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Fragmentation of old and new networks: contextualising the situation of the Ukrainians fleeing the war into the older mobility networks to the EU.

Olena Fedyuk* - Anastasia Ryabchuk**

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1. Introduction.

Russia's full-scale invasion on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, shook the world by bringing war into the heart of Europe and took most of Ukrainians by surprise.[1] In the scales of its brutality, destruction and targeting of the civil population, it pushed an estimated 7.8 million Ukrainians to search for shelter in the European countries.[2] It also made the EU review its reception policies as well as change, - at least for the time being, - the way it responds to the influx of people fleeing their home countries. Displacement by war massively transformed mobility flows from Ukraine, a country which since its independence in 1991 became one of the key sending countries of the labour force to the EU.[3] The post-February movement of people, drastic and unprecedented as it is, thus did not emerge ahistorically. First, since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the beginning of the war in the east of Ukraine,

* MSCA fellow at the University of Padua. E-mail: olena.fedyuk@unipd.it. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No 893032.
** British Academy CARA fellow at the research project "Emptiness", School of Anthropology, University of Oxford. E-mail: anastasia.riabchuk@gmail.com.
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[1] Kulick O., *Gender and violence in Ukraine: changing how we bear witness to war*, in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 64, 2-3, 2022, 190-206.
[2] *See* UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal: Ukrainian refugee situation*, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine (last accessed 11 April 2023).
[3] Fedyuk O., Kindler M. (*eds*), *Ukrainian Migration to the European Union. Lessons from Migration Studies*, in *IMISCOE Research Series (IMIS)*, Springer, Cham, 2016.

Ukraine had one and a half million internally displaced people from the war zones.[4] This large-scale experience of displacement and related challenges to livelihood, social reproduction, employment and dealing with war-related traumas remained overwhelmingly invisible to the EU publicity.[5] Meanwhile, military actions in the east of Ukraine triggered some of the displaced people to search for work in the EU already in 2014; as they failed to see equally attractive opportunities within Ukraine and in the light of the dropping migration volume to Russia, they added into the larger outward, mostly labour migration, flows.[6]

Second, it is important to remember that Ukraine has an extensive history of migration throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries,[7] with rich experience of inter-USSR mobility for work before 1991[8] and post-1991 transnational labour migration, particularly to the EU. Thus, before February 2022, the Institute of Demography of Ukraine estimated 4 million people employed abroad in general, with about 2,7-3 million working abroad at any given time.[9] February 2022 brought a dramatic change to the volume of mobility, but also to the demographic characteristics of people on the move, their needs and intentions, the way they move and integrate, and the way they plan their (non-)return.

In this chapter, we reflect on the current situation of Ukrainians fleeing the war and their decision-making as to employment and settlement. We map out three areas that require further careful examination and more empirical research, but which so far seem to fail to get due attention in the current literature. The first is the fragmentation of the experience of those who flee the war. In other words, we ask why it is so hard to (and important not to) speak of a unified profile of a "Ukrainian refugee." The second issue we discuss is about decision-making and experiences linked to the labour market integration of those who fled the war, particularly in connection to fragmented experiences of war and diversity of needs and various forms of resources. Within the third area, we contextualize how the already existing networks of labour migrants in the EU responded to and were affected by the war in Ukraine. With this last topic, we seek to make visible the contribution and the cost of this contribution on those actors of the reception effort that remains consistently invisible - Ukrainian labour migrants. The chapter is structured into consequent 3 subsections with an introduction and conclusions. These reflections are based on the ongoing research, desk research and in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war (16) and those involved in various relief-providing institutions and initiatives (10).[10] The interviews were conducted between March 2022 and February 2023 in Hungary (10), Poland (13) and Italy (3). We also base our reflections on our personal experience of

[4] Numbers for November 2020. *See* Vakhitova H., Fihel A., *International Migration from Ukraine: Will Trends Increase or Go into Reverse?*, in *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, 9, 2, 2020, 125–141.
[5] *See* also Slobodian O., *How to Measure Integration of Internally Displaced Persons*, in *CEDOS*, 27 December 2019, https://cedos.org.ua/en/researches/yak-vymiriaty-intehratsiiu-vnutrishno-peremishchenykh-osib/.
[6] Vakhitova H., Fihel A., nt. (4).
[7] Shybko V., Khomra O., Ozhevan M., Prymak O. (*eds*), *Trudova mihratsija hromadjan Ukrajiny* (Labour Migration of Ukrainian Citizens), Kyjivskyj Universytet, Kyiv, 2006.
[8] Vollmer B., Malynovska O., *Ukrainian Migration Research Before and Since 1991*, in Fedyuk O., Kindler M. (*eds*), nt. (3).
[9] Лібанова Е., *Зовнішні трудові міграції українців: масштаби, причини, наслідки* (Ukrainian labour migration: scale, reasons, consequences), in *Демографія та соціальна економіка*, 33, 2, 2018, 11–26.
[10] All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

volunteering during 2022 (OF) and our experience of being displaced because of the war (AR).

