NOT COMPLETELY UKRAINIANS: THE EXPERIENCES OF

INTERNALLY DISPLACED STUDENTS IN UKRAINE

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DEDICATION

To my mother, I will always be grateful for your love and continuous support.

To my father, even though you didn't get to see me on this journey, I have always known that you are proud of me.

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Abstract

The integration of Ukrainian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in host communities is as multi-dimensional as the political crisis of 2014 that led to the displacement. Having made a difficult choice to let go of their past lives to escape from the constant shelling and instability of the self-proclaimed republics, IDPs hoped to find shelter and be accepted by their fellow countrymen. While many surveys claim that Ukrainians generally seem to have tolerant attitudes towards IDPs, the findings of my study strongly indicate that quite often IDPs normalize stigmatization they face.

This study employed qualitative research methods and relied on twenty-eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with internally displaced students – a group not often studied by researchers. Each interview explored issues relating to the identities of IDPs and their juxtaposition (Ukrainian, resettler and regional identity). Similar to other studies based on qualitative strategies, this research has its limitations, stemming from difficulties to extract opinions that would not be tainted by the desire to fit into a particular narrative or match perceived expectations. While researchers can attempt to remain unbiased and be aware of their subconscious beliefs, we cannot be certain that what interviewees share with us is what they sincerely believe.

Nevertheless, taking into account these limitations, qualitative studies are essential for understanding the experiences of Ukrainian IDPs. While more research is needed to get to the roots of the issues surrounding the unique challenges of IDPs' integration, this thesis makes a step to analyze what causes stigmatization of Ukrainian IDPs, how IDPs choose to respond to the stigma, what kind of strategies they use to manage it, how they interact with locals in the host communities and what are the consequences of such stigmatization.

Keywords: Ukraine, Donbas, internal displacement, stigmatization, identity.

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Introduction

The 'Ukrainian-Russian war', which should be the official name for the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine (and on the European doorstep), is more than just a mix of ethnicity, language and nation-building issues. The Ukrainian case is interesting because of how complicated it is, with all these factors coming into play and confusing researchers. It may be somewhat tricky to analyze these dynamics, since researchers may feel the need to choose a side and organize the narrative according to a particular agenda.

While the issue remains political due to the huge security threat it poses for the entire continent of Europe, in this thesis I aim to emphasize the voices of those who have suffered the most as a result of Russian aggression in the East of Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula, but have become largely invisible in both foreign and Ukrainian media - IDPs. Although in most cases IDPs endure similar hardships as other refugees - they lost their assets and property, are often forced to abandon their families, have difficulties integrating in new places – the migration literature greatly overlooks their experience because they do not cross national borders.

This thesis aims to make a contribution to several bodies of literature: migration studies and research that focuses on the social landscape of modern Ukraine, specifically the concept of Ukrainianness and the influence of regional identities. Since stigmatization of the internally displaced has rarely been studied directly, the difficulties that IDPs may experience during their integration in host communities remain unknown and as a consequence, are often downplayed. The literature review of a few discovered studies exploring relations between IDPs and their hosts in other parts of the world will aid in the discussion of the stigma that surrounds IDPs and demonstrate that there is more to the intergroup dynamics between displaced and non-displaced than meets the eye. The structural context of the displacement in Ukraine follows the literature review and provides the background necessary to understand political situation that has emerged in Ukraine after

2014. Following the literature review is the research study, based on the interviews with Ukrainian IDP students.

Statement of the research problem

This thesis examines the integration challenges faced by IDPs in Ukraine in the context of their stigmatization by some segments of Ukrainian society. It also seeks to analyze how individuals respond to, and manage that stigmatization, in their efforts to build new lives in Ukraine. Internally Displaced People are formally considered as 'refugees' by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but are different from other types of refugees because they continue to live inside their countries of origin. This thesis suggests that even though they have the same formal citizenship status as other Ukrainians, they are not necessarily seen as being part of the same imagined community as their 'hosts' in other parts of Ukraine. Their stigmatization stems, in part, from a number of sources, including linguistic differences, historically constructed differences related to regionally-based identities in Ukraine, and perceived political loyalties. The thesis suggests that managing their perceived otherness, along with associated stigmas, are central challenges that IDPs face in their search for integration into other cities and regions in Ukraine.

The central aim of this thesis is to look at the process of IDPs' social integration in their host communities and to examine how their perceived 'otherness' and associated processes of stigmatization may impact this integration. Migrant identities are unique in their complexity, but the identities of Ukrainian IDPs can be further aggravated by their difference from other Ukrainians, based on historical and cultural connections to the Russian Federation.

Coupled with the high degree of politicization of Ukrainian society after 2014, those differences led to the revitalization of old stereotypes portraying Donbas residents as pro-Russian supporters. The stereotypes were further reinforced by discriminatory policies that

necessitate IDP registration and consolidate stigmatization of the IDP status. As a result, IDPs found themselves being treated not as righteous citizens of Ukraine (part of the 'Us' group, in this case 'Them' being Russian-oriented), but as aliens, foreigners ('Them', 'Others'), or something in the middle - pseudo- or semi-citizens (Bulakh, 2020; Ivashchenko-Stadnik, 2017). It stands to reason that such treatment added to the double stress of surviving the traumatic experience of war and necessity to quickly integrate into the new community.

This study will examine identity shifts, and stigma management techniques, undertaken by Ukrainians who have been displaced because of the consequences of the protracted conflict and what they mean for IDPs in particular. This thesis will also explore how stereotyping and hostile attitude of the media as well as political figures have affected the way IDPs negotiate their identities and adapt to their social environment in the host communities. Lastly, this thesis aims to identify the main reasons for the emergence of these negative attitudes and understand what continues to drive them after six years since the beginning of the conflict.

Acronyms

ATO - Anti-Terrorist Operation

GCA - Government-controlled area

IDP - Internally Displaced Person

IOM - International Organization for Migration

MPI - Migration Policy Institute

NGCA - Non-government controlled area

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PACE - Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UN OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

USSR - the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, unofficially Soviet Union

Chapter I. Stigmatization of IDPs in different contexts.

Labelling as factor of stigmatization.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the number of internally displaced globally reached an all-time high in 2020, totaling 50.8 million people (IDMC, 2020). Back in 2015, Ukraine was ranked ninth on the list of countries with the highest numbers of displaced people with about 1.3-1.5 million citizens internally displaced (IOM Ukraine, 2015). Among other countries with large IDP populations are Syria, Colombia, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Pakistan, and Nigeria (UNHCR, 2019). Most of the academic, and grassroots research focuses on such aspects of displacement as economic well-being of the displaced (including employment and residence concerns), legal status of IDPs, their access to the political life of the country and mental health.

Meanwhile research on social integration is heavily reliant on economic factors and thus its scope is limited to exploring the correlation between the two. For example, numerous research articles draw connections between the livelihood of the displaced (isolated neighbourhoods, camps, collective centres), access to certain employment areas, infrastructure, public services, etc. and their ability to make lasting connections in the host communities (Brun et al., 2017; Mitchneck et al., 2009; Salukvadze et al., 2014). While these are important questions to discover to better understand the difficulties of resettlement, those are primarily structural factors, exploration of which will not provide us with valuable insights into the lived experiences of those who have been displaced.

Although some research taps into questions of gendered patterns and family dynamics of the displacement, a large realm of discovery such as social dynamics between the displaced and non-displaced public remains beyond the scope of inquiry. Interestingly, while a significant part of migration research explores hostile attitudes towards refugees in the host

communities (Dyas, 2019; Hatoss, 2012; Schmitt & Witte, 2017), less effort has been undertaken to analyze open or hidden antagonism and negative stereotyping of the non-displaced public towards the displaced citizens of their countries.

Sociology understands identity as a fluid set of distinct characteristics of a person or a group of people. Since identity is a social construction, it is fully dependent on the meanings people attach to it. Therefore, identities of the displaced are often dictated by the events that predetermined their displacement and political narratives developed by governments and/or media. Despite the same citizenship and/or ethnicity, for the non-displaced public, the displaced can become perceived as 'foreigners', because of their association with the negative circumstances that led to their displacement. The identities of the displaced thus become 'spoiled' and this stigma surrounds them in every social interaction within the host community.

Erving Goffman distinguished three types of stigma: physical - visible deformations of a human body, stigma of character traits - invisible physically, they are displayed in human behaviour, and finally, 'tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion' (Goffman, 1963). Tribal stigma is the stigma that is attributed to a group of people related by a certain commonality, such as displacement. Goffman differentiated between the virtual (imposed by society) and actual (the attributes the person actually possesses) identity, and noted that the difference between them is what discredits the person in the eyes of the society and insulates them from others.

Stigmatization often results from labelling - a process during which a person or a group of people are assigned a special status in society, a 'label' that defines them for others. Willner-Reid, who analyzed the consequences of labelling for the IDPs of Afghanistan, states that labels play an important role in the life of every society; it would be practically impossible to assist IDPs/migrants without defining them as such (Willner-Reid, 2016). He notes however, that labels are far too often manipulated by those in power: 'bureaucracies

exercise this function with pragmatic and action-oriented goals in mind; as opposed to, for example, social scientists whose primary goal is descriptive.' (Willner-Reid, 2016). Social scientists agree that labels can be extremely powerful in shaping public opinion and have harsh consequences for those who are labelled.

While the debate over the necessity of labels remains open, Willner-Reid posits that labels are the primary tool policymakers use to identify those in need in order to provide support (Willner-Reid, 2016). Nevertheless, one of the consequences may be further categorization of IDPs into subgroups, such as what happened with Ugandan IDPs who became classified into two types: camp IDP and urban IDPs. Urban IDPs are often not considered IDPs at all, since according to Ugandan government, their resettlement 'reached a durable solution' (Refstie, 2008). In his research based on the interviews with Ugandan IDPs, Refstie demonstrates that this is far from true: while urban IDPs may have housing in urban areas, they can be just as vulnerable in their economic and social status as IDPs living in camps. In a similar example, NGO workers in Afghanistan interviewed by Willner-Reid considered IDPs only those living inside camps (Willner-Reid, 2016). These cases demonstrate the manifestation of a special hierarchy of vulnerability perceived by the non-displaced, who have the power to view IDPs through a limited lens and treat them based on these perceptions.

