Forming a Ukrainian Diaspora in Poland: Between "Common Culture," National Naturalism, and Othering

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Abstract
Poland remained a popular destination for migrants from Ukraine for many years before February 24, 2022, the outbreak of full-scale Russian aggression on Ukraine. Ukrainian communities in Polish cities, including local autochthonous Ukrainians (the Ukrainian national minority), are already well-established and well-organized, although they are very diverse. Drawing from anthropological fieldwork conducted in 2021 and at the beginning of 2022, this article seeks to address the nexus of the diaspora and culture and explores the imaginations of "common culture" in diaspora-forming processes. We treat "culture" as diasporic imaginings of naturalized and reified representations of what is to be a Ukrainian in Poland. The essentialized notion of putative "common culture" is routinely discursivized and maintained by diasporic elites. Exploring this as an empirical phenomenon captured in the field helps reveal the internal tensions and that this imagining empowers the production of cultural differences. We argue that imagined "common culture" may actually activate "othering" of the diasporic Other and might not be as unifying a factor in diaspora-forming processes as it appears.

Keywords: diaspora-forming processes; culture; Ukrainians; migrants; Poland

Introduction

Kateryna came to Poland in 2013 from western Ukraine. She is a political scientist specializing in migration and is presently a PhD student at the University of Warsaw. She speaks fluent Polish, is very active in her community, and coordinates cultural events in one of the prominent Ukrainian organizations. Alina, in turn, went to Kraków the same year to study, then married a Pole. For several years, she has been involved in cultural activities, organizing, organizing events, concerts, and theater performances in the initiative group she co-created. As she says, her ambition is "to present the Ukrainian culture to the people of Kraków." She supports young artists from Ukraine, invites them to present their achievements, and connects Ukrainians and Poles in the city.

Contrary to Alina, due to her position, Kateryna has much more contact with local Ukrainians, i.e., people of Ukrainian origin who did not migrate to Poland (nor their ancestors) and have been living in this country – as they say – "for ages," "since forever." These are Polish citizens of Ukrainian roots, recognized by Polish law and named the Ukrainian national minority.[1] Many of them attend the events Kateryna coordinates, and she knows them well. In contrast, Alina has a limited contact with local Ukrainians because her initiatives usually reach only the young

generation of migrants from Ukraine. We asked Kateryna and Alina directly about issues common for Ukrainian migrants and local Ukrainians. They both pointed to, among others, "culture":

> Well, it's the language, culture, and anything related to culture; all songs, literature, whatever is Ukrainian is close to them, and it is certainly common for us and them. (K7_I_f23)[2]

> […] this common affinity, religion and culture, this mainstream culture, it's shared and it connects us. (W7_I_f30)

This caught our attention and made us think about the vision of culture that is considered to be common to local Ukrainians in Poland and their co-ethnic migrants from Ukraine. This question is all the more important as it was based on the statements of two migrant activists working in the field of cultural events and having extensive reflections on the Ukrainian communities[3] in Poland.

Also, during other meetings with diasporic entrepreneurs and during the analysis of diasporic discourses, we heard the slogan "Ukrainian culture" many times. As in the quotes above, it was stated in general, or the "components" were enumerated: traditions, customs, songs, embroidery, etc. When we asked our research participants to deepen these issues, however, it turned out that under this surface of the declarative and supposedly common "resource," there is significant heterogeneity and, further, "culture" in its specific manifestations is not always common, and does not always unify.

The article offers a study on the current processes taking place in Poland, a Central and Eastern European country, with its empirical database related to intra-diasporic processes occurring between the autochthonous minority and its co-ethnic migrants. In recent years, we have observed the interesting phenomena of cultural encounters between rooted minorities and migrants from the former USSR in this part of Europe. Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Romanian, and Slovak scholars have already developed research on varied aspects of migration from neighboring countries, especially former Soviet republics, to their states, but they have been mostly concentrated on migrants alone with no reference to their autochthonous co-ethnics (e.g., Benč 2015; Burean 2018; Drbohlav and Jaroszewicz 2016; Fedyuk and Kindler 2016; Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017; Plenta 2016), and have rarely addressed minority-migrant encounters (for exceptions, see Lapshyna 2019; 2021; Dunin-Wąsowicz and Fomina 2020; Triandafyllidou 2008; 2009). In Poland, such encounters apply not only to Ukrainians but also to Belarusians and Jews. Similar processes have been taking place in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania, where citizens of Ukraine and Moldova migrate and encounter their co-ethnics of autochthonous origin (e.g., Wallace and Stola 2001). However, our case concerns the largest scale of this phenomenon in the region: Poland is inhabited by a relatively big Ukrainian autochthonous community[4] and has been facing the largest migration from Ukraine for dozens of years. Therefore, the research and findings presented here contribute to a better understanding of encounters of co-ethnics with and without migration experiences in CEE and may be treated as emblematic.

One of the few researchers analyzing "diasporic identity narratives" among autochthonous national minorities and their co-ethnic migrants in CEE is Anna Triandafyllidou (2008; 2009). In her analysis of the field material gathered in several countries, including Poland, she uses the tools of critical discourse analysis, tracking certain topoi in the narrations. One such topos is that of ethnocultural unity:

> One important topic in our informants' narratives refers to the internal divisions of the diaspora between migrants and native minorities. In order to resolve this tension and position themselves as a diaspora community in the country of settlement, several informants adopt the topos of ethnocultural unity. This topos turns internal socioeconomic and political divisions on their head and argues for one, true and homogeneous diaspora and nation. (Triandafyllidou 2009, 237)

This topos, or more precisely its discursive utilization, has a very specific function of mitigating the differences between the representatives of minorities and migrants recognized by the migrant leaders, as it is used "to even out differences, silence class issues and construct their 'authentic' diasporic identity" (Triandafyllidou 2009, 240). Triandafyllidou treats these tensions and differences as intra-diasporic and recognizes the coexistence of the topos of ethnocultural unity with other topoi, including those that emphasize differences.

Although we conducted our research in completely different circumstances, especially regarding the significant numerical advantage of migrants over local Ukrainians even before February 24, 2022, the recognitions of Triandafyllidou remain current. We recognized some of the Triandafyllidou's topoi during the research in our empirical material. Still, we would like to focus to the greatest extent on how they are created, fueled, and discursivized. Also, we decided to go further and to problematize and recontextualize what she calls ethnocultural unity within new migratory processes. Drawing on the research material, through the bottom-up perspective, we trace the "Ukrainian culture" as an allegedly unifying factor in the intra-diasporic relations in Poland. What drew our attention was whether the topos of ethnocultural unity, referred to by us as "common culture" and treated as one of the diaspora-forming processes (see below), is actually used only to eliminate intra-diasporic differences or maybe is also utilized as a tool for othering and boundary making. Our general problem in this article prompted us to ask several research questions:

- What is hidden behind the essentialized notion of putative "common culture" in the narratives of diasporic leaders and activists?
- Does the imagined "common culture" activate the othering of the diasporic Other? And if so, how?