2. Looking beyond the trends: fragmentation.

Perhaps, the first contextualisation that needs to be done is about the number of 7.8 million Ukrainians that have fled to European countries. About two-thirds of those who fled the war did so in March (84% by the end of April), and only as little as 15% of Ukrainians left their country from May onwards.[11] In the consequent months, the EU witnessed the return of Ukrainian war migrants back to their home country. From May onwards, the State Border Service of Ukraine reports that the number of border crossings into Ukraine began to exceed the number of crossings to leave the country. Therefore, it makes more sense to talk of the 4.5 million Ukrainian displaced persons with temporary protection status in the EU, a status that was activated for the first time in the EU, as a response to the influx of people fleeing Ukraine. Oksana Dutchak,[12] in her analysis of enforced single motherhood and Ukrainian war migrants' care networks, highlights one of the main characteristics of the migrant flow from Ukraine, i.e. more than 80% are women, and two-thirds have children. At the same time, among those Ukrainians who are returning to Ukraine, only one-third are with children [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) research at the border with those returning to Ukraine, carried out on April 3-27]. This is quite expected: mothers with children are more hesitant to return to Ukraine while the war is still ongoing, fearing for their children's safety. Younger single people who feel they will be able to adapt to the new war reality, as well as the elderly, who find it difficult abroad and miss their homes, are more likely to return at this stage.

And yet, it is important to mark here an incredible fragmentation of personal experiences of war that accompanied people and their journeys to safety. Mobility is a privilege that necessitates certain resources; to be able to leave, one needs to have the means to do so, skills, social capital networks, and certain financial safety. The first ones to leave Ukraine were better off economically and had more social and cultural capital to consider moving abroad. The first wave of migrants was more likely to have personal savings to cover basic needs while waiting for temporary protection confirmation to be processed. A UNHCR survey[13] of 34,145 Ukrainian war migrants found that 12% of them had relatives in receiving countries and that 56% already managed to find private housing for rent (although 29% were still in reception centres and this figure is higher for the newly arriving refugees). They were more likely to have private vehicles (so could leave the country in the first days of the war),

[11] Ryabchuk A., *Who will Stay and Who Will Return? Divergent Trajectories of Ukrainian War Refugees in the EU*, in *LeftEast,* 17 January 2023, available at https://lefteast.org/divergent-trajectories-of-ukrainian-war-refugees-in-the-eu/.

[12] Dutchak O., *Together We Stand: Enforced Single Motherhood and Ukrainian Refugees' Care Networks*, in *LeftEast*, 19 January 2023, available at https://lefteast.org/enforced-single-motherhood-and-ukrainian-refugees-care-networks/.

[13] UNHCR, *Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - March-December 2022*, 26 April 2022, available at https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92257.

some prior contacts in receiving countries - either personal or professional, knowledge of at least one foreign language, higher education, etc. Razumkov Centre study[14] found a higher percentage of managers (14% compared to 1.5% of the Ukrainian population as a whole) and private entrepreneurs (14% compared to 4% of the Ukrainian population as a whole), with a further 12% self-identifying as skilled workers, and another 11% as housewives. Thus, those who left Ukraine often had a higher socio-economic status compared to those who remained. They are also more likely to come from urban areas (nine in ten respondents in the Razumkov study) and have higher education (86% have either completed or were in the process of obtaining higher education). Those who decided to leave at a later point in time were more likely forced to do so by a deteriorating safety situation, loss or damage to their homes, and other "push out of Ukraine" factors.

Geography played another pivotal part - whether people were fleeing from those parts of Ukraine that had sporadic bombardments or none at all, or they had to leave under the shelling or even escape the occupation. The availability of vehicles and fuel for them, and networks of friends that could provide shelter en route turned out important in enabling people's mobility.[15] In this context, one of the author's first meetings with a person fleeing the war was revealing. A woman with two teenagers, whom Olena met in Budapest on February 24, said that the night before she packed her lunch for the next day's work - "My salmon - avocado salad into my bento box" - while the next morning, she put her kids into the car and drove straight to the border, instead of work. The shock of the social class proximity and the experience of losing its privilege was probably the strongest feeling while listening to her story. When asked if they needed any help, the woman said she was going to her friends in Germany and needed nothing. In Budapest, when one of the authors (OF) volunteered in humanitarian relief, some other colleagues remarked on the rising number of expensive new cars with Ukrainian license plates, while the 7th District Budapest municipality had to remove a Ukrainian Porsche from a free parking lot, claiming that "the owner is probably capable of paying parking fees". In the following weeks, we witnessed many people, whose status and needs were much harder to decode: owners of a private school in Irpin, fleeing with three kids and a dog and seeing the bridges exploding right behind their cars and stopping en route to their friends in Texas. A bank manager, Olya, fled the Kyiv region after hiding for weeks in a country-side house and then driving a car with two of her children and two others entrusted to her through a forest and across a nearly collapsed bridge. As she was settling for a night in a temporary flat in Budapest - five people in a tiny bedroom, Olya commented ironically: "That feeling when you have three flats in Ukraine, and you have to share a bedroom with four other people".

