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Ukrainian Academics in Forced Migration Caused by the Russian–Ukrainian War: Problems of Identity

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This article focuses on the problem of the migrant self-identification of displaced Ukrainian academics. The authors propose a typology of self-identities based on the different ways in which academics construct their autobiographical narratives, analysing the metaphorisation of the migration experience, the use of emotives and recurring themes and the temporal structure of narration. Three types of self-identification of Ukrainian academics in emigration are distinguished: 'mobile academics', 'refugee academics' and the transitional type of 'displaced academics'. As a result, the authors aim to highlight the dynamic nature of the process of self-identification. The experience of migration, recast in terms of mobility, was a resource that allowed 'mobile academics' to construct a more consistent academic identity under extreme conditions. 'Refugee academics' – those who were unable to take advantage of professional opportunities in forced migration – demonstrate, in their interviews, that their experience abroad directly stimulated their professional mobilisation and shaped a positive perception of their own strengths and capabilities. Finally, the transition from a 'refugee identity' to the identity of 'displaced academics' took place in the course of rethinking the meaning of one's professional activities through the lens of war and raising the significance of these activities to the level of social mission.

Keywords: displaced Ukrainian academics, refugees, mobile academics, forced academic migration, scholars at risk, Russian–Ukrainian war, oral-history interviews, migration identity

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Introduction

The start of a full-scale Russian–Ukrainian war in 2022 has created the largest migration crisis since World War II. As of 14 March 2024, 5.9 million Ukrainian refugees were officially registered around the world – most of them in Germany, Poland and other European countries (UNHCR 2024).

Ukrainian academics became part of this wave of forced migration. According to one sociological study, at the time of the survey (April–May 2022), out of 2,173 respondents, 47.2 per cent of scientists remained in their place of permanent residence, 38.1 per cent were internally displaced and 14.7 per cent were abroad (Lutsenko, Harashchenko, Hladchenko, Korytnikova, Moskotina and Pravdyva 2023: 5). According to another study (de Rassenfosse, Murovana and Uhlbach 2023: 9) at the time of the survey (Autumn 2022), out of over 2,500 respondents, 18.5 per cent of academics fled the country. Regardless of which number is the more accurate, such estimates show the general trend and point to the new challenges facing Ukrainian academia as the Russian invasion continues. Among these challenges are the current loss of 20 per cent of Ukraine's research capacity (de Rassenfosse *et al*. 2023: 5) and the danger of losing human capital in the long run ('brain drain') (Ganguli and Waldinger 2023). This is especially true since, according to sociologists, the most research-active Ukrainian academics were among the most likely to leave the country and it is estimated that as many as 2.5 per cent of all theUkrainian academics who have fled abroad since February 24 may not return home (de Rassenfosse *et al.* 2023: 6).

On the other hand, the forced migration of academics may be seen as a form of 'brain circulation', which implies that academic migration can potentially benefit Ukraine, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and helping to enrich research practices, change the academic culture and develop international academic and general networks of support (Mucha and Łuczaj 2018). At the same time, it is stressed that the potential beneficial effect of academic migration will greatly depend on the strength of the ties between those who left and those who stayed, the balance between emigration and return and the effective functioning of the diaspora (Mucha and Łuczaj 2018: 119). Today, the Ukrainian government is taking active steps to consolidate the Ukrainian academic diaspora, creating and supporting channels of communication – for example, the website of the 'Ukrainian Science Diaspora' (https://ukrdiaspora.nauka.gov.ua/uk/). However, it was only in July 2023 that the Ministry of Social Policy began work on the Demographic Development Strategy of Ukraine (Minsotspolityky 2023). Researchers argue that concrete political measures in this sphere should be based on the analysis of academic migrants' experiences; existing sociological studies aim to explore not only the challenges which displaced Ukrainian academics face and their preferred types of support but also their plans for the future and their vision for the post-war recovery and development of Ukrainian research and education that would help turn these plans into reality (Maryl, Jaroszewicz, Degtyarova, Polishchuk, Pachocka and Wnuk 2022).

Nevertheless, going forward, an in-depth conversation about the current state of Ukrainian academia and its future prospects is not possible without understanding academics' behavioural strategies in extreme circumstances. This involves exploring changes in professional self-identification during forced migration and answering questions such as how pre-migration experiences affect the shaping of the identity of Ukrainian academics and how changes in their self-identification during forced migration can potentially influence their strategies of professional behaviour in the future.

Theoretical background and methodological approaches

Studies on the contemporary forced migration of academics are expanding rapidly, owing in large part to the intensification of war-related threats to higher education over the last 15 years. Researchers in this field focus, first

and foremost, on the complex and varied nature of forced migration – together with the agency and self-perception of displaced academics – and endeavour to overcome the conceptual limitations of the term 'refugee' (Yarar and Karakaşoğlu 2022) and bridge the dichotomy between the study of 'voluntary' and that of 'forced' migration (Burlyuk and Rahbari 2023: xvii).

Important contexts for exploring the agency of displaced academics include their living and working conditions in host countries and the migration policies and discourses with which they have to deal. There is a growing body of critical research on humanitarian political, media and aid discourses that victimise refugees in general (Newman 2003; Papadopoulos 2021) and refugee academics in particular (Pherali 2020). One example is the study of programmes for scholars at risk. Researchers recognise their importance but criticise them for their provisional humanitarian nature, which does not promote long-term shared responsibility for the protection of academic freedom (Vatansever 2022a: 105–106, 116). Researchers stress that, by victimising academics and treating them as an anonymous group, the approach taken by programmes based on humanitarian compassion leads to an underestimation of the competences and abilities of academics (Özdemir 2021: 13). In some European countries, these programmes also require their recipients to have the formal status of refugee. Another moral dilemma is that, despite their humanitarian nature, the programmes prioritise research excellence and career prospects (Axyonova, Kohstall and Richter 2022: 19–20). At the same time, because of their short duration, scholarships for academics at risk force their recipients into a nomadic lifestyle and thus impose on them the burden of a 'negative reputation' (Vatansever 2022a: 113). So, despite the reluctance of academics to accept the label of 'refugee', the realities of life, the rules of the game and the dominant discourses make the refugee lifestyle an integral part of their experience (Pherali 2020: 95).

The situation of Ukrainian academics is somewhat different. Coming under the Temporary Protection Directive, which was implemented by the EU Council on 4 March 2022, Ukrainian academics enjoy broad rights in their host countries – most notably, access to the labour market, social security systems and equal remuneration in accordance with the general laws in force in each EU member state.[1] Furthermore, the unprecedented wave of academic support for Ukrainian scholars after 24 February 2022 encouraged various assistance initiatives not only from specialised programmes and funds but also from national research funding bodies in various countries, individual universities, museums and other cultural and educational institutions, which often offered temporary or permanent contracts to Ukrainian scholars. This, of course, hardly makes Ukrainian academics' situation stable (not only in Europe but also in Ukraine); however, it does make their experience more diverse and affects forms of self-perception and agency at both the personal and the collective levels.