Further, during the analysis of the empirical material, after recognizing such practices, we formulated the next question:

- How do diasporic subjectivities conceive, formulate and organize "diasporic culture" and deal with cultural variation within putative "common culture" – a culture common to all Ukrainians of autochthonous and migratory backgrounds – as the tool of making the diasporic Other, fueling diasporic discourses and practices?

In order to answer these questions, we propose the term "diaspora-forming processes," inspired by Khachig Tölölyan's (2007, 649) approach of "diasporization, a becoming-diaspora," and "a process of collective identification and form of identity." We localize diaspora in the sphere of social imaginings and cultural practices of people who live outside their homelands and *believe* they live in a diaspora and are diaspora members. When these social imaginings and cultural practices are shared and intersubjectively treated as common, they transform into diasporic discourses and claims (including idioms, stereotypes, and cliches) and mobilize people as a diaspora. Nevertheless, some mobilize only partially, i.e., particular communities, while being contested or at times not accepted by others. Diaspora-forming processes such as heritage, culture, nationalism, and diasporic policy may differ within different "groups" and "communities," so they do not entail "wholeness" or "unity," even if they resound as "common." One may uncover the diaspora-forming processes by exploring discourses, cultural idioms, popular cliches, and stereotypes based on recognized bottom-up beliefs and images of a diaspora (Anonimized 2023).

Below, we present the context of our empirical case and fieldwork. Further, we uncover what is hidden behind the "common" and how diasporic subjects deal with differences. We discuss the most frequently named factors of differences and show that they are built on *national naturalism*.[5] As such, they are normativized oppositions by which it is easy for the diasporic subjectivities to employ othering of other Ukrainians. Finally, we conclude with the argument that exploring the

imagination of common culture turns out to be insightful when it comes to understanding the dynamics of diaspora-forming processes.

Literature Review

We follow the tracks of the researchers, who investigate the intra-diasporic differences in different contexts, although without taking the very existence of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland for granted. In the literature, we can find many examples of research on particular diasporic communities and their relationship with others, separating different "segments of diaspora" or tracing the establishment of mutual connections of different "groups" or "old" and "new" migration of the same ethnic background or country of origin (e.g., Isurin 2011; Koerber 2017; Liu 2014; Satzewich 2002).

Tigran Toroysan and Arax Vardanyan enumerate scholars' attempts to describe the modern Armenian diaspora "as a single whole," to "study its separate communities" and "to make a comparative analysis of [its] communities." (Torosyan and Vardanyan 2020, 67) Then, they introduce the notion of "different segments of diaspora" and supplement Cohen's (2008) classical typology of diaspora by adding a sixth type: the transforming one, thereby also contributing to the dynamic concept of diaspora (Shuval 2000).

The perception and maintenance of intra-diasporic differences may utilize the mechanism of othering. We follow Dragana Kovačević Bielicki's (2019, 178) view that othering can be "described" and "experienced" by social actors in different, specific ways. She approaches "otherness" "as the attributed quality of being *different from*" and specifies that

> the active process of othering – in the sense of affective or discursive labeling of persons or imagined groups as "others" – implies something essentially evaluative, nega-tive and, often, even hostile. It frequently entails not only an awareness that others are different, but also an assessment of some forms of being different as "wrong," less valuable, less moral, strange, or foreign. (2019, 178)

Ivan Kozachenko (2018; 2021), interested in the internal differentiation of the discourses within the Ukrainian diaspora since 2014, introduces a division into the "old" and "new" diaspora, and conceptualizes them slightly differently in both articles. He notices the ongoing opening of the "old" diaspora to the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Ukraine, and thus a change in the model of national identity, while among the "new" diaspora, on the contrary, he observes a shift toward symbolic ethnic resources despite the ethnographic diversity. These changes take place in the diaspora, but they have their source in Ukraine. The traditional, ethnic notion of the "Ukrainian diaspora" less and less mirrors the widening openness and inclusiveness of that category, which follows the ongoing transformation from ethnic to civic notion of national identity in Ukraine (e.g., Arel 2018; Barrington 2022; Kulyk 2019; Kuzio 2016; Nedashkivska 2018; Riabchuk 2015). Kozachenko, however, shows rather a transition from ethnic to civic Ukrainian identity in the diaspora and identity negotiations than othering.

As long as the distinction between "old" and "new" diasporas is applied to describe differences between the different "waves" of migration to Western, traditionally receiving states, this does not seem to cause serious methodological doubts, except those concerning generalizations. But such a distinction is sometimes adapted in studies concerning Ukrainians in Poland, entailing interesting but rather terminological rather than methodological challenges.

Iryna Lapshyna's (2019; 2021) studies of the diaspora mobilization in several European countries, including Poland, during and after the Revolution of Dignity fall into the non-essentialist paradigm and reveal the differences between various "segments" of the Ukrainian diaspora in each given country. As she claims, her findings "challenge the neat distinction between immigrant communities and diasporas and the narrow conceptualization of diaspora based on their historic

roots" (2019, 58). But, despite some remarks, the author, in practice, treats the "old" or "conventional" diaspora (i.e., the Ukrainian autochthons in Poland) as if they were just well- and long-established immigrants. The acceptance of migratory origin as a constitutive element of a diaspora definition (Lapshyna 2021, 240; 2019, 53) rather blurs her theoretical position, and the interesting difference between Polish and Great Britain cases (2019) loses its distinctness. Nevertheless, her approach remains functional with regard to her research questions concerning transnational mobilization and deserves recognition as it is not simply based on a reductionist temporal or generational perspective but meets characteristics of the "old" and "new" diasporas, which may be approached from the intersectional perspective.

Other scholars investigating Ukrainians in Poland also face a serious terminological challenge. Roch Dunin-Wąsowicz and Joanna Fomina (2020) accept the term "the diasporic and migrant community" to encompass local Ukrainians and migrants from Ukraine. The key term of their article, "Ukrainian diasporic civil society," refers to both groups. Analyzing the "diasporic identity narratives," Triandafyllidou (2008; 2009) covers both national minorities and their co-ethnic migrants with the common term "diaspora."

These examples of advanced studies on different diasporas and differences between their segments help overcome the shortcomings of generalizations and of taking diaspora unity for granted (or, on the contrary, diversity as obviousness), but still may lead to further generalizations within arbitrarily distinguished categories such as generation, gender or time and circumstances of arrival. In our case, such generalizations may concern, firstly, differences between migrants and local Ukrainians.

The examples of various approaches to imaginable internal differences within the diaspora often draw from attempts to conceptualize diaspora and enumerate its characteristics in accordance with the existing definitions (e.g., Cohen 2008) and, on the other hand, from the intersectional perspective (Amelina and Barglowski 2019). They show that the notion of diaspora is flexible and the criteria of unity and diversity being taken into account may vary. Concentration on intra-diasporic difference is a kind of deconstruction of the seemingly coherent community. The crucial question may occur during such a deconstruction: is what we are dealing with still one diaspora? Our approach is different. We focus on similarities declared by our research participants and try to deconstruct them. We also reveal that these similarities are not always unifying. Our focus on diaspora-forming processes entails the cautions toward adjudicating the very existence of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland. Nevertheless, we remain aware that, for other researchers focused on different research questions, such terminological peculiarities are not of crucial importance.

