

— ARTICLES —

(Missing) Bridging Ties and Social Capital? The Creation and Reproduction of Migrants' Social Network Advantages: The Case of Ukrainian Migrants in Poland

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The paper investigates the mechanisms behind the formation and maintenance of those migrants' social ties which translate into a particular composition of the network and become a source of social capital. Based on a number of in-depth interviews with Ukrainian migrants in Warsaw, we find that Ukrainian migrants' networks are based primarily on ties homogenous in regard to nationality, level of education and character of work. The institutional context of social interaction determines with whom migrants form relations and whether these ties become a source of social advancement. The studied migrants do form bridging ties with more experienced, as well as socially and legally embedded persons, mainly other migrants, receiving both instrumental and emotional support.

Keywords: social networks; bridging ties; social capital; Ukrainian migrants; Poland; institutional embedding

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Introduction

You see, I only have Ukrainians on my list (...). I think that each of those persons on this list, the ones who are in Poland, have even more Ukrainian acquaintances, who I do not know.

In this quote Petro, a Ukrainian migrant who has studied and now works in Poland, comments on the fact that his co-nationals are the only people he contacts on a regular basis and with whom he forms meaningful relationships. He adds that his Ukrainian friends living in Poland also have Ukrainians in their extended social circle. This statement seems to go against past research assumptions and findings, claiming that due to their ‘cultural proximity’ Ukrainians practically ‘assimilate’ in Poland (see, for example, Brzozowska and Grzymała-Kazłowska 2014). At the same time, Petro’s seemingly highly homogenous network is a source of social capital, allowing him to find a prestigious job and having a satisfying social life in Poland. Why is Petro’s network characterised primarily by the presence of his co-nationals? Who are these co-nationals? These questions raise the issue of the mechanisms behind social tie formation, the character of relationships and the resulting source of migrants’ social capital.

While social networks are regarded as necessary to explain the processes occurring after migrants’ arrival, such as finding employment, accommodation or receiving emotional support (Anthias and Cederberg 2009; Cheung and Phillimore 2014; Drever and Hoffmeister 2008) any precise definitions of the term are rare in migration studies (Dahinden 2011). A number of migration studies refer to Granovetter’s work and ‘the strength of ties’ (for example, see Brzozowska and Grzymała-Kazłowska 2014; Damstra and Tillie 2016; Hagan 1998; Liu 2013; Mostowska 2013; Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa and Spittel 2001; Pilati 2012; Tillie 2004; Vervoort 2012; Wilson 1998). Following Granovetter’s definition of the strength of ties as ‘the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy (mutual confiding) and reciprocal services’ (1973: 1361), some authors hypothesise on the importance of weak ties, especially of the so-called bridges, and the role they play in diffusing information. For example, Louise Ryan and other authors (Ryan 2011; Ryan, Sales, Tilki and Siara 2008) draw on Granovetter’s and Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of ‘social location’ and ‘social distance’ and suggest that networks may be conceptualised in terms of the value of resources travelling across ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ bridging ties. Establishing social networks in the country of migration – forming new ties and maintaining old ones – is presented in numerous studies as a zero-sum game. Migrants are seen as either forming bridging-ties with ‘natives’ (accessing and mobilising social capital that is different to their own and understood as ‘better’) and thus ‘integrating’ into society or relying on bonding ties to their co-nationals, (forming so-called ‘ethnic networks’, and accessing social capital similar to their own), which is interpreted as a sign of ‘non-integration’ (Danzer and Ulku 2011; Waldinger 1994; Wierzbicki 2004). Numerous past studies also follow Granovetter (1973, 1977, 1983, 1985) in assuming that close, friendship ties (strong ties) are interconnected and that they provide emotional and care support, while weak ties extending beyond one’s own social circle provide more instrumental support, by, for example, facilitating the broad diffusion of information when it comes to job search (Granovetter 1977). However, more recent research findings have questioned some of the assumptions of structural network theory. There is evidence to doubt the interconnection of strong ties in a network (people interact in different spaces, with little reason to believe that friends from two different contexts will necessarily interact) and to show that, actually, weak ties may be equally or even more important than strong ties in providing emotional support (confiding ‘truly serious matters’ to those with whom we share close ties bears high risks of harm to the relationship) and what matters is not how well the confidant is known to a person, but how well the confidant can empathise (Small 2017).

In this analysis we are primarily interested in how social networks are formed and become a form of individual social capital. We define social capital following Lin (2001: 29) as ‘resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilised in purposive actions’. As Coleman (1994), we underline that social capital is not coterminous with resources as such. The key is being able to use these resources for social advancement. However, we want to reach beyond the rational actor approach and reflect on whether social capital can be an unintended outcome of a particular network structure, which is conditioned by institutional embeddedness (Small 2009).

Our case study, that is, personal social networks of Ukrainian migrants in Warsaw and its vicinities, might not, at first glance, be an obvious choice. First of all, Poland was a country of emigration rather than immigration for most of its contemporary history. However, in the 1990s, Poland and other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, were referred to as ‘migration magnets’ for people from the former Soviet Union (Okólski 2001, 2012; Wallace 2001, 2002). A characteristic feature of this ‘local mobility’ was the fact that it was based primarily on social networks. In the case of migrants circulating between Ukraine and Poland, they used social networks to receive documents, cross the border, trade goods or find work (Brunarska, Kindler, Szulecka and Toruńczyk-Ruiz 2016). Today, the majority of Ukrainians in Poland continue to be so-called circular migrants, which means they enter and stay in Poland for a limited period of time on the basis of a visa (Górny 2017; Górny and Kindler 2016). However, since the dramatic political changes in Ukraine started in 2014, the number of migrants applying for a temporary or permanent residence permit has been growing dynamically (Fedyuk and Kindler 2016). Although rural areas are an important destination for seasonal workers from Ukraine (as they attract workers to the agriculture sector) and emerging research shows that Ukrainian migration to Poland is now more evenly spread out throughout the country, large urban centres, including Warsaw in the Mazowieckie province, continue to be an important destination for migrants (Brunarska *et al.* 2016). One may assume that such a spatial concentration of migrants in cities may be conducive towards establishing homophilic ties and segregated neighbourhoods. However, until now no evidence has been found to prove this kind of spatial segregation in case of Ukrainian migrants, who are present in numerous Warsaw neighbourhoods (Górny and Toruńczyk-Ruiz 2014; Grzymała-Kazłowska and Piekut 2007; Piekut 2012; Piekut and Valentine 2017).

