriented towards historians, but nevertheless they… help… people comprehend what they DON'T qui- quite UNDERSTAND, they still don't understand despite… all those articles they have read on everything=everything they have SEEN and read, they DON'T understand completely… the whole spectrum of those emotions that you experience at the same time… It's like you have the opportunity to work and work very well and sometimes, much better than you did in Ukraine because of (someone knocks on the door again)… that great opportunity that you have now been granted especially lear- learning languages, a good scholarship… the desire to work, even DESPITE the war the desire to work and do at least something, AS A HISTORIAN, at least something.[19]

Furthermore, not all academics exclude themselves from the category of refugees; however, even those who do not, with few exceptions, seek to underscore their independence. They assert that, due to their unique position, they can provide moral support to other categories of migrants. They also represent themselves not only as recipients, but also providers of aid, donating part of the money they receive to charity initiatives or in support of the Ukrainian army.[20]

In connection with this, we may also note an interesting relationship between "I" and "We" images. Most married respondents' stories are dominated at the outset by a "We" image, which both reflect the consolidation of the family in the face of an external threat and imposes certain limits on the narrator's independent agency. This decision to leave home, however, marks a turning point in the narrative as it is this juncture that internal and family conflicts manifest themselves for the first time, leading to an awareness of responsibility for one's own life and the lives of loved ones, and giving impetus to various kinds of social activism. At the level of self-identification, this is reflected in the fact that the narrators become the protagonists in their stories, emphasizing this transformation: "I am different."[21] The "We" image' expands beyond the family and colleagues, to encompass friends, the migrant community including academics,[22] or academics in general,[23] as well as Ukrainians[24] or, even broader, Europeans[25].

> . . . THE SAME (smiles). We are the SAME, we think the same, we similarly… we have the same values. We… are European countries, we value freedom, yes, we are proud, we will not allow ourselves, like, to be oppressed. We=we are fighting for our dignity, in this we are the same…[26]

14. PKWK, 05.08.2022.
15. ZSLO, 31.03.2023.
16. ZKRK, 04.08.2022; PKWK, 05.08.2022; ZKRK, 05.10.2022.
17. ZKRK, 05.10.2022.
18. PKWK, 05.08.2022.
19. ZHBK, 02.10.2022.
20. ZRBK, 29.10.2022, ZHBK, 02.10.2022.
21. PKKD, 18.06.2022.
22. ZSRO, 31.08.2022; ZUMK, 08.09.2022.
23. ZRBK, 29.10.2022; ZMLM, 31.10.2022.
24. PKKD, 18.06.2022; ZRGK, 20.06.2022; ZSRO, 31.08.2022.
25. ZMLM, 31.10.2022; PKKD, 18.06.2022.
26. ZMLM, 31.10.2022.

Interestingly, it is doing things, working towards shared goals, and generally fighting on various "fronts" that becomes the basis for the construction of collective "We" images. Thus, self-identification is directly related to specific practices of the social and professional self-mobilization of migrant scholars.

3 Practices of the social and professional activism of migrant scholars

The social activism of Ukrainian academic migrants manifests in various forms, primarily volunteer and charity work. Interestingly, these practices are not only directed outward but also serve as important mechanisms of inner stabilization, allowing individuals to "find themselves"[27] under extraordinary circumstances.

> . . . I WANTED it, I WANTED, I needed, I felt it… I HAVE TO HELP… I MUST help someone, because this is the meaning of my life, and, I started going, to the Red Cross, every day.[28]

Another important task for an academic migrant is disseminating information about the Russian-Ukrainian War, both interpersonally and by participating in protests and rallies. Some respondents considered this practice as an important aspect of their mission abroad.

Indeed, informing the Western public about the war is sometimes seen as a professional duty. Four respondents presented papers about the war at academic conferences.[29] Thus, social and professional forms of activism intersect in this aspect of self-mobilization.

> . . . I joined lectures and… webinars and certain such vari-, any information events, where it was necessary to talk about the war and about Ukraine and about WHAT TO DO, how to help at this PROFESSIONAL level.[30]

Addressing the significance of their own migration experience, our respondents focused primarily on their professional activities. This indicates a growing level of self-awareness among Ukrainian academics. For some, relocation offered a chance to return to scholarship and resume research they had set aside in Ukraine.

