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8

Kristina Schäfer

Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine

National Belonging in the Light of the Ongoing Donbas Conflict

Tectum

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With a Preface by Prof. Dr. Andreas Vasilache

Tectum Verlag

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Preface

In this book, Kristina Schäfer analyses the construction of national identity and belonging of internally displaced persons in Ukraine who have fled from the territories occupied by Russia to other parts of Ukraine. The qualitative data collection of narrative interviews with internally displaced persons took place before Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine. However, the study has been of particular, downright tragic urgency since February 2022. It is a great benefit that this study has been revised and updated in response to the Russian aggression and is now being published as a book.

Three aspects in particular should be emphasized that make this book a must-read for anyone who wants to better understand the transformation of belonging and national identity in Ukraine. Firstly, Schäfer succeeds in providing an overview of the complex initial situation of national belonging and identity in Ukraine that is both broad and focused on the essential aspects. Secondly, the book skillfully brings together the sociological and theoretical literature on belonging and national identity, thus demonstrating the analytical added value of an entangled perspective in this research area. Thirdly, this approach does not only highlight the changes in belonging and national identity in Ukraine, but also brings to light the process of change itself.

In particular, the book reveals that references to national belonging and identity in Ukraine are not limited to cultural and historical links. Rather, the alienation from Russia goes hand in hand with a strengthening of civic references, in which democracy and the turn towards the European Union play an important role. However, the fact that this is by no means an ethnically exclusive model of national belonging and identity must be

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understood as a further aspect of the growing distancing from Russia — which has been reinforced and intensified by the Russian invasion.

Last but not least, there is another great merit of this study. Kristina Schäfer has achieved the rare feat of presenting a book that will appeal to very different readers. The book is an asset both for social science experts in the field of national belonging and identity studies and for readers who would like to gain a broad overview of belonging and national identity in Ukraine.

Bielefeld, December 2023 Prof. Dr. Andreas Vasilache

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Danksagung

Im deutschen und österreichischen Wissenschaftssystem gibt es für Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen (leider) eigentlich nur einen Karriereweg: über Promotion und Habilitation auf einen Lehrstuhl berufen zu werden. Dafür gilt es viel zu forschen und dabei viele Papers und gerne weiterhin auch eine Monographie zu schreiben. Mitten in meiner Promotion könnte man meinen, ich sei auf dem besten Weg dorthin: Meine Studierenden nennen mich bereits Frau Professor, denn das ist die übliche Anrede für Lehrkräfte in Gymnasien als auch an Universitäten in Österreich, auch wenn ich nicht habilitiert bin. Und nun erscheint meine erste Monographie mit meinem Namen darauf: meine Masterarbeit zur ukrainischen Identität – ein Thema, das durch Russlands Angriff auf die Ukraine im Februar 2022 unerwartet aktuell wurde, jedoch schon länger umkämpft ist. Ich habe meine Masterarbeit, die in den Jahren 2020 und 2021 entstanden ist, mit Blick auf die Entwicklungen der letzten Jahre aktualisiert und habe dabei meine Analyse vor dem Hintergrund aktueller Forschungsliteratur eingebettet. An dieser Stelle möchte ich nicht viel mehr über den Inhalt, sondern über die Entstehungsgeschichte dieser Arbeit verraten.

Die Reise von der Konzeption meiner Masterarbeit bis zur Veröffentlichung dieses Buchs war geprägt von bedeutenden Begegnungen, Herausforderungen, die zum Lernen eingeladen haben, aber vor allem von der Unterstützung einer Vielzahl von Menschen, ohne die meine Studie nicht die wäre, die sie ist. Diesen Menschen gebührt von Herzen Dank!