This article explores the mechanisms behind the construction and reproduction of migrant social networks and their advantages looking at the case study of Ukrainian labour migrants in Poland. The main research questions are the following: How do migrants form and maintain their social ties? What is the composition of migrants’ networks? How do networks become a source of social capital for migrants? We analyse conditions for personal network establishment, look at how and with whom migrants form ties, and check whether they are able to form so-called bridging ties. Putnam (2007: 143) refers to bridging ties as ‘ties to people who are unlike me in some important ways’ and which allow reaching different social circles and, consequently, a different (better) quality of support. Following Putnam (2007) we assume that bridging and bonding ties are not exclusive (not a zero-sum game), but can be compatible with each other. We also assume that bridging does not only refer to forming ties along the lines of shared ethnicity or nationality, but also along other important social differentiating factors, such as class, level of education or gender. We investigate how the character of a tie in a network may reflect a particular type of social capital (emotional or instrumental). We pay attention to the link between ties and space: local ties (such as those formed in the neighbourhood) are recognised in the literature as important in finding out information about the location of the nearest grocery shop, kindergarten or school for the child (van Eijk 2012; van Meeteren, Engbersen and van San 2009), while trans-local or even transnational ties may be important sources of emotional support for individuals (Wellman 2002; Wellman and Berkowitz 1988).

After a brief theory section introducing some relevant network concepts, we outline the research methodology and method of analysis. Based on the qualitative research material (interviews with participants who differ in terms of gender, age, family situation and occupation), we demonstrate the mechanisms behind migrants' tie formation and network social capital they use in three basic dimensions of life: legal, professional and personal (to compare, see Ryan 2015; Ryan, Erel and D'Angelo 2015). Each dimension is analysed in regard to a network-conditioning structure, such as institutional embeddedness, and agency involving network derived resources.

With this paper, we aim to respond to the call by Mario Luis Small (2009: 8) to explore 'how do people make social ties' that provide social capital, going beyond the rational actor approach. At the theoretical level, we draw on our research data to reflect on the importance of institutional embedment for network (re)production, turnover and the complexity of 'bridging' ties. Based on a more diverse research sample, we go beyond the past research outputs, which showed a tendency of the Ukrainian migrants who stay in Poland longer (i.e., those who do not circulate) to have very few ties to other Ukrainians (Brzozowska and Grzymała-Kazłowska 2014; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2015). We also aim to contribute to (until now rarely present in migration research on migrants in Poland) a systematic approach to social network analysis.

Network theory analysis: basic theoretical concepts

We propose to use social ties as the main unit of analysis, instead of essentialising 'ethnic' groups by assuming that they are a 'natural' starting point for research. A social tie is, at its most basic, 'a sedimented interaction history embellished by the anticipated likelihood of future interaction' (Crossley 2016: 172). In general, a person's ties are interdependent, usually embedded in broad networks. In this paper we understand a social network as a 'structured set of social ties between individuals' (Gurak and Caces 1992: 152). A given pattern of ties modifies the effects of a particular tie. That is why we focus on social networks, which are always 'in-process' and evolve at different paces, with new ties forming, and the old ones changing or breaking up. In addition, we acknowledge that network effects and dynamics are 'mediated by meanings, identities, actors' understandings and thus by culture' (Crossley 2016: 179). These meanings and identities, as well as opportunities and constraints, are negotiated by actors during interaction. The interactions are also very much influenced by the particular contexts in which they take place, including the mediating role of both formal and informal institutions (their norms and rules) (Small 2017). Thus, a person may not use the opportunities s/he has thanks to her/his network position, while another person may respond in different ways to the same constraints, with the importance of agency and structure depending on circumstances. Ties may also be formed accidentally (not purposefully), and social capital can be an unintended outcome of a particular network structure (Small 2009).

We assume that social ties are generally formed along the *homophily principle* – the tendency for similar individuals to associate with one another (Lazarsfeld, Merton and Ronkeylaf 1954; Lin 2002; McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001). Similarity may be divided into three types: attribute similarity (commonality of ethnicity, gender, nationality or other personal characteristic), situational similarity and structural similarity (people who are in nearly equivalent structural positions within a network) (Small 2017: 99). Homophily can be divided into baseline and inbreeding. Baseline homophily occurs due to demographic factors, for example a large size of a particular group. It means that an individual has a higher chance to meet people who are similar to him or her when the pool of potential contacts like him/her is larger. In-breeding homophily refers not only to personal preferences, but also to social structures below the population level (for example, churches or migrant organisations). This leads us to organisational or institutional embeddedness of social interaction, which not only provides the space for interaction, but also mediates interaction via its norms and rules of

behaviour (Small 2009: 2017). Thus, particular similarities may matter in one context, while not in another (Small 2017).

The network effects or outcomes are also known as *network social capital* – a particular form of resource present in social networks, which can be accessed and/or mobilised (Lin 2002). The assumption is that the better the quality of social resources one has gained via social ties, the more chances they have to attain their goals. Network social capital varies with the network composition. Thus, networks with a high variety of diverse ties, both ‘strong and weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973), and a wide range of ties with qualitatively different connections to diverse others (in terms of gender, ethnicity, class; or, more generally, in terms of status; but also in terms of roles, such as kin, friends, etc.) are said to represent better network social capital. In other words, the people with whom ties are formed and the character of these ties translate into the diversity of a social network and, consequently, their potential function (Borgatti, Mehra, Brass and Labianca 2009). The more homogenous a network is, the weaker the networking effect and the less resources one can expect, while, the more diverse a network is, the higher potential for bridging ties and better quality of resources (Lin 2002).

Research methods

This analysis of migrants’ social ties is based on data collected during a qualitative study consisting of 39 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian labour migrants carried out between May and July 2017. We purposively sampled a diverse group of 23 interviewees from the pool of respondents participating in the 2016 survey, based on respondent-driven sampling (quantitative part of the research project *Migrant Networks and Integration of Ukrainian Migrants in Poland: A Quantitative and Qualitative Approach*, 2015–2019). These respondents represented migrants with a minimum of two years of migration experience and with diverse social networks in terms of size, character and social capital volume. We recruited the remaining 16 informants via snowball sampling, intending to reach migrants with higher education working in white collar occupations as this group was underrepresented in the survey.¹ 21 interviewees worked as cleaners, care-workers, construction workers, seamstresses or waiters, while 18 worked on managerial positions in business, civil society or as professionals in academia or freelance jobs, such as journalists (some of our interviewees had two occupations). The majority of the 18 professionals have graduated from a university in Poland. Our sample is uneven when it comes to gender, with 30 interviewees being women and only 9 being men, (the latter were more likely to refuse to participate in the research than the former).