These ethnographic anecdotes are important on several levels, as they flash out the crumbling contexts in which settled ideas of social class and social capital become shaken, reconfigured, and obscure the needs of displaced people. The sum of these reconfigured contexts makes up the outcome of the total experience of displacement and affects decision-

[14] Razumkov Centre, *Sentiments and evaluations of Ukrainian refugees, July-August 2022*, 30 August 2022, available at: https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/nastroi-ta-otsinky-ukrainskykh-bizhentsiv-lypen-serpen-2022p.
[15] Ryabchuk A., nt. (11); Dutchak O., nt. (12).

making as to the daily matters but also such bigger questions as return or labour market integration. For one, the war set in motion many people who never intended to leave, who had differentiated resources in terms of social and financial capital and thus, different levels of needs and dependencies. Furthermore, besides the initial resources to start the move, the experience of war and violence put everyone in a very differentiated position in terms of physiological vulnerability and endurance. Further lines of fragmentation that play a crucial role is responsibility within familial and larger social care networks: in other words, people who had only themselves or their nuclear family to care for, became responsible for previously independent family and community members (including friends and relatives' children), responsible for those who could not or chose not to move from Ukraine, for family properties and financial assets, and often even pets.

The war and the experience of fleeing also vastly exacerbated the vulnerability of many groups of the population, calling for special assistance: EU has better healthcare, facilities for special needs children, and better provisions for people with chronic illnesses and life-threatening diseases like cancer. As time goes by, "Pull into EU factors" may also dominate for youth without a family of their own and without a permanent need to care for family members in Ukraine (university students, single people). They see the economic support of family members who remain in Ukraine as a valuable contribution and a reason to remain in the EU ("I can send my parents money and help them in this way"). Furthermore, the decision to stay in the EU is stronger, if the family unit remains intact, as in cases where the father was able to join his wife and children in the EU (cases of 3+ children, children with disabilities, or if the father left the country before February 24) or cases where grandparents were able to settle with their children to help out with household and childcare duties.

A second reason why fragmentation is important to remember is that individual goals and contexts, although seemingly minor in the scale of real-time military threats, are important for a more constructive conversation around how the reception can be done in the most supportive and sustainable way in the long term. Finally, it can help us tackle the question which we hear so often from our non-Ukrainian volunteer colleagues: "How can these people choose to go back to a war-torn country?" In all these, the issue of temporality, especially the duration of the war and the pace of the following reconstruction period, becomes a crucial factor.[16] Here, temporality has more dimensions: who could flee and at what stage, how long can they afford to stay outside of Ukraine (socially, emotionally and financially), who will consider the return in the light of the prolonged conflict, especially, if children start schooling in the receiving countries, and how the integration in the receiving countries is happening. For instance, the Razumkov Centre survey of Ukrainian war migrants found that 42% of respondents had problems finding a job, 32% - housing for rent, with a further 21,5% lacking any housing, and 15% claiming uncomfortable housing conditions. In the UNHCR research carried out in May 2022 at the border in Zakarpattia region about reasons for Ukrainian war migrants' return home, only one-third indicated a perception of safety in the area of return (particularly for Northern regions and Kyiv that had been recently liberated) as a main reason, while another one-third mentioned family reunification as the

[16] Ryabchuk A., nt. (11).

main reason. As research shows, existing reception trends in countries "filter out" Ukrainian war migrants into the more or less "desirable" - further integrating those who managed to find employment and housing, but limiting social benefits to all others, thus forcing some of them to return home. Secondly, they make it more difficult for the newly arriving refugees - who are often a more vulnerable subcategory than the first wave.[17]

3. Navigating the labour market: considerations for employment.

Such drastic fragmentation of resources, goals, plans and trajectories among the mobile populations was not such a pronounced issue prior to 2022 when Ukrainian workers were coming to Europe to fill in often ethnicized and gendered sectors of segmented labour markets. In 2020, the main spheres that employed Ukrainians outside of Ukraine were building and construction (predominantly men), agriculture in crop times (men and women), domestic and care work (mostly women), services and tourism (mostly young men and women), transnational transportation services (predominantly men), and various "low-skilled" jobs (factories, warehouses, post and packaging) (men and women).[18] Since about 2010, we have seen an increasing role of transnational employers and recruiters, looking for workers in Ukraine for fixed-term and seasonal employment that do not lead to longer forms of residency.[19] Temporary protection status, activated for the first time to protect a group of people based not on the individual revision of circumstances, but for a collective threat, granted Ukrainians fleeing the war a possibility not only to move across the borders and get social protection but also the right to employment. Therefore, the ability to join the labour market became an important topic of integration and support strategies discussed in the EU. Work.ua study[20] showed that 59% of Ukrainian war migrants were already searching for employment under temporary protection status. Of course, the latter figure could be due to insufficient support in the hosting countries, but also, because temporary protection status, unlike the status of a refugee, allows for employment.

The rise of temporary and seasonal employment of Ukrainians abroad before February 2022 also meant that many Ukrainians who came to work in the EU left their families and children back at home, relying on care networks across the border and effectively separating social reproduction from the site of their employment. In the current context of the demographic profile of women and children and the further burden of various fragmented familial obligations of those fleeing the war, it is important to emphasize that the question

[17] *Ibidem*.

[18] Андреєв В., Борисов О. (упоряд.), *Трудові права, умови праці українських трудових мігрантів в країнах ЄС та вплив пандемії COVID - 19 на трудову міграцію* (Labour rights and work conditions of Ukrainian labour migrants in the EU and the impact of COVID-19 on labour migration), in *м. Київ: Профспілка працівників будівництва і промисловості будівельних матеріалів України*, 2020, 55.