Die Idee über die nationale Identität in der Ukraine zu schreiben, entstand im Rahmen einer Summer School über Binnenvertriebene im post-sowjetischen Raum, finanziell gefördert vom deutschen akademi-

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schen Auslandsdienst (DAAD). In dieser Zeit bin ich ukrainischen Wissenschaftler*innen an der Nationalen Karazin Universität in Kharkiv, in der Ostukraine, begegnet, die mich ermutigt haben, meine Masterarbeit über die Ukraine zu schreiben und dafür zum Forschen zurückzukommen. Dank der Unterstützung von PD Dr. Alexandra Scheele, einer meiner Dozentinnen, habe ich mich erfolgreich um ein DAAD-Forschungsstipendium für Feldforschung in der Ukraine beworben. Ohne dieses Stipendium wäre es mir finanziell nicht möglich gewesen, für meine Masterarbeit ins Ausland zu gehen. Daher möchte ich mich an dieser Stelle auch bedanken, dass es den DAAD gibt. Dank solcher Austauschprogramme ist es Menschen aus sozio-ökonomisch prekären Verhältnissen überhaupt möglich, Erfahrungen zu sammeln, die nicht nur persönlich spannend und lehrreich, sondern auch immens wichtig sind für eine wissenschaftliche Karriere.

In der Ukraine wurde ich herzlich willkommen geheißen und erfuhr tatkräftige Unterstützung an der Nationalen Karazin Universität in Kharkiv, an der ich institutionell andockte, und denen ich von Herzen danken möchte: Olga Filippova, Oleksandr Kyzhniak und Elena Mashintsova. Ich habe sowohl Unterstützung hinsichtlich des schwierigen Feldzugangs als auch viele wertvolle Impulse für meine Analyse von ihnen bekommen. Danken möchte ich an dieser Stelle auch Kontakten außerhalb der Wissenschaft in Deutschland und der Ukraine, die mich beim Feldzugang unterstützt haben. Ohne die persönliche Vermittlung hätte ich weder ukrainische Binnenvertriebene kennengelernt, noch hätten sie mit mir so offen und ehrlich gesprochen, denn Vertrauen war der Schlüssel zu erkenntnisreichen Interviews.

Herzlich danken möchte ich auch meinen Interviewpartner*innen, die sich auf das Interview eingelassen haben, mir von ihrem Leben erzählt haben und mir damit wichtige Einblicke für die Beantwortung meiner Forschungsfrage gewährt haben. Ihr habt mir Euer Vertrauen geschenkt, denn es ist nicht leicht über intime und aufwühlende Erfahrungen während eines Kriegs und umkämpfte Themen wie die ukrainische Identität zu sprechen. Ihr habt mir damit ein großes Geschenk gemacht, das ich würdigen will: Dank Euch konnte ich einen Beitrag dazu leisten, zu verstehen, wie die ukrainische Identität gegenwärtig konstituiert ist und wel-

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chen Einfluss der Ausbruch des sezessionistischen, bewaffneten Konflikts im Donbas hatte. Meine Arbeit kann damit hoffentlich als Hintergrund dazu dienen, aktuelle Dynamiken seit dem russischen Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine im Februar 2022 zu beleuchten und einzuordnen.

Leider verkomplizierte der Ausbruch der Covid-19-Pandemie im Frühjahr 2020 meine Forschungsarbeit in der Ukraine: Gezwungen frühzeitig abzureisen, entstand diese Arbeit unter erschwerten Bedingungen. Hierbei will ich weniger über infrastrukturelle Probleme der Pandemie, wie geschlossene Universitäten, oder methodologische Probleme, wie den Abbruch der Feldforschung, eingehen, sondern auf die Schwierigkeit, die Masterarbeit in Zeiten sozialer Isolation weiterzuführen. Ich bin sehr dankbar, dass ich zu dieser Zeit von Menschen umgeben war, die mir mit Rat und Tat zur Seite gestanden sind, immer ein offenes Ohr für mich hatten und darauf geachtet haben, dass ich mich in der Arbeit nicht verliere. Von Herzen ein großes Dankeschön an Ahmed Yousef, Dominik Wrobbel, Monique Kluß, Pia Dullweber, Rebecca Schmidt, Sascha Grewe und Till Klöpping, die mich durch alle Hochs und vor allem die Tiefs begleitet haben und auf die notwendige gesunde study-life-balance geachtet haben.