The interview script concerns the migrants’ situation prior to migration, their first migration experiences and focuses on the mechanisms behind the ego-centred network character, formation and maintenance, practices involved in crossing over to new social circles and the drawing of network boundaries. Following the ‘free-listing’ technique, we asked our interviewees to write down the names (initials or pseudonyms) of persons (or groups of persons) with whom they maintain regular contact – a network visualisation (Reyes 2016). We did not use a sociogram for that purpose, as we did not want to impose any pre-defined categories on the informants. We were interested to see to what extent the interviewees would create their own ‘labels’. We also asked the interviewees to write down the names of any institutions that had an impact on their migration experience (whether positive or negative). We further inquired about the quality of the relationships, asking the interviewees about the history of the different relationships, but also their meaning. We asked to what extent these relationships amount to social capital and were mobilised via the ties to obtain different forms of support. Additionally, we inquired whether, in the interviewees’ opinion, Ukrainian migrants do support each other. We also asked whether they had experienced discrimination (verbal and/or physical) in Poland and whether they had reached out for resources to cope with that discrimination within their network.

Our informants were able to choose the language of the interview: 23 interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, 13 in Polish and 3 in Russian. The research team recorded and transcribed the interviews, translating interviews from Ukrainian and Russian into Polish. The transcriptions were not cross-checked. The quality of translation of the Polish quotes into English in this text was double-checked by the editor. In the process of qualitative data analysis, we used Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. We anonymised the names of all our interviewees.

Legal dimension: routes of migrant entry as spaces for interaction and availability of social capital

Migrants' ability to establish a network is determined by wider social processes, such as migration policy and the resulting rights attached to particular migration statuses (Berry 1992; Meissner 2018; Menjívar 2014; Morris 2006). The character of ties together with their capacity to become a source of social capital and solve practical problems are shaped by these statuses, as well as by the local power contexts within which such statuses are expressed. Practically all the interviewees who first came to Poland after 2003 claimed to have entered the country on the basis of a visa (for work, study or tourism purposes). In general, migrants who entered as tourists (before the visa regime) and later, those who entered on the visa for 'tourist' purposes had the most precarious legal status as they were not able to work legally or to apply for a residence card. The interviewees who entered on the basis of a tourist visa, tended to lack ties to individuals or (educational or business) institutions in Poland, whose aid they could use in order to receive a work or student visa. Circular labour migrants first entered Poland for seasonal work using documents arranged for by informal 'travel agencies' in Ukraine. Those who entered after 2006 did so mostly on the basis of visas received thanks to employers' declarations issued by unknown Poles via Ukrainian 'taxi drivers', circulating between Poland and Ukraine. Let us present the legal trajectories of two of our informants, both of whom were working in the domestic work sector in Poland at the time of the interview. Valerija is a 52-year-old divorcee, who first entered Poland in 1995 via an informal 'tourist bureau' for seasonal work, did a job picking cherries the first time, and in the following years she collected potatoes and onions. After she had lost her job in Ukraine in 1997, she needed to find another source of income to support her daughters. Together with a friend they went to Warsaw and asked random people in the street where to look for a job. Following their advice, they went to a 'job fair market' on the outskirts of Warsaw. After a few months of picking fruit and planting flowers, Valerija's friend found a job in the domestic work sector and helped her to enter this sector. Valerija's case shows the difficulties experienced by a migrant who has a precarious legal status, does not know anyone in Poland and is forced to build his/her network from scratch. In these circumstances, Valerija relied on information she had obtained from people who were not part of her network, but who just happened to be there. This is in line with Small's findings to the effect that, instead of searching for particular ties, people rely on those that are available and willing to help (Small 2017). The composition of our informants' networks and ability to use them as a source of social capital to improve the stability of one's legal status changed with the length of migration experience. Sofija, a 58-year-old migrant, who has been circulating between Ukraine and Poland since 2001, mentions the change in her legal status and network composition:

At that time I still needed to leave every three months, so I left for three months, then I returned, stayed for three months, and then I returned again (...), because at that time I still couldn't manage to arrange for it. So, I took the tourist one. And later on, they gave me an invitation to come to work here and I came to work, for a year...

The change from ‘at that time I still couldn’t manage to arrange for it’ to ‘later *they* gave me an invitation to come to work here’ (italics added by authors) shows two types of change. First, it marks the change in the employment policies towards foreigners, which came with the introduction of the facilitated employment scheme in 2006; secondly, it demonstrates how Sofija’s personal network changed: from the situation where she had no bridging or bonding ties to her having access to and being able to use a tie to a Polish employer in order to receive the necessary work documents. Valerija, on the other hand, not knowing any Poles willing to facilitate her legal stay, and facing a return to Ukraine with no perspective of earning an income there, decided to overstay the permitted period and remained in Poland for 12 years without valid residence documents and no right to cross the border. However, despite her precarious legal status, she managed to reach a sense of stability in her personal and work life. Finally, her Ukrainian migrant friends encouraged her to reach out to relevant organisations to regularise her status during the abolition in 2012:

A friend suggested that I should go to [name of international aid organisation] – it’s this organisation for foreigners, which helps them return home... (...) and I went there, quite a few people were there, we started talking, everyone asked something, then my turn came and then this Mr P. said to me ‘and you?’, and I said ‘I’ve been here for eight years already, without leaving, I do not have any documents, I would like to go to Ukraine and I would like to return [here], because I have family here, I have a stable job, I have...’ (...) and he said ‘If you have stayed here for eight years, just wait a little bit longer, because there will be an abolition’. And then I started going everywhere, knocking at every door, asking what this will look like, which documents I will need what else is needed, when will this abolition take place, because people in Poland did not know too much about it. And then I started going to this organisation [name of NGO]. K. was running it (...) and she said that I had to wait, she said what was needed, and that starting from 2nd of January they would accept documents. And then... oh, I called a friend, some acquaintances, because I knew that they were also here without [the possibility to] ‘leave’, like me, a bit shorter, but still they were stuck, like me. And on the 2nd of January, at 4 a.m., I was in Bankowy Square in front of the door. I was the first [in line].