Another example of this is provided in the research article by Christopher Duncan, who explored relations between Indonesian IDPs from the province of North Maluku and their 'hosts' in the province of North Sulawesi (Duncan, 2005). Many locals expressed jealousy towards IDPs who were granted housing and humanitarian support, while the rest of population was in need and required assistance as well. They even complained about IDPs having TVs in camps considering this as a proof of their economic well-being. Duncan concluded that if assistance was not based solely on categorical division and the general public was provided support as well, there would likely be less tensions (Duncan, 2005). Interestingly, Willner-Reid cited several NGO workers and donours, who expressed

analogous perspectives that 'displacement is always prioritized over vulnerability', which could be beneficial for IDPs but actually leads to conflicts between them and locals (Willner-Reid, 2016). Along these lines Duncan notes how challenging it may be for authorities 'to walk the fine line between helping IDPs and ostracizing them at the same time' (Duncan, 2005).

One more example of the hierarchy of vulnerability used against IDPs is the situation with IDPs in Zimbabwe, in particular those in Hopley and Caledonia settlements, explored by Naidu and Behura (2017). These IDPs became displaced in the result of the governmental program - Operation Murambatsvina, which demolished their homes practically leaving them without shelter. The authors emphasize that regardless of inhumane life conditions IDPs have faced due to the displacement, this was not considered sufficient by the government to deem them as IDPs (Naidu & Behura, 2017). Similar to urban IDPs in Uganda, IDPs from Hopley and Caledonia settlements became invisible both for the government and international community, failing to fall under the category of displaced (Naidu & Behura, 2017).

Spatial and social segregation of IDPs. Strategies of stigma management.

One of a few studies that focus almost entirely on the complexity of relations between displaced and non-displaced is Juan Esteban Zea's research about stigmatization of IDPs in Colombia. Zea asserts that negative stereotyping of the IDPs frequently is manifested through symbolic violence (Zea, 2010). He goes on to explain how the non-displaced assign meanings to the identities of the displaced and redefine their identities for them: 'These invasion descriptions erase IDP life histories and create new definitions of IDPs that do not fit into their lived realities.' (Zea, 2010). This symbolic violence pushes IDPs to self-identify with the place of their origin and displacement, making them reluctant to develop connections to the host communities in urban centers.

The accounts of Esteban Zea's interviewees have shown to be in sharp contrast to the popular narratives about IDPs in Colombia. While the public discourse discredited IDP as uneducated, lying and lazy criminals living off government payments, IDPs in their turn viewed the non-displaced living in cities 'as rude and cold, while those in rural areas of Colombia are open, hospitable and sharing.' (Zea, 2010). Symbolic violence of non-displaced thus engendered reverse negativity of the displaced and further sustained governmental efforts to impose categories and separate the population. As Zea notes, although Colombia's population is heterogenous and combines many cultural identities, the phenomenon of 'othering' divides the groups based on superficial factors, erasing the importance of cultural diversity and promoting discrimination, which already constitutes a far-reaching problem in Colombia, especially for marginalized groups such as displaced and Indigenous people (Zea, 2010).

Zea discovered several ways through which the displaced manage their stigma. First of all, they created and leaned on to the identities that were the opposite of the demonizing narratives produced by the government and popularized by the media. These identities were related to the past life of IDPs - their activities which preceded displacement. If they faced negativity from those in cities, IDPs brought to the forefront the positive characteristics of their identities. Additionally, the common experience of being ostracized brought IDPs together, creating a feeling of groupness, connectedness (Zea, 2010). Nevertheless, this way of handling stigma is not always beneficial. That is why some IDPs felt the necessity to hide their actual identities in order to find employment, for example.

What is more important however, is that after some time, this sense of togetherness grew into social action. Colombian IDPs have been shown to become proactive in their interactions with government officials, affirmingly stating their needs during the conferences on IDP issues (Zea, 2010). Although most such meetings are symbolic in nature, the resistance demonstrated by IDPs is clear proof of their uplifted spirit. While the government may continue portraying them as lazy victims, they are asserting themselves

in ways that are feasible at the moment, by speaking out loudly and refusing to be marginalized (Zea, 2010).

Brun, Fàbos and El-Abed, who explored the exclusion of IDPs from Georgia, Sudan and Jordan nevertheless note that elevated solidarity of the groups of the internally displaced may prevent them from integrating socially (Brun et al., 2017). They provide an example of a Georgian IDP woman - one of the interview participants - who highlighted the importance of her IDP identity and status explaining it with political and historical reasons. Even though it has been more than 20 years since the displacement, narratives of exclusion still have significant influence on how Georgian IDPs are perceived by themselves and others. The abovementioned participant recounted being taught at school about the dangers of the collective centers (temporary residencies for IDPs in Georgia) and feeling frustrated with the evident othering of her social group (Brun et al., 2017).

Seyidov interviewed managers of the refugee integration programs of Turkish NGOs and found that the most important factor for the successful integration is desire for mutual cooperation by the host community members as well as the refugees/IDPs themselves (Seyidov, 2019). In other words, the displaced should not be expected to completely assimilate, but efforts must be undertaken by both displaced and non-displaced to build an effective communication relationship. Yet in many cases, due to the success of categorization and negative public reactions, IDPs feel more comfortable limiting their interactions to those with the similar background. Costantini and Driscoll found that a share of the displaced in Iraq likewise did not attempt to integrate socially, by learning Kurdish language for example. They called this process 'self-imposed isolation' (Costantini & Driscoll, 2020).

Salukvadze et al. state that reluctance of Georgian IDPs to establish connections outside of collective centers has led to the creation of IDP networks which can be characterized as a concentration of poverty (Salukvadze et al., 2014). IDPs thus become spatially segregated.

Consequently, the isolated patterns of settlement negatively affect their search of employment, political and social participation and the very motivation to be economically and socially integrated. The researchers conclude that coping strategies of avoidance and isolation implemented by IDPs do not promote their integration, but rather place them in secluded support bubbles (Salukvadze et al., 2014).

This is not a distinctive feature of Georgian IDPs; displacement often restructures geographical space of the affected countries creating homogenous zones which separate the displaced and non-displaced. For example, in her recent article Evanthia Tselika discusses the issue of social segregation in the case of internally displaced Greek Cypriots (Tselika, 2019). State housing program launched by the Greek Cypriot government in 1976 was meant to provide substantial support to the displaced; however, as Tselika's interview-based research shows, it also led to the creation of a lower-class social identity assigned exclusively to IDPs (Tselika, 2019).

Urban neighbourhoods for re-housing IDPs were built on the outskirts of cities and IDPs were placed in them based on their household income level. Tselika demonstrates how the decision to place lower-income IDPs in one isolated space was political in nature, since it led to the creation of a powerful label of a poor IDP/refugee, accompanied with negative stereotypes such as IDPs' laziness or welfare abuse (Tselika, 2019). What is more, the label has persisted through decades, affecting children of IDPs who continue residing in these neighbourhoods. It was also transformed to now include migrants who cannot afford higher cost accommodation and thus settle in the periphery.

Today, decades after the displacement, the neighbourhoods remain ghettoized, primarily populated by low-income migrants. Due of the influx of impoverished social groups in one urban area, problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and violence appeared over time, in a way becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy for negative attitudes of the non-displaced public against the displaced/migrants (Tselika, 2019).

Generally, the trope about IDPs as violent and dangerous criminals is a popular one and is often utilized in political narratives. Here again, one can draw parallels with internal displacement in Indonesia, as described in research by Duncan (2005). According to Duncan, while IDPs in Indonesia were often blamed by the general public for the increase in crime, statistics from the police did not find a correlation between the displaced and increase in crime rate (Duncan, 2005). Furthermore, they stated that it is IDPs who often suffered from crimes. By the same token, IDPs from Kurdistan region of Iraq reported being associated with criminals and terrorists as shown in the study by Costantini and O'Driscoll (Costantini & O'Driscoll, 2019). Similarly, popular narratives of the conflict created a negative image for the displaced from Kashmir in Delhi due to their exposure to violence, as described by Thomas (2020). As numerous examples show, tropes of similar nature can become quickly popularized and in many cases continue shaping IDPs' identities in the perception of non-displaced public for years, even when there is no proof to substantiate them.

Since governments often tend to find connections between the rise of crime levels and displacement (Ng, 2019), and IDPs of many countries frequently are segregated both socially and spatially, politicians can use such narratives to incept or reinforce control mechanisms. In turn this creates a paradox, when those in need of protection become the most scrutinized. The issue of increased surveillance over IDPs and refugees is often brought up by researchers. Some discuss stringent refugee policies in light of Foucault's concept of state's power, discipline and surveillance (Zea, 2010). Costantini and O'Driscoll state that although increased surveillance in Iraq can be beneficial for security in the wake of IS's activities, it further isolates those that have suffered the most (Costantini & O'Driscoll, 2019). Additional measures of security instill associations of IDPs as those of terrorists which justifies their treatment as second-class citizens.

Isolation of IDPs can also significantly impact IDPs' ability to influence policies that have direct impact on them, since they have no access to places and people who make decisions.

Esser, who explored how groups of the internally displaced in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone engage in political processes, found that one of the decisive factors for the effectiveness of their social action is proximity to the networks of policymakers (Esser, 2005). Out of four IDP groups which were chosen for the study, only one group managed to effectively influence policies related to IDPs mostly due to the fact that its location was closer to the urban center (Esser, 2005). To add to this example, Refstie noted that some urban IDPs in Zimbabwe have organized collectively through councils or social action initiatives in order to protect their rights (Refstie, 2008).

Another important aspect of stigmatization which can affect forcibly displaced is linguistic stigmatization. Language is an essential part of cultural identity; language ideologies combine assumptions about language practices, such as belief in superiority of certain languages and have profound influence on the way individuals are perceived culturally. Language is a highly visible characteristic and cannot be hidden easily. Park's study of North Korean refugees in South Korea shows that even different varieties of the same language can cause significant difficulties for social integration (Park, 2021).