The agency of academics is an umbrella term that gives additional meaning to migrants' practices and experiences, from recognising forced migration as a decision-making act (Yarar and Karakaşoğlu 2022: 15) to the tasks of establishing new academic networks and intervening in the complex fabric of knowledge production in their host environments in order to intensify exchange between epistemic communities which, otherwise, have little opportunity to intersect (Axyonova *et al.* 2022: 21). In this connection, integration strategies and their conditions represent another important subject for analysis. It is interesting to note here that academic integration, associated with forced internationalisation (Vatansever 2022a: 107), is a modern phenomenon. During earlier waves of Ukrainian emigration, in the aftermath of the civil war of 1917–1921 and World War II, academics tried less to integrate into the already existing European institutions and more to establish institutions of their own in Europe and North America in order to preserve the Ukrainian tradition of scholarship in the humanities (Portnov 2008; Zavorotna 2020).

Assimilation projects intended to overcome foreignness tend to experience cultural failure (Yuval-Davis 1997: 60). Migrants are always characterised by the feeling of being 'in-between', on the borderland, in transit between the host and home countries (La Barbera 2015: 3). Academic migrants often long to go back (Pherali

2020: 93) and try to maintain ties with their homeland and be useful to it. That is why researchers also pay attention to strategies of agency among displaced academics, involving interaction with their societies of origin. Such strategies can appear even when there is no prospect of return – in particular through the preservation of intellectual heritage and the development of networks of contacts for the transfer of knowledge and cultural capital (Theo and Leung 2022).

A notable trend in the study of forced academic migration today is developing around the concept of 'third spaces', which denotes the sphere of micro-communities and grassroots initiatives of academics outside their home and host environments, in which displaced academics strive to continue research work in high-risk conditions (Axyonova *et al.* 2022: 22). The agency of academics in third spaces is based on a different model of overcoming foreignness: not through assimilation but through dialogue (Yuval-Davis 1997: 60). It is from this angle that researchers often look today, for instance, at the community of Turkish academics in Europe – as a group that contributes different critical perspectives provoking new discussions in the Western academic space. This includes, in particular, criticising authoritarianism and nationalism and challenging the precarity of the neoliberal system in Western academia, as well as creating alternative centres of knowledge production and support structures based on solidarity between academics in exile and their partners in host societies (Özdemir 2021; Özgür 2022). Incidentally, Özdemir believes that the categorisation of new forms of activism of displaced academics is in need of rethinking – in particular, she suggests that Turkish academics be recognised not as academic refugees but as the 'politically exiled', able to take part in critical discussions despite their legally uncertain situation (Özdemir 2021: 947).

Another form of 'third space' identified by researchers today is the professional activism of precarious academics and their networks, less result-oriented and more 'geared towards the formation and solidification of communities of mutual trust and solidarity' (Vatansever 2022b: 2). According to Aslı Vatansever, such affective forms and relational aspects of work and activism primarily represent a 'feminised' form of resistance and potentially expand the notion of the 'feminisation' of academic work (Vatansever 2022b: 4).

Thus, such new approaches to the study of the agency of displaced academics confirm the idea that individual and collective identities have a complex constructed nature and lie at the crossroads between self-representation and social categorisation (La Barbera 2015: 2). In addition, the exploration of agency as part of the study of forced academic migration not only pays tribute to the self-respect and dignity of academics but can also potentially influence policymakers by proposing alternative categories or by expanding already existing concepts.

The migration experience of Ukrainian academics is a case that illustrates the struggle of displaced academics for their subjecthood. However, it is also somewhat unique due to the specifics of the underlying military conflict and the situation and prospects of Ukrainian academics in Central and Western Europe. The majority of displaced Ukrainian academics are women, which is undoubtedly significant, considering the specifics of women's self-perception practices, inner conflicts and interpersonal relations in emigration (Ivashchenko and Kiselyova 2024). Furthermore, most Ukrainian academics find themselves in a more precarious position on the European academic labour market, since the share of those who have previously developed connections with Western academia, whether conducting research or holding long-term fellowships, is small. Moreover, the activism of Ukrainian academics in 'third spaces' focuses on speaking out about the war in Western academic institutions in order to shape its global understanding and promote political reactions at the international level. However, according to researchers, this leads to the self-labelling of Ukrainian academics as 'others' who are perceived less through their professional accomplishments than on the basis of their experience of war and trauma (Strelnyk and Shcherbyna 2023). On the other hand, these migrant researchers, most of whom intend to return to Ukraine, are increasingly categorised as 'academic losses' in the Ukrainian academic and political discourse, which marginalises the experience and skills they have acquired, as experience gaps widen between those who have left the country and those who have stayed. Thus, Ukrainian

academics find themselves at the crossroads of several discourses that marginalise and 'other' their subjecthood. All this makes the study of forms of Ukrainian academics' self-identification as a component of their agency and struggle for subjecthood a pressing concern. Our goal in this paper is to outline different forms of self-identification developed by displaced Ukrainian academics and to propose a typology of self-identities based on the different ways in which academics construct their autobiographical narratives.

Our analysis is based on the idea that identity is not a thing that people have and that causes them to act in a certain way but is, rather, an ongoing, open process of 'self-identification' linked to the agent's interests and built into the structure of his or her relationships (Jenkins 2008). We thus see the self-identification process itself as an agentic action.

It is methodologically important for our purposes to take into account the temporal orientation of the self-identification process. Following Hitlin and Elder Jr (2007: 171), we believe that the unfolding of this process directly depends on the 'time horizon' – the 'particular zone of temporal space' on which the actor's attention is focused and the perception of which is a reaction to the social situation in which the individual finds herself but, at the same time, is shaped by the individual's free will. As a result, several types of agency emerge. Two of them are relevant for our study. The first is pragmatic agency, which manifests itself in situations where habitual reactions to conventional social actions are invalidated by extraordinary circumstances (Hitlin and Elder 2007: 178), usually leading to a rupture of experience. The second is identity agency as a strategy for following habitual social roles and the habitual patterning of social behaviour, which both presuppose the perception of the continuity of one's own activities and the ability to plan for the future on this basis (Hitlin and Elder 2007: 179). In our case, by pragmatic agency we understand the social agency of interviewees, which covers all practices of 'taking part in the war', at the levels of both behaviour and emotion. By the identity agency of Ukrainian academics, we mean their professional academic activity and adherence to the academic ethos.