The particular circumstances, searching for opportunities to regularise one’s status, and particular institutional spaces – civil society organisations supporting migrants in legal distress, provide not only information on how to proceed, but also a place for conversation for irregular migrants, who could share their worries and provide a trigger for agency at the right time. As in the study by Engbersen and colleagues (2006) on the importance of network resources for irregular migrants, Valerija shared with other labour migrants her knowledge and experiences about the process of regularising one’s stay during the abolition. According to Valerija, she advised more than 400 people on how to go through the legalisation procedure.

At the moment of regularising her stay, Valerija had already been working in the domestic work sector. Several months later, a friend of her informal Polish employer offered her a job and a proper employment contract. On that basis, she applied for a temporary residence permit, which she received. However, in the domestic work sector, employment is often characterised by *quasi*-legality or so-called ‘façade employment’. As a result, whether one is able to maintain their residence permit depends on the stability of ties to employers: with time these may turn, either into a ‘permanent’ permit or the opposite – a precarious residence status. For example, Roma, a 61-year-old widow, who has been working as a care-worker and circulating between Ukraine and Poland on a regular basis since 2007, had a temporary residence permit in the past. However, at the moment of the interview she was staying in Poland on the basis of a visa, having received from one of her informal employers an employer’s declaration to hire a foreigner. Although she managed to persuade her informal Polish employers to somehow legalise her entry and stay in Poland, she did not identify them as part of

her network, referring to ‘Polish acquaintances’ only once throughout the whole interview. The precarious legal status of these two informants shows a very different trajectory when it comes to the use of social ties as a source of social capital to legalise their stay. In Valerija’s case, not only did she rely on information from her migrant friends to use the structural opportunities of the 2012 regularisation Act to be able to regularise her legal status, but she also became – by her own account – an important source of information on that procedure for other migrants. Having had the experience of irregularity, she seemed to be more determined to have a secure residence status and mobilised her available ties to informal Polish employers and their acquaintances to achieve that. On the other hand, in Sofija’s case, it seems that entering the domestic work sector and the interest (or lack of it) of the informal Polish employers for Sofija to continue work as a care-worker for their elderly parents, played a leading role in determining her legal status. Sofija did not really mobilise these ties herself, nor did she consider them to be part of her social network. This also points to the structural opportunities (regularisation policy), the context of informal care-work (motivation of employers, routine interactions) and individual agency, as factors influencing to what extent, by whom and which social capital is accessed and mobilised.

Those of our informants who entered Poland based on a student visa (that is, the majority of our interviewees who work as professionals), entered a particular institutional space which mediated interactions; also, during their studies and after graduation they had an easier access to the labour market (no need for work permit). Still, applying for a temporary residence permit before the expiration of the visa was quite a challenge. Artem, who was admitted to a university in Poland in 2003, said:

I experienced the greatest problems during my studies, because I did not understand the whole procedure. (...) When I got here I asked some experienced people in the dorm and they explained to me what it is, I mean there were no electronic queuing systems at that time – one had to wake up in the morning, as everyone arrived in October, so the 90 days passed in December (...) so in December at 6 a.m. when it was so cold we had to queue in Długa street. We were all in the same cycle, everyone got their visas in the beginning of October and the 90 days finished at the same time, so I remember we went in groups and filled out these applications.

Neither in this quote, nor at any point during the interview, does Artem mention the university as an institution facilitating the stay legalisation procedure. However, thanks to entering Poland via the ‘educational channel’, Artem and some other Ukrainians we interviewed had the opportunity to move into university dormitories, which proved to be important spaces for interaction. As the university had a policy to place all foreign students together in the dormitories, these provided particular structural conditions for in-breeding homophily. As a result, at moment of studying the interviewees had almost exclusively Ukrainians in their network, with the rare Belarusian or other non-Ukrainian Russian-speaking colleagues. Many of our interviewees who studied in Poland received information on how to legalise their stay from more experienced, foreign (usually Ukrainian) students with whom they shared dormitories. Interestingly enough, however, not only were these more experienced students not part of the informants’ networks at that time, but they never became part of their network in the future. Again, they were present in a particular context when particular information was needed, sharing some attributes (nationality) and the situational similarity (being foreign students in Poland), but differing in terms of the knowledge they had about the legalisation procedure for newcomers.

The task of collecting the necessary documents required to apply for a temporary residence permit was also a serious challenge due to time limitations.² Here is what Yuliya who was accepted as a doctoral student in Poland in 2008 said:

At that time there was a law saying that in order to apply for a residence card you had to do that no later than 45 days before the expiration of the last valid document, so when I arrived in Poland I had 45 days to find an apartment, apply for insurance, apply for the tax identification number, because then you needed it to apply for residence and the personal identification number, to obtain housing registration, because you also needed that to apply for a residence card.

The housing issue Yuliya mentioned as a barrier in legalising her stay was confirmed as problematic in other interviews. Not only did Ukrainian migrants face serious obstacles renting apartments due to their limited funds, but also Polish landlords were unwilling to rent to foreigners. In addition, they had to find a landlord who would be willing to register them at this particular address, for them to have all the necessary documents to apply for a residence permit. Yuliya's network played a crucial role in solving this problem. She met a more established migrant through an acquaintance from Ukraine involved in the same doctoral programme:

She went to some sort of a rosary circle for 'Easterners', which was run by the Polonia House in [name of street] (...). And there she met this girl, who had lived in Poland for 10 years already. (...) She said that at that moment her flat-mate – they were renting an apartment together – had left for the US for three months and she wasn't using these two rooms, so we could move into that room, for three months she said no problem, if you need to stay longer, we will talk about it. And she didn't even charge us for that.