The works of Agnieszka Bielewska (2012a;, 2012b) and Michał Garapich (2008) remain of particular interest for us. Both authors investigated the encounter of post-WW2 and post-EU accession Polish migrants in Great Britain. The general assessment of Bielewska resembles the intuition that laid the foundation of our research project: "Taking into consideration the fact that these migrants are not only by outsiders but also often by researchers classified simply as Poles, it is interesting to observe how little they have in common" (Bielewska 2012a: 58–59). She found Poles in Manchester as groups sharing "the same ethnic origins, but the way they perform their Polishness […] differs" (Bielewska 2012a: 59). The difference between "political" and "economic" migrants, crucial for Garapich and Bielewska, is not the case in our research. Nevertheless, their findings that not only the objective difference between those two modes of migration matter, but that economic migration is disrespected by political migrants (Garapich 2008; Bielewska 2012a: 65) fall into our interest in intra-diasporic othering. Considering the significance of their works for our theoretical stance and empirical findings, we will return to them in the conclusions to draw some parallels and comparisons.

The literature on diasporas rarely raises the "culture-diaspora" nexus. Culture is predominantly "observed" by researchers but not understood from below and not shown in an emic perspective. As such, it is referred to in different configurations, e.g., "ethnic culture," "diasporic culture," "host/ home country culture," "own culture," or "original culture," and described as a diasporic resource

around which identity is being formed (e.g., Cohen and Yefet 2021; Fawadleh 2022). Even in anthropological studies, "culture" sometimes remains a self-explanatory, bounded and fixed set of rooted customs, traditions, values, and rules attributed to a diaspora (e.g., Jain 2011; James 2016). Such an approach reproduces an understanding of it as timeless, coherent, and discrete (Abu-Lughod 1991). However, at the beginning of the 1990s, anthropologists drew attention to the processualism of cultural identifications and the need to reflect on culture itself (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1991), also in diaspora studies. Recalling the classical study of Stuart Hall (1990, 225), it is worth noting that cultural identity is a matter of "becoming as well as being," which means fluidity, "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1990, 236). By inscribing "culture," "cultural difference," and "historical memory" in space and by localizing cultures, culture and place is "frozen," and naturalized as bounded, fixed entities, such as "Indian culture" or "American culture" which leads to methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; also Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6–7). Nevertheless, in diaspora and migration studies, there is a clear lack of an anthropological perspective in researching culture in/of diasporas. "Culture" is usually left as self-explanatory (e.g., Scully 2012; Worrall and Saleh 2020) or as a capacious term for diasporic parameters such as language, religion, norms, rules, traditions, and customs, but in our view, it deserves a more reflective approach. In this article, we do not define culture in advance as an external category of analysis. Instead, we conceptualize it as an emic *national naturalism*: as diasporic imaginings of naturalized and reified representations of what is to be a Ukrainian in Poland. We treat diasporic "culture" as a product of emic imagination and perception constantly present in diasporic discourses. The essentialized notion of putative "common culture" appears as "imagined culture" discursivized and maintained by diasporic elites.

Methodology

We gathered empirical material for this article in two of the biggest Polish cities, Warsaw and Kraków in 2021 and at the beginning of 2022. The guidelines of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; King 2018) were applied when considering the links between people, their biographies and narratives, places and meanings, and the axes of diasporic discourses. Multi-sited ethnography was also implemented through the dispersion of observation points across different sites, cities, institutions, and Internet spaces, which enabled consideration of the multiplicity of discourses and localities immersed in wider social processes that affect the lives of Ukrainians in Poland. Particular "fields," understood as both physical and metaphorical places, illuminate and complement each other. Further, a thematic analysis of the data was used to identify and study the main patterns of themes and their relevance to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2019).

The empirical base of this study consists of field notes made during long-term and multi-site participant observation and 49 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted before February 24, 2022. The interviews lasted between 1 and 4 hours. We invited Ukrainian leaders (also informal leaders) as well as Ukrainian scholars and journalists engaged in diasporic organizations and discourses. These are people who work on Ukrainian or Polish-Ukrainian topics, mostly historians and sociologists employed by Polish academic institutions, working for the Ukrainian media, or affiliated with Ukrainian NGOs. At the same time, those who were invited to our research are active in formulating and disseminating diasporic discourses and are considered by their communities to be experts. We also find them to be astute and deeply engaged observers of Ukrainian life in Poland. That is why we refer to them as "activists" or diasporic entrepreneurs in this article, although it does not mean that every Ukrainian scholar working in Poland is an activist or a leader. However, our research participants' activism is well-recognized in the Ukrainian communities in Poland.

The material is supplemented with dozens of fieldnotes and headnotes from informal talks, participant observations conducted during cultural and social events, and demonstrations in support of Ukraine just before and after the Russian invasion on this country. We met with our research associates in cafes or in the organizations' venues, and the languages of interviews and talks

were Polish or Ukrainian. All the activists met in diasporic hubs producing and spreading diasporic discourses are Ukrainian-speaking, and the very such hubs operate in Ukrainian and have no Russian-language counterparts.[6] Therefore, the Ukrainian diasporic discourses originating from formalized centers of Ukrainian life in Poland are exclusively in Ukrainian.

The group of interviewees was strongly diversified in terms of age (between 24 and 75). Most of them held university diplomas. They included migrants (n=36) who had lived in Poland for between 7 and 30 years and local Ukrainians (n=13). We worked with 28 women of migrant background and 5 women from the local Ukrainian community. Referring to the research questions of this article, we consider their positionalities of the communities' leaders and activists as public and private mediators (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz 2018: 4) who mediate between the Ukrainian communities in Poland. We do not discuss the perspective of people unengaged in organizational life or recent newcomers, nor do we include the perspective of people fleeing Ukraine since the full-scale war outbreak.

Interlocutors were reached by purposeful snowball sampling (e.g., Barglowski 2018), starting from Ukrainian organizations' leaders and activists/employees. Extended participatory observations (Boccagni and Schrooten 2018) during different events allowed for progressive immersion in Ukrainian organizational life. Researchers started to be recognizable by Ukrainian leaders and warmly welcomed during different activities. Once Russia attacked Ukraine, the authors engaged in humanitarian help provided both in Poland and directly in Ukraine, which undoubtedly ensured our research participants that we do not only "exploit" their communities for scientific purposes, but are eager to engage ourselves in aid activity. We consider this crucial due to our ethical principles of the fieldwork.