From a methodological standpoint, it is important to keep in mind that the typology of self-identities among Ukrainian academic migrants will represent a combination of the typology developed by the actors themselves and that constructed by researchers. Many of our interviewees, for instance, explicitly refuse to identify themselves as refugees or migrants and represent their leaving Ukraine as a form of academic mobility: 'I still reject, with regard to myself... the term "forced migrant" or "forced exile" or "refugee" [...] to me this is another academic leave' (ZSRO 31.08.2022).[2] Another example is: 'I have relatives living here, my father's brother, they are GERMAN, and... they also kept inviting me, but to JUST come, you know, as a refugee, I couldn't come like that, I... well, it's like I never inscribed myself in this role' (ZRBK 29.10.2022).[3]

Overall, we outline 3 types of self-identity of Ukrainian academics in emigration: 'mobile academics', 'refugee academics', and the transitional type of 'displaced academics' for those scholars who found themselves with the status of refugee but who see obtaining contracts and finding opportunities to engage in academic work as a change in status. The first two terms – 'mobile academics' and 'refugee academics' – can, to some extent, be regarded as existential concepts constructed by the interviewees themselves. In contrast, the term 'displaced scholars' is constructed by the authors. Following R. Papadopoulos, we understand it as a concept that emphasises the human experience of migration-related phenomena and perceives the forced nature of migration as a challenge, highlighting the agency of individuals fleeing war and other upheavals (Papadopoulos 2021: 38–43). First, we attempt to articulate the difference between 'mobile academics' and the other two categories, grouping the latter into the general category of 'academics fleeing from war' for the sake of convenience. Next, we try to pin down points of growth in the self-identification of 'displaced academics' through specific narrative strategies that manifest a change in their self-perception.

We must stress that our goal is not to determine the number or proportion of academics who exhibit this or that type of self-identification. This would be impossible, given the spread of our interviews over time and the

uncertainty of any classification. We aim to identify differences in the ways in which academic migrants describe their autobiographical experiences (what they say about those experiences and how they say it) and to describe the process of professional self-identification in forced migration as a dynamic phenomenon.

Method

The study is based on a body of semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian academics collected as part of the oral history project 'Moving West': Ukrainian Academics in Conditions of Forced Migration (2014–2024), which explores strategies of survival and career-building among Ukrainian humanities scholars of the first (2014) and second (2022) waves of migration caused by the Russian–Ukrainian war. In this article, we focus in particular on the experiences of those interviewees who have undergone forced migration to European countries after 24 February 2022. Of these, 43 semi-structured interviews are relevant for this purpose.

The Ukrainian interviewees represent 10 different regions and cities: Kyiv and its region (15), Kharkiv (15), Dnipro (3), Odesa (3), Lviv (2), Vinnytsia (1), Chernihiv (1), Mykolaiv (1), Mariupol (1) and Rivne (1). They are scattered across several European countries: Germany (18), Poland (13), Switzerland (4), France (2), Great Britain (2), Luxembourg (1), Sweden (1), Hungary (1) and the Czech Republic (1). Additionally, 5 of the interviewees had the experience of changing their country of temporary residence during the period under consideration.

Our interviewees primarily come from the humanities (mainly history but also ethnology, English philology, pedagogy and sociology). Most of them (38 individuals) are affiliated with institutions of higher education, while 3 work at research institutes of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, 1 is employed in a museum and 1 is an educator who organises educational and museum projects. In the project, 5 participants hold the degree of Doctor of Sciences (equivalent to Habilitation), 34 hold the Candidate of Sciences degree (equivalent to a PhD) and 4 are currently PhD students.

The gender imbalance among our Ukrainian interviewees (only 3 of 43 are male) is due to the fact that male academics under 60 cannot leave Ukraine, with a few exceptions.[4] Most of the interviewees (22) travelled abroad with their children – 1 with her grandson and daughter and 3 more with their elderly parents. Another 17 left the country with people who needed their care during migration. The presence or absence of dependent family members, to a great extent, determines the characteristics of interviewees' migration experiences and self-perception but it is not a decisive factor in the self-identification and construction of autobiographical narratives.

At the time of their interviews, most of the interviewees were on scholarship programmes lasting from 3 months to a year; only 6 did not have a scholarship. As a rule, the initial scholarships were short-term; during this time the host institutions helped Ukrainian academics to find further funding opportunities. Fourteen academics were granted scholar-at-risk scholarships while several others received research scholarships that were redirected to Ukrainian academics fleeing the war by European academic institutions in 2022. Four more persons held temporary work contracts with academic institutions in their host countries.

The interviewees had a range of relationships with institutions back in Ukraine. At the time of their interviews, most continued to work remotely or had arranged foreign leave, keeping their positions while they were abroad on scholarships. For 5 interviewees, leaving the country led to the termination of their temporary contracts and another 9 resigned during the active phase of the war for personal reasons or because of institutional demands to come back to Ukraine. It should be noted that 14 of our interviewees have already returned home. The ongoing war potentially carries the risk of job loss for Ukrainian academics due to faculty and staff layoffs and pay cuts in conditions, when the average salary of an associate professor in Ukraine amounts to 400 Euros and is not sufficient to meet basic needs.

Due to the traumatic nature of interviewing on this subject and the incompleteness of the events under study, it is important that our research adheres to certain ethical principles: voluntary and informed consent to participate in the project, academic integrity, respect for the rights and interests of the interviewees, recognition of the value of their experience and more (IASFM 2022; Wylegała 2022). To minimise the retraumatising effect of interviewing, we sought out interviewees using the 'snowball' method, which helps to establish a more trusting atmosphere during the interview process. This aspect was also taken into account when preparing the questionnaire. Our principal research tool was the semi-structured qualitative interview, which is based on a questionnaire but which also allows the interviewer to vary the number and sequence of questions and, if necessary, give the initiative to the interviewee. The main focus was on questions concerning the decision to leave the country and choice of destination, expectations and first encounters with reality, as well as reflections on further professional activity and, more generally, on the experience gained. At the initial stage of the project, we deliberately avoided direct questions about interviewees' long-term future, focusing on the discussion of academic migrants' immediate plans and emotional state. Interviewees sign a special agreement in which they choose the degree of public access to their interviews (from the widest possible use under their own name or anonymously to limited access to certain questions or to the interview as a whole), which they can subsequently change. Taking into account the prolongation of the war and possible risks to the interviewees, we currently do not publicise personal data for any of our project participants, which affects the way we cite interviews. However, despite all the difficulties inherent in the study of the extremely traumatic experience of forced migration, in our case the interviewing process is greatly facilitated by the professional background of the interviewees. Almost a third of them were involved in oral history research before the war or took part in such projects after leaving the country, so they are very familiar with the nature of our research and give meaningful consent to participate in it, taking into account the possible risks. In turn, the interviewers' own personal experience of migration also reduces the potential risks of retraumatisation.

