

# From Drifting to Anchoring. Capturing the Experience of Ukrainian Migrants in Poland

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*The article applies the concept of anchoring, defined as the process of searching for footholds and points of reference which allows individuals to acquire socio-psychological stability and security and function effectively in a new environment, to explore complex, multidimensional and flexible adaptation and settlement processes among migrants from Ukraine in Poland. Based on 40 in-depth interviews and questionnaires with migrants resident in Warsaw and its vicinity, we argue that the traditional categories employed for analysing migrants' adaptation and settlement such as 'integration' or 'assimilation' are not always adequate to capture the way of functioning and experience of contemporary Ukrainian migrants. Rather than traditional categories, we propose to apply the concept of anchoring which enables us to capture Ukrainians' 'fluid' migration, drifting lives and complex identities as well as mechanisms of settling down in terms of searching for relative stability rather than putting down roots. The paper discusses the ambiguous position of Ukrainian migrants in Poland constructed as neither-strangers nor the same, gives insight into their drifting lives and illuminates ways of coping with temporariness and establishing anchors to provide a sense of stability and security. This approach, linking identity, security and incorporation, emphasises, on the one hand, the psychological and emotional aspects of establishing new footholds and, on the other hand, tangible anchors and structural constraints. Its added value lies in the fact that it allows for the complexity, simultaneity and changeability of anchoring and the reverse processes of un-anchoring to be included.*

*Keywords: social anchoring, Ukrainian migrants, integration, adaptation, settlement*

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## **Introduction**

Since 1989 the most numerous group of migrants coming to Poland has consisted of increasingly diverse citizens of Ukraine. Although due to their numbers and significance on the job market in Poland, Ukrainian migrants have attracted attention and become the subject of intensive studies, research to date has predominantly addressed the issues of migrants' economic activity, social networks and mixed marriages (Górny and Kępińska 2004; Fihel, Górny, Grzymała-Kazłowska, Kępińska and Piekut 2007; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2008; Górny, Grabowska-Lusińska, Lesińska and Okólski 2010; Kindler 2011). The previous studies have not focused on socio-psychological challenges experienced by migrants nor examined the complexity of adaptation and settlement within the context of 'fluid' migrations. Additionally, turbulence in Ukraine, starting with the Euro-maidan demonstrations in 2013, followed by the 2014 revolution, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass, has provided new motives for migration from Ukraine including the revival of patriotism and nationalism, fear of violence and forced migration, which were not taken into account in previous analyses.

The goal of this article is to capture complex, multidimensional and flexible adaptation and settlement processes among migrants from Ukraine in Poland through the lens of the concept of anchoring (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2016). We argue that the traditional categories employed for analysing the processes of adaptation and settlement of migrants in receiving societies, such as 'integration' or 'assimilation', are not always adequate to capture the way of functioning and experience of contemporary migrants. We present our argument using the example of Ukrainian migrants in Poland. Rather than traditional categories, we propose to apply the concept of anchoring which allows for understanding the simultaneity and flexibility of migrants' attachments as well as the complexity of adaptation (understood as adjustment to a new environment). It enables us to capture Ukrainians' 'fluid' migration, drifting lives and complex and dynamic identities as well as mechanisms of settling down, in terms of achieving a state of relative stability, rather than developing roots which firmly ground individuals in a new country.

Anchoring is defined as the process of searching for footholds and points of reference which allow individuals to acquire socio-psychological stability and security (defined as a feeling of being safe and not exposed to chaos and danger) and function effectively in a new life environment. This approach adds to the prevalent understanding of adaptation and settlement, offers a more comprehensive perspective than that of integration, links identity, integration and social networks as well as incorporating the issue of security, and integrates psychological and sociological approaches. It emphasises, on the one hand, the psychological and emotional aspects of establishing new footholds and points of references and, on the other hand, tangible anchors and structural constraints. Its added value lies in the fact that it allows for the complexity, variety, simultaneity and changeability of anchoring and the reverse processes of un-anchoring to be included.

This article outlines our key arguments and contributions in six sections. After presenting the theoretical framework and methodological approach and the context of the research, it discusses the complex and ambiguous position of Ukrainian migrants in Poland as those who are neither strangers nor the same. Then, the article gives an account of the drifting lives of the interviewees before moving to the last section, which focuses on migrants' ways of coping with temporariness and establishing anchors which provided them with a sense of stability and security.

## **Conceptualising adaptation and settlement beyond integration and assimilation**

The predominant – usually circular – form of migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland in the period of systemic transition following the breakup of the Soviet Union was described with the aid of the concept 'incomplete migration' (Okólski 2001). Okólski (2001) defines 'incomplete migration' as a temporary international

movement between post-communist countries and Western European states by migrants who usually did not comply to administrative rules and sojourned in host countries in order to earn money in their 'shadow zones' for the benefit of households in the countries of origin. Incomplete migration was presented as the product of, on the one hand, 'unfinished' urbanisation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) societies with an insufficient movement of population from underdeveloped peripheries to urban areas and, on the other hand, economic disparities between CEE countries and Western states combined with demand for migrant labour in the secondary job sector of the latter.

However, in recent years we have been witnessing the diversification of migration, transforming patterns and blurring borders between different types of mobility, also visible in the case of migration from Ukraine to Poland. In the face of intensive migrations accompanied by the processes of globalisation and technological advancement, two classic models of traditional migration – settlement and temporary – have proved to be insufficient (Castles, Korac, Vasta and Vertovec 2002). The divided and multiple attachments of contemporary migrants as well as the diversity and flexibility of current migrations have become acknowledged. The transnational perspective has been used to capture migrants' simultaneous relations with their countries of origin and destination, as well as resulting ties (family, economic, social, organisational, religious, political) which span nation-state boundaries (Glick-Schiller 2003) and strategies for life in transnational social spaces crossing geographical, cultural and political borders (Faist 2000).