[19] Fedyuk O., Volodko V., *Bargaining for working conditions and social rights of migrant workers in Central East European countries (BARMIG), National report: Ukraine*, Research Report 51, Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI), 2020.

[20] *Ukrainians want to return: 86% of citizens who left, plan to return* (Українці хочуть додому: 86% громадян, що поїхали, планують повернутися), in *Work.ua*, 2022, https://www.work.ua/articles/work-in-team/2900/.

of employment cannot be seen outside or apart from the question of social reproduction. Difficulties in finding a job involve not only barriers to employment - no knowledge of local languages, need to confirm skills/qualifications, unwillingness to accept "humiliating" offers (i.e. farm work for urban middle-class migrants) but also the negative experiences of bureaucracy that takes too long, difficulties in finding housing, securing childcare, but also in some cases better employment prospects in Ukraine. They are aggravated by problems securing childcare needs: cases where preschools only accept children if mothers are employed, or where one needs to have a permanent address before applying for a place at a preschool, where working hours don't correspond to hours of schools and preschools, or where school fees are unaffordable (esp. in nurseries for young children). 14% of Ukrainian war migrants from the Razumkov study had difficulties in securing children's education, and 13,5% - in securing their leisure and after-school activities. Not only schools and nurseries' operating hours, but also those of bureaucratic institutions, shops, pharmacies, etc. often overlap with working hours, so a single mother cannot secure her household's needs, look after the children, and keep a job. Mothers with preschool-age children, interviewed by the authors, confirmed that the lack of childcare options was the main barrier to finding employment, limited their choice of a place of residence, and was likely to push them back to Ukraine. Social ties are much more limited in hosting societies, whereas in Ukraine other family members or social networks can be of help. There are also emotional and psychological difficulties: understanding how the system operates in Ukraine ("like a fish in the water") *vs.* needing to figure everything out from scratch that takes up time and resources ("fish taken out of the water"). Difficulties in securing childcare and lack of family support in case of family separation may push women to return even to a context that is not perceived as safe. With older children and youth, there is also a possibility of the mother's return while the child remains in the EU.

Again, it is hard to discuss a unified picture or a profile of a Ukrainian war migrant with fixed goals and needs, and yet, employment often meant more than just paid work for our interlocutors. In several of our interviews, they expressed particular pride in what they called "Ukrainians are not lazy". One of our respondents in Italy mentioned how Italian social workers expressed appreciation for how quickly Ukrainians started searching for jobs and kept asking for jobs. In Poland, my interlocutor Zenya said that before any other support, new arrivals from Ukraine asked for available jobs, "encouraging each other to work, taking each other by the hand to the employers". These accounts, however, are just fragments of a very diverse picture in which location, access to childcare, school, internet for online schooling, and transportation play crucial roles. For instance, Nadia, a mother of two kids of elementary school age who settled in Hungary, described to us her aspiration to work, but her daily routine consisted of a 2-hour daily commute to school and only half a day of schooling for one child. For months Nadia was frustrated with an effort to find a job for the 3-5 hours that she had for employment and her sense of obligation to give her children some sense of stability through a good schooling environment. For many of those who received accommodation and shelter in small urban centres or rural areas, these questions became central. Even though temporary protection status offered an opportunity for independence and dignity through earned income, many questions related to social reproduction obstructed

this opportunity. The role of such factors may grow over time. Firstly, people may be more willing to accept inadequate living conditions in reception centres in the short-term, but not in the long-term perspective. Secondly, the social benefits offered to Ukrainian war migrants in the first weeks and months are being drastically reduced, which makes survival without full-time employment more difficult. In the end, it is not surprising that many decide to return: no housing/ difficulty finding housing in the receiving country (5%), or lack of employment opportunities in the receiving country (among those returning to Kyiv this was the reason for 5% - even during the war, Kyiv could offer some people better working conditions than EU countries).

Temporality again played an important and diverse role in the decision to search for employment with our interlocutors. In the first place, the question about the length of the conflict was central, as all of our respondents noted that they expected that war would be a matter of days or weeks.[21] The second aspect related to temporality was the time needed to process what has happened and to regain the capacity to act after the experience of fleeing and the traumas of the journey. One of the volunteers, who helped run a shelter in Budapest, remarked that one of the tasks that they had to do in the first weeks was to check on people in their rooms. The new arrivals would spend hours on end alone, letting children play in the common areas outside, but seemingly not able to talk or socialize for days after their arrival. This echoes the comment of my interlocutor Nina, who left Kyiv with two teenage children to settle in a small town in Italy. Nina, in her early 40s and a practising psychologist, noted that after arrival and getting a room in the dormitory for refugees, she spent two weeks "glued to bed, not being able to sleep or to talk". Nina remarks: "Only after this time, I started crying and saying that I can also help". To our question about when she started to look for jobs, Nina said that in those days, she couldn't even take care of her own basic needs, not to mention think of the future or search for a job. Importantly Nina remarks that for her, these stages of mental and physical fatigue have a repetitive form; triggered by the images of liberating Bucha and Irpin, later, by massive bombardments of the infrastructures in the winter of 2022, sent her into periodic lapses of apathy. Thus, it is important to note that despite their willingness to work, Ukrainians fleeing the war often face considerable psychological traumas, which can take various lengths of time to deal with or can be repetitive thus abstracting their ability to work.