We interpret the autobiographical experience of our interviewees using a method of narrative analysis which engages with stories about the experience of migration at the levels of both content and presentation, addressing the questions of what was said and how it was said (Barkhuizen 2014). We follow a performative approach, according to which narratives do not merely represent reality but participate in shaping it. According to Hanna Meretoja, narrative understanding functions by assimilating new situations to what is already known; it also works dialogically, as 'encountering new situations changes one's preconceptions and narrative models of sense-making' (Meretoja 2018: 91). Thus, the narrative represents not the outcome of an already established identity but a performative moment of meaning formation and a process of identity construction whose characteristics change depending on the context (Yarar and Karakaşoğlu 2022).

We attempt here to trace the manifestation of 3 types of self-identification ('mobile academics', 'refugee academics' and 'displaced academics') in the autobiographical narratives of Ukrainian scholars at 3 levels. The first level is the strategy of the representation of the content of the migration experience; here we focus on thematic analysis, while taking into account which interview questions give rise to which themes. Secondly, we consider the level of the metaphorisation of the migration experience. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), we see the metaphor not only as a result of the interpretation of reality (linguistic form) but also as a decision-making mechanism (conceptual structure), which, according to Steen (2008), also has a communicative function. On the third level, we analyse the emotives which are not just emotional markers that reflect experienced emotions but are also tools for directly changing, building, hiding and intensifying emotions, acting with varying degrees of success and generally influencing goal-setting (Reddy 2001).

Results

Strategies for representing the path to the West in interviews with Ukrainian academics

As already noted, some academics consciously reject the refugee identity (interviews PPEK 28.06.2022, ZRBK 29.10.2022, ZSRO 31.08.2022, ZTLK 10.06.2023, ZKWK 09.09.2023) or tell stories manifesting identity conflict – for example, in crossing state borders (ZKRK 04.08.2022). However, not all such interviewees can be classified as 'mobile academics'. Some belong to the group of 'displaced academics', since their self-identification emerges through rethinking their migration experience and their identity is more explicitly conflicted, for example:

> *I don't identify myself as a refugee, I understand that formally and, well, maybe that's why the name researcher-at-risk fellow but... and if many English people treat us like refugees, but what kind of refugee is this that every four yea- four months he reports what he did for his research, that's not quite a refugee in my opinion and again from the point of view of the Ukrainian law I'm not a refugee, I'm on leave, there you go. And... when I'm asked here, was asked once by an English woman whether I consider myself a refugee I say that no, I do not consider myself a refugee, I am here on the same stipend as the other fellows, I'm doing the same work as the other fellows, here* (ZPOK 15.12.2023).

The self-identification of 'mobile academics' is usually supported by certain ways of framing autobiographical experience and a whole network of metaphors that represent the behavioural strategies of academics abroad in terms of academic mobility. One such pattern is a self-conscious focus on a wide 'time horizon', embodied in the strategy of presenting one's experience not as a break but as a continuity of pre-migration and migration experiences in the form of a 'journey West' that began long before the war and migration (ZTLK 10.06.2023). In particular, such interviewees stress their professional background (ZTLK 10.06.2023) and previous exposure to international mobility: 'I was very happy that, back in the day, I had gotten this scholarship – Fulbright – and then I thought it would be good to get a Humboldt some day, too' (PPMK 19.08.2022). They also particularly notes the availability of professional communication networks that facilitated the wartime move abroad and provided a high level of help in adapting to a new country (ZSRO 31.08.2022); 'Everything was taken care of' (ZRBK 29.10.2022). For the interviewee whose words are quoted at length in the previous paragraph, the 'turning point' in making the decision to go abroad (where his long-time academic contacts were waiting for him) was his experience of domestic migration to Western Ukraine after the start of the full-scale invasion. He describes it as finding himself in a 'turbulent flow', a 'tunnel', which had no end in sight and which became 'part of this story' that brought him to one of the most renowned European universities. It is interesting that the interviewee articulated this theme when replying to the question about the meaning of his experience of migration, which we see as evidence of a reflection on identity, part of which is awareness of the importance of the continuity of experience: 'It was some kind of a turning point but, who knows, maybe in a few years all this will look different' (ZPOK 15.12.2023).

Another aspect of representing the autobiographical experience characteristic of interviewees whom we classified as 'mobile academics' was making a point that their decision was not just to evacuate from Ukraine but to leave with the goal of continuing academic work: 'And... then, then I simply made the decision for myself that, if I were to leave, I would not just go into nowhere but go to work. That is, do what I can, because this is ALSO important and also relevant' (ZSRO 31.08.2022).

> *...it was clear to me that if I still wanted to continue... to TEACH normally and... do something from a research point of view, then leaving a dangerous territory for a few months, it would probably be the best decision [...] I just said to myself right away, I don't know WHY I decided this, but I had to decide something in this respect, that I would NOT just GO, well, not knowing where* (PEMK 22.08.2022).

This decision affected the level of organisation of the departure, among other things. 'Refugee academics' and 'displaced academics' in most cases used evacuation or personal transport or found a ride with someone else, referring to the entire undertaking as a 'classic evacuation' (ZSHD, 08.01.2024) or 'escape' (PDLR 17.06.2022). 'Mobile academics', on the other hand, despite the fact that they were also leaving in the first months of the war, planned their route and bought tickets, calling their departure from Ukraine a 'journey West' (ZTLK 10.06.2023), a 'path' they paved (ZSRO 31.08.2022) or even a 'voyage' (PEMK, 22.08.2022). It should be noted, however, that this aspect of our interviewees' experience was greatly influenced by the timing of their departure from Ukraine (the first weeks vs the first months of the full-scale invasion), as well as the geographical factor – from which part of Ukraine (eastern/western; under occupation/not under occupation) the interviewees left.

The most common metaphor characterising the move abroad in the narratives of Ukrainian academics is that of 'the road to nowhere'. 'Mobile academics' tend to apply it to others, while 'refugee academics' and sometimes 'displaced academics' use it fairly widely in speaking of their own experiences – pointing out, for example, issues with reception in the new country if they had an invitation and guarantees of a scholarship (ZNCK 05.11.2022) or, more often, in situations when they did not have a clear destination or invitation from European colleagues or acquaintances (PBWK 05.08.2022, ZRGK 20.06.2022). Notably, this metaphor not only conveys the subjective experiences and feelings of interviewees accustomed to planning all aspects of their lives but could also, at the communicative level, be used to appeal to European colleagues, reflecting the academics' expectations: '...and then when I was already on the train, I wrote to a colleague that, we had met in Kharkiv […]. And purely by accident, I think of her, write and say, "So and so, I'm on my way to nowhere, to the West". She says, "Well, I'll help you, I know some people"' (PBWK, 05.08.2022).