Having an acquaintance among the Ukrainian students in Poland, who already had rented a place that one could share the flat with was an important resource facilitating the legalisation procedure. Yuliya's doctoral programme provided the circumstances, in which she met someone, who also searched for an apartment and who had access to a very different social circle ('rosary-circle') than that of Yuliya (an atheist). The solution to the problem arrived with the tie to a person, whom neither of them knew well, and who due to her negative past experiences related to housing conditions, decided to help them. As in the previously discussed cases, Yuliya no longer considers this 'bridging weak tie' as part of her network. The role of the institutional setting, particular situational similarity and resulting sense of solidarity, activates support in legalising the residence status of those who entered Poland as students. At the moment of the study most of these interviewees had a stable legal status. They were residing in Poland on the basis of different forms of residence cards, with one person having even received Polish citizenship. Most of them claimed that social networks' resources played a very limited or no role in the legal dimension of their lives. However, it seems that in the past an important role in the legalisation of their stay was played primarily by those whom they came across thanks to their institutional embeddedness and interaction with people with whom they shared some attributes and situational similarity.

Among our interviewees who were working as professionals at the time of our study only a few first entered Poland not to study, but to work. The role of social networks in their case was rather limited. In the initial phase of migration, these persons used their vocational skills to find blue-collar occupations and so enter Poland legally. These manual jobs provided them with the necessary financial support and gave them time to apply to have their Ukrainian diplomas recognised (a time-consuming and costly process) and to improve their Polish language skills. They reached out for professional help rather than network-resources to solve such issues as administrative barriers concerning prolonging of residence, health and social insurance or starting one's own company. However, they also faced legal barriers they were unable to overcome, such as the inability to buy land or limited possibilities for political activism.

Professional dimension: the workplace as a context for interaction

The majority of our interviewees received the first information about jobs from more experienced migrants – Ukrainian acquaintances or friends they had met in Ukraine. This allowed them not only to find work, but also to avoid poor working conditions, especially regarding payment. For example, Dmytro, who came to Poland to study, found his first summer job in Poland thanks to information provided by a Ukrainian acquaintance (who was working in Poland) over the internet. It was a manual job in a carpet warehouse. He received the information about his current place of employment (his first full-time job after graduation and a highly-skilled one) from a Ukrainian friend, an experienced migrant, who was his first information source when making the decision whether to go to Poland and who had also helped him to find accommodation in Poland. However, the interviews also contain examples of a mechanism of social capital generation which Portes (1998) referred to as ‘reciprocity exchanges’, that is, exchanges where access to resources was provided with the expectation of ‘repayment’ in the future. As Irina, a 31-year old deputy director in a real-estate company, who first worked in cleaning in Poland, comments:

My parents' acquaintances helped me with my arrival, I don't even know their name. And this was not some sort of unselfish aid, it was more like a sort of barter. Their sons also used to come here and my father helped them find some jobs for men, so we had agreed that when I arrived, they would help me with a job for a woman.

While working as a cleaner, Irina graduated from a university in Poland, and started to look for a job on her own, sending CVs in response to job advertisements in her professional area. The support she needed and received from her social network at this stage was not instrumental, but emotional: she was encouraged to apply for a job suitable to her skills.

With time, the position of migrants within the network changes. Roma, who has been circulating to work as a care-worker for over 10 years, claims to be more of a source of support for other Ukrainians than a person who receives it. She had lost her job in Ukraine and relied on an intermediary agency to find her first job in Poland as she did not know any migrants herself and she was dependent on the earnings from seasonal work. In the subsequent years, she also worked in Poland as a cleaner and kitchen help. She argued that, over the years, she had helped many people whom she did not include in her personal network:

Now it's much better, I know lots of people and I have Polish friends. We are really good friends. It used to be hard, I came here and I didn't know anybody. (...) I helped a lot with job searching, passing on information about work, I did.

The workplace constitutes an important formal or informal institutional context for interaction and potential tie formation for labour migrants. The type of work our interviewees perform is one of the important differentiating factors determining who they form ties with. Labour migrants who work in agriculture, construction, services or as cleaners in public institutions, usually have Ukrainian co-workers and mainly form ties with them. Even in the rare case where our interviewees do have Polish co-workers, the relations remain formal. Vasyli, a 27-year-old, who works at a construction site, mentions his three Polish co-workers:

We are only in touch because of work. These are, in fact, work relations. (...) No point in calling. We could maybe call each other on our birthdays.

The only exception among the interviewed labour migrants are women working as domestic workers in private households. These women work alone and the tie to the Polish (informal) employer is the only meaningful relationship they are potentially able to form. Migrant domestic workers, as many other circular labour migrants, meet other Ukrainian migrants ‘on the road’, while commuting between home (Ukraine) and their workplace (Poland) by means of one of the migrant institutions, the informal ‘taxi’ (see Kindler 2011). Here is an example of Maria, who has already circulated to work as a cleaner for two years and who met her best friend while travelling to Poland:

I was travelling to Warsaw then, and we met on the way and all this time we have been in touch, we travel, we are friends. (...) Because we always use some private transport we arrange for, a taxi – several people get into a car and we go. And so, this is how I met this woman and we’ve been friends until today.

The interviewees who work in office jobs and as specialists also have few opportunities to meet Polish colleagues at work: they predominantly work in so-called ‘Eastern departments’ of various private companies, non-governmental organisations related to Eastern Europe, as freelance journalists, translators or are concentrated in niches for which there is a high demand on the Polish labour market, such as IT. While looking for a job, these migrants strive to capitalise on their cultural competences, which are unique on the Polish labour market. The institutional embeddedness determines the construction and reproduction of their network. Although some of our interviewees have met Poles through their workplace, in most cases the only Poles in their workplace are the bosses. Their co-workers are foreigners, mainly other highly-skilled Ukrainians, who become the main or important part of their social circle. Most of these interviewees, like Dmytro, the 27-year-old project manager in the advertising and marketing department of a large IT company, has job colleagues who are approximately the same age and share similar migration experience:

Well, first of all there are my job colleagues. In general, the people I know from my job, we are in touch, there is an integration trip sometimes... or maybe we play billiard or others... such like, for example on Fridays, we do this kind of thing. (...) It’s a really large company – some 200, 200 people work there. But I work in the ‘Ukrainian department’ where there are some 35 or 40 people.

Thus, the homophilic character of the formation of these ties, where the similarity is due to the shared nationality and profession, is structured by the institutional context. Those who have contacts with Poles at work claim that their work relations remain professional. An exception in terms of forming bridging-ties with Poles are labour migrants who work with Poles in the public sector or who meet Poles while working during their studies. For example, Kalina, who finished her studies at a Polish university, is a qualified teacher and has two Polish colleagues from her previous workplace (a public kindergarten) in her network:

[These are] Poles. I mean, I met them in my previous job. The people I work with now we’re constantly in touch. I was the only Ukrainian then...