Mi Yung Park conducted a qualitative study based on the interviews with four North Korean refugees in South Korea, who experienced othering because of their accent which was considered old-fashioned by South Koreans (Park, 2021). North Korean refugees reported that during their interactions with employers or other people they met, they were often asked about their origin which immediately made them feel different. With more unpleasant interactions they internalized perceived superiority of South Korean accent over the North Korean and attempted to speak like South Koreans. Speech classes did not change their accents to a desired extent, they were still mistaken for Chinese Koreans or generally overseas Koreans, which is a special category in South Korean discourse. Then, as Park discovered, after repeatedly failing to conceal their 'spoiled' identities trying to pass off as South Koreans, North Korean refugees changed their coping strategy. They now tried 'to construct more desirable and potentially useful identity positions through imagining

legitimate membership in a future, reunified Korea.' (Park, 2021) Instead of trying to get rid of their stigmatized identities or mask them in other ways, they recognized that their native knowledge of North Korean language can be potentially helpful in the future and tried to construct new imagined positive identities which would present them not as a strain but as valuable assets for united Korean society (Park, 2021).

Park's study demonstrated how just a few distinctive characteristics of the same language that developed in different environments can marginalize minority groups and create barriers for social integration as well as deny the sense of belonging. Park's participants felt the need to first hide their origin but then developed a more effective strategy to manage their stigma by renegotiating their identities (Park, 2021).

Although research about stigmatization of IDPs remains scarce, examples from different countries have shown that intolerance towards the displaced is not only limited to foreigners (refugees or migrants), but in many cases extends to those with the shared citizenship as well. Alienation of the internally displaced happens on the basis of certain differences that distinguish this group from the non-displaced population, such as language or religion (as in the case of the displaced Kashmiri Muslims in Delhi in the study by Thomas (2020). However, sometimes these differences become visible because of the displacement itself. For example, in Zea's study, displaced Colombians who moved from rural to urban areas were stereotyped as poor and uneducated based on their origin, but this fact was not used against them before their displacement (Zea, 2010). The prejudice may have existed in the past, but displacement reactivated old stereotypes. Duncan also notes that before displacement, relations between the communities he studied were generally positive, but due to the prolonged period of displacement and its negative impacts on the economy (the population was hit with both increase in housing prices and salary cuts) considerable social tension appeared (Duncan, 2005).

Based on the existing research, IDPs have developed several strategies to resist negative attitudes. The initial reaction in most cases seems to be avoidance, downplaying and subsequent clinging to their past identities. Kashmiri IDPs in Delhi reported minimizing their interactions within the host community as much as possible after continuous discouraging encounters (Thomas, 2020). A survey conducted by Salukvadze et al. has shown that 87% of IDPs in Georgia chose to spend half or more of their time inside collective centers (Salukvadze et al., 2014). Finding comfort in their past or displacement identities is especially true for older IDPs: elderly displaced Colombians in the study by Curcio et al. described the value of what their heritage means to them and the strategy of carrying those memories with them at all times (Curcio et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, this strategy is not sustainable for social integration. That is why at some point IDPs may choose to create new identities, which allow them to both remember their past, but also position themselves as an essential part of the new communities. Lastly, IDPs organize themselves and take action in order to transform the labels assigned to them by engaging in policymaking process. Zea states that through marches and takeovers IDPs claim their displaced and marginalized identities publicly - which is the opposite of avoidance and isolation - and become agents instead of victims. What is more, Esteban finds that Colombian IDPs find ways to maneuver the system government has set up for them, utilizing negative stereotypes about their social class to receive financial support (Zea, 2010).

Chapter II. Structural Background.

The 2013-2014 crisis

2013 was a watershed year for Ukraine. What started as an internal political issue soon led to the economic breakdown of the country, loss of control over 7 per cent of its territory (the Crimean Peninsula and uncontrolled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions) and protracted war with the Russian Federation, which continues to take the lives of Ukrainian military and peaceful civilians alike. When the then-president of the country, Viktor Yanukovych unexpectedly took a foreign policy U-turn by refusing to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union and instead, voiced his government's intention to revitalize negotiations with Russia about entering a Eurasian Customs Union, Ukrainians took to the streets for a peaceful protest, which eventually ended up costing the lives of more than a hundred activists (later named the 'Heavenly Hundred' - 'Nebesna Sotnya' in Ukrainian).

A months-long protest action, which became known as 'Euromaidan' (a shorthand term that is rooted in the geographical and geopolitical macro and micro focal point of the protests), in Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv (Independence Square) and the demands of the protesters for the course of integration into European Union, started in November 2013. It soon turned into a large-scale revolution and subsequent overthrow of Yanukovych and his government. In a swift turn of events, Yanukovych fled to Russia and the Parliament of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada) voted to remove him from his post as president on the very next day - 22 February 2014 (Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada № 764-VII).

Even though the widely regarded corrupt leader of the country had physically left, Ukraine remained in an impoverished, disorganized and politically chaotic condition for months after that. Protests did not just affect the Ukrainian capital, many solidarity meetings were held in other cities of Ukraine. The biggest rallies took place in the Western Ukraine, e.g. Lviv, Uzhhorod, Chernivtsi. Activists, aimed at rooting out over-the-top corruption of the

era of Yanukovych, were now chasing his known associates and demanding their removal from high government positions.

The initial euphoria over Yanukovych's removal soon gave way to political instability which affected the entire country. But the worst-case scenario came true in South-Eastern territories of Ukraine. While Euromaidan protests gathered hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians in their fight for democracy, the so-called pro-Russian elements in Crimea, as well as Donetsk and Luhansk regions, were paving their way for taking ahold of strategic buildings, such as Sevastopil City Council and Regional State Administrations in both Donetsk and Luhansk.

At the end of February 2014, armed men seized the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. On March 16 an illegal referendum was held, which reported that an overwhelming majority of Crimeans supported joining the Russian Federation. International organizations, such as the United Nations, OSCE, Council of Europe and many others declared the referendum not in line with the Constitution of Ukraine and its results doctored (General Assembly Resolution 11493, 2014; OSCE, 2014; Venice Commission, 2014). Nevertheless, the mechanism of annexation had already been set in motion. The process in Crimea went rather more smoothly than many might have otherwise expected: the newly-appointed powers in Kyiv, constrained by Ukraine's much weaker military, and guided by the recommendation of Western powers not to provoke a large-scale bloodshed destined for Ukraine's loss given the estimate of Russian military capabilities, decided to bet on an old-fashioned wait-and-see position (Gentile, 2014). In any case, by the end of March 2014 the Russian Federation was in full control of the peninsula (Sasse, 2017).

The annexation of Crimea triggered the first wave of internally displaced persons. Because of how quickly the events unfolded, Crimeans had limited time to pack their belongings and organize their move (Bulakh, 2020). Crimean Tatars – an ethnic group indigenous to

the peninsula - were the first to move to mainland Ukraine due to the threat to life Putin's xenophobic policies posed for them (Albert, 2016; Lashchuk, 2018; Lupiatska, 2018). Thus, Crimean Tatars were forced to flee due to the fear of persecution, detention, torture and death. This damaging experience reminded many Crimean Tatars of the forced deportation by the Soviet Union in 1944 (Charron, 2020; Lashchuk, 2018; Uehling, 2017). Researchers note that Crimean Tatars constitute a special subgroup within IDP community, since their historical memory, passed through three generations, is still fresh about the times of terror and genocide under the Soviet regime, many principles of which arguably underlie Putin's presidency still. The displacement of Crimean Tatars thus has a cyclical pattern and is even more traumatic (Voytyuk, 2019). Unlike other IDPs, Crimean Tatars cannot visit their homeland in light of the abovementioned risks.

According to the UNHCR, by 20 May 2014, internal displacement affected around 10 000 people (UNHCR, 2014). Most of those were Crimeans, since similar unconstitutional referenda in newly-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics were held only ten days earlier - on May 11. It is important to state that all estimates are approximate, since the move happened rapidly and the Ukrainian government had yet to come up with a system of monitoring IDPs' movement (Bulakh, 2020). Before the mechanism of registration of IDPs was introduced, there was no way for both the government as well as international and volunteer organizations to know how many people fled the peninsula. According to the data provided by the UNHCR, a year later - by August 2015, there were 15 286 Crimean IDPs (OSCE, 2015).

The Ukrainian government and international community were caught off guard by the rapidity and effectiveness of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. They were in for yet another surprise when the Donbas (short for Donetsk coal basin) descended into turmoil. In a timeframe that overlapped with the regime change in Crimea, pro-Russian elements stormed the buildings of Ukraine's State Service in Donetsk and Luhansk. The pro-Russian loyalty of local authorities made it easy for the relatively low numbers of

'separatists' to gain control over the most important infrastructural organs. Soon, Donbas was riddled with Russian military equipment and pro-Russian gunmen.

In an attempt to avoid a repetition of the Crimean scenario, the acting president of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, announced the beginning of what was called the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) and sent battalions of the Ukrainian army to fight Russian-backed separatists. The situation escalated every day and May marked the beginning of intense fighting. Ukrainian students were just about to finish the study year (the spring term in Ukraine finishes in the end of May) and take exams, yet they were already in danger by simply walking the streets. Heavy shelling and bombing continued throughout the summer. This is when most of IDPs of Donbas left their homes.

The beginning of displacement

Researchers note that for most IDPs from Crimea, the decision to move was mostly based on ideological preferences (desire to live in Ukraine, not Russia; denial of the freedom of speech, etc.). IDPs from Donbas first and foremost fled because of fears over their physical security and safety (Sereda, 2020). According to UNHCR data, by September 18, 2014 the cumulative number of internally displaced reached 295,000 (PACE Report, 2014). The intensification of the conflict coincided with the period of summer vacations for many Donbas citizens. Qualitative studies have revealed that when leaving, many IDPs hoped to be back soon enough (Kuznetsova & Mikheieva, 2020; Lashchuk, 2018; Lazarenko, 2020). The general expectation was for the unrest to calm down within a few weeks and for normal life to go on. This expectation was also stimulated by the new president, Petro Poroshenko's, promise to end the ATO in two weeks (Walker & Luhn, 2014).

It is precisely because the situation was absolutely unprecedented and in the absence of practical guidelines from the government, let alone organized efforts to safely evacuate

civilians, future IDPs could not imagine that their return back home would be postponed for an indefinite period of time. Studies of IDPs, including the interviews I conducted, found that the majority of respondents initially believed their move to be only temporary. They did not consider the possible long-term consequences of the conflict or plan their actions for the near future (Lashchuk, 2018). The only plan was to get somewhere safe to ride out the storm. For this reason, many did not take winter clothing or household items essential to start their lives elsewhere in Ukraine (Mikeieva & Sereda, 2015).