The notion of 'liquid migration' has been introduced to describe the new type of European migration where migrants choose individualised paths of migration, look for a place for themselves in different countries, often taking advantage of open borders and labour markets in the European Union (EU) (Engbersen 2011). It underlines that migrants may become detached from both their countries of origin and their current places of residence (Engbersen, Leerkes, Grabowska-Lusińska, Snel and Burgers 2013), living on the move and adopting a strategy of intentional unpredictability (Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich 2007). In a similar way we use the notion of 'fluid' migration to refer to migrants' changeable attachment. A different type of temporariness resulting from circular migration has been observed in relation to Ukrainian migrants in Poland as an effect of legal constraints and geographical closeness (Górny and Kindler 2016). In the light of the described phenomena, the well-established categories used in discussions about migrants' adaptation and settlement such as 'integration' or 'assimilation' seem insufficient to capture the complexity and fluidity of migrants' lives.

Although the concept of integration has been to date a central category in migration studies (Favell 2001), it has been also a problematic notion because of its politicisation, the domination of a practical and empirical approach over an analytical and theoretical one (Spencer and Cooper 2006). In addition, there is a problem of its adequacy in relation to increasingly unstable, complex and transnationally linked societies (Urry 2000). Growing mobility and diversity, taking in some places the form of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), are accompanied by growing individualisation, the reduction of coherent cultural systems and traditional institutions such as the conventional family or institutionalised religion, which is interrelated with accelerating economic and institutional transformations and rapidly increasing inequalities (Giddens 2006). These developments have led to alternative, more dynamic conceptualisations of society in terms of networks (Castells 1996) or various types of mobilities and flows (Urry 2000) rather than fixed groups and socio-cultural systems as assumed in an integrationist perspective.

Moreover, integration has been mainly understood as the participation of migrants in the life of a receiving society, often stimulated by special policies. It has been confused (particularly in public debate) with assimilation, seen as being absorbed into a dominant society and not maintaining a separate ethnic identity, instead of being perceived rather as an adaptation strategy when migrants establish a relationship with a receiving society without rejecting their ethnic identity (Berry, Kim, Power, Young and Bujaki 1989). The notion of integration presupposes ethnicity seen in a rather essentialist, static and fixed way which can be criticised from

the perspective of ‘groupism’ (Brubaker 2006). This can be challenged from the perspective of Anthias’ (2008) intersectional framing for the understanding of belonging, including interconnections between social divisions such as gender, ethnicity and class. Both concepts of assimilation and integration fail to highlight adequately a psychological need for stability and security, whereas the significance of these for migrants’ adaptation seems to be clear in the light of Maslow’s theory of needs confirmed in recent studies (Ager and Strang 2008).

In general, even though newer theories of integration and assimilation have become more complex and multidimensional (Portes and Zhou 1993; Bosswick and Heckmann 2006), they usually do not include identity in a sufficient way either. To date studies on integration and identity have been mainly developing in parallel, despite the argument that identity plays a crucial role in mediating all human actions and social relations (Blumer 1969) and has become a crucial category to understand contemporary society (Giddens 1991; Castells 1996; Jenkins 2004). In the face of an increasingly changeable and diverse world, identity has become a key area of search for a basic meaning and main points of reference when individuals try to find in themselves relatively stable footholds in an unpredictable world. In order to grasp identification processes occurring alongside the processes of adaptation and settlement, alternative concepts such as belonging (e.g. Fortier 2000), attachment (Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Trąbka 2014) or embedding (Ryan and Mulholland 2015) are also being developed.

To overcome the limitations of the concepts of integration and assimilation, and link the issues of security, adaptation and settlement, the concept of anchoring has been proposed. In contrast to integration, anchoring highlights various possible (not only social or cultural) types of footholds that may provide foundations for identity and adaptation. In this way anchoring also extends the notion of social capital, defined as a productive property of social relations which stimulates activity and facilitates achievement of goals (Coleman 1988) and moves beyond the social network approach by shifting the focus from relations between people to individuals and their resources, and changing perspective from structural to interactional and cognitive. Anchoring emphasises the psychological dimensions related to a need for safety and security, the simultaneity of anchors in different geographical spaces or even the possibility of not being anchored in any particular physical places or countries, as well as the processual character of the studied phenomena. In order to use the potency of its founding metaphor but overcome its limitations, the analytical concept has been proposed to stimulate imagination and provide theoretical inspiration which has been developed through empirical research (see further Grzymała-Kazłowska 2016).

### **Methodological approach**

The empirical material used in this paper was gathered in fieldwork research with 40 Ukrainian migrants<sup>1</sup> in Poland conducted in 2014–2015. The project included alternate, cyclical stages of theory building and fieldwork research based on grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Its qualitative methodology aimed to explore the processes of anchoring and provide in-depth knowledge about the diverse footholds used by migrants.

Individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) and questionnaires with 40 Ukrainian migrants (20 women and 20 men) constituted the main part of the study. After the minimally structured interviews about migration and projective techniques including spontaneous drawings of migrants’ anchors, the concept of anchoring was introduced to explore existing and missing anchors in structured interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, encoded in NVivo and analysed by means of categorical, processual and hermeneutical analyses. The interviews were followed by tests (e.g. a sentence completion test) and a questionnaire gathering socio-demographic and migration data as well as measuring the self-assessed levels of adaptation, integration, life problems and satisfaction. In addition, some ethnographical research was carried out that was supplemented by the

analysis of texts from forum discussions and blogs published by Ukrainian migrants in the Internet which provided ‘unguided’ and naturally occurring materials (Silverman 2005).

The participants interviewed for the project could not have a Polish spouse/life partner (to eliminate those who had already been rooted in the Polish society through their spouses/partners), had to be in their 30s and 40s, have been living in Poland between one and ten years and be residents of Mazovia Province (Warsaw or surrounding towns, which represent the most diverse urban areas in Poland). Maximum variation sampling (MVS) was applied in relation to other characteristics: gender, life cycle, family situation, education, economic situation and occupation, so the interviewees were highly diverse in socio-economic terms (including professionals, manual workers, entrepreneurs) and family situation (representing singles, families with children, single parents and couples without children). MVS was employed as a type of purposeful sampling to capture common patterns that emerge from variation as representing core or central experiences (Patton 1990). In this way the internal heterogeneity of the researched population was acknowledged in accordance with the project’s standpoint regarding contemporary diversity and the falsification method used (Popper 1959). This also allows for internal generalisation alongside the analytic external generalisation of the theory and the possible transferability of the theoretical developments to other cases (Maxwell and Chmiel 2014).