Interviewees also gave different answers to the question of what crossing the Ukrainian border meant for them. As a rule, 'mobile academics' refused to assign any symbolic meaning to border crossing, considering it an ordinary event, one among many for them, including for academic purposes: 'I, well, there was nothing symbolic for me, I had, I only had the feeling of, God, how easy it, HAS BECOME' (PPMK 19.08.2022). For some interviewees, it was this question that prompted them to state their rejection of the refugee identity: 'So... there was nothing particularly symbolic that I was getting out of Ukraine, I was leaving Ukraine, so for me this was another academic trip. It's just that before it was a month, or two, three at most, and now it's a year' (ZSRO 31.08.2022).

However, for many 'academics fleeing from war', stories of crossing the border or approaching it presented an opportunity to talk about their strong emotional experiences. It is interesting that, for one interviewee, these experiences were related precisely to the conflict between the professional and the refugee identities:

> *Then as I remember very well, how we=our train arrived in Przemyśl. And we see the windows these volunteers start coming up, waving at us, and I'm just crying. To me, I had this feeling, you know, I had always gone to Poland for fellowships, for grants, for summer schools as a researcher, and here I am as a refugee with some kind of backpack, a small suitcase, with a child in my arms. Well, I know that a friend is already waiting for me there in Przemyśl [...] I understood that, like, I wouldn't be stranded at the station, but I, so much that, I cried...* (ZZPD 30.06.2023).

However, more often interviewees talk in these stories about the feeling of guilt caused by parting with loved ones (ZNCK 05.11.2022, PDLR 17.06.2022) and the sense of betraying Ukraine and the Ukrainian people: 'I LEFT my people there' (ZPBL 15.08.2022), 'a GUILT complex, that you have, like, abandoned your fatherland' (ZVML 11.09.2022) and 'the FEELING, that I'm abandoning Ukraine, GUILT, reproach' (ZHBK 02.10.2022), often applying to themselves such derogatory markers as 'traitor' (PDLR 17.06.2022, ZVML 11.09.2022) or 'coward' (ZHBK 02.10.2022).

As a rule, 'mobile academics' do not display such feelings. In only one case did an interviewee mention the 'moral choice' that faced her as a 'patriotic person' (PPMK 19.08.2022). However, it is not just the statement of emotions and thoughts that is important but also how they are expressed. For instance, the last-mentioned interviewee uses, for this purpose, conceptual language such as 'the survivor complex' and her narrative functions less as a description of her emotions and more as an effort to manage them, to find circumstances justifying her decision.

Conversely, narratives of 'refugee academics' and 'displaced academics' are often dominated by strategies that represent their overall migration experience as traumatic. On the one hand, this is evident in the fact that interviewees, when answering the question about the meaning of their experience, draw attention to the emotional aspects ('mental conditions') that distinguish the experience of mobility from forced migration:

> *…many people from our diaspora believe that we are in COMFORTABLE conditions here, NOT LIKE... when they first arrived. But these are DIFFERENT mental conditions, different feelings… of a kind of hopelessness, tragedy* (PKMK 22.08.2022).

> *I always sort of kept moving forward, and now I also just see, I in some way, I'm following this scenario, but... it is quite traumatic, it is an experience of moving forward, but in different conditions, in the conditions when... when there is suffering around you, when your country is on fire, and CRYING, you know, it's VERY hard* (ZVML 11.09.2022).

On the other hand, some interviewees return several times to the theme of guilt when answering different kinds of question, describing in detail their emotions and thoughts: 'I would CHEW MYSELF OUT EVERY DAY, HARD' (ZVML 11.09.2022) and 'I couldn't do without sedatives, more or less' (ZHBK 02.10.2022). The use of this self-justification through a guilt and suffering strategy testifies to both the intensity of interviewees' emotional experiences and their authenticity. However, in terms of self-identification, it reflects the prevalence of pragmatic agency, the switching of interviewees' attention from their professional academic identity to a socially relevant one. A fairly large number of our interviewees indicated that they thought about the need to personally participate in the war – 'We got a request from the university who wanted to sign up for territorial defence; I signed up' (ZGLK 09.02.2023) – or 'physically' take part in the volunteer movement to support the war effort: 'Let's say helping to bandage the wounded, I very much considered this prospect for myself' (PPMK 19.08.2022). Thus, shame and guilt were caused by the inability to properly fulfil a valued social role (Owens and Goodney 2000) that came to the fore during the full-scale war.

At the same time, bringing up the feeling of guilt is often accompanied by representing the decision to leave Ukraine as an action taken under pressure from the family and made necessary by the obligation of care for loved ones (PDLR 17.06.2022, PKLK 16.04.2022): 'If it had concerned me PERSONALLY, of course NOT. I wouldn't have left, there's just no reason to. The CHILDREN, the children, it's this maternal instinct, you must get them set up somewhere […] and it was like a... like an excuse for me' (ZVML 11.09.2022). In this way, interviewees try to mitigate the effect of destructive emotions; however, as a result, giving up agency in the matter of motives behind leaving the country inevitably affects the construction of their autobiographical

narrative about the experience of migration as a whole: ‘Like, even now I have this feeling that this is not at all=not=not my- my kind of behaviour, that it is not completely MY CHOICE, that it is, like, it is a bit imposed, sort of... by my FAMILY or something’ (ZPBL 15.08.2022).

Also noteworthy is the difference in interviewees’ representations of their expectations for the future as they were leaving Ukraine. For ‘academics fleeing the war’, regardless of whether colleagues and acquaintances were expecting them abroad, the future was characterised by ‘unknowability’ (PDLR 17.06.2022); they were experiencing ‘the state of BEING LOST’ (PKWK 05.08.2022), the fear of ‘being stranded on the streets’ (ZRGK 20.06.2022). The future looked as uncertain as it could be, which made it impossible to build a forward-looking strategy: ‘I had no plans, I DID NOT PLAN’ (PKLK 16.04.2022). Accordingly, interviewees testify that they were ready to work in other kinds of jobs (PKKD 18.06.2022, ZRGK 20.06.2022) and expected a break in their academic career:

> *So you’ll have to stay, you think: well, physical labour, – yeah, you don’t know the language, it is probably physical labour, well, I’m not afraid of any physical labour, right, but, still, I thought, that, there were no prospects, of continuing, the academic career...* (PKLK 16.04.2022).

Alternatively, ‘mobile academics’, in their narratives, spoke of going abroad as the beginning of a new phase, a chance to continue academic work (PEMK 22.08.2022, PPMK 19.08.2022, ZRBK 29.10.2022). In this case, it may seem that a guaranteed scholarship abroad is the key factor in the self-identification of academics. Researchers have argued that the migration trajectories and possible success of highly skilled migrants in any migration movement are shaped by several factors, the central one being ‘the way they enter a country: with a job offer or not’ (Weinar and Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 3). However, as already noted, not all academics who had prior contracts and guarantees can be classified as ‘mobile academics’. The key criterion here, we would like to stress once again, is the deliberate construction by interviewees of their own professional self-identity and its purposeful presentation in interviews.