Kalina’s example shows how the interaction with work colleagues change, depending on the size of the migrant group and the job position. When Kalina started her first job there were very few Ukrainians working in the public sector as teachers. As she mentions ‘I was the only Ukrainian then...’, which meant that she only had Polish co-workers and no other co-nationals at work to form ties with. Now, she is the head of a private kindergarten, and her staff members are all Polish; however, these relations remain professional, as she is the

superior in relation to her co-workers. The different institutional work context, i.e., working either for a company in the private sector (with more co-nationals available) or working in the public sector (with more Poles available), as well as the position in the employment hierarchy both have a clear impact on who our informants interact with.

In terms of its consequences for social capital access and mobilisation, it is important to note that for the social ties in the group under study, homophily runs not only along the lines of nationality, but also along the lines of occupational or even social class. Petro, who works for an international corporation in Poland, and who earlier commented on having only Ukrainians among the friends and acquaintances he listed during the interview, added:

Another thing is that all of them, how to say that in a way that's politically correct, are from the same social class, although their earnings may differ. All of them have higher education, there are no representatives of the working-class on that list (...). I am not saying that uneducated people are not ok, but I do not know anyone, who would be in touch with such people, I mean the people who have come here only to make money, with the so-called 'zarobitchanie' ('money-makers'), who have completely different views.

Petro claims that neither him nor anyone from his social circle has ties to 'zarobitchanie', which is a rather derogatory term used to refer to labour migrants in Ukrainian. Class inequalities within migrant groups limit the possibilities of forming ties, but do not seem to translate into more ties with representatives of the receiving society as found in other research (Akkaymak 2016; Marchetti 2017). The missing bridging ties among Ukrainian migrants to people in different occupational positions on the Polish labour markets mean that specialised knowledge or skills of highly-skilled migrants are generally passed on within a closed social circle, which also suggests little chances for upward mobility for those working in the secondary sector of the labour market. Very few of our interviewees are able to move to the primary sector of the labour market in Poland (unless they have graduated from Polish universities) and make a transition similar to Polish students: from part-time, low-skilled jobs during studies to highly-skilled jobs after graduation.

Migrants share a common experience of initial hardships, having no acquaintances and few opportunities to find a job and it is this sense of solidarity with their compatriots in a similar situation that triggers their willingness to help. Thus, we can find evidence of what Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) called bounded solidarity, that is, a group-oriented behaviour whose sources lie in the shared situation, common experiences and perceived community of interests. These factors lead to the emergence of norms of mutual support and a sense of duty towards co-nationals, letting the social capital travel along the networks. Our interviewees spontaneously refer to the imagined national community when speaking of Ukrainians, using the pronoun 'us'.

However, with time the newly arrived migrants are also seen as competition on the labour market and the cause of the worsening working conditions by the migrants with longer migration experience. As Polina mentions:

Ukrainians who first come to Poland, especially if they come to work, do not know anything, they have only heard stories told by acquaintances who worked in a factory somewhere... They come to earn anything, they agree to work for 5 zlotys per hour, or 8, 7 zloty. The general hourly wage decreases. As far as I know not only Ukrainians suffer from this. For example, supposing I've come here to do training, I've invested money in that and then they tell me that the maximum hourly rate is 8 zlotys. But sorry, I am an inhabitant here, I pay taxes, and some people come here to earn a little and return to Ukraine.

Polina refers to an argument we heard in many other interviews, identifying the different needs of the circular migrants, who, in Polina's words, 'come here to earn a little and return to Ukraine' and those who are more settled, and so have higher living expenses. The absence of ties between migrants via employment as the result of the competitive character of such employment sectors as care, cleaning or construction was also found in other studies (Marchetti 2017). From the initial bridgehead role of migration facilitators, migrants turn into gate-keepers, unwilling to share their network resources.

Personal dimension: from internet through professional to migrant institutional context for interaction

Social ties, both transnational and local, play an important role both in the initial and at later stages of migration for our interviewees. The migrants engaged in circular migration, with a precarious legal status and working in less skilled jobs, maintain ties to family members in Ukraine via everyday phone-calls (via social media communicators), and regular visits home. They also preserve the ties to best friends in Ukraine via communicators and playing internet games together. Vasyli, whose sister and mother are also living in Poland, but his best friends are in Ukraine, had this to say:

J. is a friend, J., P. – my two best friends. They are from my village. They are 26 and 25 years old. We call each other. We are constantly in touch, whenever we play football [internet game] we can talk, or, when something happened, when there is a message, I contact those two guys, we can write to each other or call. Now they are in Ukraine, they work there. They are Ukrainian. They only come to Poland for shopping. They are single. A. [another friend] is a friend from the same [school] grade. So, it's the same with him, we write to each other, maintain a relationship. He sat next to me in class, then his daughter was born. He doesn't have an international passport. He doesn't go to Poland, he works in Ukraine. He is 27 years old, like me.

The internet provides a crucial platform to communicate, as well as to socialise. It allows younger migrants not only to maintain transnational ties, but to meet new people in Poland. The interviewees with a stable legal status in Poland and mostly higher education are members of many hobby groups they have found via social media and thematic forums, which are important networking channels. From knitting to intellectual games, the interviewees have formed ties with new Ukrainian acquaintances, who they regularly meet off-line. Usually, these communities consist of several tens of people: the narratives of the migrants under study indicate that the ties are numerous, but relatively weak and the composition of the group may change (characteristically, the informants tended to speak about a group as a whole rather than about specific people). For example, Dmytro, whose girlfriend from Ukraine has recently joined him in Poland, is an active user of sites with 'intellectual games'. He uses two main game sites, one with over 100 members, who also meet off-line. 10 of these people are on Dmytro's list, and he refers to them as friends. On another internet site Dmytro has ties to approximately 40 persons, mainly Ukrainians:

Many people in that group, the majority, in fact, are from Ukraine, but also from Russia..., there is even a Pole [female], but she is great, she speaks Russian.