Ukrainian "Worlds" in Poland

Warsaw and Kraków have often been chosen by people from Ukraine who decided to move to Poland before February 24, 2022, as well as after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, partly as a result of the existence of migration networks. Local Ukrainians, whose ancestors were forcibly displaced from south-eastern Poland during Operation Vistula, which was the last act of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict in 1943–1947 (Motyka 2022) also live in each of these cities. Over 140 thousand Ukrainians were displaced, uprooted, and then subjected to assimilation pressure. Although the Operation was presented by Communist propaganda as a necessary condition for defeating the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), its lack of real military justification and application of the principle of collective responsibility, along with the assimilation goal, prompted Motyka (2023) to consider it the "Communist ethnic cleansing." The centuries-old neighborhood and settlement structures, family, neighborly and social ties, entrenched cultural patterns and ways of conceptualizing the world, and the rhythm of village life, work, and celebration were destroyed. Teaching Ukrainian, engaging in cultural activities, performing the Greek Catholic rite traditional for most of the deportees, or changing the place of settlement were forbidden (Drozd and Halczak 2010, 99–104). Although, with time, the living conditions improved, the odium of uprooting has become a part of the life of Ukrainians in Poland, as well as their collective trauma.

It was the 1950s that brought changes in policy toward Ukrainians in Poland. A few boarding schools with the Ukrainian language and song and dance ensembles were founded, and then the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society (USCS) and Ukrainian weekly *Our Word* (*Nasze Słowo*) were established. Local Ukrainians living in small towns and villages started to organize the community's cultural life, although within a strictly state-controlled framework. In order to satisfy their religious needs, they could only choose between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, as the Greek Catholic rite was still forbidden in most places of their existence (Wangler 2012).

The aforementioned frames were maintained till the fall of communism. They were affected by the policy of marginalization in public life and negative stereotypes heated for years by Communist propaganda. Ukrainians were perceived as collectively responsible for the Polish-Ukrainian conflict

during and after World War 2, called *rezuny* (murderers) and *banderowcy* (Banderites), which resulted in undertaking a strategy of hiding the Ukrainian identity. Nevertheless, the community developed some cross-linking initiatives that helped it survive, strengthened the bonds between dispersed people, and therefore counteracted the processes of assimilation. These initiatives were grounded on a schedule of cultural festivals, poetic evenings, and concerts organized in the towns and villages where the local structures of USCS had been established. They revolved around a few key symbols that turned into identity pillars: attachment to pre-displacement traditions, focus on Operation Vistula, Greek Catholic confession and religiosity, nostalgia for places of origin in south-eastern Poland, and maintaining dialects of the Ukrainian language. These key symbols and values created the model of Ukrainian patriotism and formed the local "Ukrainianness."

Only after the collapse of communism in 1989 could previously forbidden topics functioning in the collective memory be openly deliberated. The change in the political system also brought a debate about the effects of assimilation, the shape of the identity, and the future of Ukrainians in Poland (Lehmann 2010; Wangler 2012). The USCS was renamed the Union of Ukrainians in Poland (UUP).

The pattern of cultural activity changed due to democratization processes in the country, but its main pillars remained the same: the anniversaries of deportations and events from the history of local Ukrainians, festivals and folkloristic events, publishing of *Our Word* weekly, teaching the language, and running bands and choirs. The UUP deals with issues of key importance to the community: securing and promoting Ukrainian cultural heritage, education, media, the past and its commemoration. Since the increasing migration to Poland from Ukraine, they also involved themselves in supporting migrants and reacting to critical moments in Ukraine, such as both Maidans (2004/2005, 2013/2014), the annexation of Crimea, the outbreak of the war in Donbas (Dunin-Wąsowicz and Fomina 2020; Lapshyna 2019; 2021), and the full-scale Russian aggression since February 24, 2022.

Although migrants from Ukraine have been coming to Poland since the 1990s, it was 2014 that brought a significant increase. Before 2022, the number of migrants from Ukraine was estimated to be 1.35 million people (Bukowski and Duszczyk 2022). These were mostly economic migrants, pushed from the country because of the prolonged economic crisis and encouraged by the liberalization of EU visa regulations in 2017. This population is highly diverse in their motivations and the nature of arrivals (seasonal, circular, permanent immigration), social class, including social and cultural capitals (highly skilled migrants, young people undertaking studies in Poland, people with lower education undertaking 3D jobs), and their orientation toward integration with the Polish society (Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017). They come from different regions of Ukraine and prefer to speak Ukrainian or Russian. In each of the biggest Polish cities, Ukrainian organizations that focus on integration with Polish society, cultural events, addressing the needs and problems of migrants, and creating spaces for cooperation have been established.

Our research was conducted before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although we cannot yet predict the potential influence of the recent newcomers (war migrants) on the diaspora-forming processes nor the scale and dynamics of their returns to Ukraine (Bukowski and Duszczyk 2022; Libanova and Pozniak 2023), the hitherto findings of the study seem to remain valid for a long time.

"Imagined Culture" and Diasporic Discourses

Both local and migrant leaders and activists have developed a certain model of "Ukrainianness," which they discursively reproduce and propagate through their activities. Following Brubaker (2005), we focus on the processes of shaping diasporic imaginations, the ways in which diasporic discourses are used by actors of local and migrant backgrounds, and their impact on the social reality of the studied environments. Ukrainian discourses in Poland function and are being shaped on the basis of at least two common denominators. The objective common denominator is

that it takes place in the Polish state's space and the Polish society's social environment. The second, more subjective, common denominator is the shared belief of the interlocutors that they are Ukrainians themselves and that they speak about other Ukrainians: "You know, we have everything in common. […] Of course, we have a lot in common. First of all, we are all Ukrainians" (K8_I_f27).

Ukrainian organizations, both local and migrant, deal with "culture" daily. Promotion and/or preservation of the "Ukrainian culture" is one of their explicitly formulated aims. Their websites and fan pages read, for example:

> The "Our Choice" Foundation was founded in 2009 by Ukrainians and their Polish friends to work for Ukrainian migrants in Poland, help them to integrate with Polish society and Polish culture, and to familiarize Poles with Ukrainian culture. (Nash Vybir (NV) (N.d.); originally in English)

> The main goal of the organization is to preserve and develop the national and cultural identity of the Ukrainian community in Poland and to develop good neighborly contacts and cooperation between Poland and Ukraine. For years, the union has been conducting activities in the sphere of culture, education and civic activity. (Unions of Ukrainians in Poland (UUP) N.d.; originally in Polish)

As we can notice here, the "Ukrainian culture" and the "Polish culture" can be learned and familiarized. The issue of "Polish culture" is beyond our interest. However, we are aware that it can be problematized in a similar way.