We may highlight the importance of this thesis using the example of an interviewee who speaks of a deep internal conflict concerning the decision to leave Ukraine – which, she says, was made under pressure from her husband (PEMK 22.08.2022). Nevertheless, the description of the trajectory of her subsequent migration experience exhibits a certain sense of purpose. Thus, the interviewee decided to go, by invitation, to continue her work. She frames the story of the first weeks of adapting to a new country as that of struggle between apathy and professional obligations:

> *For the first maybe TEN DAYS, I wasn’t I didn’t WANT anything, I wanted to just sit and do nothing. […] I HATED myself, why am I so WIMPY, why am I so WEAK, THIS IS NOT RIGHT, I have to ACT! THAT’S IT! LET’S GO, GET TO WORK and that’s what I* [laughs] *was saying to myself* (PEMK 22.08.2022).

Finally, the process of establishing contacts with European colleagues is presented as a conscious strategy on the part of the interviewee to change the nature of these relationships from humanitarian assistance to professional communication – ‘intellectual care’:

> *...if I had said, that I needed, well, I don’t know, an iron... right, well, because I don’t have one, I need, like, a blanket... because I’m cold or something. Well, they would have found all this for me, and... said, ‘THIS IS IT, we have helped, a Ukrainian, right, everything is great, we, we have done something’ […] I had requests like, here, read my text, I want to present it, and can I, I don’t know, I=me advi can you advise me I really want to, and can I ask you questions, and can you send me literature on this here subject... […]*

because I have come to whom, to intellectuals, well... what am I going to do, ask them for an iron? (PEMK 22.08.2022).

At the same time, the interviewee is aware of – and emphasises several times – the difference between her own strategy of behaviour and that of her Ukrainian colleagues at one of the largest universities in Europe. Thus, for example:

One of my [laughs] *colleagues there was complaining that at the Center, where SHE now was, they were saying that she should present something every month, she says: 'Oh my, every month, isn't that a bit much?' No, awesome... EVERY MONTH I would also like to do it every month'* (PEMK 22.08.2022).

Furthermore, our interviewee deliberately calls her internship a 'job' because this is what helps her to mobilise her strength and makes it easier to perform professional duties in extreme circumstances. Thus, once again, it is the ways of evaluating and representing one's professional activities that are key to the construction of identities in narratives of forced migration.

Strategies for representing professional activities during forced migration

Ukrainian scholars see the opportunities for academic work that have opened up for them, such as scholarships, grants or employment in European universities, in a variety of ways. Academics in the 'fleeing from war' category often perceive such opportunities as humanitarian aid (ZGBK 04.11.2022, PKLK 16.04.2022). Of course, any programmes for scholars at risk are primarily of a humanitarian nature; they are historically, socially and culturally determined and are directly related to the existing political regimes of migration (Löhr 2022: 81), of which participants on these programmes are certainly aware. However, it is important for us to concentrate on how our interlocutors represent the connection between the new prospects and their own experiences and what meaning they attribute to these professional opportunities.

'Academics fleeing from war' sometimes express their understanding of the humanitarian nature of the assistance through acknowledging that they lacked the necessary qualifications to compete for certain positions and opportunities:

To get this opportunity having right now the=the CV with the CV points that I have now is IMPOSSIBLE (ZHBK 02.10.2022).

I appreciate everything that I have received here... for me it is very unexpected, I never I mean somewhere in December [20]*21 I of course did not imagine that I would be HERE* [a well-known university in Germany] *[...] I... APPRECIATE it, because it... is absolutely at variance with my ideas about myself, about myself in academia* (ZUMK 08.09.2022).

Overall, the representation of social advancement as dependent on circumstances – rather than on one's own merits – and guilt towards those who are 'unlucky', are characteristic of the impostor syndrome (Mikrut and Łuczaj 2023), which occurs quite often among women who achieve success (Clance and Suzanne 1987) (note that 90 per cent of our interviewees are women). In the academic context, the concept of *habitus clivé* is more often used, which is designed to capture the psychological cost of academic mobility (Friedman 2016: 145). Research shows that, while in situations of gradual and limited mobility the *habitus* is equipped with resources to adapt to new social conditions, in cases of rapid mobility across the boundaries of the habitual

academic milieu, intended as long-term, the risk of painful mental sensations/emotional imprint increases (Friedman 2016: 139), which further impairs the condition of academics traumatised by war and uncertain future prospects.

This is why some of our interviewees represent their overall migration experience as traumatic. As already noted, this also affects academics' view of new professional opportunities. Thus, scholars 'fleeing from war' often interpret/evaluate the opportunity to continue their work first and foremost as psychological help, an avenue of escape from heavy thoughts and emotions:

> *Some TEMPORARY GRANTS, temporary PROGRAMMES... We started to frantically submit documents, again plunged into THIS kind of activity […] and it, of course, took up all the free time remaining from... right... from a small child and so on, this, of course, HELPED, right, TO TUNE OUT, to not read the news* (PKLK 16.04.2022).

Work does have a broad healing power and plays a critical role in the lives of those emerging from traumatic experience (Mollica 2006: 172). However, it is noteworthy that our interviewees particularly stress the importance of being busy – 'Well, work, work is always something that helps. I, I sit taking notes into the night until I just feel like I'm going to fall asleep over them' (ZGLK 09.02.2023) – rather than the significance of work as a way to find purpose and value. Also, sometimes the conditions that pushed our interviewees towards self-mobilisation are represented as external circumstances: 'This seminar, it... it put us back on our feet, you know' (ZVML 11.09.2022); 'One way or another someone invites you, with popular lectures […] Well, even if in=in=in a popularising format, they still get you back into academic work' (ZPBL 15.08.2022).

Some interviewees saw the opportunities for obtaining scholarships and contracts primarily as help from their European colleagues. They often characterised such colleagues as friends and sought to stress that their experience of close interaction took their relationship to a qualitatively new level of friendship or even something comparable to family ties: 'VERY WONDERFUL PEOPLE, I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO THEM for their support, they sincerely support Ukrainians, right, and I kind of always feel such, well, very powerful support and, you can always discuss the situation in Ukraine that is, you know, sort of FAMILY relations' (ZGAB 06.09.2023).

On the other hand, 'mobile academics', despite also seeing help from their European colleagues as 'invaluable support' (ZSRO 31.08.2022) that deepened their connection, still underscored the professional nature of such relationships: 'If I hadn't been SPECIFICALLY invited here, to the university, I would NOT HAVE LEFT... I have friends with whom... friends, acquaintances, colleagues, I don't even know what to call them, you could say PARTNERS, with whom we have been working together since 2010' (ZRBK 29.10.2022).