### **The context of the research**

Since 1989 migrants coming to Poland, traditionally a country of emigration, have begun to bring cultural and ethnic diversity to the relatively homogenous post-war Polish society, although immigration statistics show still quite limited numbers of registered migrants living in Poland. According to the register of the Office for Foreigners, on 1 January 2015 175 065 foreigners had documents giving them the right of residence in Poland, mainly from Ukraine (40 979), Germany (20 200), the Russian Federation (10 739), Belarus (9 924) and Vietnam (9 042). Of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland, the vast majority were granted either a temporary residence permit (19 323) or permanent residence permit (18 637). In addition, 2 761 had a long-term EU resident’s residence permit, 97 had a right of residence or right of permanent residence as family members of EU citizens and 161 were under protection.

After a relatively open admission policy dating from 1989, Poland’s accession negotiations with the EU led to the introduction of stricter regulations in the Act on Foreigners of 1997 (Łodziński 1999). A subsequent Act on Foreigners in 2003 included an even more restricted law, also introducing a visa requirement for citizens of Ukraine who previously enjoyed visa-free movement. Although an even stricter admission policy was implemented once Poland became a part of the Schengen Area in 2007, certain categories of foreigners (including co-ethnics; citizens of Ukraine; the inhabitants of borderlands) were granted additional opportunities to enter Poland for work and study. Ukrainians, regarded as relatively unproblematic (as The Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) study shows [Kowalczyk 2015]) and more desirable migrants (particularly in the context of demand for workforce in the secondary sector and the predicted depopulation of Poland [Grzymała-Kazłowska 2007]) have been privileged in Polish migration policy. For example, citizens of Ukraine may take advantage of a simplified employment procedure and be granted special visas to undertake short-term employment in Poland. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, Ukrainian migrants received 48 010 work permits out of 65 786 issued in 2015. In the same year there were registered 782 222 employers’ declarations of intent to hire a foreigner (762 700 of them regarding Ukrainians). Another special provision allowing Ukrainian citizens to come and reside in Poland is the *Karta Polaka* (officially called the Card of the Pole) introduced in 2007, which may be issued to those who either declare Polish national affiliation, demonstrate a connection with Polishness and have Polish ancestors or can demonstrate their active involvement in the promotion of Polish language and culture. The card gives such benefits as: the right to take

up employment and economic activity in Poland, and access to the free education. Amendments introduced in 2016 give further privileges to cardholders including: permanent residence permit, special financial benefit for maintenance (up to nine months) and opportunity for naturalisation after one year of residence in Poland. According to data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, up till the end of 2011 79 684 people had received the *Karta Polaka*, mainly inhabitants of Ukraine and Belarus (88 per cent). In 2013 over 23 000 such cards were issued in Belarus and Ukraine (89 per cent of the total issued that year).

Various legal statuses (i.e. visas, temporary or permanent permits) offer migrants different rights and time perspectives. Short-term visas (up to one year) issued for the purpose of study, employment or self-employment allow migrants to reside in Poland for the period of visa, take up employment (providing a proper type of visa and either employment work permit or right for employment without permission) or run certain types of business. Migrants with short-term visas may study (providing a proper type of visa) but must cover the costs of education, have health insurance in order to access public health care and cannot benefit from social care provisions. Temporary residence permits are issued for a longer period of one to three years when migrants prove their need to reside in Poland for employment, business or study as well as showing that they can make a living and possess health insurance and a place to live. Apart from the duration, the main difference from the visa is that they can be reunited with families after two years in Poland. The permit may be cancelled if the reason why it has been issued does not apply any more. A permanent residence permit is issued for an indefinite time (although may be withdrawn due to security reasons) to those who are of Polish descent or possess the *Karta Polaka* and want to settle permanently in Poland or have been married to Polish citizens for at least three years, as well as to those who have been legally living in Poland for five years. It gives migrants full access to the job market, public education, health, social care and gives opportunity for family reunion.

### **Neither the same nor strangers**

The position of Ukrainian migrants in Poland and how it is reflected in their identity may be described as ambiguous and contradictory. In spite of cultural similarities, similar history and geopolitical proximity, there is a social distance and power asymmetry which have an impact on Ukrainians' adaptation, functioning and position in Polish society.

As previous studies demonstrated (Hormel and Southworth 2006), Ukrainians choose Poland as one of their destinations because of not only geographical proximity and easy transport but also common cultural heritage (e.g. Slavic language and relative religious similarity). This may be illustrated by the account of the following interviewee:

*I have also chosen Poland from the perspective of comfortable life. This is not a country, where, if you come, you have to adapt to the society because this society is completely different than that one you were brought up in. So the choice of Poland was rather pragmatic that the country which is next to Ukraine that is a neighbouring country, there is a short journey (UA34\_w\_single\_8y).<sup>2</sup>*

Long-lasting contact between both nations, language and relative religious similarity, similar socio-cultural characteristics and shared experiences contribute to the construction of Ukrainian migrants in Poland as relatively close to Polish society. However, the relationship between these two nations is affected by historical conflicts, Polish political influences on Ukrainian society and negative stereotypes resulting from the past. Although CBOS research indicated an increase in positive attitudes towards Ukrainians since the Orange Revolution (Konieczna-Sałamatin 2015), asymmetry in mutual perception may still be observed – the prevalence of a critical view of the Ukrainian state and ambivalent attitudes towards Ukrainians in Poland with, at the

same time, an overall positive perception of Poles and the Polish state in Ukraine. The former is related to negative stereotypes of Ukrainians originating from the Second World War period and the general adverse perception of the countries of the former Soviet Union, while the latter may be explained by Poland's support for pro-democratic, pro-European changes in Ukraine and advocating its interests in the EU (Fomina, Koniczna-Salamatin, Kucharczyk and Wenerski 2013) and the favourable Polish policy towards the Russia–Ukraine conflict (Kucharczyk, Łada and Wenerski 2015). Moreover, Poland was associated by our participants with the West, a higher standard of living and values regarded as European (i.e. civil liberties, transparency, abiding by the law) as illustrated in the following examples: *Here, it seems to me, it is the West more civilised, there is such a more civilised attitude towards business* (UA34\_w\_divorced\_5y) or *I came [to Poland] and everything surprised me that all is so European, not as at ours* (UA31\_w\_married PL\_4y). Also the Polish press analysis and survey results showed the predominance of paternalistic and patronising attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants and their country of origin, together with a feeling of familiarity and similarity (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2007).