Furthermore, for those who fled Ukraine the decision to stay or start looking for a stronger integration through the labour market does not depend on them alone. People's decisions might not be linked to just war but relative safety of the location of their homes in Ukraine, properties that are left behind, relatives that might or might not need immediate care, even pets, emotional attachments, relationships, businesses, jobs. Even if the war continues, some people see a chance to obtain a new or continue their old job when they return, depending on the military actions, or even the availability of electricity in the region. For some, it is a question of temporary care arrangements they have in place for those who stayed behind but can become unavailable due to further mobility of people, or partners' decisions ("My husband told me not to come back, but I really want to"), perceptions of

[21] *See* Ryabchuk A., nt. (11).

relative safety. As one of our interlocutors described: "We are in a permanent stress and basic concern for survival on so many levels".

For those who felt they could make a more independent decision about their (non)return to Ukraine, the questions of available resources and investment into integration were closely linked to employment. In other words, "If I stay, where do I work?" becomes a question which requires a longer-term strategy, and when asked, many of our interlocutors did not see themselves working typical immigrant jobs but would rather like to invest in making proper professional CV, having their qualifications recognised or considering alternative locations to initial ones for their settlement, with more matching employment opportunities. For many, deciding to switch a job and investing in requalification meant a much longer and more serious investment which they couldn't make due to changing prospects, obligations, and strategies.

A feeling of deskilling, coupled with an expectation that the new arrivals would take "typical" immigrant jobs was very prominent among our respondents, the majority of whom were white-collar professionals. Besides the already mentioned availability of material resources to "hold on" a few months without work, it is important to mention that some Ukrainians remained employed by their transnational employers (particularly true for the IT sector) or maintained paid distant work from Ukraine (for instance, many educational institutions in Ukraine made immediate arrangements for online education for both its students and teachers). In our interviews, we could clearly feel interlocutors' resistance to take up the jobs that are traditionally associated with Ukrainian labour migrants, coupled with expectations and in some cases open pressure to do so, from the hosting communities. One interlocutor, a bank manager from Kyiv, Olya, whom we have mentioned earlier and interviewed on her en route to the UK through Budapest, was very clear from the start that she would not accept any jobs below her professional level. Having worked for years in the transnational banking system she had both professional and social capital to activate networks that would help her to get a matching job. However, she met a complete misunderstanding with her UK sponsors once she moved there with her two children and the other two who were entrusted to her by her relatives, using the UK sponsorship program. She recalls in our telephone follow-up interview:

> *"I immediately started applying for jobs [in the UK] but the first offer I had didn't suit me. My host sponsor was appalled by the fact that I rejected it and said I had to take the job. When I said that it didn't suit me, he replied that there was no such thing, I needed to be grateful, take the job and not hand-pick. When after only 3 weeks of further applications I got my current job offer in London and showed him what they offered me as a salary, the guy went mad with fury. He started yelling that it was not possible that I came from nowhere and got this job, that I didn't deserve it, that I needed to start small and work my way up, that it was not fair I got a job like this straight away. I told him that probably he was confused in his head; there is a difference between coming to a new country when you are 21 because you want to see the world, and being torn out of your professional life at 46 when you have already built an entire life and know exactly what you can do and how things work. [...] Obviously, we*

> *couldn't stay at his place, so we had to move out and look for accommodation. But those few weeks he almost made me doubt my common sense and sanity with this nonsense".*

This account resonates with other accounts we heard from our respondents in Italy. Snizhana, who settled in the south of Italy, commented that for Ukrainians there seem to be only jobs in the cleaning and domestic sector, and these were constantly pushed onto the people in the reception dorm where she stayed for the first 4 months. She, however, relied on her own, transnational professional networks to remain in paid employment through freelancing. In fact, Snizhana, who is a single woman in her 40s, chose to quit the collective housing provided for her with other Ukrainians, as she felt that the caring obligations for the children of others were taking a toll on her time and preventing her from doing her hour-pay-based job. Nina, whose story we have recalled earlier in the text and who is responsible for two teenage children, felt that an organization that provided accommodation for them in the north of Italy for free exerted open psychological pressure on her, pushing her to search for a job "in a bar or as a *badante*". Upon her arrival, Nina however committed to be, what she calls, "more useful". She wrote a psychological help program for Ukrainian arrivals, which, with the help of a local volunteer, she translated into Italian and managed to get a local municipal grant for it. Despite her being employed in this program through this grant, as well as in an online platform of psychological help and volunteering the rest of her time, the manager of the refugee help organization that offered them housing exerted everyday pressure on her "to get a proper job". Nina recalls:

> *"They kept telling me that I did nothing and that I had to get a job. I kept repeating to them that I did have a job, I worked in a program that provides psychological help, I also had an online job, and I was happy to pay for my accommodation, but they just kept saying that I didn't have the right to sign a contract for accommodation and that I needed to get a "proper" job. They almost made me believe that I didn't do enough. At some point I even thought, ok, I can go and work in a bar, cleaning tables, if this is how it works here, but once I made that decision my whole self just revolted against this. I mean, I have three diplomas: I am an obstetrician, economist, and psychologist. I have been studying for 20 years, I can be much more useful in a more skilled way, so why should I do something useless? [...] Maybe because I am a psychologist and I have learnt to respect myself, I wouldn't want to take any other job. It would feel very sad to go and start cleaning, and if I did, I wouldn't stop searching for a job more suited to my skills".*