On October 2, 2014, the Ukrainian State Emergency Service reported 375 792 IDPs (PACE Report, 2014). Although it is difficult to accurately estimate the numbers of IDPs due to reasons that will be discussed later, it is clear that the flow of forced migrants was extraordinary for Ukraine. The only other instance of internal displacement Ukraine had to face in the last fifty years, was the one triggered by the Chornobyl catastrophe, when the nuclear accident displaced more than 350 000 people (Bazaluk & Balinchenko, 2020; Ivashchenko-Stadnik, 2017; Rimpiläinen, 2017; Smal, 2016). Yet the scale of the internal displacement caused by the armed conflict soon surpassed that of the 1986 nuclear disaster. By the end of January 2015, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine counted more than 942,000 IDPs (Ministry of Social Policy, 2015).

The IDP registration system was launched by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on October 15, 2014. The system was criticized by many as severely incompetent: researchers note that there is no categorization of IDPs in terms of their origin - Crimea or Donbas (Bulakh, 2020). The system was merely meant to calculate the number of registered IDPs; it did not offer data for any kind of efficient analysis for policy development, such as the number of IDPs in need of humanitarian aid and livelihood support, number of large families, number of unemployed IDPs, etc. Prior to the creation of the system, the only organization which followed the movement of IDPs and tried to determine their needs and provide humanitarian aid was the UNHCR. An Operational update by the UNHCR from May, 2019 gives an account of more than 1.5 million IDPs (UNHCR Ukraine, 2019). As

of October 12, 2020 the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine reported 1 458 977 registered IDPs (Ministry of Social Policy, 2020). The UN OCHA also reports that more than 4.4 millions of people have been directly affected by the conflict on the whole, with 3.4 million in need of humanitarian assistance (UN OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2017). According to some data, more than a million of forcibly displaced fled to Russia (UNHCR 2017, cited in Rimpiläinen, 2017).

The discrepancies in the numbers provided by the Ukrainian government and other organizations are mostly due to the selective policies of Ukraine's authorities on whom to count as an IDP. The Ukrainian government considers IDPs only to be those who registered as such in governmental social protection offices, which process social benefits for low-income population groups, and received the so-called IDP certificate. (Stakeholders' Report, 2017). International agencies repeatedly warned that the real number of IDPs could be twice as large as the official statistics suggests, since far from all IDPs choose to register with the government (Ferris et al., 2015; Sasse, 2020).

Researchers have identified several reasons why the displaced have refused to register. The most common are: fear of sharing the private information such as their residential address with the government authorities which emanates from the general lack of trust in the government (Bulakh, 2020), fear of military draft (Brenzel et al., 2015; Kuznetsova, 2017), and lack of the required paperwork (Dean, 2017). Refusal to obtain official Ukrainian IDP status can also be caused by the stigma that formed around the 'IDP' term. Wishing to avoid the labeling and discrimination, those who moved saw obtaining IDP status and being treated as an IDP as something humiliating or by the very least, offensive (Bulakh, 2020). This category of the displaced usually are not dependent on social benefits the government offers for IDPs and choose to save their time fighting over the small amount of financial support (social benefits for IDPs range from 442 UAH for able-bodied (~16 USD) to 1784 UAH for disabled persons (~63 USD)) that requires strict adherence to cumbersome bureaucratic procedures (Lazarenko, 2020; Trubavina, 2015).

Ukrainian authorities have tried making the registration compulsory by introducing policies which require the IDPs to present an IDP certificate when visiting a hospital, enrolling in school or university, and engaging formally or informally with other Ukrainian institutions (Herdenberg, 2017). Supposedly, this was done to verify the identities of IDPs and make sure they are not involved with pro-Russian rebels. This caused even more dissatisfaction among IDPs and led to 'othering' of IDPs by the members of their host communities. The last thing IDPs wanted after their move was to be treated in a different way than people surrounding them. Sentiments of deep disappointment with the government's stance can be found in many qualitative studies of IDPs. For example, Bulakh's study provides a quote of an IDP man stating: 'I do not agree when they call us *pereselentsi* (from Ukrainian - 'resettler'). Chernobyl victims were *pereselentsi* because they were evacuated by the government… But we were left to run away on our own. And now we are left alone to prove that we are not criminals for saving our lives and our families' (Bulakh, 2020). This quote also demonstrates resistance to the stigmatized 'IDP' term and unwillingness to be associated with this newly emerged identity.

One of the main requirements for obtaining an IDP certificate is the residential registration ('*propyska*' in Ukrainian) in the occupied areas. '*Propyska*' is part of a legacy of the long outdated Soviet Union system, which basically constitutes a residential address written in person's passport; in a way it constitutes an address which the person is 'assigned' to and which governs how they can access certain government services or benefits. For instance, general hospitals in big cities are divided by districts, so *propyska* would determine the hospital that the person is supposed to visit in case of necessity. Obviously, displacement jeopardized the system built on the principle of *propyska*, so the solution was to solidify the compulsory character of an IDP certificate for receiving any kind of civil services - medical help, educational services, etc. (Bulakh, 2020; Kuznetsova & Mikheieva, 2020). The new system soon proved its defectiveness when many IDPs tried to get services or medical care in their host communities and were denied simply because they did not have the IDP certificate handy or did not undergo the registration at all.

At some point such instances evolved into a pattern and several researchers argued that by systemic denial of essential services to IDPs on the basis of the lack of the single document, the government of Ukraine began regarding citizenship as a privilege, and not as an acknowledgement of person's ability to exercise constitutional rights within the state, which in its turn bears the obligation to protect its citizens against abuse of their rights. Citizenship thus became an object of protection itself (Bulakh, 2020; Krakhmalova, 2018).

Whether by design or default, by introducing the IDP certificate system the government of Ukraine sent a message to the IDPs that they could only understand in one way: even though IDPs are Ukrainian citizens with Ukrainian passports, they will be denied their civil rights unless they officially register and report their residential address to authorities on a constant basis. In this way, the government set additional barriers to IDPs' adaptation in their new environment and dissociated them from the rest of its citizens who did not need to provide additional documents in order to enjoy their constitutional rights (Herdenberg, 2017).

IDP profile. Demographics of displacement.

In 2015 the UNHCR ranked Ukraine as the ninth largest country in the world (next to Pakistan and Nigeria) in terms of the number of IDPs (UNHCR, 2018). According to a Migration Policy Institute report, more than 90 percent of the 1.5 million of IDPs in Ukraine are from Donbas, while around 50 000 are from Crimea (MPI, 2019). According to some authors, Crimean IDPs constitute about 5 percent of the displaced (Trubavina, 2015). In any case, such substantial dissimilarity in numbers may have affected the differential attitudes that members of the host communities adopted in their perception of IDPs from Crimea and from Donbas. This will be further discussed in the section on social integration.

Gendered patterns

While in the most countries affected by internal displacement there is no sharp gender difference in terms of the number of displaced, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Social Policy in June, 2016 out of 1 785 740 IDPs, almost 1 100 000 were women, and around 700 000 - men (Smal, 2016). The condition of internally displaced persons in Ukraine has a strong gender dimension which is reflected in the way IDPs travel from government-controlled territories back home, support their families and divide household chores and responsibilities (Trubavina, 2015).

Ukraine's society overall, and especially the older population, can still be called traditional in many aspects, thus gender roles and stereotypes continue to have great importance. One of the main reasons women moved in larger numbers than men was associated with the need to leave men back home to guard family property and continue working while women prepared a new place for a family (Krakhmalova, 2018). For the majority of IDPs, their apartments or houses in the occupied territories are the only property they own, the biggest possession they have been working for their entire lives, thus it is of symbolically and financially high value (Mikheieva & Sereda, 2015; Voytyuk, 2019). This is why many families made a decision to assign the task of taking care of the property to 'heads of households' - men. It is known that armed rebels in Donbas regularly 'hunt' for abandoned properties in order to burglarize or 'grant' apartments as a reward to those who have demonstrated loyalty to the authorities or who have been part of military actions. The only way of preventing them from breaking into the apartment would be to leave someone appearing strong in order to create the impression that taking that apartment would not be as easy as if it was guarded by a woman or left completely empty.

Among other reasons for the significant difference in the percentage of female and male IDPs, is the fact that since women are the primary caregivers in the family, it would be typically deemed logical for women and children to move together, leaving the men behind

to take care of unfinished tasks and close businesses. For most IDP families, making sure their children were safe was the number one priority at the peak of the military conflict. Thus, mothers would leave with their children in the first instance, settle in the new place and expect the men to join them later (Mikheieva & Sereda, 2015). Such a division of roles led to the fact that IDP women were forced to shoulder most of the burden of displacement and at the same time held primary responsibility for the well-being and educational progress of their children. In many cases, men would not move from the occupied territories, as initially planned, either because the situation was not getting better and the family decided that guarding property is essential, because many of them would still have jobs in the occupied territories, or because the financial state of the family did not allow it to resettle all its members in such a short period of time. All in all, such gendered patterns of displacement led to the long-term or even permanent split of many families and negatively impacted the mental health of IDPs, especially children and teenagers.

Geography of displacement

Another interesting characteristic of Ukrainian IDPs is the geography of their resettlement. According to the data published by *Slovo i Dilo*, out of 1 446 691 IDPs, more than 500 000 now reside in the controlled areas of Donetsk region - in close proximity to the 'contact line', and more than 280 000 - in controlled territories of Luhansk region (*Slovo i Dilo*, 2020). The next large agglomeration of IDPs is currently registered in the city of Kyiv - almost 160 000 IDPs. Kharkiv region has a large number of displaced persons as well: around 135 000. Somewhat large conglomerations of IDPs are registered in Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia and Kyiv regions – with more than 55 000 in each.

Other regions of Ukraine host fewer IDPs, ranging from 3000 in Volyn region to 22 500 in Poltava region, which borders Kharkiv and Kyiv regions. The high percentage of IDPs in Donetsk and Luhansk region is explained by their proximity to home. Researchers even identified some small towns, in which the population of IDPs now exceeds the local

population. Since the move was presumed to be short-term, many IDPs did not wish to move too far from their home cities and took shelter in the closest places, where they had relatives or friends. Short distances also allow for frequent and easier visits to their homes with the purpose to check up on property and relatives who remained in the non-government controlled areas (NGCA). One more reason not to move too far from home was to stay close to the people with the similar mentality (Voytyuk, 2019). This too will be analyzed in the section on the peculiarities of social integration.