Von Herzen danken möchte ich auch jenen Menschen, die mir wichtige Impulse zur Verbesserung meiner Arbeit gegeben haben: Norman Dürkop, Maik Khodai, Max Krause, Morgaine Jourdaine, Maike Rudolph, Fabio Sand, Rebecca Schmidt, Tiwonge Tembo und Ahmad Wali Ahmad Yar. Ohne Euch wäre die Arbeit nie so gut geworden!

Mein herzlicher Dank gebührt auch meinen beiden Betreuern, die meine Arbeit mit Rat und Tat begleitet haben und denen ich wichtige Impulse für meine Analyse verdanke: Prof. Dr. Andreas Vasilache und Prof. Dr. Frank Grüner.

Aus einer Masterarbeit wäre aber niemals ein Buchprojekt geworden ohne Menschen, die mich darin bestärkt hätten, mich um eine Publikation zu bemühen. An dieser Stelle möchte ich Prof. Dr. Susanne Pernicka danken, die mich dazu ermutigt hat, meine Masterarbeit zu publizieren. Einen Text zu schreiben ist das eine, Publizieren ist jedoch etwas ganz anderes. Mein besonderer Dank gebührt daher Dr. Falko Schnicke, der mich beim Publikationsprozess intensiv begleitet hat, indem er mir kritischen Impulse zur Verbesserung meines argumentativen roten Fadens

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gegeben hat sowie mit Rat, Tat und Ermutigung bei Problemen zur Seite gestanden ist.

Eine Karriere in der Wissenschaft sieht zwar meist nach Einzelsport aus, aber für mich ist es ein Teamsport. Ich habe Menschen an meiner Seite, die mich durch die Höhen und Tiefen in der academia begleiten. So sind tiefe Freundschaften als auch eine Vision einer Wissenschaft entstanden, in der wir uns gegenseitig fördern und dabei solidarisch miteinander sind – dem Konkurrenzkampf im Forschungsbetrieb zum Trotz.

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Acknowledgement

In German and Austrian academia, there is (unfortunately) only one career path for young academics: to be appointed to a professorship after having worked on one's doctoral thesis and having habilitated. To do this, you have to do a lot of research and write a lot of papers about it, and in sociology at least a monograph. As I am in the middle of my doctorate, you might think I am well on the way there: my students already call me professor, because that is the usual way to address teachers in secondary schools as well as universities in Austria, even though they have not habilitated. And now my first monograph with my name on it is being published: my master's thesis on Ukrainian identity—a subject that became unexpectedly topical as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine in February 2022, but had already been controversial for some time. I updated my master's thesis, which was written in 2020 and 2021, in line with the past developments and embedded my analysis in current research literature. At this point, I do not want to reveal much more about the content, but rather about the genesis of this thesis.

The journey from the conception of my master's thesis to the publication of this book was characterized by significant encounters, challenges that invited me to learn, but above all by the support of a large number of people, without whom my study would not be what it is. I want to wholeheartedly thank these people!

The idea to write about Ukrainian national identity was born during a summer school term on internally displaced people in the post-Soviet space, funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). During this time, I met Ukrainian scholars at the National Karazin Uni-

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versity in Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, who encouraged me to write my master's thesis on Ukraine. Thanks to the support of Dr. Alexandra Scheele, one of my lecturers, I successfully applied for a DAAD research grant for field research in Ukraine. Without this scholarship, it would not have been financially possible for me to go abroad for my master's thesis. I want therefore to thank the DAAD for its existence. Thanks to such exchange programs, it is possible for people from socio-economically precarious backgrounds to gain experience that is not only personally exciting and instructive, but also immensely important for an academic career.

I was warmly welcomed in Ukraine and received great support at the National Karazin University in Kharkiv, particularly by the following scholars, whom I would like to thank wholeheartedly: Olga Filippova, Oleksandr Kyzhniak, and Elena Mashintsova. I received support from them with regard to accessing the field in question as well as many valuable ideas for my analysis. I also want to thank contacts outside academia in Germany and Ukraine who supported me in gaining access to the field. Without personal mediation, I would not have met Ukrainian IDPs, nor would they have spoken to me so openly and honestly, because trust was the key to the insightful interviews I conducted.