It must be said that the nature and level of assistance from European academics and academic institutions were important factors in the shaping of the self-perception of displaced Ukrainian scholars. As a rule, the latter were 'mobile academics' who found themselves in a milieu in which they received not only humanitarian but also professional aid and in which they were viewed as partners in the process of producing sound knowledge about Ukraine and the ongoing war. Moreover 'mobile academics' often made a point of highlighting their own agency in these relationships, noting that they not only received support from their European colleagues but also, in turn, helped the latter professionally (ZSRO 31.08.2022). It is important to note that some interviewees represented their success in European institutions, such as obtaining new grants, primarily as a result of their own actions and efforts:

> *I even see my colleagues who are like 'Will they keep us or not?' for example, at the institute [...] and it is not clear to me, the question of what it means, 'keep us' [...] I, like, well, I work and see the results probably*

the colleagues who are around they also see this, and that's why they speak for you, because if you are moving, right, westward and... you're not interesting, well, they won't be writing on your behalf (ZTLK 10.06.2023).

At the same time, we should note once again that 'mobile academics' deliberately stressed the difference between their own situation and the experience of their Ukrainian colleagues working in the same European institutions. The category of 'Other' is an important aspect of a stable identity. Thus, on the one hand, 'identity agency' helped scholars to return to normal practices of academic competition, driven by professional interests: 'It is very clear that our people are not familiar with either literature or discourses or none, that is, maybe because they simply never had access to these materials [...] I'm saying that from a professional standpoint I would refuse [to extend scholarships], but they are not refused' (PPMK 19.08.2022). However, on the other hand, in the new situation, the resources and self-identification of 'mobile academics' pushed them to focus their efforts on organising help for their colleagues at home in obtaining academic opportunities and leaving Ukraine. In this, they acted as negotiators/intermediaries with their Western colleagues, which strengthened their symbolic capital (ZRBK 29.10.2022): 'That is, I was also able to... bring three more girls to the project. They already came, as it were, to a SET TABLE because we had already, they only needed their resumes because I took all this work upon myself' (ZTLK 10.06.2023). 'Mobile academics' also underscored their social agency – for example, by talking about their initiatives in organising the activities of the Ukrainian diaspora in general – and showed signs of possessing high psychological capital:

That is, the option when the environment formats me is not my option, rather I format my environment. Right, and the thesis 'It's good where we are', so, if I've ended up HERE, then I'll do my UTMOST here. Right, for my country, for my family, for and for myself (ZSRO 31.08.2022).

This mental stability and refusal to represent experience as traumatic can be explained by traits of personality; however, in our view, the difference in the perception of the future is also important. For all categories of interviewee, the future is as unpredictable as it can be during a war; nevertheless, all were willing to discuss the meaning of the migration experience for them, as well as ways in which it could be used in the future in their teaching and research. However, here 'mobile academics' were also distinguished from the other categories by a distinctive 'time horizon of the future' – namely the ability to focus attention on their period of migration/mobility as a temporal zone important in and of itself. For them, this period is not just a gap between the known past and the unpredictable future; it has a measurable value, expressed in concrete academic outcomes – usually writing books, completing doctoral theses (PEMK 22.08.2022, PPMK 19.08.2022), contributing to collective monographs (ZTLK 10.06.2023, ZSRO 31.08.2022) or editing collections of sources:

Integration, integration I'm not integrating into this SYSTEM, but... I want to DO SOME WORK, I want to take MORE... what I CAN take now, right, of the same, like I said, of the same SOURCES, of the stuff that later it will be possible to work with back home, with that material (ZRBK 29.10.2022).

Thus, the drive of 'mobile academics' to articulate a professional identity distinguishes them from other academics, whom we have grouped into the category of 'fleeing from war'. However, most interviewees in the latter group show signs of leaving the refugee identity behind; they can often be classified as 'displaced academics'. Such signs vary depending on the timing of the interview (for example, during the search for grants) or circumstances of migration (for example, migration from areas of intense strikes or shelling or the

experience of migration burdened with care for family and children). In the latter case, interviewees often spoke about a conflict between professional and family responsibilities when, faced with professional prospects, they could not fully meet their own idea of professionalism due to the need to care for loved ones (ZVML 11.09.2022, PKMK 22.08.2022, ZPBL 15.08.2022). It is interesting that some 'mobile academics' represented their children as 'partners' (PEMK 22.08.2022) and allies in taking advantage of the opportunities opening up in the course of migration (PPMK 19.08.2022, ZSRO 31.08.2022).

Despite the diversity of experiences of 'academics fleeing from war', however, we can detect signs indicating a departure from the refugee identity. First and foremost, many interviewees rejected the identity of a victim and distinguished themselves from other categories of refugees. The emphasis here was placed not so much on the fact that academics received additional opportunities abroad but on their eagerness to continue academic work: 'But now I am seeing... completely different situations, when people si- for 3–4 months they sit and do nothing, just sleep [...]. We had COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, a different vision of our stay here' (ZRGK 20.06.2022); 'I will try to do my BEST to work HARD, to do everything in my power' (PPEK 28.06.2022).

Also inextricably linked with the rejection of the victim identity is interviewees' stated intent to independently solve problems arising during migration (ZKRK 05.10.2022, PKWK 05.08.2022), as well as their efforts to build relationships of equality with colleagues who helped them:

> *That is, I do not have a feeling that... I... owe something or that I am treated with some kind of, like, sa-, not sadness, but with some kind of...* [Int. – pity]. *Yes, that is, I am treated as an... EQUAL, right. And, uh, and this helps me, for example, we were invited to dinner, and this Friday we are having Geraldine and her husband over for dinner* (ZKRK 05.10.2022).

The change in self-identification is also evident in the fact that interviewees not only describe their mental experiences – in particular the feeling of guilt – but also reflect on how they cope with such emotions. In so doing, social obligations connected with one's participation in the war effort are framed in terms of the pressing awareness of professional responsibilities:

> *She managed to realise my dream of joining the territorial defence she says, 'Well, all right, I joined the territorial defence, got registered there, I went there for a month, and then they told me 'That's it, go home, we don't need you here, we, like, need professionals'. That is, she, so to speak, gave me to understand that everyone should do their job. That is, yes, I don't have, like, combat experience, but I have the experience of teaching, I can do that* (ZGLK 09.02.2023).

In fact, the most common metaphor interviewees use to represent their activities during the war is that of fighting on the 'information front' (ZVML 11.09.2022, ZHBK 02.10.2022, ZRGK 20.06.2022): 'Everyone on their front must do everything in order for us to win as soon as possible. And-and I believe that our work, and for us it is information work, that this information front plays a very important role' (ZMLM 31.10.2022). The professional activities of academics assume the character of a twofold mission – to disseminate information about the Russian–Ukrainian war and to represent the Ukrainian academic community abroad through one's work:

> *...those people who will now work in Europe, with their reputation they also cement the reputation of Ukraine and create the reputation of Ukraine. And if before, European institutions, well, were afraid somewhat, yes, let's say, to collaborate with Ukrainian institutions, now they will not be afraid of it, because*

they will see, well, that our people are also highly professional, reliable and hardworking and this is now kind of like our, our mission today for those who are in Europe from the academic community, it's... to uphold and create Ukraine's reputation here, so that they keep working with us going forward (ZKPC 27.07.2022).