> I mean, when I was in Ukraine, I understood that one still needed to have a certain, meet certain standards of publication activity. ANOTHER matter was that the way I lived in Ukraine, I could not make enough time… to… well, work on, on it and really achieve some noticeable results. I understand that having at least a year and a half of time here… really, and when I don't have to run around working four jobs there, you know, I have a CHANCE, you know.[31]

For three respondents, new opportunities allowed them to completely change the direction of their professional development — to abandon teaching for research. The respondents themselves were inclined to explain this turn in terms of realizing their true calling.[32]

Respondents holding academic positions viewed the time of internship at European scientific and educational institutions as an opportunity to establish contacts with European scholars and to represent their own institutions. Many spoke of enriching their teaching and research practices and of new opportunities for working on projects that had been the focus of their attention before the war started. They noted that their lived experiences brought new research perspectives to the fore and helped them better understand the behavior and motivation of individuals during tragic historical events.[33]

27. ZPBL, 15.08.2022.
28. PDLR, 17.06.2022.
29. ZMLM, 31.10.2022; PPMK, 19.08.2022; ZRGK, 20.06.2022.
30. ZVML, 11.09.2022.
31. PPMK, 19.08.2022.
32. ZKRK, 04.08.2022; PPEK, 28.06.2022; ZSLO, 31.03.2023.
33. PKMK, 22.08.2022; PKLK, 16.04.2022.

> . . . this PERSONAL experience is ALSO important for an individual, yes, as PERSONAL experience, and this is a very big experience for a historian… in Kharkiv we were interrupted preparing the fourth volume of memoirs devo- Kharkiv, about Kharkiv University, devoted specifically to the Second World War, right, and I also constantly catch myself understanding in a COMPLETELY different way what people wrote about, that, probably, only, well, HAVING GONE through this EXPERIENCE, right, you fully realize what they WROTE about, and what they left out, right, that is, PROBABLY, also not completely, because the contexts [I: Yes] are different, but still a little deeper, so this is a very important experience both for the person and for… and for the historian, for the professional.[34]

At the same time, some respondents state that they have been rethinking their research agendas, becoming more interested in the current developments in Ukraine.[35]

It is important to note that the impetus for new practices of professional self-mobilization was provided not only by the new opportunities and social experiences of migrant scholars, but also by the "feeling of guilt" that influenced the rethinking of moral obligations at both the personal and professional levels. For two women respondents, this feeling was linked to disapproval from their friends and colleagues regarding their decision to leave the country.[36] Respondents who did not directly mention the "feeling of guilt" often felt it was important to explain why they did not remain in Ukraine and how their stay abroad could benefit Ukrainian academic institutions and the country as a whole.[37]

> If you really… go to the shelter, run to the shelter, it's not, you can't work, and here at least we have the opportunity to be safe and to work. And my understanding is, I understand for myself that this is also a kind of help. How can I help my, my country at this hour?[38]

Under these conditions, scholarly work, along with social activism, takes on the characteristics of a mission, encompassing both individual professional mobilization and the collective duty of Ukrainian academics abroad to represent their community. In fact, it is primarily in this context that we can observe the formation of a group consciousness of Ukrainian migrant scholars.

> Those people, who will now be working in Europe, with their reputation they also reaffirm Ukraine's reputation, and create Ukraine's reputation. And if before European institutions were, well, afraid in some ways to cooperate with Ukrainian institutions, now they will not be afraid of it, because they will see that we also have highly professional, reliable and hardworking people, and this is our, our mission today for those who represent our academic community in Europe, it is… to maintain and create Ukraine's reputation here, so that others continue to cooperate with Ukraine in the future.[39]

Given this context, it is particularly interesting to note that some respondents experience a conflict between professional and family values. For some, this conflict is perceived as a persistent state that becomes central to their autobiographical narratives. Notably, professional and family responsibilities clash when respondents are faced with the prospect of a promising academic internship or scholarship, but feel unable to fully pursue them due to their caregiving responsibilities for loved ones who have also left Ukraine.[40]

> Family! The feeling of responsibility, that you must take care of them. Sometimes it is a lot of PRESSURE, because you are in a non-stop conflict. Because, on the one hand, you understand that in order to become a professional here you need to learn the language, you need to develop

34. PILK, 18.04.2022.
35. ZHBK, 02.10.2022.
36. ZRGK, 20.06.2022; PKKD, 18.06.2022.
37. ZMLM, 31.10.2022.
38. ZKPC, 27.07.2022.
39. ZKPC, 27.07.2022.
40. PKMK, 22.08.2022; ZVML, 11.09.2022; PPEK, 28.06.2022.

