

NEW STUDIES OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY.

Introduction

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The 2013–2014 political protests and subsequent transformations of Ukraine's political landscape, as well as the annexation of Crimea and military actions in the eastern part of the country, significantly changed Ukrainian society and also revealed new social phenomena and processes, thereby suggesting new topics and directions for social research of Ukraine for scholars both inside the country and abroad. During this period the themes of political crisis, revolution, war, refugees and internal migration, social media and mobilization, information warfare, and memory policy were added to the more traditional Ukrainian studies topics of collective and cultural memory, national identity, borders and borderlands, ethnonationalism, regionalism, and such.

At the same time, many topics remain insufficiently researched. Among them are changes in the symbolic landscape of Ukrainian society: the emergence of new social categories, such as volunteers and immigrants, or the transformation of the role that the army and military personnel play in society. The new symbolic meanings of urban spaces, which emerged during the Euromaidan and in connection with the policy of decommunization, have become a source of unique data for analysis and interpretation. Multidirectional processes in the sphere of civil society, including the growing influence of the Right, volunteer movements for humanitarian causes, women in the army, and LGBTQ activism, also call for serious scientific examination and reflection.

In general, high-quality scholarship on Ukrainian society that uses well-designed qualitative methods is still lacking. Publications in the fields of history and political science predominate; and although they often rely on various sociological data, qualitative techniques of participant observation or in-depth interviewing are rarely found in the methodological toolkit of these studies. However, the conditions of social instability triggered by the annexation of Crimea and the military conflict

on Ukraine's territory diminish the reliability and representativeness of quantitative methods of social research. At the same time, studies based on qualitative methods not only avoid such limitations, but their significance and value increase in such circumstances, as they bring to the fore the goals of the social sciences to understand and interpret social phenomena (as opposed to simply measure them).

The information war resulting from the events of 2014 disrupted communication between the Russian and Ukrainian scientific communities and, particularly, between the social sciences. If Western and Ukrainian scholars continue to conduct research on Ukrainian society without ideological interference from their governments, Russia has accumulated a deficit not only of critical thinking but also of basic knowledge about social processes and changes that are taking place in Ukraine. One of the main tasks of this issue of *Laboratorium* is to break this silence, to renew contact between researchers, and to promote international dialogue among social scientists.

This special issue of the journal consists of four articles and three book reviews. The authors of the first two articles, printed in Russian, are sociologists from Ukraine; those of the other two articles (published in English) are a historian and an artist, both based in Europe, and an American political scientist. The reviewed books, which came out in the last six years both in Ukraine and abroad, present the reader with interesting examples of contemporary scholarship by Ukrainian authors in various social science fields: sociological theory (Marina Sobolevska); economic sociology (Oleksandr Rakhmanov); and cultural studies, gender studies, and feminist theory (Marian J. Rubchak).

The empirical studies on which the articles included in the issue are based have been conducted, for the most part, within the last three to four years. They deal with various aspects of contemporary Ukrainian society: gender inequality as manifested through the policies and practices of women's integration into the armed forces; the impact of transnational migration processes on female labor migrants from Ukraine to Italy; changes in the politics of memory and, more specifically, in representations of World War II in museums of the Western Ukrainian city L'viv; and the forms and methods that Russia and the West use to influence Ukrainian domestic reform policies, from the point of view of Ukrainian politicians and experts.

The article by Tamara Martsenyuk and her coauthors, "Integration of Women into the Armed Forces: Perspectives and Problems of Ukrainian Society," reveals the obstacles to women's participation in military operations in Eastern Ukraine. It is based on over 40 semistructured interviews with Ukrainian servicewomen, conducted in 2015 in the area of military conflict in the east of the country. The article analyzes the challenges of the integration of women into the armed forces in Ukraine in the context of both international experience and realities of postsocialist societies. Statistical data on women's participation in the armed forces of Ukraine are accompanied by an analysis of gender policy in the army, including laws and other state regulations, in relation to its efforts to ensure gender equality. On the one hand, the interviews reveal a great deal of what the authors term "legal and infrastructural invisibility" of women in the army. On the other hand, servicewomen appear as active, autonomous military personnel, building plans for the future and relations with

their fellow servicemen—however constrained they might be by policy and prejudice. Furthermore, the article presents some results of a reform to improve gender equality in the Ukrainian army achieved, in part, as a consequence of the campaign to popularize the “Invisible Battalion” project carried out with participation of the article’s authors. This testifies to the importance of the contribution the authors have already made in achieving gender equality in the Ukrainian armed forces—and in the promotion of public sociology in Ukraine.