Such patterns of resettlement had several important consequences. First of all, the fact that IDPs relocated highly disproportionately has led to some regions (especially Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv) having to accept a much larger strain on their resources for the IDPs' integration (Rimpiläinen, 2020). Secondly, the social landscape of Ukraine went through a transformation. With some towns now having more IDPs than their original population, and with remarkable numbers of IDPs in the capital, job and property markets inevitably changed as well (Kuznetsova, 2017; Rimpiläinen, 2017). In its turn, this has led to the covert or overt lack of tolerance towards IDPs on behalf of the members of host cities and made quick integration virtually impossible.

Social integration of IDPs

It is hard to say with confidence that Ukraine is a culturally homogenous country. While the vast majority of the population now chooses a 'Ukrainian citizen' identity over regional or local identities (Haran et al., 2019; Sasse, 2017), and social values across the country remain largely the same, partially due to the primary Christian religion and still strong influence of the Soviet past, acute regional splits in opinions on foreign affairs, state language and politics, legislature are nevertheless salient (Burant, 1995 and Munro, 2007 cited in Gentile, 2015). The Presidential election of 2019 demonstrated this on a whole new level, when former president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko was supported almost

exclusively by the residents of Western regions (mainly, Lviv oblast) and Volodymyr Zelensky took the majority of majority of votes in Central and Eastern Ukraine (Bruzgalin, 2019).

According to many experts, the Ukrainian government should have taken more steps to build a strong national identity immediately after proclamation of independence in 1991, which presumably, could have prevented the entire crisis of 2014. As Korostelina mentions, the concept of Ukrainian national identity is heavily reliant on the interpretation of the 'standing of Russian and Ukrainian ethnic groups in the society' (Korostelina, 2013 cited in Taradai, 2019). Nonetheless, the situation may not be as divisive as it seems. While it is undeniable that Ukraine is a politically and economically divided country, cultural differences, which are often presented as the main culprit of the Donbas conflict and are even used by some as a major excuse to name Ukrainian-Russian war a 'civil conflict' within Ukraine (e.g., Ghent, 2017), are rather far-fetched.

The cultural differences, such as those around language (Ukrainian versus Russian), local traditions, interpretations of history, attitudes towards specific holidays (for example, sentiments towards Victory Day (9 May) are different in Western and Eastern regions of Ukraine with Eastern and Central Ukraine having more exposure to practices and symbols popularized by the Russian Federation) and even attachment to certain Russian TV shows and famous personalities objectively, are not sufficient to provoke a state split and lead to loss of thousands of lives. Quantitative researchers have reached the conclusion that the Ukrainian population generally holds healthy attitudes about the political future of Ukraine, without expecting the return of a renewed Soviet Union, but supporting Ukrainian independence (Mikheieva & Sereda, 2015). In order to kindle the fire of enmity on a large scale, one would have to be heating up the stereotypical setups and manipulate people's consciousness for years (Mikheieva & Sereda, 2015), which is essentially what Russian propaganda has been doing since the collapse of the USSR (Balinchenko, 2019a; Katchanovski, 2016). By and large, the regional differences which may trigger

microaggressions between Ukrainians are generalized clichés, arising from Ukraine's historical past (Voytyuk, 2019). Yet, they have never had a potential to give rise to a conflict of such a high degree.

Uniqueness of Donbas identity

Despite having common Ukrainian citizenship, residents of Donbas arguably have quite a distinct identity, which combines loyalty to Ukraine with strong preference for Russian language, nostalgia about life during the Soviet era (at least among the older population), some suspicion towards the political intensions of the West, a combination of both Ukrainian and Russian traditions, and perhaps even a sense of superiority in relation to other regions of Ukraine. This sense of superiority is interesting to explore further, since it emanates from a common self-perception of people of Donbas origin as conscientious and strong and thick-skinned. Since they are used to living in tough conditions of Ukraine's industrial heartland, their self-definition involves the need to develop a backbone in order to 'survive'; otherwise an individual will fade away in the mainstream (Koshkina, 2015 cited in Giuliano, 2018). As Haran et al. put it, there is a 'strong self-perception of 'real workers feeding other parts of the country' (Haran et al., 2019).

The origins of Donbas identity will be further deliberated on in the research section. Meanwhile it is essential to state that many aspects of this regional identity can be misunderstood by Ukrainians in Western and Central Ukraine. The increased Ukrainization of the post-Maidan society have promoted the use of Ukrainian language and the intentional and unintentional 'othering' of Russian speakers. As Kulyk concludes, "while the self-representations do not undermine Russian-speakers' identity as Ukrainians, the other-representations often do, thus questioning their belonging to the imagined national Self" (Kulyk, 2018). More often than one would anticipate, the choice of Russian language of

people from Donbas is equated with overall loyalty to the Russian system and Russian leaders; values and attitudes of IDPs relating to the Ukrainian state and nation are frequently questioned, and IDPs themselves could be held in an overt suspicion before members of the host communities get to know them better and realize there is no threat they expect by default.

In the aftermath of the conflict, huge flows of IDPs diversified the social landscape of other regions of Ukraine quite considerably. As one of the consequences, those stereotypes, which used to surround citizens of Donbas in the mind of other Ukrainians, who never were in contact with them before, were activated and appeared in their entirety. The migration literature offers many insights which allow one to observe that this is a relatively usual reaction of the 'majority', when a certain country accepts large numbers of refugees, especially if they are different from the mainstream culture. Therefore, the general population is likely to descend into a defensive mode, justifying it by the 'necessity to protect' the homogeneity of their culture, and thus it creates and reinforces a visible split between so-perceived 'Us' and 'Them'.

Usually, the more dissimilarity there is between the cultures or between the physical appearance of the newcomers compared to the host society (explored by race studies, see qualitative study on African immigrants in Australia by Udah & Singh (2019), study on experiences of Namibian refugees in GDR by Schmitt & Witte (2018)), the more extreme the reaction. Over time however, according to the contact theory developed by Allport (1954), the stereotypes are supposed to be alleviated, since with more interaction individuals are likely to notice that the differences, which have served as a basis for their negative attitudes towards the Other, are either far-fetched or purely imposed.

In the case of Ukraine however, we are dealing with a somewhat different situation. There are no visual differences between Ukrainians from different regions, and the religion is usually the same (Catholic in Western Ukraine [25%], and mostly Orthodox in the rest of

the country). Even the language issue often can be equalized, since many Donbas citizens are fluent in Ukrainian, though they may choose to communicate in Russian as a matter of preference; and a big chunk of the residents of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia and other regions speak Russian on a daily basis, while being able to navigate between Ukrainian and Russian depending on the interlocutor. Moreover, Ukraine is one of the countries where bilingual communication is common: one person may speak in Russian and the other would reply in Ukrainian or vice versa. Thus both parties are able to encode and decode the message in both languages simultaneously. This unique bilingual communication is inherent to many post-Soviet countries.

Finally, the citizenship of both IDPs and host community members in most cases is the same, so it is only logical to expect that IDPs would be treated with sympathy and compassion by their fellow citizens. Nevertheless, a notable amount of qualitative research found that the majority IDPs did not feel welcome in their host communities at least at one point during their resettlement (in the beginning, or even after several years of living in a host community) and reported cases of discrimination, negative verbal treatment, othering, shaming based on their choice of language or lack of knowledge of Ukrainian, offensive stereotyping, harassment - such as insults, and even intimidation and violent attacks.

Interestingly, many scholars, as well as IDPs themselves (including participants of my interview-based study) note that attitudes towards Crimean IDPs are usually more tolerant than to those from Donbas. This once again, is related to the negative imagery attached to people from Donbas, sharp differences among Ukrainian media representation of what happened in Crimea and Donbas, and especially the tone the fourth estate employs to portray Crimean versus Donbas IDPs (Sereda, 2020). The much larger numbers of Donbas IDPs than those from Crimea makes an impact as well. Rimpiläinen also found that many governmental bodies of Ukraine (including the Ministry of the Occupied Territories and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, whose objective is to provide assistance to IDPs) and public officials were the most prominent figures who through their statements and

interaction with the media have been continuously vilifying IDPs in the public eye, thus building the soil for the stereotypes to flourish (Rimpiläinen, 2017, 2020).

Bazaluk and Balinchenko posit that attitudes towards IDPs throughout the six years of conflict are somewhat similar to a rollercoaster. First, there was the stage of euphoria - increased sympathy, interest bordering with 'interrogation' (interviews with my interlocutors corroborate this fact). Then came anger - frustration with the large number of IPDs and the changes their displacement brought about. And lastly - indifference (Bazaluk & Balinchenko, 2020). This theory is reiterated in Bulakh's research named 'Strangers Among Ours' (Bulakh, 2015).

Economic integration of IDPs. Housing and social benefits.

Rented housing and targeted assistance

The main obstacle which considerably slows down both the economic and social integration of IDPs is the housing issue. As mentioned before, majority of IDPs had to leave their only apartments with most of their belongings behind. Those, whose houses or apartments had been destroyed by shelling found themselves in an even worse situation, since there is no way for them to get compensated for losing their assets. According to the recent data published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 60 per cent of Ukrainian IDPs rent their housing, 17 per cent live with relatives or host families, and only about 1 per cent own dwelling in government-controlled areas (GCA) (IOM, 2020). Thus, majority of IDPs are bound to spend half or more of their monthly income on housing, which puts them at a huge economic disadvantage compared to the locals in the host communities.

Even though it has already been six years since the beginning of the conflict, governmental efforts to improve the housing situation for the IDPs have fallen short of the expectations of international community and IDPs themselves. The major aspect of governmental assistance remains the social benefit for IDPs, that is paid on a monthly basis. It currently stands at 35.5 USD (1000 UAH) for children and pensioners, 15.6 USD (442 UAH) for able-bodied IDPs, and from 48 to 63 USD (1373 to 1784 UAH) for disabled persons, depending on the disability group (Decree 505/2014). For comparison: from July 1, 2020 the subsistence level in Ukraine amounts to 75 USD (2118 UAH) (Verkhovna Rada, 2019).