> topics about which you understand nothing yet. Everything is completely different. Life is different. And you need a lot of time for self-improvement, for preparation. So, it's, you know... Working here is such, let's put it this way, a BIG credit of trust, and this is a bar which you still need to reach up to. But because you have a responsibility, yes, this one, you cannot, uh, do it as well as you thought you would, you cannot devote that much time to German, for example.[41]

However, while acknowledging this internal conflict, our respondents declare their readiness to be as effective and productive as possible.

Thus, practices of social and professional activism, based on shared values, function as markers of both individual and group identity of migrant scholars. However, as noted previously, the core mechanism of individual and collective identity lies in the intersection of self-representation and social categorization. In other words, collective identity emerges when individuals' belonging is recognized by outsiders (La Barbera 2015).

Our project includes interviewing European academics who assist their Ukrainian colleagues. These interviews allow us to understand how Ukrainian scholars' agency – their behaviors, words, and actions — shapes the image of the "Ukrainian migrant scholar" within the European academic community. Most respondents in this category viewed their experience of meeting Ukrainian colleagues positively, noting their energy, optimism, and desire to return to professional activity and regain independence as soon as possible. Many noted that the Ukrainians were very grateful for the help offered but sought to become independent quickly. The gendered aspect of this issue is also interesting. When reflecting on their motivation for aiding Ukrainian academics, European academics focus on compassion for women and children fleeing war, but they also primarily view their female colleagues as professionals.[42] Moreover, when asked what, in their opinion, their Ukrainian colleagues needed most, respondents most frequently named opportunity to continue scholarly work. Psychological assistance was mentioned in only one case.

> What surprised me… looking at my relations with Ukrainians after February 24, it… it is how they asked to help them with a job search… that they immediately, sort of, wanted, despite the war, despite the fact that they had fled from their homes, despite the fact that it was kind of psychologically hard, that they immediately want to sort of get a job and somehow get involved in society.[43]

Notably, the agency of Ukrainian academics has influenced the way representatives of the host countries understand their own role in assisting migrant scholars. They commonly view preserving the Ukrainian intellectual elite as one of the most important tasks of the European academic community, as these elites are seen as crucial for Ukraine's future reconstruction.

> I thought that the most important is to… to help academics, because academics are… academics or intelligentsia are the core of the nation so if somebody would like to destroy the nation, would like to destroy intelligentsia and it was happening to Polish intelligentsia before, so as we knew that we knew and our university authorities knew.[44]

Furthermore, our European respondents noted that, as societies and governments in their countries focused greater attention on Ukraine, Ukrainian subjects were becoming more prominent in individual research interests and practice. The need to develop collaborative research projects with Ukrainian colleagues was also increasingly felt. Changes were also occurring at the institutional level. For example, the Center for Dialogue with Russia in Warsaw was renamed the Juliusz Miraszewski Center for Dialogue, and its work now focuses on cooperation with colleagues from Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova. Notably, recent academic conferences have been devoted to interpreting the impact of the current war on the socio-economic development of Europe, historiography, and historical memory.

41. PPEK, 28.06.2022.

42. PGW, 24.05.2022; PLL, 18.06.2022. The names of European respondents are encoded as follows: form of recording, surname code, place of residence, date of interview.

43. PGW, 24.05.2022.

44. PNG, 27.04.2022.

At these academic events, Ukrainian scholars act as both experts and witnesses, prompting them to record their personal experience of the war and preserve the legacy of forced migrants in general. These practices manifest on the level of personal testimony, such as photo-documentation of events[45] and the keeping of autobiographical records.[46] Moreover, the desire to make sense of the current events in Ukraine motivated Ukrainian historians to actively participate in oral history projects, which are currently underway in many European countries to create a record of the experiences of Ukrainian migrants and eyewitnesses to the war.

Eight of our respondents have engaged in this type of work. In fact, oral history projects can be considered a collective form of activism among forced migrants. Interestingly, networks of interaction among Ukrainian academic migrants are currently forming around such projects, as communication between colleagues and acquaintances scattered across numerous countries has diminished.[47] Thus, we observe a certain reflexive level of agency for Ukrainian academic migrants. This involves collecting evidence, sharing experiences of migration, processing these experiences, and possibly using them to enrich research and teaching practices in the Ukrainian academic community and its overall culture.