Three factors seem to have collapsed in this excerpt of Nina's story: 1) an expectation that Ukrainians would join the workforce, especially in those sectors that are already employing many Ukrainian workers by Ukrainian workers; 2) differentiated integration of the newly arrived people into the workforce; and 3) post-covid drain of "essential workforce" in Europe. These observations would surely need more analytical and thorough investigations, but at least at first glance, they echo the swift responses from, for instance, temporary work agencies that right after February 2022 seemed eager to advertise jobs specifically for newly arrived Ukrainians. When we called some of these job ads in Hungary

and asked what special provisions they make considering the needs of, for instance, single mothers with children, many could offer only permission to stay with the family in the workers' dorms with no further vision of reliable care and educational opportunity for children. As one of the agency operators replied: "We are employers, we can only offer jobs. That's what we can do". To us, this eagerness to quickly react spoke rather of their shortage and eagerness to absorb excess workforce, than of longer-term integration of workers through labour market participation.

4. Invisible networks that catch.

We open this section with the story of Valya, whom one of the authors knew from her previous research on Ukrainian domestic workers in Italy. Valya, in her early 60s, worked in Naples as a caregiver for over 15 years. Since the beginning of the full-scale war in February 2022, she managed to bring over from Kyiv her mother, who was a cancer patient, her daughter – a 35-year-old lawyer from the Kyiv area – and her two teenage grandchildren. They all now lived with Valya in the south of Italy, all surviving on her income alone. Her mother needed surgery. Her daughter was thinking about going to earn money elsewhere, alone, leaving her two teenagers with Valya. And then, there was Valya's job to attend to.

Emerging literature about the reception effort of Ukrainians in the EU, features the legislation frameworks, volunteering and humanitarian relief organizations that provided help, as key actors.[22] Stories like that of Valya's stay off the radar, and yet, we argue that as in Valya's case, the war has pushed much of the financial, emotional, and social responsibilities of support to the networks well beyond the Ukrainian borders onto the already existing diasporic communities and less defined informal networks of labour migrants. Much of the costs of new mobility, precipitated by the crisis, became individualised and redistributed further along these already asymmetric transnational networks of care. While EU States provided the opening for easier mobility, we argue that the already established networks of labour migration bore the bulk weight of managing this crisis in two distinct ways; first, through multiplications of obligations, and second, through the multiplication of vulnerabilities.

Like in the case of Valya - her contribution is not changing the cause of history but, for the members of her family, she provided the first safety point, making them not dependent on the State's support, allowing them to consider employment. In this, Valya's contribution is not just to her family members' independence, but to the economy of the receiving state. Valya is providing unpaid, invisible work of care for their grandchildren and her elderly sick mother, while carrying much of the financial burden of the displaced family members. Similarly, one of my interlocutors in Poland (Tanya, 37), working at a factory, spoke of a

[22] For instance, *see* Ociepa-Kicińska E., Gorzałczyńska-Koczkodaj M., *Forms of Aid Provided to Refugees of the 2022 Russia–Ukraine War: The Case of Poland*, in *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19, 12, 2022; Carta S., Hahn H., Heidland T., Kaczmarczyk P., Lücke M., Łukasiewicz K., Maru M.T., Pachocka M., Ruhs M., *Refugee protection in the EU: building resilience to geopolitical conflict,* in *Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM)*, Assessment Report, 266254, 2022.

workers' dormitory as an unexpected network of solidarity in which women who just arrived and had children were better off than those living outside the dorms:

> *"It was much better to stay in the dorm than to stay alone. In the dorm you have people who lived here for longer, you could get advice on everything, even the haircut, or get some contacts. Your kids were never alone - someone would look after them, see that they stayed out of trouble, and give them some food if needed. These women then could take work in any shifts. Outside of the dorm, you needed to solve childcare".*

In this quote, Tanya points again to invisible unrecognized and unpaid caring work, shared by the workers to enable each other to join paid employment. Again, besides the financial independence of the worker, this creates a convenient situation for the employer and the receiving State, in which the social reproduction for the worker lies on the burden shared within the networks of solidarity.

The true role of the existing networks in the reception of the Ukrainians fleeing the war requires much more research and data; it is hard to generalize the engagement of individuals due to the low profile, lack of formal status of some, sporadic and non-continuous nature of their help that always depends on personal economic, emotional and social resources at a given time. Furthermore, the help they provide is often very personalised and goes to the heart of the needs of particular individuals. It is done through individual and informal networks of communication and often doesn't leave any digital or other trace. And yet, we argue it is important to see the weight of this contribution, to identify the social and economic-political value of this fragmented help. Migration from post-1991 Ukraine has been traditionally framed in terms of economic or labour migration, a perspective that has consistently ignored the contribution of the Ukrainian migrants to Ukrainian internal affairs and active transnational political participation. In particular, it can be relevant to look into the role a mobile population may play in shaping political opinions at home, the forms of political and civic engagement of these mobile populations and the choice of resistance or exit strategies at times of various political crises that stir the mobility decisions of individuals.[23] This role can be examined by looking at the emerging diasporic communities, as a means of asserting a political identity, which can be taken up by groups as a source of empowerment.[24] In the 32 years of Ukrainian independence, we have witnessed a significant surge of transnational political activism coming precisely from otherwise individualised and dissociated labour migration networks, especially in times of such political crises as the Orange Revolution[25] and Maidan.[26] To leave these contributions unseen and unrecognized