According to State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the average cost of renting a one-room apartment in Ukraine was 130.5 USD (3701 UAH) in 2019 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2019). The cost is double as much in Kyiv, averaging 266 USD (7538 UAH). The huge flow of IDPs to Kyiv can be explained by the vast pool of job opportunities that are concentrated in the capital, as well as many vacant spots in so-called survival jobs one can take up in the beginning of displacement, such as taxi driver, grocery clerk, etc. Donetsk and Luhansk were listed among the regions which have the lowest cost for renting apartment (2056-2473 UAH), likely because of the proximity to the warzone and instability this causes (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2019).

It is clear that the governmental assistance for IDPs is far from sufficient to cover the rent of a one-room apartment in any region of Ukraine. Yet, most IDPs are financially vulnerable to such an extent that they are actually heavily reliant on this minuscule payment. In desperate need of any amount of financial compensation, IDPs sacrifice their time in order to stand in long lines and go through numerous bureaucratic procedures. An IDP who wishes to receive the benefit has to come to a governmental office in-person, provide several identity documents including the IDP certificate and hold an account in Oschadbank - governmental bank that deals with social benefits and pension payments in Ukraine. Some researchers have drawn attention to the fact that IDPs are not given freedom

to choose the convenient way for them to receive these payments (Bulakh, 2020; Sereda, 2020; Stakeholders' Report, 2017).

In addition to this, every six months a social worker has to verify the residential address of the IDP - a very controversial procedure, which borders on breach of privacy (Ferris et al., 2015). Researchers note that the objective of the social workers is not to ensure that the housing is suitable for a family, that it has access to basic utilities such as clean water, energy, etc., or that it is in adequate sanitary conditions, but rather to verify that the address provided in the application is the actual address of IDP's residence. In other words, they are verifying that the IDP has not lied about the fact of their resettlement and sometimes also making sure that the financial condition of IDP does not exceed the allowed standard (such as whether IDP owns a car or other goods of luxury), otherwise the application for assistance will be denied (Kuznetsova, 2017; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2017).

Numerous IDP interviews, as well as the fieldwork of researchers, have demonstrated that the organization of the process is on the very low level. The copies of IDPs' documents are stored in folders, the electronic system often acts up, or the cases easily end up misplaced or completely lost which causes even more stress to IDPs (Bulakh, 2020). Bulakh has noted that during her observation activities in Ukrainian social organs, while she was communicating with state employees, she could not help but notice how displaced pensioners carefully treated their IDP certificates and other documents. Sometimes they even laminated those to protect them from the slightest damage (Bulakh, 2020). The reason for this hyper-anxiety is the structure of Ukraine's bureaucratic state system, in which one's legality and access to rights is dependent on the provision of documents. Same as other social benefits, the system of provision of targeted assistance to IDPs is set up based on the IDP certificate, the receipt of which is in its turn reliant on other documents, such as birth, marriage certificate, etc.

In the recent research, Olha Shyshatska (2020) shared the story of a displaced pensioner Olena, who had her internal passport stolen a few months after displacement. Since the system of old paper passports with *propyska* has recently been replaced, and citizens are now offered plastic ID-cards and a supplement document with *propyska*, Olena could not receive this document as she was from the occupied territory. This document however was required to receive the social benefits, bank services, etc. and Olena had to face rejection each time from the bank/state employees, who could not provide these services because the system requires a specific documentation package (Shyshatska, 2020).

This is regarded as one of the ways the state controls its citizens, by setting up additional documentation requirements and creating the atmosphere of constant delays of the document processing, which leaves vulnerable groups such as IDPs feeling stressed and insecure. The state thus has a complete monopoly over the citizenship rights and can easily marginalize those who do not meet its requirements. Moreover, through the prolongation of the wait time, the state normalizes the unfair mechanisms it has created, making IDPs wait in hope that they will be approved for the assistance so that when they receive it, they feel relieved and do not have the courage to complain about the process.

In addition, many IDPs report bizarre interactions they have with social workers, who are said to be unhelpful, rude, ignorant and untrustworthy. Shyshatska pays attention to the fact that in the exploration of the interaction between the state workers and IDPs, one has to keep in mind that their attitude towards IDPs is the reflection of the attitude of the state in general (Shyshatska, 2020). Many Ukrainian sociologists note that employees working in state offices often have little compassion, they do not explain the process of receiving social payments properly (Bulakh, 2020), which often causes miscommunication, frequently due to the fact that they speak Ukrainian (as the state's employees) and senior IDPs, who did not study Ukrainian at school in Soviet time, have a hard time understanding it. International organizations have recommended providing training for public officials on

the IDP situation numerous times, but such training has so far been neither planned nor discussed (Ferris et al., 2015).

To add insult to injury, the targeted assistance which sometimes has to be 'fought for', can be revoked at any moment if the government believes that the financial situation of an IDP has changed, suspects that an IDP provided false information 'hiding' assets that may indicate their ability to sustain themselves, or that IDP may be a 'pretend' IDP, factually residing in NGCA, which I will explain more broadly in section on 'pension tourism'. This triggers fears of IDPs of the government finding out about their savings accounts, and deeming their financial condition as sufficient enough to deny governmental support. Such instances provoke further lack of trust towards the government among IDPs and increase feelings of insecurity about their future.

Pension and benefits 'tourism'

One of the most financially vulnerable groups of IDPs are seniors, whose primary income is a state pension paid on a monthly basis. A problem for pensioners from the occupied territories appeared in October 2014, when the Ukrainian government adopted a discriminatory policy to cut off the payments for those pensioners who were suspected of residing in NGCA (Kuznetsova, 2017). The justification of the policy was based on the presumed 'betrayal' of so-called 'pension-tourists', who were only claiming to be 'real IDPs', but instead continued residing in the occupied territories (thus, from the Ukrainian government's perspective, supporting pro-Russian rebels with these payments) (Kuznetsova, 2017; Rimpiläinen, 2017).

In reality, however, the phenomenon of 'pension tourism' appeared as a survival mechanism for pensioners who cannot afford to pay for rent in the government-controlled territories, and instead, continue residing in their only properties and regularly take trips to the banks in GCA to verify their identities (according to the official procedures) in order to

continue receiving the funds. Taking such trips, which include standing in long lines on checkpoints is stressful enough and very damaging to the already weakened health of most Ukrainian pensioners (Ferris et al., 2015). In addition, having to go through verification every 3-6 months has created a demand for the 'semi-legal middlemen', who offer services of private transportation and pay off Ukrainian military to let them cross the border faster and without lines (Rimpiläinen, 2017).

Moreover, researchers have found that by ceasing provision of payments to those residing in NGCA, the Ukrainian government contributed to the increase in IDP numbers, which are already unsustainable for the country's resources (Albert, 2016; Brenzel et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2015). According to Brookings report from 2015, amending Verkhovna Rada's Resolution 509, which initiated the termination of payments to pensioners residing in NGCA, could reduce the number of IDPs up to 20-30 per cent, and it is likely that with the current IDP flows this percentage could be even higher (Ferris et al., 2015).

When Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsenyuk called pensioners from Donbas 'fraudsters', the government's position was clear: there was no understanding of the struggles IDPs, and especially seniors face, and no support should be expected (Rimpiläinen, 2017). Such instances perpetuated the sense of 'complete abandonment' by the government that many IDPs feel up until today. In contrast to younger IDPs, who are more mobile and less dependent on social payments, senior IDPs, the vast majority of whom still share a Soviet mentality, are used to relying on the state and expect it to substantially help them in solving large-scale problems like displacement (Mikheieva & Sereda, 2015).

Chapter III. Research Study

Data and methods

This thesis is based on 28 in-depth semi-structured interviews with internally displaced students. The interviews were conducted remotely, through platforms such as Skype, Viber or Telegram in audio or video regime based on the preference of participant, over a four-month period (November 2019 - March 2020). The interviews were carried out in Russian language, as it is the mother tongue of the participants and thus the most comfortable language to express themselves. The audios were then recorded, transcribed and translated into English.

The central research question of the study focused on how internally displaced students define their identity, and their sense of belonging and acceptance in host communities. The interviews lasted 40-45 minutes on average and were conducted by an internally displaced person, who understands the sensitivity of the topic. The interview guide consisted of twelve questions, which could be adjusted or omitted based on the judgment of the interviewer. The interview guide is provided in the Appendix. This research study was approved by McMaster Research Ethics Board.

The interviews provided an opportunity to obtain a rich understanding of the experiences of the displaced, narrated by them in a comfortable setting and listened to by an interviewer who have gone through a similar experience. The participants were not interrupted, which allowed them to express their feelings and tell all elements of their stories which they considered relevant from their own perspective. The choice of the interview format with open-ended questions is conditioned by the limited number of saturated qualitative studies which give appropriate consideration to the testimonies of the displaced, without politicizing or generalizing their answers. In their turn, closed-ended surveys do not allow for a deep exploration of the questions of identity, belonging and experiences of 'othering'.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to define the topics of their displacement that they consider most essential. All interviews started with the same first question and then, based on response, the sequence of questions could change or follow-up questions could be asked. In order to recognize and examine the emerging themes of the narrative, thematical approach was adopted. Thus, interviews were coded based on the most repeated topics IDPs mentioned, such as *HOME, BELONGING, IDENTITY* and others. Then, more detailed categories for each of the topics were chosen and the data was organized according to these topics and categories.

Participants

Participants consisted of 13 female and 15 male students or recent graduates of Ukrainian universities, who were either in the middle of their studies during 2014 and had to transfer to another university in a region they moved to; or who entered university in 2014, right after they were forcibly displaced. The participants were not asked whether they possess an official IDP certificate. In most cases the interviewer used the term 'resettler' instead of 'IDP', since it is a more familiar term without an official undertone. The participants' names have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy and identity.

The recruitment of prospective participants was based on several announcement posts, made by the interviewer in private Facebook groups launched with an objective to provide IDPs with relevant information and establish a safe platform where IDPs can share their services or ask for support of any kind. The names of the Facebook groups are the following: 'Donetsk-Kyiv folks' ('Donetskie Kievskie', 66.8K members as of April 19, 2021), 'Resettlers of Donbas and Crimea' ('Peresentsyi Donbassa i Kryima', 46.1K members), 'Ukrainian Donbas. Resettlers in Kyiv' ('Ukrainskiy Donbass. Pereselentsyi v Kieve', 7.2K members), 'Ukrainian Donbas. Resettlers in Dnipro' ('Ukrainskiy Donbass. Pereselentsi v Dniepre', 3K members).