Additionally, the majority of the interviewees came from Western Ukraine (28 out of 40), which had particularly strong cultural and historical connections with the Polish state, where a Polish minority lives and where there are the most widespread cross-border relations and simplified procedures for crossing the border. However, for decades contacts between Poles and Ukrainians were limited. Even though contacts have intensified since the early 1990s, the vast majority of Poles and Ukrainians have no direct, personal relations (Fomina *et al.* 2013). Existing ties to people and institutions constitute social capital that facilitates finding jobs and housing in Poland.

The Ukrainian migrants studied also highlighted some mental and behavioural differences between the two nations. While they appreciated the courtesy and kindness as well as showing other people respect in daily contacts that contribute to greater public order in Poland, the interviewees noticed a greater social distance between people. Conversely, they described compatriots as more sociable and hospitable, which they linked to closer social relations in Ukraine:

*So to say, that I am a very open person, really, and among us, so to say, maybe people are not so nice at the beginning so they will not smile to you or say such things but if you really need something, everybody will help you, there is no other option. Here is the opposite. All smile, are nice to you but if you ask for anything, it will be simply 'no'. So I was surprised by this but now I have got used to it* (UA36\_w\_familyUA/PL\_3y).

Another key aspect of proximity perceived by Ukrainians refers to language comprehension. According to data from the representative research of the Institute of Public Affairs in 2013, 41 per cent of Ukrainians claimed that they speak or understand Polish (Fomina *et al.* 2013). However, their language proficiency was often on an elementary level (20 per cent). Another 9 per cent reported that they are able to take part in a regular conversation. It should be also noted that language proficiency varies significantly among different regions of the country and generations. Older residents of Western Ukraine most often claimed to be able to understand and speak Polish. Even if people did not have Polish roots or personal contacts with Poles, they learned Polish thanks to access to the Polish media, like the following respondent:

*My parents do not speak Polish. But around 1985 year it was fashionable that you could catch a Polish TV signal in Lvov. And at that time, some people just turned their aerials towards Poland and we watched Polish TV which was much better. (...) And I picked up this language. (...) And I learned Polish letters on*

*my own. I knew how a word sounds and I just made analogies: Ukrainian alphabet – Polish alphabet and I picked it up (UA36\_m\_married\_5y).*

Nevertheless, Polish was seen by the interviewees as the biggest challenge at the beginning of their stay in Poland, particularly informal speech and academic language in the case of students (see also Brzozowski and Pędziwiatr 2015). At the same time they perceived Polish as the most significant issue for their life in Poland (38 out of 40 respondents indicated it was ‘very important’ or ‘important’). However, after spending at least one year in Poland only four interviewees evaluated their level of speaking in Polish as ‘rather poor’, while 23 had ‘rather good’ and 13 ‘very good’.

As has already been mentioned, there are pronounced regional differences in knowledge of Polish which is related to the complex history of Ukraine, reflected in ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity as well as the relatively vague and complex nature of Ukrainian national identity. Some scholars argue the country, in fact, comprises two founding nations and three ethno-cultural groups: Ukrainophone Ukrainians, Russophone Ukrainians and Russophone Russian (Taras, Filippova and Pobeda 2004). Others, like Stephen Shulman (2004), propose a framework of two national identity complexes. The first, ‘Ethnic Ukrainian’, is based on the assumption that Ukraine is essentially a European nation. The second incorporates residual Soviet and Pan-Slavic Russian-speaking identities and represents ‘Eastern Slavic’ nationalism. Ethnic and linguistic identities of many citizens of Ukraine are mixed and fluid due to overlapping attachments and ethno-culturally mixed families as in the following example:

*When I was in this [Polish] association, I felt such a feeling, it was related to Polish patriotism because I could not replace this with anything. Once I wondered whether I am Russian or Ukrainian. I contemplated this for a long time and I could not decide who I am. And I decided that maybe I am Russian because I speak Russian. But then Polish origin was added. I started thinking of my Polish origin, going there [to Polish association] and there was Polishness and Ukrainianness and I could not decide who I am. I do not feel affiliation to anybody, I do not have the feeling of identification which is maybe a fact because I do not feel that I am a Russian, I am a Ukrainian or I am Polish, world citizen (UA34\_w\_divorced\_5y).*

The above quotation illustrates not only hybrid identities of members of mixed families but also ambiguous linguistic identification where people can understand both Ukrainian and Russian and the society is inherently bilingual (Kulyk 2006). This complexity was less reflected in the data from the questionnaire where people tended to indicate one dominant identification in spite of multiple options – as many as 33 defined themselves as Ukrainians, five declared Polish identity, one identified as both Ukrainian and Pole and another could not tell. Mixed affiliations remained more visible in the case of attachments to countries – the majority of the respondents (21) felt the most attached to Ukraine, 9 to Poland whereas 10 declared attachment to both countries. Similarly, 18 interviewees perceived only Ukraine as their home while 13 of them regarded Poland as such and 6 respondents thought about both countries as their home.

