





## INTRODUCTION



# Understanding Ukrainian society before and after the Russian invasion



Tamara Martsenyuk <sup>a</sup>, Alexi Gugushvili <sup>b</sup>, Evelyn Ersanilli <sup>c</sup> and Patrick Präg <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Mohyla Academy, National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine; <sup>b</sup>Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway; <sup>c</sup>Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands; <sup>d</sup>CREST, ENSAE, Institut Polytechnique de Paris, Palaiseau, France

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was a watershed moment in modern European history. It quickly became evident that the war would have significant consequences for Europe's security, politics, and economy. Ukraine is shaken by the invasion to an extent comparable to the devastation during the Second World War. As Editors of *European Societies*, we realized that there was little sociological research on Ukraine, one of the largest European countries. Only a handful of articles were ever published on Ukraine in *European Societies* or other leading general sociological journals. Thus, we initiated a Special Issue on 'Understanding Ukrainian Society Before and After the Russian Invasion', co-edited by two Ukrainian sociologists, Tamara Martsenyuk from the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy and Tymofii Brik from Kyiv Schools of Economics.

This Special Issue was a large collective effort lasting for more than two years. The Editors received 53 extended abstracts in response to the initial call, out of which 28 were invited to submit a full manuscript. After the peer review process, *European Societies* accepted for publication the 17 manuscripts that make up the articles of this issue. Writing up manuscripts and reviewing them offered hurdles, as some Ukrainian authors stayed in the country while others left and became refugees. Furthermore, recruiting Reviewers for the Special Issue manuscripts was a challenge due to the necessary area-specific knowledge. We also want to thank two Associate Editors of the journal, Turkey Nefes and Conrad Ziller,

---

**CONTACT** Alexi Gugushvili  [alexi.gugushvili@sosgeo.uio.no](mailto:alexi.gugushvili@sosgeo.uio.no)  Postboks 1096, Blindern, 0317, Oslo, Norway

© 2024 European Sociological Association

who handled a number of manuscripts. First and foremost, we are particularly grateful to the following Reviewers who contributed to peer review and decision-making:

Akaliyski, Plamen  
Aksyonova, Svitlana  
Andžāns, Māris  
Barrie, Christopher  
Boersma, Kees  
Burljuk, Olga  
Byelikova, Yuliya  
Carlsen, Hjalmar  
Dimitrova, Antoaneta  
Draznova, Lenka  
Drbohlav, Dusan  
Fedorenko, Kostiantyn  
Hernández Aguilar, Luis  
Hrycak, Alexandra  
Jarosz, Ewa  
Katchanovski, Ivan  
Khanenko-Friesen, Natalia  
Khutkyy, Dmytro  
Koikkalainen, Saara  
Krakhmalova, Kateryna  
Kreis, Ramona  
Kulyk, Volodymyr  
Lazarenko, Valeria  
Makhortykh, Mykola  
Marchenko, Alla  
Mikolai, Julia  
Muszalik, Marta  
Mykhnenko, Vlad  
Narvselius, Eleonora  
Nelson, Laura K.  
Pawlak, Mikołaj  
Phillips, Sarah  
Popova, Maria  
Pozniak, Oleksii  
Radomska, Marietta  
Riabchuk, Anastasia  
Romanova, Valentyna

Schmäing, Sophie  
Siim, Birte  
Stecker, Christian  
Stepurko, Tetiana  
Stewart, Susan  
Strelnyk, Olena  
Umland, Andreas  
Wallaschek, Stefan  
Wynnyckyj, Mychailo

We do not intend to summarize the wide variety of studies included in the Special Issue here, but rather, we will outline the authors' characteristics and a number of key topics that the articles cover. The Special Issue achieved a good balance of gender and institutional and national representation as 19 out of 34 authors are female, while half of the authors have either institutional affiliations in Ukraine or are Ukrainians who work in other countries.

Regarding the topics covered, Zaiets (2023) provides one of the first ethnographic accounts of the war from the frontline in the initial months of the Russian invasion. A number of contributions on local democracy (Schmäing 2023), civil society (Zaremba and Martin 2023), and fighting against corruption (Yanchenko and Zulianello 2023) give us some tentative answers about the resilience of Ukrainian society and newly-identified challenges during the war. Three articles of the Special Issue deal with various aspects of inequalities, such as the discourse on intellectual elites in Ukraine (Shchepetylnykh 2023), class conflict and regional differences (Ishchenko 2023), and health inequalities experienced by refugees after fleeing the country (Mazhak *et al.* 2023).