The groups are openly pro-Ukrainian, meaning that the policies of the groups outline that supporters of DPR and LPR, as well as any kind of pro-Russian sentiments are not welcome. This is one of the limitations of this study, since experiences of those IDPs that have differing opinions were not included. 37 individuals reached out to the interviewer through Facebook messages, 21 became participants. Out of 37 who reached out, 11 persons were not selected for the interviews because they did not match one or more of the selection criteria:

1) Being a current student or a recent graduate (within the last 3 years);
2) Identifying as a resettler or an internally displaced person;
3) Having moved from an occupied/annexed territory of Ukraine (Donbas or Crimea) at any time after the beginning of Russian aggression (spring 2014).

Five more individuals did not show up for the interview. The rest of the participants (seven) were recruited through snowball technique: the participants recruited through Facebook groups (21) were asked to share the post with other displaced students, whom, in their opinion, might be interested to take part in the study. In order to diversify the sample, the following rule was followed: each participant could refer several potential interviewees, but only one of those became a participant.

In recruiting participants, the interviewer sought to maintain gender balance and diversify the sample through recruiting participants of different origins: from both big urban centers, as well as smaller towns and villages; and who have relocated to different regions of Ukraine. The disproportion evident in the relatively large amount of participants who relocated to Kyiv is explained by the fact that the capital has the biggest number of universities; and that Kyiv is ranked second after Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in terms of the number of IDPs hosted (Slovo i Dilo, 2019; Smal, 2016). IDP students who relocated to the unoccupied regions of Donbas are not at the focus of the study, since the objective was to explore the social dynamics of the interactions between IDPs from Donbas and

Ukrainians in other regions. As described by Haran et al., the closer to the contact line - the more people are ready for compromises, which means that the further from Donbas IDPs have moved, the more likelihood to discover controversial attitudes, practices of 'othering' and intolerance (Haran et al., 2019).

In order to make the interpretation of the findings easier, the following table provides key information about the participants:

#	Name (pseudonym)	Sex	Age (at the time of the interview)	City of origin	Host city
1	Mariya	Female	22	Donetsk	Kyiv
2	Galina	Female	23	Donetsk	First - Zaporizhzhia, now - Kyiv
3	Olha	Female	25	Chervony Promin (Luhansk region)	Kyiv
4	Vadim	Male	24	Donetsk	Kyiv
5	Alina	Female	24	Donetsk	Kyiv
6	Darya	Female	23	Donetsk	Kyiv
7	Nikolay	Male	21	Luhansk	Kyiv
8	Nikita	Male	24	Krasnohorivka (Donetsk region)	Vinnytsia (now resides abroad)
9	Anastasia	Female	24	Sevastopil (Crimea)	Kyiv
10	Maksim	Male	26	Donetsk	Kyiv
11	Denis	Male	25	Luhansk	Chernihiv
12	Valeriya	Female	22	Donetsk	Kharkiv
13	Oleh	Male	23	Luhansk	Kharkiv
14	Vladislav	Male	24	Donetsk	First - Bakhmut (Donetsk region), now - Kharkiv
15	Katerina	Female	23	Donetsk	Vinnytsia
16	Nina	Female	22	Donetsk	Kharkiv
17	Vladimir	Male	23	Sloviansk (Donetsk region)	Kharkiv
18	Ivan	Male	24	Yenakieeve (Donetsk region)	First- Vinnytsia, now - Mariupil (Donetsk region)

19	Boris	Male	25	Donetsk	Vinnytsia
20	Aleksandra	Female	24	Donetsk	First - Zaporizhzhia, now - Kyiv
21	Miroslava	Female	22	Donetsk	Vinnytsia
22	Anna	Female	28	Luhansk	Lviv
23	Tatyana	Female	23	Stakhaniv (Luhansk region)	Lviv
24	Andrey	Male	24	Donetsk	First - Vinnytsia, now - Kyiv
25	Stas	Male	22	Donetsk	First - Lviv, now - Donetsk
26	Aleksey	Male	23	Crimea	Lviv
27	Ruslan	Male	24	Simferopil (Crimea)	Lviv
28	Bohdan	Male	22	Donetsk	Lviv

The following charts visually demonstrate migrant profile of the participants:

City of origin of the participants
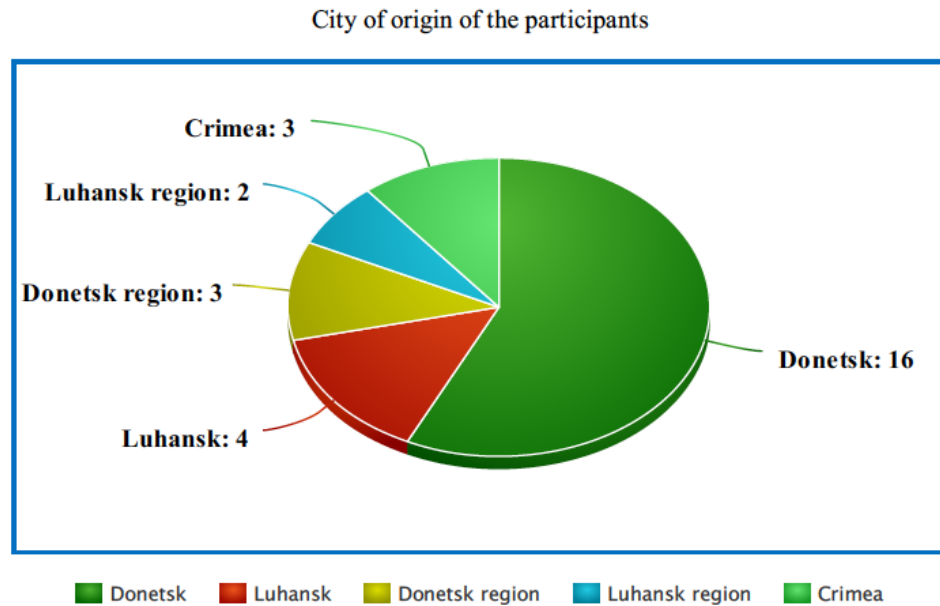
Host city of the participants
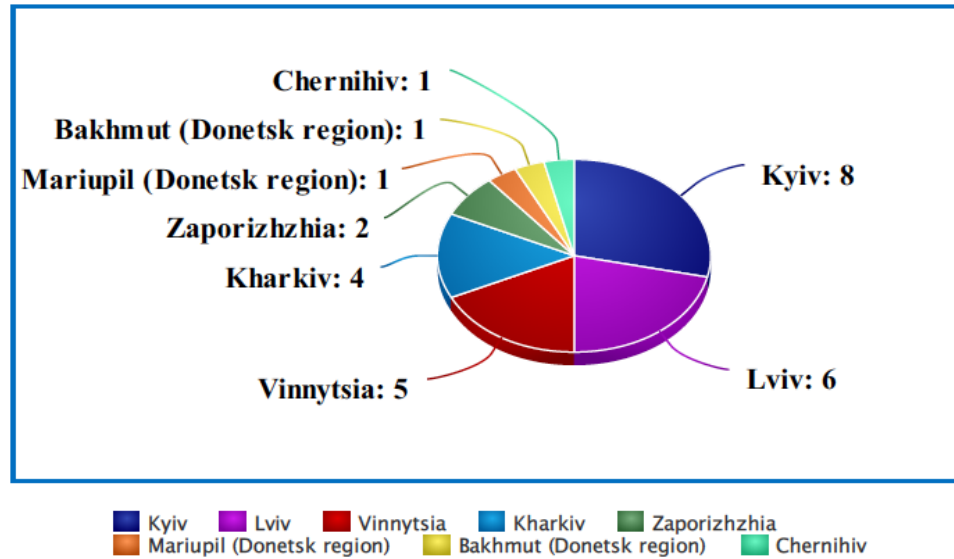
The student group (average age: 23.5) was chosen because it is substantially underrepresented in the studies on Ukrainian IDPs. To date, studies have focused on the most vulnerable IDPs, such as pensioners (Bulakh, 2020; Hnatyuk, 2014; Kuznetsova & Mikheieva, 2020), disabled persons (Krakhmalova, 2019; Kuznetsova, 2017; Sasse, 2017), women who have experienced violence (Pahulich & Vesnianka, 2015), women more generally (Nidzvetska et al., 2017), or on displaced adults in general. Students are the most mobile and dynamic population group, who defines the future of the country, which is why it is vital to explore their attitudes towards displacement and how those were impacted by their experiences in host communities. Some researchers (Mikheieva & Sereda, 2015) have noted that there is a sharp difference in the mindsets of the older and younger IDPs. In addition, it is interesting to see the identity shifts among younger population, since so far most studies have explored the economic aspects of resettlement, rather than social and personal.

Findings and analysis

What home means to IDPs. Emergence of 'resettler' identity.

Home away from home

The migration literature agrees that migrant identities can be extremely complex. Most of researchers focusing on migrant identities posit that they are multi-layered and clearly reflect the division of the life of a migrant into 'before' and 'after'. The concept of 'home' is considered crucial for the understanding of a migrant identity. Valeria Lazarenko, author of one of a very few qualitative research studies about Ukrainian IDPs, emphasized that IDPs' identities should be analyzed through three central categories simultaneously: 'home', 'trauma' and 'displacement' (Lazarenko, 2020).

Defining home can be difficult for IDPs, since when their initial move happened it was not planned and did not have a definitive timeframe. Similar to many other IDPs, the majority of the students I interviewed at first perceived resettlement as a temporary move for safety concerns, only 'until things back home settle down'. Given that the peak of conflict came at the summer of 2014, parents of some students sent them further away from the warzone, to their summer homes or to visit relatives. Little did students know that this 'temporary move' would become the most decisive moment of their youth. The following accounts are good illustrations:

"At first, I did not seem to understand that I moved. When it all started in early June, I went to Crimea. Hmm… Like for two weeks. Everyone was going somewhere for 'two weeks' back then. I was sure that I will be back soon."

Alina, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

Me, my younger brother and I, we were sent to Kyiv with my grandmother and she also thought she would stay there while there was no work at home... and my eldest brother ... he already studied in Kyiv, he moved in 2012, his birthday was coming on June 15th. And

I said: "So, I'll get to be there on his birthday?" And dad tells me a phrase that I still remembered really well: "Do you think you'll be there for so long?"