[23] Karolak M., *"Once you see that it can be otherwise, then you expect something else": the labour experience of Polish migrant returnees from the UK*, in Fedyuk O., Stewart P. (*eds*), *Inclusion and exclusion in Europe: Migration, work and employment perspectives*, Rowman & Littlefield International, London, New York, 2018.
[24] Adamson F., *Constructing the Diaspora: Diaspora identity politics and transnational social movements*, in Lyons T., Mandaville P. (*eds*), *Politics from afar: transnational Diasporas and networks*, Hurst&Company, London, 2012, 25–41.
[25] Solari C., *Transnational politics and settlement practices: post-Soviet immigrant churches in Rome*, in *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49, 11, 2006, 1528–1553.
[26] Fedyuk O., *The digital power of Ukrainians abroad: social media activism and political participation*, in Oleinikova O., Bayeh J. (*eds*), *Democracy, Diaspora, Territory*, Routledge, London, 2019.

means to continue the legacy of non-participation, and non-recognition of the needs and interests of people who make en masse major contribution to Ukrainian political, economic and social life, creates a whole "category" of people who by leaving Ukraine are delegitimised in their rights and voice. This topic can become particularly acute in the post-war reconstruction effort of Ukraine but also matters for the reception efforts of EU States in the current situation.

In our conversations with those labour migrants who came to the EU before February 2022, there was a similar surge of activity; men who were travelling back to Ukraine to fight or to the borders of Ukraine to help transport their families, an explosion of social media and IT communication channels support groups, are to name a few. Tanya, whom we have mentioned before and who worked in a factory, remarked that their factory manager allowed Ukrainian workers to take "phone call breaks" - to keep monitoring the situation back at home and provide on-spot support to their family members - another form of care and responsibility that weight heavy on those who were abroad when the full-scale war broke off. To map out the most common forms of responses that we have observed, but also to give a sense of the intensity and wide spectrum of the activities, we grouped them in a chart below. We further grouped them according to the level of personal proximity to those to whom the support was extended.

Table 1. *Types of solidarity activities by Ukrainians living abroad, grouped according to the level of personal proximity to those to whom the support was extended.*

Obligations within the family; personal networks-based solidarities	Financial help to those member who were previously independent, activated networks of former colleagues and classmates, relatives, neighbours, who asked for various forms of help and support; organizing safe route for leaving Ukraine (checking safe routes, finding networks that could accompany individuals in need en route, financing mobility before and after the border); organizing care arrangements for people who stayed and contacts to those who found themselves in occupation; taking care of the safety of properties, and pets; providing shelter and advice for those who were en route to specific destination and places; providing or sharing home with those who decided to come over; integration effort of those newly arrived family / social network members (depending on their personal, at times medical needs); supporting financially the newly arrived; helping with the paperwork, translation, job search, experience sharing; psychological support (including keeping in touch with and double-checking on those who stay in Ukraine).
Transnational solidarity activities	Donations to relief organizations, the Ukrainian Army, small grassroots collection campaigns for the support of individuals and specific local causes through social media; collecting and transporting humanitarian aid and other items requested by volunteers from

	Ukraine (medicine, various forms of equipment, vehicles), volunteering at the reception points (translation, paperwork, humanitarian relief); help with finding schools, accommodation, job advice, doctors, veterinarian, advice on small aspects of daily life through Telegram chats "Ukrainian help in…", Facebook and Viber groups, local church communities, etc.
Advocacy and political activism	Participation in protests; information campaigns in hosting societies; and "placing Ukraine on the map", i.e. having talks with neighbours, employers, and colleagues from different countries about the current situation in Ukraine.

Source: *Authors.*

Many labour migrants saw their obligations multiply, and their financial, time and emotional resources stretched in a daily effort to cover many emerging needs. In these times, the informal networks of material, social and moral support built over the last 30 years of extensive Ukrainian labour migration not only became the networks that caught and supported those fleeing the war. In many places, these same networks applied political pressure that helped shape local and national responses of EU States to the war in Ukraine.

The second way in which the already existing labour migrant networks carried the burden of the war was through the multiplication of their vulnerabilities (immobilisation, loss of jobs, ability to work and generate pre-war level of incomes, crumbling of the established patterns of earning, loss of accommodation).