Diasporic images of "culture" seem to intertwine with diasporic imaginings of naturalized and reified representations of what is to be a Ukrainian in Poland. Imagined "common culture" is discursivized and maintained by diasporic entrepreneurs, and as such, is "easy" to be caught empirically in the field. The term "Ukrainianness" appears widely in Ukrainian diasporic discourses in Poland. As a figure of collective imagination and a colloquial cliché, metonymically referring to images which are self-explanatory and present national "character" or "features" in a condensed way, "Ukrainianness" is a strongly essentialized and reductionist category, and it reifies the "Ukrainian culture." As Ivan, a prominent activist of the local Ukrainian association, explains:

> We formed ourselves in the world view of being under siege. We had to survive and teach the children [Ukrainian language and identity]. We had to survive it all. Therefore, we have this approach that we defend [our identity]. We need to keep it going. Certain values that defined this identity were considered essential. The issue of celebrating according to the Julian calendar, [Greek-Catholic] church, language, and choices of a husband and wife from our own environment. It did build a longer perspective. (W6_M_m60)

Being under the siege in a Communist and post-Communist, almost monoethnic national state, along with living in dispersion and acting through a network of small cultural centers, has created, therefore, an understanding of local "Ukrainianness" as a conglomerate of memory, sticking to traditions and the language, as well as resisting assimilation. The local activists, however, notice that this model of "Ukrainianness" is becoming less and less attractive:

> future generations will not identify themselves only with Operation Vistula. We are an open-air museum of the year [19]47, you can listen to us saying "We have our songs, our Shevchenko, we are proud that it is," but there is nothing else. (W11_M_f33)

This bitter constatation of Natalia clearly shows that the entrenched model of "Ukrainianness" does not answer the youth's needs and seems to be worn out. As an activist of the Ukrainian scout

organization in Poland, which integrates young local Ukrainians and migrants, she notices the necessity to remodel the local Ukrainians' imaginings by also including migrants' vision:

> I [personally] went a little bit beyond the context of Operation Vistula, because it is a bit harmful to think only about and through it. And many people from my generation do the same as I did. […]you need to go beyond these frames. I believe that if we are to survive, we cannot think all the time through [19]47, wear *vyshyvanka*[7], go to Shevchenko evenings [but we should try] to build a modern community. (W11_M_f33)

Although referring to their observations and diagnoses, migrant research participants speak with respect about the survival of the Ukrainian community in Poland and the achievements of individual activists. They note that, in principle, those migrants from Ukraine who encounter the local Ukrainians perceive the local "Ukrainianness" as a bastion of anachronisms. For many of the migrant interlocutors, the local community's attachment to the past is a little foreign and too much exploited: "I can name ten things much more important to us. Also, they got stuck a bit in the past" (K8_I_k27). At this point, the profile of local Ukrainians' activity appears to be focused on the past, thus being backward and unfamiliar with what is important for migrants. It is all the more acute as over the years, UUP has put a lot of work and effort into promoting contemporary Ukrainian artistic achievements, supporting Ukraine's European aspirations, promoting Polish-Ukrainian dialogue and cooperation, and supporting migrants long before the migrant organizations were established.

For decades, the local model of "Ukrainianness" was fueled by images of Ukraine as a country that would one day be independent. Although Ukraine has been independent for more than 30 years, images of a dreamed, ideal country (cf. Kostantaras 2008) free from the Russian language and influences, as well as inhabited by the "conscious Ukrainians," are still vivid – preserved by the lack of experience of contact with an existing country. Moreover, the vision of Ukrainian post-displacement identity and the model of survival developed in small towns clash with the cosmo-politan lifestyle of migrants from Kyiv or other large cities in Ukraine. Additionally, the image of a "dreamed Ukraine" clashes with the everyday life and daily problems of its inhabitants, among whom there are those who migrate to Poland too.

> They [local Ukrainians] have a very idealized image of Ukraine, which had been stronger until the Ukrainians from Ukraine came here […] Local Ukrainians from Poland have no idea about everyday life in Ukraine; they never entered its borders and when Ukrainians from Ukraine came here, this strangeness came out because Ukrainians from Ukraine turned out ordinary people with ordinary problems for whom this Ukrainianness is often irrelevant. (W1_M_m50)

Slavko is a journalist who used to live in Ukraine and, until today, travels there very often. As he critically pointed out, a long-lasting focus on the memory of deportations as a foundation of local "Ukrainianness," which has been undertaken by the UUP, intensifies the local Ukrainians' alienation in Ukraine. In his opinion, the Ukrainian dream weakened along with their confrontation with migrants.

At the same time, the fall of the Ukrainian dream may not be harmful but rather uplifting. For Ivan, the aforementioned confrontation with migrants brings "something different," originating in Ukraine and is inspiring, at least for him and other local Ukrainians who seek new ideas:

> We have to move away from the model that focuses and ends on the fact that children have to be taught language, letters, writing, reading and whatever, but they have to go through such a "wow" moment and that it is worth being associated with. […] [What is needed is] an interesting cultural offer […] of the type of opening to Ukraine, a little better acquaintance with that country, a little bit of a different experience. […] Either we get to the point where we influence people that they feel it's cool and necessary, or people will just say that it's time to turn off the lights and go away. (W6_M_m60)

The Ukrainian community in Poland has been observing migrants from Ukraine since the 1990s, but only in the last few years have some questions about the methods of operation, perspectives, and ways to reconcile various interests and entanglements become more intense. At present, Ivan sees that the community is at a turning point:

> It seems to me that where there are migrants who want to do something nice, they will help build a different story. Perhaps it will be attractive to children and adolescents, and may take a while. And where it is not done, there will be no activity. And so, this has already been happening. There are already places where the Ukrainian community used to operate, and where we now turn off the lights and lock the door. The children went to big cities, and nothing is happening anymore and nothing will happen, and this is also a natural phenomenon, unfortunately. (W6_M_m60)

Dynamic migration processes mobilize the community and become a kind of mirror in which they can see themselves. Natalia often emphasized the differences between local and migrant "versions" of the Ukrainian culture. She pointed out the problem of accessibility of "contemporary Ukrainian culture" for young local Ukrainians due to the language barrier. Anyway, for her, the Ukrainian culture is still common. It not only provides the common denominator for two named groups but also sets a certain, even obvious goal to be pursued in the youth organization she leads: to integrate them.