Relative cultural closeness could contribute to the fact that the interviewees self-evaluated their adaptation and integration in Poland relatively highly with respective means of 7.75 and 7.25.<sup>3</sup> Principal values for them, apart from the Polish language, were ties to Ukraine and contacts with Poles (respectively 38, 37, 36 respondents described them as ‘very important’ or ‘important’). At the same time, less important were the maintenance of contacts with compatriots living in Poland (30), speaking Ukrainian (29) and observing Ukrainian tradition (24). European Union (33) and Ukrainian citizenship (28) were relatively more important to the participants than Polish citizenship (24). This relatively high value of contacts with Ukraine and Ukrainian citizenship could be partly explained by the growth of Ukrainian patriotism and civic nationalism, understood as increased



affection towards the state perceived more as a political than ethnic community and civic participation in the state after the Euromaidan, Russia's annexation of the Crimea and military intervention in Ukraine (Kuzio 2015; Riabchuk 2015). One of the respondents described this in the following way:

*I never perceived myself as a patriot before Maidan. I lived in this country. There was always something not right in our Ukraine but I did not feel proud that I come from Ukraine. But now I just think that I have to do something good for this country (UA47\_m\_familyPL/UA\_2y).*

On the other hand, Ukrainian migrants' orientation towards Polish language and culture and establishing ties with Poles were noticeable.

### **Drifting lives of Ukrainian migrants**

One of the most important factors leading to the makeshift and temporary life of Ukrainian migrants in Poland was related to legal determinants. Participants' unstable legal status in the long term contributed to their feeling of uncertainty and lasting temporariness. Although all the interviewees could legally reside in Poland, only 3 out of 40 had a permanent residence permit, while 17 were granted a temporary residence permit and 20 had short-term visas (although the last number includes 6 participants with the *Karta Polaka* who could enjoy unrestricted access to the labour market).

Migrants' precarious situation on the job market in Poland manifested itself in the fact that nine of them were working illegally while other six had only partly regulated contracts with employers. In some cases instability and insecurity started just after migrants' arrival in Poland when the interviewees found out that they had not had work secured.

Legal instability, the need to deal with bureaucratic procedures, difficulties with securing legal status in Poland and proper employment were among the most apparent problems listed by the interviewees alongside language difficulties, problems with access to health care (e.g. high costs of private services), negative stereotypes of Ukrainians in Poland and migrants' low self-esteem. A permanent residence permit appeared to be the most desirable legal status for the interviewees, as for this female participant who confessed:

*I would try to get a permanent residence permit. So far I have been working for this family but I will change [job] later and I will have problems again with finding someone who will employ me to be legally here. I am employed in a normal way. I pay social security contributions. This is of paramount importance to me (UA34\_w\_divorced\_4y).*

In addition, 18 participants planned to apply for Polish citizenship, whereas 12 did not while 10 had not decided on this matter, with some from the two latter groups even highlighting the benefits of short term visas as being relatively the easiest to get.

Another dimension of uncertainty and temporariness was related to migrants' situation on the job market. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and its aftermath had a significant negative impact on Ukraine's economy and the welfare of its population. Ukraine has become a country suffering from political instability with high levels of corruption and economic volatility, resulting in stagnation and deterioration of the state (Lapshyna and Düvell 2015). The economic crisis of the mid-1990s led to substantial unemployment, delays in salaries, lower incomes and in consequence severe decline in the standard of living (Hormel and Southworth 2006). The changing structure of the Ukrainian labour market caused the devaluation of some professions, the growth of the grey economy and the worsening of working conditions (including delays in payments or reduced wages), which led to internal and international migration. Prior to migration 13 of our interviewees had casual

jobs (e.g. working illegally as petty traders or kitchen helpers) and 3 others were unemployed. 20 participants pointed to economic incentives as the main reason for their migration, while 11 came to Poland to study and the rest had other than economic or educational motivations (i.e. family reunion, desire to change life). The combination of instability and lack of opportunities for proper employment in Ukraine pushed some of the participants to migration, as in the following example:

*Usually it was illegal work or a partial employment for minimum wage declared by the state and the rest [of money] you got in an envelope. An employer could always cheat you in some way, do not pay you the remaining money. In general, I realised this after two months of work and then I had a possibility to go to Poland for a scholarship and finally I decided to go (UA\_30\_m\_partnerPL\_8y).*

The economic downturns in the 1990s and the collapse of social services particularly affected women as they were pushed out of state-based occupations and less likely to find work in the private sector while at the same time carrying an increased care burden (Solari 2010). One of our interviewees portrayed her difficult economic situation and lack of social security before migration in the following way:

*[It was] like the life in Ukraine if you do not have a job. There was no work. (...) In the 1990s from 1996 to 2000 I worked in Czech. I quitted a job on an open market [in Ukraine]. At a market stall there is no much work, low income, no registration and it all lasted until I decided to go to Poland in 2005 or 2006. The life was difficult [in Ukraine], there is not worth talking, that I earned little, you simply could not earn for living. You wondered how much or whether to buy a half of loaf of bread or a whole (UA42\_w\_divorced\_7y).*

Ukrainian women were frequently forced to combine traditional women's roles as caregivers and breadwinners regardless of the presence or absence of men in a family (Zhurzhenko 2001). In the hardest situation were single mothers responsible for survival of their families who could no longer rely on the state for childrearing support:

*So I am such a single mother who looks after a child alone and it happened that when my son went to university, I needed money so I came here in order that my son would have (...) education (UA44\_w\_divorced\_5y).*

However, women's migration decisions were not only determined by economic factors but also by more complex circumstances including conflicts and abuse within family. This type of motivation can be illustrated by the following quotation:

*To be honest, it was a bit personal. I could not reconcile with my husband at home because of money since I earned little and there was always shortage of money for something. And then I decided that I would go abroad. If all others can try to earn, I also can. (...) I applied for a passport and firstly went to pick strawberries. It was supposed to be just a one-off – to go and earn for something. I needed one thing. And that would have been it. (...) And then I went abroad with my acquaintances (UA37\_w\_familyUA\_8y).*

The above citation also shows the role of social networks in migration from Western Ukraine. Family, friend and neighbour networks provide information about crossing borders, seasonal work in agriculture and domestic care, and accommodation facilitating migration to Poland. Such networks are particularly important in the

domestic care sector where people are offered jobs thanks to references and the rotation system is required not only because of legal constraints (e.g. visa requirements) but also due to often physically and emotionally exhausting working conditions (Kindler 2011). One of the respondents described her circular migration related to work providing caring services to the elderly in the following way:

*I have such a person who replaces me that we change one with another because it also suits her since she does not want to be [here] all the time and this is so psychologically difficult to work without a break because with this Alzheimer's disease sometimes I think that I am going mad (UA37\_w\_divorced\_3y).*