In the last decade, Ukrainian migration experienced the rise of short-term, seasonal employment mediated specifically through temporary work agencies, catering for the needs of the EU capital in flexible, "just-in-time" labour.[27] These patterns of employment are characterized by periods of intense employment that allow to make wage minimum through a system of over-time, group accommodation on-the-site and maximisation of other labour-intensive short-term strategies.[28] This pattern also required outsourcing of care and other familial obligations across the border, concentrated in alternating periods "at home" and in between employment. In assisting their families flee the war and reuniting with them in destination countries, many migrants found their jobs and ability to earn and provide for their families compromised. For instance, many Ukrainians who came to work in Hungary before the war stayed in workers' dormitory accommodations, where life regimes were subjected to the rhythms of production and the opportunity to maximise income to support distant families. Reuniting with family members and dependents revealed how much these housing options function as an extension of production regimes, shaping migrants into a particular working subject[29], and how they are incompatible with family life and work-life

[27] Polkowska D., Filipek K., *Grateful precarious worker? Ukrainian migrants in Poland*, in *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 52, 3, 2020, 564-581.
[28] Meszmann T., Fedyuk O., *Snakes or Ladders? Job quality assessment among temp workers from Ukraine in Hungarian Electronics*, in *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, 8, 1, 2019, 75–93.
[29] Schling H., *(Re)production: Everyday life in the workers' dormitory*, in *Society and Space Magazine*, 7 November 2017.

balance. Furthermore, night work shifts and extra hours that previously guaranteed relatively good income through the accumulation of over-time bonuses also became unsustainable with new family life rhythms, thus reducing their income below a subsistence level.

To illustrate what we mean, we narrate here a situation with a factory worker in Budapest, whom we call Ihor. Ihor lost his job at a factory, where he had been working for two years through a temporary work agency over a fight with his dorm management. Since February 2022 his employer allowed him to host in the same dorm his wife and a 5-year-old son, as well as his mother. Losing employment in the temporary agency that provided accommodation for Ihor meant a loss of housing for the entire family. Furthermore, since he arrived in Hungary before February 2022, Ihor was not eligible for the temporary protection status, and he lost his permission to stay based on his employment at the factory. For Ihor, who was the main breadwinner, returning to Ukraine, where he had no job, was not an option; it would mean leaving his wife, his mother and child alone without a source of income and resources abroad. In the summer of 2022, when we have interviewed workers at a factory dorm in Budapest, there were already several men, who moved from other countries due to similar to Ihor's situation; having started their jobs before February 2022 they were not eligible for the temporary protections status, while the seasonal nature of their employment in the previous days was solved by their cyclical returns home for the periods of unemployment. The restrictions on the trans-border mobility of men in Ukraine exacerbated the vulnerability of these workers and dependent on their income families. It also made these men more vulnerable to the threat of firing, and thus, more willing to put up with bad working conditions and low pay.

Similarly, women like Valya, who provide care and domestic services, found it hard to reconcile full-time domestic sector jobs with the care for their own families. Paradoxically, the arrival of families and dependents into the established migration networks brought to light the true cost of labour migration regimes. These jobs are made sustainable mostly due to the sacrifice of any semblance of a work-life balance among labour migrants. This has resulted in an instrumentalised turnover of people, bringing in those who can entrust highly gendered tasks of care along their family networks being thus able to separate the time and space of work from the time and space of "life" back at home.

5. Conclusions.

Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, led to up to five million Ukrainians obtaining temporary protection status in the EU. People fleeing the war differed from the earlier waves of migration from Ukraine, being much more fragmented and heterogeneous, but also dependent on the available diaspora networks formed by previous waves of labour migration.

This chapter focused on three areas that require further careful examination and more empirical research. First of all, we highlighted the fragmentation of the experience of those who fled the war, based on demographic characteristics, class differences, and the situation at home from which they were fleeing. Among Ukrainian war migrants there is a much higher

percentage of urban dwellers, people with higher education, managers, and private entrepreneurs than the population of Ukraine as a whole. The region from which people fled, the time when they reached this decision (right away in the first days of the invasion, or at a later stage), and whether they have a home and a job to return to, are some of the other differentiating factors.

The second area for further research is related to the experiences of labour market integration of those who fled the war, particularly in connection to fragmented experiences of war and diversity of needs and various forms of resources. Among Ukrainians with temporary protection, a significant number insists on their qualifications and are unwilling to take on jobs that were stereotypically offered to Ukrainian labour migrants (cleaning, caring for children and elderly, unqualified factory work, etc.). Furthermore, some keep their online jobs (in the IT sector, online education, accounting, etc.), and yet others do not have the resources or motivation to pursue employment and are waiting for a possibility to return to Ukraine.

Finally, the third question worth exploring further is how the already existing networks of labour migrants in the EU responded to and were affected by the war in Ukraine. It is important to make visible the contribution of those actors in the reception effort that remains consistently invisible - Ukrainian labour migrants. While the role of national governments and NGOs is relatively well-documented, the activation of and impact of the war on already existing networks and the role they play in the reception of the new wave of arrivals remains mostly invisible. At the same time, many of our informants suggested that their migrant relatives and friends were their first contacts in the EU, and this contributed to their decision to flee Ukraine, as well as to the specific migration routes they undertook.

In connection to the last critical point, it is crucial we recognize the contribution, status, and rights of Ukrainian citizens abroad. We must refrain from turning a blind eye and absorbing remittances without due acknowledgement. It is important to recognise their status and address their needs, through the negotiation of bilateral agreements, simplification of paperwork processes, ensuring pensions, recognising work experience, facilitating employment, and validating diplomas. Additionally, we should foster better cooperation with solidarity networks, such as the UGCC, trade unions and cultural collectives.