Uncovering "Common" and Dealing with Differences

The migrants feel that despite the local Ukrainians' specific sensitivity to historical issues, the understanding of political and linguistic conditions that have been historically created in Ukraine is largely missing. From the point of view of Oksana, a journalist from Ukraine, local Ukrainians' attitude to the identity-language nexus is frequently astonishing to migrants:

> I have a lot of Russian-speaking friends and, for example, this linguistic issue has so far been a problem for the Ukrainian minority in Poland. They cannot understand how it is to be Ukrainian and speak Russian. At first, it really struck me a lot, it offended me, but now, in retrospect, I am beginning to understand that […] [according to the local community] a Ukrainian must speak Ukrainian. Later [since 2014], many Russian-speaking Ukrainians went to the war, [because for people from Ukraine] identity equals identification with the state, with Ukraine. And for the Ukrainian minority, this linguistic issue is very important. They simply equal Ukrainian identity and the Ukrainian language, and there is no other option at all. It is from my experience, this is how I understand it, also referring to the comments that I heard about these issues – well, it's simply incomprehensible at all that someone says that they are Ukrainian [and speak Russian]. "So why didn't she or he put in the effort to learn Ukrainian?" And for a Ukrainian [from Ukraine], it is not so obvious, and it is a kind of difference, a language issue that divides. (W23_I_f42)

As the Russian language serves as a means of othering, or even symbolic exclusion from the circle of "our people," it is often positioned as a danger for "Ukrainianness." We were given examples of people who began to speak Ukrainian after a certain period of "serving apprenticeship," which was appreciated. The research participants frequently mention that the language difference between Ukrainian-speaking (both local and migrant) and Russian-speaking (only migrant) Ukrainians is assessed as important by social actors, but they rarely confess that they personally take it as crucial, even though some of them assess speaking Russian as a sort of aberration, "unnatural," and not fitting the "Ukrainianness." Therefore, the Ukrainian language is, by default, the only tool for communicating the "common culture" content – and only provided that it is perceived as "culture"

by the diasporic subjectivities. We may presume that due to the Russian aggression, the issue of the Russian language in diasporic encounters will gain growing prejudices and reluctance. Thus, it may become an important regulator of the diaspora-forming process in which Russian-speaking Ukrainians would be excluded from the Ukrainian diasporic discourses and treated as *personae non gratae*.

Another issue, again based on a stereotypical view, is the alleged attachment of the local community to *sharavarshchyna*,[8] i.e., folk culture presented on stages, the lack of a wider interest of the community in "high culture" and in the "valuable artistic achievements" imported from Ukraine. Lyuba, a Warsaw local activist, puts such an attachment into the pattern common for dispersed communities and explains why it is so important for the local community: "being outside the homeland, in order to keep our identity, roots and so on, we pay attention to so-called folksiness. It somehow helps us to stay separate, to emphasize that we are different" (W24_M_f50). What is today perceived by migrants as being backward was, for decades, the main tool for local Ukrainians to create ethnic boundaries between them and Poles.

In the opinions of all interviewees, migrants generally do not know the fact that the autochthonous community exists in Poland. It expresses the question that the local-born Ukrainians hear from the migrants they meet: "And when did you come to Poland?" Such misunderstandings may be very offensive and challenging for the identity of local Ukrainians. In the perception of some of the migrants, material evidence of the existence of the autochthonous community, such as churches, are treated as the achievements of migrants from Ukraine who arrived in the 1990s. Local Ukrainians seem not to be the reference group or significant other for migrants, including the war migrants from Ukraine. The small number and dispersion of local Ukrainians, leading to their invisibility, undoubtedly underlies this situation; hence, migrants navigating the ethnic boundaries (cf. Wahlbeck 2022, 175) could easily miss the very fact of their presence. As we observe, Ukrainian migrants encounter the dominant Polish cultural context ("mainstream culture") "by default," while meeting with the local Ukrainian cultural context requires commitment and conscious activity. The identity of migrants is challenged by the Polish receiving society, and they seem to forge their own relations with Poles only and directly. The arrivals of migrants challenge the identity of local Ukrainians, not vice versa. While for decades the latter had a single point of reference, i.e., the Polish society, for a few years they have been sensing the pressure to develop multiplied subjective positionalities, i.e., toward the Polish society *and* migrants. Therefore, the local Ukrainian community has been constructing dual minority positionalities. The fact that the numerous war migrants from Ukraine have recently come into contact with local Ukrainians through aid channels created by the latter does not seem to increase recognition of the local Ukrainian community in the migrants' eyes.

We were told dozens of times that local Ukrainians are more attached to "traditional culture" and, on the contrary, that migrants are rather interested in "something modern." As pointed out by Iryna, a migrant journalist from Warsaw, migrants with their cultural needs and the lack of attachment to "traditional culture" are perceived by some elderly local community members as a threat for their vision of "Ukrainianness." Our migrant interlocutors point to the causes of the local Ukrainians' conservatism, which stems from the post-displacement dispersion. This alleged conservatism is also explained by some of the migrant interlocutors with the mechanisms and conditions of the local community's survival in the Polish People's Republic and its problems after 1989, the most serious of which are financial, the lack of professional cadre, and progressive assimilation. However, these conditions are unknown and unreadable to wider migrant circles. Moreover, the local "offer" is not attractive to most migrants, especially young, high-skilled migrants from big Ukrainian cities:

Networking proposed by the minority is very specific. It revolves either around the Greek Catholic church, or, as I call it, the festival *sharavarshchyna* […]. Among migrants, some people seem to be attracted to such networking. However, especially when I talk to people who

come from larger cities […], it is a bit of a bygone for them. It is understandable why children at school act this way, but when it's being done by adults… (W13_I_f38)

However, migrants have their own imaginations of "Ukrainianness," modeled by their region of origin and their symbolically encapsulated histories. Ukraine is stereotypically and essentialistically perceived as two main opposite units: West and East, rarely with Central Ukraine in between (cf. Barrington 2021). Migrants, therefore, derive from this essentialism and divide the country in accordance with moral geography (Smith 2000). This normativized and naturalized opposition – as a self-explanatory figure of collective imagination and a colloquial cliché – explains not only the survival of Ukrainian traditions in the western part of the country that resisted the political tension of Sovietization and, simultaneously, the successful process of Sovietization in the East (Yekelchyk 2020, 19–22). This opposition also brings a clear image of "other Ukrainians" who are more or less Ukrainian, i.e., who can easily be put on the scale of the "Ukrainianness" imagined and reproduced by migrants themselves. Olha, who teaches classes of Ukrainian folklore in Kraków, was one of many activists who perceive this issue this way: migrants from the east of Ukraine often do not know Ukrainian traditions, history, or religious symbols. This means that in Olha's eyes, "eastern Ukrainians" are not familiar with "pure," "authentic" Ukrainian canon:

> Generally, western Ukraine is rich in customs and traditions. Central Ukraine, too, but they have slightly different traditions, but they still have them. And eastern Ukraine… There… There are smaller traditions, there are… But some… Hmmm. I don't know. Some different traditions. (K3_I_f40)

A noticeable hesitation in Olha's voice along with her difficulties with explaining this issue, show that what she calls "smaller" traditions does not fit in her image of authentic Ukrainian canon. What is more, "smaller" resonates with "less important," or "worse," or not that precious.

It is crucial, however, that migrants from the East, unlike others who comment on them, are less likely to decline their "Ukrainianness." In turn, they note that in the Soviet times, it was much more difficult to stick to it than in the West. Today, the measure of this "Ukrainianness"– even if someone speaks Russian and comes from Russian-speaking circles – is to emphasize that one feels Ukrainian. And at the same time, they undermine the relationship between the language used and identity, which is often more categorical in the eyes of those who judge them. The above-discussed issues illustrate what was caught in the field by Triandafyllidou: "The existence of native co-ethnic minorities […] makes diasporic identity a contested issue. The question arises of who is 'truly' a national who has the 'right' to represent the nation in diaspora" (2009, 239). In our case, this is the question of whose vision of "Ukrainianness" in Poland will prevail. As we can see, this interaction of different visions results in tensions and competition.