In the article “Home without Walls, Walls without Home: Constructing Physical and Symbolic Transnational Locations in Ukrainian Women’s Migration to Italy,” Svitlana Odynets analyzes the processes that had come to the fore long before the Euromaidan protests of 2013–2014—women’s labor migration, which began at the end of the Soviet period. The author focuses on the concept of home as it is created by Ukrainian women migrants in Italy. The article makes a contribution to research on international markets in domestic services and women’s labor migration; this study of the Ukrainian case will allow further comparative analysis, as well as situating the Ukrainian context of migration processes in the international and post-Soviet order. Moreover, the author presents rich data on the female segment of the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy from the beginning of the 2000s. In addition to the practices—symbolic and material—of “homemaking in migration,” the author is interested in such aspects of the daily life of migrant women as national identity, integration into the host community, the processes of mastering the values and norms of the host country and, perhaps most importantly, the formation and evolution of their subjectivity. At the same time, a leitmotif of the article is the variety of losses experienced by Ukrainians abroad: whether it is a home left behind in Ukraine, an indefinitely postponed return to the homeland, or an unrealized integration into the host society.

Ukraine’s Soviet past, its efforts to institute a strong national identity and a democratic, transparent polity, and the current military and ideological struggle with Russia loom large in the other two articles of this special issue. The contribution by Alexandra Wachter and Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair, “From Soviet to Post- or Anti-Soviet: Two L’viv Museums of War in Search of a New Ukrainian Narrative of World War II,” reports some of the findings of their larger interdisciplinary project on military museums in Western Ukraine. Given the perception of Russia as a threat to Ukrainian nationhood and statehood that is especially strong in this region, the authors are interested in whether, since independence nearly three decades ago, narratives about the Second World War, a particularly fraught and complicated period for Western Ukraine, have been rewritten to bolster a national vision. Their account of L’viv’s military museums’ history and, especially, of these museums’ contemporary exhibits and commemorative practices problematizes the conflation of “anti-Soviet” with “anti-Russian.” It turns out that the politics of memory is neither simple nor simplistic: far from every nationalist enterprise, even in those parts of Ukraine with a history of the most militant anti-Russian sentiment, aims to erase all traces of the Soviet narrative of WWII—not even in the context of the current military confrontation with Russia.

The role of Russia—and the West—in the country’s policymaking is the subject of “Reform in Ukraine and the Influence of Foreign Actors after Euromaidan” by Ryan Barrett. His primary interest is to understand what kinds of influences Russia, on the one hand, and the United States and European Union, on the other, have been exerting on Ukraine since 2014—and how, through what channels and by what means, they have been doing so. But the article starts with an overview of Ukraine’s democratization and anticorruption efforts since independence—some more and some less successful—and of the push-and-pull influence both sides have had on the country’s political elites over time. We see that, if foreign influences on policymaking have intensified since 2014, both sides have been intervening in Ukraine’s domestic reforms by means of soft and hard power (Russia) or soft power alone (US and EU) for decades. Barrett’s findings are perhaps not that surprising, but the study provides interesting insights into the views of Ukrainian elites on the policy-making process, their understanding of “how the sausage gets made”—and from which side of the border its recipes and ingredients are imported.

While many topics and trends examined by scholars of contemporary Ukraine are unique to the country due to its geography and history, readers of this issue of *Laboratorium* will do well to ponder how the major topics that the authors of this issue raise—the role of women in the military and society at large, migration and assimilation, the politics of historical memory, and sovereignty in policymaking—play out outside of Ukraine as well: in Russia, in other postsocialist societies, and beyond. Even as some new state borders and ideological barriers go up, the boundaries of scientific inquiry and information exchange ought to come down.