This vision was not only declarative. It was also expressed in concrete decisions and choices – for instance, the decision to write and publish in European languages, which would potentially 'make Ukraine better heard, internationally' (ZPOK 15.12.2023). The willingness of our interviewees to reflect on the use of their traumatic experience of migration in research can also be seen as a sign of professional growth. Thus, some interviewees stated that their experience helped them to better understand the behaviour of historical actors caught up in tragic events of the past (PILK 18.04.2022, PKLK 16.04.2022, PKMK 22.08.2022). The willingness to incorporate reflection and a search for the meaning of the migration experience into one's current and future activities is an important sign of post-traumatic growth (Kraybill 2019).

Thus, the overwhelming majority of academic participants in our project show signs, in their interviews, of the actualisation of their professional self-identification, which allows us to classify them as 'displaced academics'. We propose this term as a way to highlight the fluid nature of the forced migrant identity of academics and the potential of professional values and commitments as drivers of change in their identity.

Those who spoke of themselves more as refugees were usually those who did not have the opportunity to obtain scholarships and contracts in European academic institutions (PKKD 18.06.2022, ZPBL 15.08.2022, ZSHD 08.01.2024, ZGBK 04.11.2022) or (like one interviewee) who found employment in a different field (PDLR 17.06.2022). In such cases, it is external factors, more than the narrator's intention, that influence the representation of the migration experience. Nevertheless, it is important to show the impact of migration on the self-identification of this group as well. Thus, several interviewees stated their decision to return to Ukraine but, at the same time, spoke about plans to apply for grant programmes (ZGBK 04.11.2022, ZPBL 15.08.2022). Another interlocutor, interviewed after her return to Ukraine, noted that access to European libraries allowed her to formulate a new topic that she was now working on internationally:

…and when I came to [Central European country] *for the second time this summer, I had this bag, with the Ukrainian colours like a flag, this image of a girl on it. And I went around with this bag, always, and I sometimes caught people looking at me in different ways, I just felt it but I was like like all confident, that I'm not leeching, pardon me, on your taxes I'm here doing research work, earning a living. I came on my own have done work on my own and will go home on my own* (ZSHD 08.01.2024).

Conclusion

The proposed typology of the self-identification of Ukrainian academic migrants, as represented in their interviews through specific narrative strategies, demonstrates the dynamic nature of the self-identification process. We believe that our article provides strong support for recognising the process of the self-identification of academics as a special and important form of their agency. We draw attention to the fact that it is not enough to register the rejection of the 'refugee' identity at the level of a narrator's self-labelling. Self-identification is a complex and continuous process of autobiographical storytelling by displaced academics in which they rework their migration experience which, in turn, leads to certain decisions and actions. This process demands significant effort, unfolding as it does in conditions of uncertainty and vulnerability and amid a multiplicity of marginalising discourses.

Furthermore, our paper underscores the key importance of professional agency for displaced academics. In wartime conditions, Ukrainian academics are faced with a value conflict between civic duty and self-preservation (and the preservation of loved ones). The experience of migration pushes them to re-imagine their pragmatic agency, which becomes part of their professional identity. Moreover, professional identity serves as an important instrument of post-traumatic growth and resilience for displaced Ukrainian academics.

First, our interviewees' reflected-upon experiences of mobility become a resource for them, creating (but not necessarily guaranteeing) the opportunity to construct a more consistent academic identity in difficult conditions. Second, professional activity serves as an important 'anchor' (on this term, see Grzymala-Kazlowska and Ryan 2022) for Ukrainian academic migrants, allowing them to emotionally and cognitively cope with negative feelings, maintain relative social and mental stability and function effectively in the new environment. As a result, the replacement of their 'refugee' identity with the identity of a 'displaced academic' occurs hand-in-hand with the growth of the perceived social significance of their professional activities (taking on the quality of a mission) and redefinition of their professional responsibilities. Finally, the experience of migration in and of itself usually helps academics to become more resilient. Thus, even interviews with 'refugee academics' who did not take advantage of professional opportunities during their forced migration show the influence of their experience on their subsequent professional mobilisation and on the development of positive ideas about their own strengths and capabilities. So, professional identity rooted in academic values potentially becomes the basis for the psychological integration of the experience of displaced Ukrainian academics, adding to the sense of coherence of this experience.

Our study also has implications for the conceptual and terminological apparatus of the study of forced academic migration. By highlighting the dynamic nature of the process of self-identification of Ukrainian academics, centred on their professional identity, we hope to contribute to Papadopoulos' (2021) concept of 'displacement' as an alternative to 'forced migration', shifting the emphasis from the external stimuli and circumstances of migration to the feelings and reactions of displaced persons and their reflexive work on their own life experience.

It is also important to stress that, for some Ukrainian academics, rejection of the identity of a 'refugee' or 'migrant' is conceptually linked to the notion of 'academic mobility'. On the one hand, this concept is grounded in the interviewees' previous experience; on the other, it sets a certain horizon of expectations for the future – to return home and apply the acquired experience in the field of research and education in Ukraine. This is where the unique value potential of this category lies. However, the agency of Ukrainian academics comes into conflict with the discourse of 'academic losses', widespread in Ukraine, which perceives migrant academics as an anonymous and homogeneous group, marginalising them and ignoring the competencies and experience which they have gained abroad. We see the practical significance of our analysis in bringing to the fore the need to acknowledge this experience and integrate it into the national academic and social context.

Furthermore, our goal is to draw attention particularly to the reflexive work of academics on self-identification. It is at the level of identity construction that both codified knowledge and 'tacit knowledge', accumulating through socialisation and professional growth in a given community, are acquired and transmitted. The experience of academics thus requires further study and should become the subject of academic and public discussion.

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Notes

1. Article 12. Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/55/oj/eng.
2. The names of interviewees are encoded as follows: the first letter indicates the form of recording (via Zoom or in person), the second letter represents the surname code (the first letter of the interviewee's last name), the third letter denotes place of residence abroad, and the fourth letter corresponds to place of residence in Ukraine.
3. In order to bring the spoken and written language as close together as possible, our transcription marks all 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) and the interviewee's behaviour and reactions to the questions (laughter, excitement, embarrassment, etc.)
4. All interviewees are correctly gendered in the article. For male respondents, we used the pronoun 'he' and for female respondents, we used 'she'.

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