Circular migration between Ukraine and Poland may result in lasting temporariness and consequently an unsettled and precarious situation in the destination country (Górny and Kindler 2016). This includes work in the informal sector as well as problems with accommodation in terms of the recurring need to move house. One of the participants described this instability in this way: *Now, I do not swap so much. The job is permanent and the accommodation is permanent too. It used to be continuous changes – every half a year for sure both accommodation and job (UA34\_w\_divorced\_4y).* However, working in the self-organised rotation system also affects men in the construction industry and petty trade, due to their seasonal character and legal constraints. On the other hand, discontinuous employment in the country of origin hinders opportunities to find a proper job there (Lapshyna and Düvell 2015). Those circumstances push individuals to further short-term migration that becomes their main source of income. An example of an unsettled situation related to the rotation system is seen in the story of this petty trader:

*There were about two months I replaced someone there, this Ukrainian woman hired me for work, so I covered for one girl. She came back after two months so I lost a job. (...) I found a job that we traded in bits and pieces. I also traded on the West Coach Station, and then I also replaced one lad there for about two weeks because he was supposed to finish his job at a building site. (...) Later, I went home for two or three [weeks] and then this woman I worked for the first time, she found me another job, she recommended me and I have been trading there for about three years (UA30\_m\_single\_3y).*

Lasting temporariness was also visible in the lack of far-reaching plans and the perception of migration as a temporary activity, which might be linked to the notion of 'fluid' migration and the aforementioned strategy of intentional unpredictability. Some migrants did not decide on the length of their work and stay in Poland, like this female interviewee:

*Honestly, I did not think that I would be so long here. I came for one year. But now there is my daughter. (...) And I have decided to let the daughter study here and then I calculated costs and think that after one month there [working in Ukraine] I would not have money for her accommodation. (...) So now I say [I will stay] five years more here. And then we will see. (...) I am simply not attached to anything. You do not plan in Warsaw, you know. Someone asked me how it is possible that you do not plan? So now in Warsaw it is like this, and after two days it can be a completely different situation. I do not know whether this applies to everyone or only to us, Ukrainians, because we do casual work. So I do not plan anything in Warsaw that could attach me. I have no idea why? Maybe where is better [for me], I am fine. Everybody does this, not only me (UA41\_w\_partnerUA\_2y).*

Referring to Morokvasic's work (2004), lasting temporariness may lead migrants to becoming 'settled within mobility' after choosing mobility as a strategy to maintain the quality of life and a tool for empowerment and agency.

This kind of drifting and unsettled situation of Ukrainian migrants in Poland did not facilitate civic engagement and involvement in voluntary associations, however; only five participants belonged to such. It should also be pointed out that prior to the Euromaidan, Ukrainian non-governmental organisations in Poland operated on a rather small scale and had rather an elitist character. They include *Our Choice Foundation* (Fundacja 'Nasz Wybór') established in 2004 by a group of Ukrainian PhD students in Warsaw, *Friends of Ukraine Association* (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ukrainy – TPU) also operating since 2004, *the Open Dialog Foundation* and *Ternopil'ska Foundation* both set up in 2009 and last but not least *Euromaidan Warsaw Foundation*. The Euromaidan consolidated the majority of Ukrainian non-governmental organisations around a common goal, which was providing assistance to the victims of violence in the Russian–Ukrainian conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk as well as fundraising for the Ukrainian Army (11 of our interviewees participated in this kind of initiative). However, some interviewees also engaged in other voluntary activities, i.e. youth meetings organised in the Greek Orthodox church, Experimental Ukrainian Theatre, the Centre for Ukrainian Culture, the choir Kalyna in Ukrainian House led by Our Choice Foundation, or sport initiatives related to Boyovoho Hopak, which is Ukrainian martial art with elements of folk dance.

### **Anchored not rooted?**

Ukrainian migration to Poland cannot be adequately grasped either by simply binary opposition such as temporary *versus* permanent migration (Górny and Kindler 2016) or by the traditional categories employed for analysing the processes of adaptation and settlement of migrants in receiving societies such as 'integration' or 'assimilation'. Thus, in order to capture the experience of Ukrainian migrants in Poland we propose to use the concept of anchoring which can be applied to more fluid and complex migration processes.

In the case of our participants the mechanisms of settling down were more about searching for stability than putting down roots. They often adopted a 'pro-future' orientation despite many obstacles and constraints in establishing themselves in Poland, as seen in these quotations when migrants were asked to list their main footholds in the host society: *Poland is simply a home, also friends, work, the realities and the future* (UA38\_w\_divorced\_8y) or *Work here, stability so everything will be fine tomorrow* (UA41\_w\_partnerUA\_2y).

The analysis of interviews allowed us to distinguish different types of anchors connecting migrants to Poland and their country of origin. They can be presented as different layers starting from external footholds, related to work and institutional settings, through to more complex anchors embedded in social relations as well as to deeper internal types linked to values and identification.

Our study confirmed the crucial role of work for migrants' anchoring in the host society. It was reflected in its centrality in their narratives usually built around work. It is noteworthy that 34 of our 40 interviewees were satisfied or rather satisfied with their employment in Poland even if they were working on the secondary job market. Our participants especially appreciated work opportunities in Poland in terms of finding or changing a job, which contributed to their overall feeling of security from the psychological and financial perspectives, as described by one of our participants:

*Opportunities, for example, when you lose a job here, you do not need to panic that it is the end of the world. No, there will be another [job]. (...) Work is the most important for a person both psychologically and financially. (...) But here, even if you wake up and know that you do not have a job but only today and*

*you should make the most of this day for yourself because you do not need to work today (UA34\_w\_divorced\_4y).*

In spite of the unpredictable and often irregular situation of Ukrainian migrants on the Polish labour market visible in the above quote, numerous interviewees emphasised chances for achieving relative stability and development in terms of establishing a stable work routine, higher salaries or in the case of migrants working in the domestic-care sector, changing from live-in to live-out arrangements. Others who had been working as specialists appreciated acquiring work experience, developing their business skills and ways for advancement in international corporations.