Internal migrant practices of othering and locating "others" on the scale of "Ukrainianness" clash in Poland with the local community's image of "Ukrainianness." In the Greek Catholic church in Kraków, we heard from the older generation that they saw young migrants as a chance for the survival of the parish in general. Therefore, the arrival of young people from Ukraine can only be enjoyed. However, as one of the older women, once the activist of the UUP Kraków branch, put it, "they have to be worked on a lot." This applies to covering heads with a shawl by some women, the exposed shoulders of other women – "If only these girls don't show their arms, why do they need scarves on their heads?" (W9_M_f28) – or treating the church primarily as a meeting place. If the migrants need to be "worked on," it means that they do not fit as they are, and it is necessary to format them according to the local community's imagination. Lyuba characterizes the same way the situation in the Warsaw Greek Catholic church, where most of the worshippers are from Ukraine:

> For example, people from Ukraine have a habit of bringing flowers to church and putting them in a jar. I say that I know that you want to bring these flowers, but the church cannot look

like a bazaar. A church is a church, a place where it is supposed to be nice and modest. […] they have [in Ukraine] such [a habit] that you can bring everything to the church. So, I am suggesting to them that there are some things that you have to do differently, and they do… little by little. (W24_M_f50)

Although the local Ukrainians are not religiously homogenous and some of them attend the Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholic Church in Poland is perceived as the national Ukrainian church in the country and the "essence of Ukrainianess" and has a strong value of ethnicization of religion (Karpov, Lisovskaya, and Barry 2012; Santhosh and Paleri 2021). However, Ukrainian society is much more religiously diverse (Razumkov Center 2020). In the case of migrants from Ukraine, especially the younger generation – and this is the overwhelming majority of migrants – the secularization processes also need to be taken into consideration (PEW 2020). In such conditions, the Greek Catholic Church is only a moderate link, and here, too, there are a number of differences related to the local community's customs and rituals to which the faithful are attached. This applies to both the differences manifested at the intersection of the local and migrant worlds, as well as regional differences from various areas of Ukraine, which are brought by both the faithful and priests working in Poland. Also, in this case, "religion" and "traditions" do not have "the same" content.

The differences are simply too noticeable to be ignored, meaning migrants cannot be easily incorporated into the local vision of "Ukrainianness." What is more, with a growing number of migrants from outside of the West of Ukraine, where Greek Catholics are the most numerous, Orthodox Christians begin to prevail among religious Ukrainians. Also, new Orthodox parishes have been established in Warsaw recently, where there are no encounters of local Ukrainians and migrants.

The issue of the assimilation of migrants, their use of the Polish language at home, willingness to assimilate to the host society quickly, or even to "become a Pole," raises reservations and is confronted with the local community's patriotism, adherence to Ukrainian identity "in spite of everything," even when it was very difficult during the Communist period. The local Ukrainians understand this migration mechanism perfectly. Still, even for them, a migrants' adoption of active integration with the majority, focusing on migration goals, and the desire to make it easier for children to start is not always understandable. In the Greek Catholic church in Kraków, we were given the example of young families from Ukraine who baptize children in Roman Catholic churches because they believe that it will make it easier to learn in a Polish school, prepare for communion in a peer group, and profit from migration. According to the priest, this attitude is proof of the instability of Ukrainian identity and its relativity. It is easy to "suspend" or remove it under migration conditions. Years later, the "disillusion" and the need to contact "our people," as he believes, will come. Meanwhile, the aforementioned trend may be based on pragmatic premises and be guided by different goals that do not have to undermine identity issues. Striving to achieve migration success cannot be easily compared with the local survival strategies cultivated for decades by content, symbols, and values.

Despite the apparent similarities, both the "culture" and its particular "components" are understood differently, so there is no single Ukrainian migrant culture or local community's culture, let alone the common Ukrainian culture. The interlocutors can almost see it when they talk about the differences in "mentality" or "upbringing" between the two environments. In their narratives, some of them even exceed the dichotomy "folk culture" vs. "artistic culture" (or "modern," or "high"), past and present, the Ukrainian traditions and "some different" ones. Some of them talk about differences in structural circumstances in the life of Ukrainians in Poland and Ukraine: dispersion, ethnic ghetto, assimilation vs. "Soviet mentality," russification, a plurality of identities, Ukrainian East and West, etc. Therefore, under the surface of "common culture," we may dig out imaginings that are handy tools for othering co-ethnics and labeling them with the term "those other Ukrainians," "those Ukrainians," which are not neutral but marked by otherness, being

not from among "our people." How difficult it is to overcome these labels, says Oksana, a migrant journalist working in a medium dedicated to local Ukrainians. She describes her doubts about how to address the audience – local Ukrainians:

> Even from the accent, you can hear that I am not from the community I am addressing. That's why I had great difficulty in saying "our community" (*nasha hromada*), because I did not know whether I was in it …. Isn't it too bold to include myself in it right away? (W23_I_f42)

Hence, it is close to what is the basis of these differences: different codes and cultural patterns, different socialization and culturalization, life in different cultural contexts, and different deeply internalized systems of cultural competencies. These two realities seem to be mutually impenetrable, which leads to othering.

The term "Ukrainian culture" is commonly used by both migrants and local Ukrainians, but the meaning of the elements of *cultural stuff* (Barth 1969)[9] included in the notion of "Ukrainian culture" differs significantly. It is not only the difference between "traditional folklore" and "modern culture" or between local customs from different regions of the origin country but also appealing to the same "components" (like traditional embroidery, patterns of behavior in church, customs and traditions) that are being differently evaluated and have been given different meanings.

As far as the novelty of our finding against the background of existing literature is concerned, our case remains different as we do not deal solely with communities of migratory origin. Nevertheless, although the notion of "common culture" was not central for Garapich, Bielewska, and Kozachenko (neither for other scholars investigating intra-diasporic differences we referred to), we notice interesting parallels between their and our findings. Referring to the cited works, we captured significant similarities between the processes taking place between "old" and "new" Ukrainian and Polish diasporas in Western states and, as in our case, between autochthonous Ukrainians and newcomers from Ukraine in Poland. The established Polish communities in Great Britain were not "significant Other" for post-EU accession migrants, and, as Bielewska (2012b, 102) put it, not a part "of their mental map." At the same time, post-WW2 migrants are afraid of losing the visibility and recognition that they gained in the receiving society (Bielewska 2012a, 66). There are similarities in different approaches toward national identity construction (assessed by Bielewska as being "modern" and "postmodern"). Additionally, it also resonates with Kozachenko's findings that the "old" and "new" diaspora identity understandings only recently approach each other, being earlier more specifically informed by "ethnic" and "civic" notions, respectively. Also, the beliefs of post-WW2 Polish migrants in London that they are "real Poles," "not infected by communism" as in the case of newcomers (Garapich 2008; Bielewska 2012b: 95) resemble the attitudes captured in our fieldwork. Furthermore, the different realities of Poland and Ukraine, referred to by our interlocutors as differences in "mentality" or "upbringing" could be described similarly to Bielewska's (2012b: 96) recognition of mutually indifferent attitudes of the post-accession and post-war migrants as a result of being formed by different Polish realities. Also, while "old diasporians" believed that newcomers would secure the continuity of ethnic institutions, the latter concentrated on successful anchoring in the receiving society, and, hence, on taking advantage of the social and cultural offer outside the diasporic organizations.