However, the importance of this form of agency extends beyond academia. Oral history projects facilitate a unique interaction in which emotional energy is exchanged (Collins 2004). This emotional exchange influences the perception and development of a distinctive migrant identity based on privilege and responsibility. This is reflected in our respondents' awareness of the significance of their migration experience. Interestingly, none of our respondents refused to answer the question about the meaning of migrant experience or how events might unfold in the future, despite the ongoing war and the traumatic effects of this kind reflection. All our respondents their expressed desire to return to Ukraine and continue their professional activities there, despite the fact that some had lost their jobs and their employment prospects remained uncertain.

> I understand that… again… I can be useful the most only in my country, in my professional work. So… I made a decision, as long as I HAVE the opportunity to return to my country, to return to my… home, I mean, I almost can already, already there, reconstruction is going on in Irpin, right. I… will, will be USEFUL WHERE I CAN be.[48]

These data are only partially consistent with the results of sociological surveys of Ukrainian academic migrants, both from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. According to one such survey, most respondents were willing to return to Ukraine only if the war ended by late summer of 2022. If the war continued, the vast majority planned to stay abroad, ideally envisioning their future as a combination of work in Ukrainian and international educational institutions.[49] The realization of these plans would help satisfy a variety of needs. However, autobiographical interviews, mainly with humanities scholars, demonstrate that open questions about future plans are more likely to be answered on the basis of values, with the respondents emphasizing not their needs but the significance and usefulness of their pursuits activities. This does not mean that the respondents refuse to acknowledge systemic problems in Ukrainian academia. On the contrary, they voice serious reservations regarding the progress of reforms in this sphere; older respondents, in particular, tend to be more pessimistic about the postwar future of their profession.[50] Nevertheless, many of our respondents see themselves as agents of change. As one interviewee observes, "We still don't know what peace will be like after the war, and it's up to us, too."[51]

45. ZRGK, 20.06.2022; PPEK, 28.06.2022; ZKPC, 27.07.2022.

46. ZRBK, 29.10.2022; ZRGK, 20.06.2022.

47. ZNCK, 05.11.2022; PPEK, 28.06.2022.

48. ZRGK, 20.06.2022.

49. See: "Beyond Resilience: Professional Challenges, Preferences, and Plans of Ukrainian Researchers Abroad." ScienceForUkraine Survey Report by Maciej Maryl et al., Warsaw, December 1, 2022, available at https://zenodo.org/records/7380509.

50. ZRBK, 29.10.2022; ZPBL, 15.08.2022; ZGBK, 04.11.2022.

51. PEMK, 22.08.2022.

Conclusion

We can draw some conclusions regarding the self-perception of Ukrainian migrant scholars and practices of self-organization within this group today. First, we note the distinctive nature of academics' awareness of their identity. This may present as "flight from war" or "academic mobility," but it virtually excludes the classic migrant self-identification. This phenomenon may relate to the problematic definition of high-skilled migration in general (Weinar and Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020, 17). This type of migration is often seen in the literature precisely as "mobility." Furthermore, the choice of forms of identity is directly linked to the future plans of academic migrants and, consequently, to the tasks and objectives they set for themselves. Migrant scholars perceive their professional activities in European countries as a mission. They emphasize the importance of returning home to utilize the experience gained during forced migration for the benefit of Ukrainian academia, culture, and society more generally.

Regarding practices of cooperation among Ukrainian academic migrants, after a year of war and exposure to the organizational features of the European academic community, there is a growing awareness of the need to transition to a new level of agency and create formal associations representing the interests of Ukrainian academics on the international stage.[52] Currently, however, the community of academic migrants is focused on reflexive agency, which entails self-organization around the preservation of, and reflection on, the group's heritage. At first glance, this version of communal agency is primarily oriented inward, and its beneficiaries are academic migrants themselves as a group and, in the future, Ukraine's national academic community. However, the trends in European historical scholarship today indicate that this version of the self-mobilization of Ukrainian scholars is important for the European academic community as a whole. It is contributing to pan-European memory and helping shape how the Russian-Ukrainian War will be remembered in the future.

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52. ZSLO, 31.03.2023.

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