Types of solidarity is another central topic of this Special Issue; articles highlighting the comparison of Ukrainian and Syrian refugees on Twitter (Weber *et al.* 2023), the online mobilization of informal civic society in Denmark (Bang Carlsen *et al.* 2023), specific support given to Ukrainian refugees in two Polish cities of Lublin and Lutsk (Podgórska *et al.* 2023), as well as the unique challenges experienced by the members of the Ukrainian LGBTIQ community after leaving the country in the wake of the war (Shevtsova 2023). Górny and van der Zwan (2024) examine the wave of labor migration in the context of the early stage of Russian aggression against Ukraine that started in 2014. Two contributions explicitly examine forced displacement as the result of the ongoing war and explore the drivers behind the decision-making processes (Maidanik 2023; Tarkhanova and Pyrogo 2023). Further, Kuzmuk (2024)

qualitatively explores post-migration Ukrainian refugee women's experiences in Poland in the initial phase of the war. A contribution from Akaliyski and Reeskens (2023) maps Ukrainian values and places them between the Slavic-Orthodox and European contexts, while Goshylyk and Goshylyk (2024) explore the role of the Ukrainian–American non-profit organization in constructing diasporic Ukrainian identity through personal and collective narratives.

At the time of completion of this Special Issue, we do not know how long the war will last and how specifically it will end, yet we are convinced that increasing understanding of the Ukrainian society through a sociological lens will be important in the long process of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### ORCID

Tamara Martsenyuk  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4785-5618>

Alexi Gugushvili  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3933-9111>

Evelyn Ersanilli  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6286-1688>

Patrick Präg  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6175-8470>

### References

- Akaliyski, P. and Reeskens, T. (2023) 'Ukrainian values: between the slavic-orthodox legacy and Europe's allure', *European Societies*: 1–30. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2206901.
- Bang Carlsen, H., Gårdhus, T. and Toubøl, J. (2023) 'Ukrainian refugee solidarity mobilization online', *European Societies*: 1–12. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2177704.
- Górny, A. and van der Zwan, R. (2024) 'Mobility and labor market trajectories of Ukrainian migrants to Poland in the context of the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine', *European Societies*: 1–31. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2298425.
- Goshylyk, N. and Goshylyk, V. (2024) 'Ukrainian-American non-profits in 2014–2022: constructing diasporic Ukrainian identity through personal and collective narratives', *European Societies*: 1–22. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2298432.
- Ishchenko, V. (2023) 'Class or regional cleavage? The Russian invasion and Ukraine's 'east/west' divide', *European Societies*: 1–26. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2275589.
- Kuzmuk (2024) "Ukrainian refugee women's experiences in Poland in the first months of Russian invasion: a qualitative account", *European Societies*. currently in production.

- Maidanik, I. (2023) 'The forced migration from Ukraine after the full scale Russian invasion: dynamics and decision making drivers', *European Societies*: 1–12. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2268150.
- Mazhak, I., Paludo, A. C. and Sudyn, D. (2023) 'Self-reported health and coping strategies of Ukrainian female refugees in the Czech Republic', *European Societies*: 1–27. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2203230.
- Podgórska, K., Jekaterynczuk, A., Yarosh, O., Kuzmuk, O. and Liubchuk, V. (2023) 'Support for Ukrainian refugees after Russia's invasion of Ukraine: aid structure and resilience factors. Case studies of Lublin and Lutsk', *European Societies*: 1–25. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2206892.
- Schmäing, S. (2023) 'Urban democracy in post-maidan Ukraine: conflict and cooperation between citizens and local governments in participatory budgeting', *European Societies*: 1–23. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2183972.
- Shchepetylnykova, I. (2023) 'Mending the divide: intellectuals and intelligentsia in Ukrainian scholarly discourse', *European Societies*: 1–18. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2188084.
- Shevtsova, M. (2023) 'Solidarity test: challenges of forced LGBTIQ migration and activism in central-eastern European countries in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine', *European Societies*: 1–23. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2181372.
- Tarkhanova, O. and Pyrogoва, D. (2023) 'Forced displacement in Ukraine: understanding the decision-making process', *European Societies*: 1–20. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2280680.
- Weber, M., Grunow, D., Chen, Y. and Eger, S. (2023) 'Social solidarity with Ukrainian and Syrian refugees in the Twitter discourse. a comparison between 2015 and 2022', *European Societies*: 1–28. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2275604.
- Yanchenko, K. and Zulianello, M. (2023) "Not fighting corruption, but defeating it": the populism of Zelensky's servant of the people in comparative perspective', *European Societies*: 1–26. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2203214.
- Zaiets, D. (2023) 'Kharkiv's shattered landscapes: observations from the front line of the war in Ukraine', *European Societies*: 1–25. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2180152.
- Zarembo, K. and Martin, E. (2023) 'Civil society and sense of community in Ukraine: from dormancy to action', *European Societies*: 1–27. doi:10.1080/14616696.2023.2185652.