In the case of Dmytro, his limited Polish restricts the possibilities of tie formation with Poles. However, the moment a Ukrainian or Russian-language hobby-group ceased to exist, some of our interviewees reached out to such hobby groups in Polish, this way meeting Poles. Thus, it seems that it was not the attributional similarity

(in this case – nationality), but the similar hobby interests and availability of hobby groups (informal institutional context), which determined who the informants interacted with. Lena, who came to Poland in 2015 and lives here with her Ukrainian boyfriend, is an active participant of a knitting group organised via the internet, in which up to 60 Ukrainian women share their passion for yarn:

I'm part of a group of girls from Ukraine, we are from different towns, but we share a passion for yarn, knitting needles, crocheting needles unite us, it's a true passion for us. Each of us does something different here in Poland, for example, one of us comes from G. to attend these meetings. So, we do these 'knitting-meetings', in different places, for example during Chopin concerts at the Royal Łazienki Park or in some cafés and restaurants. So these are the women I meet once a week or once every two weeks, and one of them is Polish.

Lena does reflect upon her 'yarn-club' as an important source of emotional support in sharing the estrangement of being a foreigner in Poland, but these are neither her close friends nor does she mentioned them by name, when drawing her network visualisation during the interview. It is also clear that this informal organisation does not rely on personal attributes, such as nationality, as their primary formation, but on a common 'passion'. However, the group was established and functioned in Ukrainian. The participation of interviewees in interest/hobby groups was also determined by their gender and the moment in their life-cycle, with mothers of young children meeting other mothers in baby-clubs or music groups for children (see also similar findings in Goodson and Phillimore 2008).

As we already showed in the previous sections, those who had studied in Poland, met the main Ukrainian group of friends during the studies and later at work. As Kalina, who currently lives with her Polish partner and two children in Warsaw suburbs, mentions:

Certainly, a kind of... let us call it psychological support, I can get from my university friends. We don't get in touch very often, but when we do call each other or meet, then we always talk about life issues, we can complain about things, we give each other advice.

Work contacts turn into friendships, too. Yuliya, the 30-year old free-lance journalist, said:

When it comes to private [ties], my Ukrainian friends are in Poland. I met all those people through my professional life, but now we do not work together anymore and these relations from work transformed into very nice private relations.

There were substantial differences between the interviewees in terms of how much personal life they had, including leisure time to socialise with friends or to meet new ones. In the case of those working in the secondary labour market sector, the time to socialise was limited and places of religious worship, such as the Greek-Catholic Church in Warsaw, provided sometimes the only opportunity to meet new Ukrainian acquaintances or exchange news with Ukrainian friends. As Zlata, a 58-year old divorcee, said:

Lena is a cleaner, too, but she is my closest friend (...). We met in church, she approached me and said that she liked me and maybe we could become friends. I said 'no problem, I like everyone' [laughter].

For these interviewees, sustaining a relationship during migration is possible thanks to phone calls, often using internet communicators, and the little free time spent together during and after religious services. The vast majority of our informants were Greek Catholics or Orthodox, but we also interviewed migrants who belonged

to Jehovah Witnesses. They joined the group at the time when neither Ukrainian nor Russian congregations existed in Poland, so the Jehovah Witness congregation provided the opportunity to form close relationships with other Jehovah Witnesses, who were mostly Polish nationals.

A number of our interviewees used the services of NGOs³ dedicated to Ukrainian migrants or attended events they organised. Our informants participated in culinary events, sang in a choir or attended Polish language classes during which they met other Ukrainian migrants. At the same time, labour migrants working in Poland as professionals were also involved as event organisers and even members of the NGOs, which allowed them to build up their network during common projects. Thus, the NGO provided the institutional setting for interaction and knowledge exchange among people who would otherwise be unlikely to belong to one network. Only circular labour migrants did not use NGOs to form ties with other Ukrainians. They were neither aware of the existence of such organisations nor did they have the time to attend cultural events. They used the practical services only if the NGOs reached out by, for example, organising an event on the premises of the Greek Orthodox Church.

While access to information about jobs and legalising one's status is of crucial importance in the initial phase of migration, with the passing of time, emotional support becomes the most valuable resource for our interviewees. For example, Roma receives emotional support mainly from other Ukrainians, circular migrants like herself, when speaking to them over the phone, discussing family problems, sharing migration experiences. However, although she treats them as her closest friends, they rarely meet. Roma's work, which requires almost full availability, limits her opportunities to socialise, enjoy the culture or any entertainment in Poland. The only place that she visits in Warsaw is the Greek-Catholic church and she meets her friends there once a week. Valerija, also receives her most important network resource – emotional support – thanks to ties to her female migrant friends. They discuss family problems, spend leisure time together and help each other in emergencies. Here is what she says about her best friend B., who is 'more than a sister' to her:

Sometimes I have the kind of problems I cannot share with my children or other people, then I immediately call her and tell her – or we meet and then we start to talk – when my dad was ill, or right after he died, when I learned about it, when they called me, for example, they called me and said that dad is dead I called B. right away. This was a Friday, I returned from work at 5 pm and at 5 pm I heard that my dad had died. And B. [arrived] from G. right at 5:30, she was with me... they came with K. [husband] and took out some money, said 'maybe you do not have money, and even if you do, doesn't matter, take the money, go to Ukraine and buy flowers or a laurel from us'.

Valerija remarks that there are 'problems', which she 'cannot share with children' or other family members, pointing to the fact that close ties to family members do not necessarily provide an outlet for migrants' emotional distress. It seems that they tend to rely on empathy and support from people who are migrants like them (situational similarity).

In general, the labour migrants from this research group who worked in office jobs or as specialists did spend considerably more time than the regular labour migrants socialising with friends. They also received emotional support via transnational ties to other Ukrainian migrants (family and friends) living in other cities in Poland or outside Ukraine and Poland, among others in Ireland, Italy, Israel or France. They also had friendship ties to other foreigners they had met during their work at international corporations in Poland, who are currently abroad. As Yuliya said:

My three best friends from university [in Ukraine], one left for Jerusalem, the other for Boston and the third one is in Germany (...). I have not visited the one in the US, but we are in touch. In exactly one week we are meeting

in Kiev, because she goes there for summer holidays, and the one who stayed in Israel and the one in Germany I try to visit once a year, or they come see me here, or we meet in Kiev during summer holidays, we have a tradition to meet on the 24th of August, during Ukraine's independence day, in Kiev, to spend time together.