I would also like to sincerely thank my interview partners, who agreed to be interviewed, told me about their lives, and thus gave me important insights with which I was able to answer my research question. You placed your trust in me in a context where it is not so easy to talk about intimate and upsetting experiences during a war and about contested topics such as Ukrainian identity. You have given me a great gift that I want to honor. Thanks to you, I am able to contribute to the understanding of how Ukrainian identity is currently constituted and what influence the outbreak of the secessionist armed conflict in the Donbas had on it. My work can thus hopefully serve to illuminate and understand current dynamics since the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 complicated my research work in Ukraine: I was forced to leave early, and this thesis was written under difficult conditions. Here, I want to talk less about infrastructural problems during the pandemic, such as closed universities or methodological problems, such as the interruption of field

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research, and more about the difficulty of continuing a master's thesis in times of social isolation. I am very grateful that I was surrounded by people at that time who helped me with advice and support, were always willing to listen to me, and made sure that I didn't lose myself in my work. In this respect, I want to wholeheartedly thank: Ahmed Yousef, Dominik Wrobbel, Monique Kluß, Pia Dullweber, Rebecca Schmidt, Sascha Grewe, and Till Klöpping, who accompanied me through all the highs and especially the lows of my research.

I also want to sincerely thank those people who gave me important ideas on how to improve my work: Norman Dürkop, Maik Khodai, Max Krause, Morgaine Jourdaine, Maike Rudolph, Fabio Sand, Rebecca Schmidt, Tiwonge Tembo, and Ahmad Wali Ahmad Yar. Without you, this work would never have been so good!

I also want to thank my two supervisors, Prof. Dr. Andreas Vasilache and Prof. Dr. Frank Grüner, who supported my work with advice, assistance, and important impetus for my analysis.

However, my master's thesis would never have become a book project without people who encouraged me to try to get it published. I want to thank Prof. Dr. Susanne Pernicka, who encouraged me to publish my master's thesis. Writing a text is one thing, but publishing it is something completely different. My special thanks therefore go to Dr. Falko Schnicke, who provided me with intensive support during the publication process by giving me critical ideas to improve my line of argumentation and by providing advice, support, and encouragement when problems arose.

A career in academia might look like an individual sport, but for me it's a team sport. I have people at my side who have accompanied me through the highs and lows of academia. This has resulted in deep friendships as well as a vision of research in which we support each other and show solidarity with each other—despite the competition in academia.

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Abstract

In the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, the former Soviet republics were confronted with the task of consolidating themselves as independent nation-states. In the context of their nation-building, they had to outgrow the Soviet identity and instead create a new meaningful bond of social cohesion and anchor it sustainably in their societies. The case of Ukraine demonstrates the difficulties it faced in creating and maintaining its own national belonging, considering the country's long history of foreign rule and recent political struggles.

Based on narrative biographical interviews with Internally Displaced Persons from the conflict region of the Donbas, this master's thesis analyzes how their national belonging is constituted and how it has changed during their lives, with particular focus on the impact of the Donbas conflict.

My analysis shows that contemporary Ukrainian national belonging is based on a mixture of identity markers, namely, among others, Ukraine's language, culture, historical memory, a pro-democratic attitude, and pro-Ukrainian activism. At the same time, contemporary Ukrainian national belonging is also based on emancipation from Russia, which is seen as a threat to Ukraine, which the aforementioned markers of belonging help to facilitate. However, Ukrainian national identity does not necessarily exclude other ethnic, religious, and local identities. Lastly, Ukrainian belonging seems to have been strengthened by the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which escalated into war in 2022.

The loss of Crimea to Russia, the outbreak of the armed secessionist conflict in the eastern Ukrainian Donbas region in 2014, and Russia's war

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against Ukraine in 2022 demonstrate the costs of creating and strengthening Ukrainian belonging.

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