Another crucial aspect of anchoring was related to the institutional environment in Poland compared with the unstable situation in Ukraine caused by the high level of corruption and lack of transparent rules for running a business. The interviewees gave examples of bribery and corrupt officials, problems with the educational system and health service as in following quotation:

*I realised here that one can work and not pay bribes for this. I can work peacefully here and nobody comes and tells you that you must pay extortion because otherwise [you will have] problems with your family and so on. So I am, you can say, more secure, I feel safer than in Ukraine (UA32\_m\_partnerUA\_5y).*

In contrast, the migrants praised a more supportive role of the state and the rule of law in Poland, which in fact referred more to clearer procedures than assistance for foreigners as in this citation: *Exactly, there is a big support here. The state does not trick here like ours. And here it is much easier, you know. For running your business and I do not know... The same with credit and everything. (UA30\_m\_partnerPL\_6y).*

In general, 30 of our interviewees were satisfied or rather satisfied with support of Polish institutions, while 4 expressed their dissatisfaction. However, not all of the participants have had any contact with Polish institutions, either governmental (apart from the Department for Foreigners of the Mazowieckie Province Office) or non-governmental. Only three had experience with the Job Centre, one received social benefits, while only 16 used the public health service and 15 received NGOs assistance.

Stable legal status was another significant anchor in Poland, even though for years some had been working in the grey economy. Almost half of our participants (18) declared that they were planning to apply for Polish citizenship. The process of anchoring can be illustrated through the example of regularising legal status in Poland (obtaining a residence permit):

*So more or less this was about money. To earn some, build something, have something. Or set up something in Ukraine or here. And there was always a decision that I do not know what I want. Either here or there. But when the war started in our country, at once I began to sort out the paperwork, pay for insurance [ZUS] and extend a temporary residence permit in order to stay here. (...) I built a building in Ukraine together with my brother when I was here what I wanted through my whole life. (...) But now because of this war, because of this everything, this all has been finished and now I must start everything from scratch (UA30\_m\_partnerPL\_6y).*

The above quotation shows additionally how migrants spontaneously referred to the unstable situation in Ukraine, which also appeared in the sentence completion test. They contrasted the absence of safety and security in Ukraine with the acquired relative stability in Poland (35 of them were satisfied or rather satisfied with the sense of security in Poland). The essential role of security and safety in migrants' lives can be explained by the scarcity hypothesis that a particularly high subjective value is attributed to the goods and ideas that are

relatively difficult to achieve (Kacprowicz and Konieczna-Salamatin 2014). This may also be applied to the lack of predictability and stability in Ukraine:

*'Stability' that is when I arrange something and I know that it will be the same tomorrow but it was differently in Ukraine. There could be something agreed and then you came and it turned out that 'You know but there is missing something and this will be in six months but, you know, you can pay and it will be [now]'. And, in general, 'stability' means to me that if I do something this will give some fruits. In Ukraine, I had such experiences that what I did over years when we had our business, in sum, just disappeared (UA32\_m\_partnerUA\_5y).*

The interviewees who were not fully settled in Poland kept their houses in Ukraine, which constituted a solid and tangible anchor in their country of origin. Around two thirds of our participants (27) maintained their houses in Ukraine regardless of costs and difficulties like the woman cited below:

*The thing is that everything in this flat was destroyed. I was refurbishing it and sometimes simply... because refurbishment is simply expensive... So I earned here and invested there and that is a loss because now when I was refurbishing it for over two years if I simply had not done this, I would better have sold it (UA44\_w\_divorced\_5y).*

It should be pointed out that this kind of anchor plays an ambiguous role in the process of migrants' settling down in Poland. Investing in properties in Ukraine turned out unprofitable and hindered capital accumulation and migrants' establishment in Poland.

Other footholds connecting the participants with the country of origin were embedded in social relations. Among our interviewees social ties constituted the strongest and most vital anchors linking them with Ukraine or anchoring them in transnational social spaces. 38 interviewees indicated that they had close family members living in Ukraine, including 10 out of 25 married who had spouses there and 10 respondents with children living in Ukraine. Our participants also formed transnational families as defined by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002), with relatives living in the Czech Republic, Italy, Kazakhstan and Belarus, additionally having close friends in Ukraine as well as in the United States, Spain, Italy, Belarus, Russia, Great Britain, Canada and Germany. The physical separation from family members constituted the most important driver for transnational practices and maintaining footholds in the country of origin, exemplified by the following quote:

*Now, when my daughter is here, I don't know. In general, nothing attracts me [to Ukraine], nothing keeps me [there] so I could even decide [to stay] permanently here. For the time being it is as it is. Some time here, some time there because I have not built my life, so simply I do not have anybody so I can go to work there and here. There is no such a stability, to sum up. This is a bit wrong (UA37\_w\_divorced\_3y).*

The above quotation also underpins the crucial role of social ties and social support in the process of anchoring in Poland. Although our participants spent more free time with compatriots, they also had quite intensive contacts with Polish friends. 34 of the interviewees met up with other Ukrainian migrants at least once a month while 29 spent their free time with Poles with the same regularity. Among 143 best friends listed by our respondents (defined as people who are trusted and could be relied on) the vast majority (104) were born in Ukraine (mainly living in Poland) and only 29 in Poland. Social anchors outside the migrants' community were mainly established through study or in the workplace.

A particular situation is represented by domestic care where migrants and employers enter an asymmetrical patron–client relationship which exists between unequal individuals with access to different types of resources (Kindler 2011). However, some of our interviewees compared this relationship to family ties in terms of density of interactions and emotional load:

*These all are my new acquaintances, those I work for too, because you almost live in each family. You come and [you are] with them, it is not that you came there and went out, there are own problems in each family or worries about children. They tell you [about them] and you also share your [worries]. Everyday you have something and advise and play a role of psychologist. This is like a new family because you know almost everything about everyone (UA46\_w\_marriedUA\_7y).*

This patron–client relation allowed migrants to adapt to conditions of instability (even irregularity) and receive different forms of support, including practical ones, i.e. in regularising legal status or providing access to an employer’s social network as the source of potential new employers (Kindler 2011). On the other hand this kind of relationship was characterised by asymmetry of power, which could potentially lead to exploitation and dependency.

