How do countries in unstable geopolitical environments generate social cohesion?

Since 2013 Ukraine has been involved in a war being fought on two fronts: military and cultural. This newly independent country is seeking to build a united modern nation, but it faces challenges to overcome linguistic, religious, cultural and world-view differences.

Starting in 2013 this research project offered an emphatically inclusive account of an important element of Ukraine’s cultural and identity-shaping life: literature. The project treated writings created in different languages (Ukrainian, Russian, German, Polish), by authors of varying ethnicity, as elements of one multifaceted national literature. This “new” model of literary history that the project advanced sought to displace an “old” model – one that focussed on literature in one language and saw it as the cultural property of a single ethno-cultural group.

The academic outputs of the project were published in leading English-language scholarly journals and in many instances also appeared in translation in East European “thick journals” of culture and politics, reaching broader audiences whose members are involved in public discussion.

The project’s published outputs, along with the inclusive social and cultural values that it promotes, were praised by the two funding bodies. This led the major funder to make an increased commitment to the project in 2016. Other sponsors, Victor and Maria Rudewych, also offered an additional large grant establishing a postdoctoral research fellowship and two PhD scholarships.

The momentum of the project was amplified by the conference “Ukraine and the World,” held at Monash in 2018. This has led the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria (AUV) to seek new forms of co-operation with Ukrainian Studies staff at Monash, with the aim to enhance the AUV’s inclusiveness and diversity.