

*The Making of Diasporas: The Power of Mobilising Frames, Social Networks, and Decolonisation Discourses. A Comparative Study of Belarusians and Ukrainians in Poland (DIAMOND)*

The study of diasporas as agents of socio-political change is an increasingly important part of the social science agenda. In their various forms, diasporas are capable of actively engaging with the country of origin as well as with the host country and in the transnational space. Moreover, the advancement of information and communication technologies make such engagements more prompt and substantial. The realities of the Digital Age create a transnational public sphere that allows diasporas to partake in a plethora of events and processes happening in the country of origin. The main objective of the proposed project is to provide a comparative analysis of diaspora-making processes within the Belarusian and Ukrainian populations in Poland. In particular, we investigate the construction and power of mobilisation frames, reveal organisational (vertical and horizontal) structures that emerge after each cycle of mobilisation, and explore the role of social media in the production and dissemination of mobilising frames and discourses domestically and within transnational spaces.

This comparative project focuses on the diaspora-making processes within unique and diverse populations of Ukrainians and Belarusians in Poland. They unite different generations and waves of forced and economic migration as well ethnic minorities that were historically residing on the territory of Poland and represent the most numerous ethnic populations in Poland. Both diasporas have already demonstrated significant mobilisation waves in response to the critical events in the countries of origin starting from 2010—the year that saw the first mass diasporic mobilisation since the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Some of the most dramatic recent events include the suppressed protests in Belarus in 2020 and the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Such juncture events led to the formation of new diasporic structures and such involvement has substantially transformed them.

The project aims to answer a series of interrelated questions:

1. What features and elements of framing processes determine the magnitude and outcomes of collective actions within the Ukrainian and Belarusian populations in Poland?
2. How do cycles of mobilisation affect the formation of vertical and horizontal organisational structures, and intergenerational dynamics within the Belarusian and Ukrainian diasporas in Poland?
3. In which ways are the mobilization patterns and actions affected by the political context and opportunity structures in the host country and the diaspora policy of the country of origin?
4. What is the role of social media within diasporic-mobilising structures, their construction, and the dissemination of mobilising frames? How are the Belarusian and Ukrainian diasporas in Poland networked online—with each other, with their homelands, with diasporas worldwide?
5. What contribution does the diaspora make to processes of nation-building and, within this, what is the place of decolonisation practices and discourses in the case of the Belarusian and Ukrainian diasporas?

The particular aim of the project is to reveal the effective, as well as durable, mechanisms of diasporic mobilisation in the Digital Age and also to study how diasporas employ or construct mobilising frames in their efforts to influence nation-building processes. The project proposes an original methodological and analytical approach to the study of the diaspora mobilisation process which uses mixed methods, including document analysis, multi-sited ethnography, expert and narrative interviews, as well as digital research methods such as internet ethnography and discourse analysis together with two quantitative research techniques: social network and sentiment analyses.