The interviewees also established their anchors while engaging in sport, artistic or religious activities (e.g. participating in meetings at Pentecostal Churches), with Poles or other migrants. Integration and maintaining contacts with Poles was the most visible at the local level as illustrated below:

*I cannot say that the whole Poland is my favourite country but just in Warsaw I feel OK for different reasons. First of all, because I have managed to secure around myself (...) such a system where I get around well and comfortably (UA31\_w\_divorced\_1y).*

37 interviewees were satisfied or rather satisfied with contacts with neighbours and 20 experienced their help, which is surprising considering the anonymity of neighbourhood relations in large Polish cities. This could stimulate an overall sense of belonging. Even though eight respondents declared that they spent free time with neighbours, it turned out that they mainly meant flatmates and other migrants. Only five interviewees had experienced antipathy in their neighbourhoods or were dissatisfied with relations with neighbours.

Lastly, subjective and internal types of anchors including values and beliefs should be discussed. Apart from religion and cultural aspects, our interviewees referred to a set of values such as democracy, freedom, civil liberties, transparency and law-abidingness which they associated with Poland and regarded as ‘European’ and important to them and contributing to their sense of stability. They also perceived these values as desired values for Ukraine as in the following quotation:

*The contemporary Poland is the future of Ukraine. Poland and Ukraine were similar socialist republics 30 years ago, but only Poland joined the European Union earlier and has followed this European path. This is something Ukraine fights for now and the only thing that I want to give my children – such a European spirit. And this is for me (...) a part of the free and united Europe. So yes, I wanted to change something there in my life, see something different, how it is to live in Europe. Not only hear about it, but experience how it is to live there, see for myself and try such a life (UA34\_m\_marriedUA\_1y).*

The values and beliefs mentioned not only played a vital role for individual anchoring but also contributed to the social and civic incorporation of migrants in society in Poland.

## Conclusions

The text uses the concept of anchoring, defined as the process of searching for footholds and points of reference which allow individuals to acquire socio-psychological stability and security and function effectively in a new environment, to capture the experience and ways of functioning of Ukrainian migrants in Poland. This study demonstrates the importance of stability and security in migrants' perception even while their lives can be characterised as ungrounded and drifting. The observed fluidity may be seen as an effect of migrants' usually unstable legal status in the long term (only three participants were granted a permanent residence permit), geographical and cultural closeness allowing for relatively easy circulation between different social spaces across the national borders and substantial social ties to Ukraine. The position of Ukrainian migrants in Poland as neither the same nor strangers, where migrants were constructed as culturally and socially similar but not always close and rather inferior, seemed to contribute to their mixed identities and multiple yet not firm attachments. Migrants' pro-European aspirations, fulfilled by acquiring Polish language and culture competencies, coexisted with the reinforcement of Ukrainian civic identity in the face of the political and military events in Ukraine. This research showed the development of the process of anchoring over time in Poland, while simultaneously the interviewees maintained links to Ukraine (mainly related to their family ties) and remained open to new opportunities such as returning to Ukraine or moving to another country. This study demonstrates different layers of anchoring in Poland, from external footholds related to the legal and institutional framework and work, through to more complex anchors embedded in social networks and deeper internal footholds, linked to familiarity and the constructed cultural closeness, as well as European, modern and civic aspirations. The migrants studied contrasted the institutional stability and work opportunities in Poland with the unstable situation in Ukraine in terms of lack of institutional transparency and predictability, low accountability of political elites, and the recent military conflict. This research showed migrants' agency in anchoring despite the noticeable constraints which hindered their processes of adaptation and settlement.

The main argument developed in this article presents a different approach to the processes of adaptation and settlement of migrants in receiving societies than through the traditional categories such as 'integration' or 'assimilation'. We argue that none of them adequately captures the way of functioning and experience of Ukrainian migrants in Poland. Apart from the fact that integration and assimilation are problematic concepts due to their political and ideological load as well as structural and functionalist assumptions, they are not sufficient to capture current dynamic and interrelated phenomena. These concepts do not embrace the complex and mixed identities of Ukrainians coming to Poland, their multiple cultural competencies, 'fluid' migrations and simultaneous transnational links. The concept of integration, which relates to distinct ethnic identities maintained alongside successful social incorporation, does not seem adequate. Nor does the notion of assimilation, which assumes that migrants do not maintain their ethnic identities whereas our research shows the importance of Ukrainian heritage to migrants and the increase in civic patriotism in the face of the recent political developments and the military conflict in Ukraine. Applying the concept of anchoring allows for better understanding Ukrainians' 'fluid' migration, drifting lives and complex identities as well as mechanisms of coping with temporariness and settling down in terms of searching for relative stability. It enables us to capture the simultaneous connections between Poland and Ukraine. The concept of anchoring embraces the complex, multiple and dynamic attachments of contemporary Ukrainian migrants as well as the flexibility of their adaptation and settlement. It highlights migrants' agency and possibilities for connection or disconnection.

This concept has proved to be particularly valuable for the study of the adaptation process of migrants that were citizens of Ukraine in their 30s and 40s, without a Polish spouse or partner, and predominantly living in Poland on short term visas or temporary residence permits. Due to the specificity of this group further research



is needed to examine the concept with different types of migrants from Ukraine and other countries. The model of anchoring linking different aspects needs to be further developed as well as differences in the process of anchoring related to gender, types of possessed capital (e.g. economic, cultural), family situation and migrants' legal status.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Migrants being Ukrainian citizens and legally residing in Poland.

<sup>2</sup> In the symbols for interviews, 'UA' stands for Ukrainian, 'w' for woman, 'm' for man, 'y' for years of residence in Poland. 'UA34\_w\_single\_8y' represents a 34-year-old single woman from Ukraine who has been living in Poland for eight years.

<sup>3</sup> Respectively defined as the level of adjustment to the change and life in Poland/participation in different domains of the Polish society and maintenance of social relations with Poles outside work; on the scale from 1 'not adapted/integrated at all' to 9 'adapted/integrated very well'.

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