Again, the situational similarity of these transnational ties (all of Yuliya's friends are migrants) provides an important ground for maintaining this relationship. This is in line with other research findings showing that cross-border ties are important sources of emotional support for migrants (Baldassar, Nedelcu, Merla and Wilding 2016; Dahinden 2012; Herz 2015; Kozielska 2014).

Conclusions

At the moment the study was conducted, the interviewees' social ties are similar to each other in terms of nationality, level of education, type of work and character of migration. We argue that in the case of the studied group, organisational or institutional embeddedness of social ties such as workplaces and university dormitories with a large presence of their co-nationals, the existence of Ukrainian migrant help groups, the Greek-Catholic or Orthodox Churches and Ukrainian or Russian-language hobby groups, but also the migrants' own social networks, are crucial in determining with whom migrants interact and the extent to which their networks are homogenous. These formal and informal institutions provide the opportunities for interactions and also mediate these interactions via their norms and values. The fact that our interviewees mainly have ties with their fellow countrymen, who are similar to them in terms of their socio-economic status, is primarily the result of the particular circumstances in which they live. For example, functioning in the ambiance of other Ukrainians for several years (at work or at university) contributes to establishing ties with highly-skilled compatriots, as the relationships have their sources in previous ones. There are only few social bridges in networks which would connect Ukrainian migrants from different socio-economic statuses and to members of the receiving society. These particular institutional conditions provide little opportunities to form relationships with Poles who are, following Putnam's bridging tie notion, 'unlike me in important ways' (with a few exceptions). The migrants do not perceive contacts with compatriots as an autotelic value, but rather as the most accessible form of networking. Individual preferences to associate with someone who speaks the same language and has a similar migration character complement the structural/institutional context. At the same time, however, interacting in multiple spaces and contexts means that migrants have the opportunity to form ties which are bridging in some ways (for example, migration experience or legal status in Poland), but not in other (for example, nationality or level of education).

However, our analysis also showed important boundary-drawing processes within the migrant group, which facilitate access to resources for some of them, while hindering this access for others, depending on their region of origin, languages spoken, socio-economic status and the moment of arrival in Poland. For example, Ukrainians from regions located in Western Ukraine had no or very few ties to Russian-speaking Ukrainians from Central and Eastern Ukraine. Such network boundaries mean less opportunities to form so-called bridging ties to people with resources different from one's own. This is especially acute in the case of those labour migrants under study who work in the secondary sector of the labour market: they rarely have access to people with higher economic, social or cultural capital, which could possibly lead to their upward social mobility and to a shift from the 'migration' sector to the primary sectors of the labour market. However, in our study we saw examples of how the work and social status boundaries, as well as the boundaries between newcomers and the established migrants, are overcome thanks to value introjections or bounded solidarity. Thus, social capital is provided to people who are not necessary part of one's network. It seems that, as Small (2017) claimed, mi-

grants also rely on those who are available in a given interaction space, and they receive help without expectations of reciprocity. We also see examples of what Portes (1998) called 'reciprocity exchanges', where access to resources was provided on the expectation of 'repayment' in the future. It was also evident from the analysis that the network of our informants changed dynamically and that apart from a few close ties, there was a substantial turnover of social ties when comparing those they had at the initial phase of migration and their social ties at the moment of the study was conducted.

As we have shown above, the character of social networks of the Ukrainian migrants under study changes over time, as they gather more migration experience and their needs and circumstances alter. We can identify two ideal types of social capital provided via migrants' social ties, i.e., emotional and functional capital. These two types of social capital facilitated circulation between Ukraine and Poland, a kind of 'settlement in mobility'. This was possible first of all thanks to ties to Poles, mainly the migrants' (informal) employers, who facilitated their legal entry and stay. Depending on the circumstances, migrants either mobilised these ties to receive the necessary legal documents for entry or the employers provided the latter without the migrants' initiative, guided by their own interest. Thus, the informal organisational embeddedness of migrants' work relations provided the opportunities for both mobilisation of social capital and access to social capital, without the actual need of mobilisation. The importance of the tie to Poles for circular labour migrants continued if migrants had a precarious legal status and diminished with the increased stability of legal status. The 'settlement in mobility' was also possible thanks to ties to kin or friends in Ukraine (with household based in Ukraine) and a few ties to Ukrainian friends met in Poland, who were a source of the second type of ideal social capital, that is, emotional support. The transnational ties were upheld thanks to face-to-face contacts during regular stays in both countries and via everyday communication at a distance (internet communicators). Transnational ties help circular labour migrants to maintain the attachment to their places of origin and the feeling of belonging to their local communities in Ukraine. However, ties to Ukrainian migrant friends in Poland, but also transnational ties to family and friends in Ukraine and abroad, allowed migrants to cope with the difficulties of adapting to a new environment. They were also supportive in leading a transnational life, in case of those migrants with households back in Ukraine, a safety-net in case of emergencies and in decision-making processes concerning among other shifts in the labour market. However, migrants preferred to share their emotional difficulties with other migrants, who found it easier to empathise with them thanks to the shared experience of migration, than their families back home. The transnational ties of highly qualified migrants limit the risk of estrangement and isolation in the new country and help them to maintain a sense of continuity and stability in their lives. What's interesting, however, is that they mostly consist of ties with Ukrainian co-nationals who are also migrants, but who live in other countries. They are often rooted in childhood, adolescence or early adulthood (especially in the period of study) and are based on a sense of mutual understanding resulting from the shared experience of migration. Thanks to new technologies, migrants share their everyday reality on a regular basis during routine interactions and offer emotional support to each other. The emotional support was crucial for both personal and professional dimensions of migrants' lives.

To conclude, migrants' form bridging ties and these ties are a source of social capital, but not in the way we would expect. The bridging occurs mainly along the lines of possessing the knowledge or holding a position (legal or professional) that could be used to advance one's social position either in Poland or in Ukraine ('settled in mobility'). It mainly concerns ties to migrants with a longer migration experience (providing both instrumental and emotional support) and, in rare cases, to Poles. Bridging also occurs thanks to institutionally provided opportunities for knowledge exchange, as in the case of services used and projects developed by migrants in the civil society.

Notes

¹ For more on respondent-driven sampling based survey see, for example, Górny (2017), Tyldum and Johnston (2014).

² Since 2014 the legal requirements have changed, and the application has to be submitted one day before the expiration of the valid document.

³ These organisations were usually formed in response to political events in Ukraine, such as the Orange Revolution or the protests at the Euromaidan.

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