Conclusions

In this article, we approached diasporic "culture" as a product of emic imagination and perception constantly present in diasporic discourses. The essentialized notion of putative "common culture" appears as "imagined culture" discursivized and maintained by the diasporic elites. Treating it as an empirical phenomenon captured in the field helps reveal that this imagining actually empowers both unifying the communities and producing cultural differences, which are maintained and used in a field of diasporic discourses. Imagined "common culture," as one of the diaspora-forming

processes, unifies when verbalized on a declarative level; but when deconstructed, it turns out to be also a tool for producing cultural differences, which activate othering of the diasporic Other.

Our aim was to show what is hidden behind the essentialized notion of putative "common culture" in the narratives of diasporic leaders and activists. Also, we asked whether and how imagined "common culture" activates the othering of the diasporic Other. Further questions concerned the issue of how diasporic subjectivities conceive, formulate, and organize "diasporic culture" and deal with cultural variation as a tool for making the diasporic Other, fueling diasporic discourses and practices. We present our findings below.

We tried to understand the emic notion of culture in the Ukrainian communities, narrativized by the diasporic entrepreneurs and intertwined with diasporic imaginings of naturalized and reified representations of what is to be a Ukrainian in Poland. The anthropologically analyzed bottom-up perspective of diasporic subjectivities reveals significant tensions, discontinuities, and gaps among the research participants' declarative level, a researcher's superficial view of "culture" and what is hidden beyond.

They are aware that different groups of Ukrainians (not reducible to locals and migrants) "have" their "own" culture. Still, they believe these "cultures" have some common core, which allows them, despite all, to talk about "common Ukrainian culture." However, imagining a common, shared culture leads to mutual misunderstandings. Going below the superficial agreement on "common culture" and "common identity" among "the same" people, i.e., co-ethnics, may reveal deep processes of diasporic othering that would be hidden otherwise. Our research indicates that the mutual perceptions and expectations of the leaders and activists of the Ukrainian autochthonous community and migrants from Ukraine differ significantly. Understanding "culture" as "common" by diasporic subjectivities, supposedly consisting of the same or coherent "elements," nevertheless leads to a series of disappointments. It turned out that under this surface of the declarative and supposedly common "resource," there is significant heterogeneity, and that "culture" in its certain manifestations not only is not common and does not always unify, but can also strengthen and reproduce practices of othering leading to internal divisions.

The aspects discussed in this article lead to another important issue: the inclination of diasporic subjectivities to rely on certain signs or even clichés, seemingly the same meaning concepts used by migrants and local Ukrainians: culture, language, religion, and tradition. They are used as self-explanatory and transparent and allegedly refer to the same content. Meanwhile, these concepts require deconstruction and discussion, although it is taken for granted that everyone understands them the same (including researchers!). Migrant and local activists use the visions of the "Ukrainian culture" that is considered common. However, objectivizing criteria by which culture is perceived, and the bottom-up categorization and conceptualization we have encountered in the field reveal tensions among diasporic entrepreneurs and discourses.

This article aimed to present and explain the emic notion of culture, elaborate on it, and unfold what the "Ukrainian culture" is from our research participants' perspective and the ways it is presented and perceived as "common." As we showed, "culture," as an emic national naturalism, is a set of reified representations of what is to be a Ukrainian in Poland. Although the essentialized notion of putative "common culture" discursivized and maintained by diasporic elites helps them encounter each other and negotiate, in fact, it also empowers producing cultural differences and – as a result – activates othering of the diasporic Other.

The increase in migration from Ukraine to Poland since 2014 has been challenging the grounded model of local "Ukrainianness" and the imaginings of culture from the perspective of the local community as a "ready" product of history, which was preserved in this form in subsequent generations. The migrants' visions of "Ukrainianness" in Poland differ significantly from this model. Our research shows that identified differences stem largely from different evaluations of "traditional folklore" and "modern culture" or customs from Poland and different regions of Ukraine. We argue that in the case of migrants, the important factors of evaluation strategies are modeled by the handy moral geography of Ukraine. By using the normativized and naturalized

opposition between two parts of Ukraine, i.e., the western and eastern parts, migrants explain the inclination to keep "authentic" Ukrainian traditions or to be more indifferent toward them. Last but not least, the visions of "Ukrainianness" imagined and reproduced by migrants are influenced by metropolitan and more cosmopolitan perspectives.

Our analysis shows that emic notions of culture in diasporas need to be de-essentialized and pluralized. The diasporic encounters not only in its Central Eastern European variation with its new migration dynamics reveal a deep need to search for what is hidden beyond emic categories – putatively self-explanatory – such as culture, heritage, diaspora, homeland, and many more. There is a need to value the role of imagined "common culture" and other manifestations of national naturalism among diasporans and be ready to work through it.

Notes

1 Although in the institutions run by the Ukrainian minority in Poland, diasporic discourses and the Polish legislation, the term "minority" is commonly used, and for many Ukrainians born in Poland it is a category of self-description, we decided to use "local Ukrainian community" exchangeable with "local Ukrainians" in order to avoid positioning this community in power relations.
2 We use nicknames instead of real names. Interviews were coded under the following coding scheme: K – Kraków / W – Warsaw (cities); ordinal number; I – migrant / M – local Ukrainian; f – female/ m – male; age (approx.).
3 Below we focus on diaspora-forming processes which entail our cautions toward the term "diaspora." Therefore, we would rather talk about Ukrainian diasporic communities in Poland as an umbrella-like term than, for instance, "old" and "new" diasporas, or the all-encompassing "Ukrainian diaspora in Poland."
4 2021 National Census captured over 82,000 persons with Ukrainian identity but there is no data available how many of them are Polish citizens, i.e., national minority members.
5 This term is not synonymous to nationalism and refers to the naturalized and reified "nature" of diasporic imaginings.
6 For the language diversity of Ukraine and its implications for national identity and politics in Ukraine and Ukrainian diaspora, see, e.g., Kulyk 2019, Nedashkivska 2018.
7 Traditional embroidered shirt.
8 A pejorative Ukrainian term meaning reduction of culture to ethnic markers rooted in Ukrainian folklore, simplified and transferred into different context, mainly festival performances. It stands for the word *sharavary*, meaning traditional Cossack pants.
9 Barth (1969) does not define "cultural stuff" directly; Jenkins (2008, 111) states, that this Barth's notion refers to "language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, cuisine, etc."

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