Maksim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

Mariya's quote highlights the feelings of instability and lack of knowledge about the future:

*The first six months we were probably in **limbo**, we felt like everything was up in the air, because we didn't know whether we would come back or no.*

Mariya, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

For many students, this state of 'limbo' became a primary reason for feeling anxious and worried about family, job opportunities, etc.:

When the finals were approaching, I started swaying, hesitating, thinking like: what, if we come back? or what if we don't? what if I start studying and my parents won't be there? where and how will they be?

Nina, moved from Donetsk to Kharkiv

Returning home kept being protracted for an indefinite amount of time, so most students made a decision to transfer into other universities in the controlled territories. Yet, most of them still hoped to return after a couple months or for the next study term.

To reflect the themes of temporality and uncertainty of the displacement, several researchers studying Ukrainian IDPs suggest use of the term 'resettler' identity. Among other things, being a resettler means having to move multiple times, not being able to feel completely comfortable in a new place, always being on the move or ready to move, not having the basic household items such as non-displaced people are used to having. Research has shown that IDPs are likely to internalize the kind of attitudes that are self-victimizing and prevent them from integrating as equal members of the host communities.

Mikheieva and Sereda discuss this in more detail in their study on the problems of adaptation of Ukrainian IDPs (2015), during which they stumbled upon the fact that many IDPs seem to have a habit of postponing essential household purchases. While they justify it saying that it is not practical to buy items which they already have back at home, authors suggest that this may be one of ways of denying the realness of the move, since it is now clear that IDPs will not be able to return home any time soon. This is a bright manifestation of a resettler identity: the IDP is not 'home' anymore, but they are not considering themselves as a part of the new place yet, so instead of investing in tools that could significantly ease their life, they subconsciously prevent themselves from feeling comfortable because they cannot accept the fact that their move is likely to become permanent.

When it became clear that resettlement is likely to become long-term, students' perception of home acquired somewhat a dichotomic character. The first image of 'home' is full of positive memories of their city or town where they spent their childhood, nostalgic feelings, family- and friends-related moments. The second image is their home (as a geographical place) in an intra-war state; the image associated with darkness, emptiness, fear, isolation and danger. It seems as if some students made a subconscious decision to separate these two images and to hold on to the one that has good energy. Students' comments about how they feel about home are full of tender emotions; they seem to attach great importance to this time-space construction. As Porter notes, migrants often tend to romanticize their homes, even more so if they cannot go back (Porter, 2020; Almenara-Niebla, 2020; Tegenbos & Vlassenroot, 2018). Porter calls this idealized image of what used to be home a 'timeless moral imagination' (Porter, 2020).

In such manner, a home which a migrant cannot return to turns into a sacred mindspace filled with nostalgic feelings devoid of negativity. Meanwhile, the new environment turns into a traumascape, as Lazarenko describes (2020), which is used to project all negative

thoughts and feelings that the very fact of displacement has triggered, and not so much the new place itself.

Such perspectives can be traced in several accounts of the participants of Lazarenko's study. In order to centralize the narratives of the displaced, she chose a creative approach and invited IDPs to draw sketch maps of their home cities and of Kyiv where they resettled (all participants moved to the capital). The mental sketch maps of the participants demonstrated that IDPs perceive their home cities in a much different way than places they live at now. The drawings of participants' home cities usually included places which bore a special meaning for them, such as the first apartment or a monument they used to pass every day on their way to work. Overall, these maps were full of emotional sentiments and attachments. At the same time maps of Kyiv did not have much of emotional weight. On the contrary, they clearly conveyed the distance IDPs felt between themselves and the new environment and were full of apathy (Lazarenko, 2020).

For example, the displaced woman, who had to move three times in one year, has sketched them all in her map by giving each a specific negative feature, such as 'this is the place with the roaches'. Nathan suggests that although romantic nostalgia is meant to replace trauma of leaving home, it keeps migrants' subconsciousness in the past, therefore constant reminiscing of how things used to be is preventing migrants from accepting new reality and making attempts to integrate (Nathan, 2007 cited in Kaur & Prasad, 2018).

Idealized sentiments about home cities were expressed in many accounts of my interlocutors as well. More often than not, participants could not give a proper explanation of their increased feeling of attachment. For instance, when asked if her perception of home changed in any way after resettlement, one participant had somewhat hard time precisely describing her feelings, and then she simply stated:

*"Now I feel some kind of pride that I am from Donetsk. Somehow, I still have such **romantic feelings** about that."*

Valeriya, moved from Donetsk to Kharkiv

However, it is not always possible to keep these images apart from one another. The reminder about how different the reality is from what it used to be is constantly there: in the news or in conversations with the family or friends. IDPs thus might get controversial feelings about what home actually means to them. Here is the account of Vadim:

*This image of childhood and the image of Donetsk got stuck in my head as… you know… some good place, kind place. I probably know logically that there are... bad features and bad moments associated with this city, but I'm trying not to remember them. I bring to the forefront some good emotions, like friendship, first love, relationship with family, like childhood, some first moments and so on ... well, I miss this time and... damn, I don't know… and I think that .... Like now returning to this Donetsk, **it makes no sense**. It's not that Donetsk, it's some kind of occupied city that is just stuck there at some point in the past.*

Vadim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

In his interview, Vadim described his life in Donetsk as far from perfect. He also shared with me some stories about his experience of being bullied, because he did not fit in the 'mainstream culture'. Yet in the above quote we see how even despite these negative memories, he confidently chooses to remember only good things. Nevertheless, immediately after he says that he misses this time, he becomes a bit emotional and corrects himself, adding that this place is no longer the same, and that returning there makes no sense. This quote is a good example of how these two images of past and present can overlap in IDP's imagination, causing bittersweet feelings.

Later, when I asked Vadim to elaborate on his perception of home, he stated the following:

Sometimes I catch such strange moments when I walk around the city and … it feels like at home…and I'm like: "Damn! I'm in Kyiv!" Well, like, I don't even … understand where I am. Okay, I'm in Kyiv, I don't care, I don't attach any importance to this, but I perfectly understand that there's nowhere to return. Well, maybe only to the past, yeah.

Vadim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

One can suggest here that detachment from home is used as a coping strategy, with the participant saying that he does not attach any importance to where he is. And then again, as a self-validation, we see how he continues to assert that there is no place to return to, other than the past. He appears to be talking himself into denying that he misses his home so as not to dwell too much in the past.

Some researchers refer to this as an 'in-between' existence, when it is clear that there is literally no place to which one can return. But at the same time, IDPs are reluctant to embrace their new reality and are not eager to immerse themselves into their new life. Homesickness can become so intense that Lazarenko feels justified in describing IDPs as 'metaphorically homeless' (Lazarenko, 2020).

Summarizing his experience in the end of the interview, Vadim recalled a video dedicated to the anniversary of his favourite football team - FC Shakhtar Donetsk and said the following:

I am not a passionate fan, but in this video they are remembering good moments and one of the phrases is like: 'Home away from home'. So I feel like that.

Vadim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

The sentiments expressed by Vadim can be found in the accounts of other participants. For example, here is an excerpt from an interview with Nikolay, from Luhansk:

Interviewer: *What are your feelings about home at this very moment?*

Nikolay: *Fear, emptiness, loss, devastation, poverty, violence… not my home. Well, as I came there once, I realized that almost all my friends are not there anymore, my*

*acquaintances are not there, the city itself has become a **stranger city**. The people walking on the streets are not those people who used to walk there before. Well ... everything has changed. It is just a city where our apartment is.*

It is known that the concept of home goes way beyond the physical dimension. Many scholars distinguish four interconnected dimensions through which 'home' can be studied: spatial, temporal, material and relational (Taylor, 2013; Ikalović & Chiesi, 2019). Analyzing IDPs' attitudes to home, I found the framework developed by Natalia Fadlalla most helpful. She proposes to conceptualize home based on material, spatial, emotional (sense of attachment) and imaginative (narratives and memories related to time) aspects (Fadlalla, 2011). If we examine Nikolay's account according to this framework, we can suggest that the emotional dimension got largely overshadowed by the image of darkness (negativity) he described, and the imaginative aspect seems to have been significantly devalorized. The only aspect that has come to the forefront is material. Thus, for Nikolay, what used to be home - associated with good moments with family and friends and warm emotions - now came down to a solely physical space, the sole value of which is determined by the property of his family that remains there.

Interestingly enough, while some participants are still holding on to the preserved image of home they captured in their minds, others reacted to the displacement in a somewhat unexpected way. Desire for survival seems to have overridden longing for home and nostalgia and in some cases even nullified the concept of home altogether. Here are some of the quotes of the participants:

The concept of home for me has simply shifted to the place where I live.

Nikita, moved from Donetsk region to Vinnytsia

Now I have the feeling that my home is where my pillow is.

Galina, moved from Donetsk to Zaporizhzhia

I think the concept, the feeling of home was generally erased for me. I love to go there because there are relatives, friends, it's nostalgia, it's still mine, it's my life. A different life, I was a little bit… even not a little bit, but quite a different person then, so it's nice to remember this when I come there.

<div align="right">Katerina, moved from Donetsk to Vinnytsia</div>

I think the meaning of home is kind of erased for me now because personally I cannot return to Luhansk for certain reasons and during these six years I changed my place of residence like a ton of times.

<div align="right">Denis, moved from Luhansk to Chernihiv</div>

The last quote also demonstrates how the experience of constant moving and displacement allows the resettler identity to take over the identity of origin. Therefore, home is no longer associated with anything in particular, because the scenery (spatial aspect) has been changed so many times, that there are no connecting links left between items or places and feelings. In simpler words, after one has been forced to move multiple times, it is rather hard to say what exactly home means. It is important to keep in mind though, that the notion of home especially for migrants is multi-faceted, that is why more often than not, the lack of attachment of home to a certain time-space can occur simultaneously with the feeling of missing one's home city.

The following quotes are provided to further demonstrate the point that IDPs have not had a universal experience and have developed differing attitudes towards home based on their background and circumstances of both what used to be their home and their 'new' home:

Of course I am homesick and always will be, because I really miss it very much. I think not all people understand such loneliness and longing and it's not always possible to find a common language with everyone and find someone who could become something like a soulmate.

<div align="right">Ivan, moved within Donetsk region</div>

I feel at home rather in Kharkiv, than in Donetsk. I absolutely do not miss Donetsk, I have nothing left there. The same friends who were there, they left to different places. I only have an apartment there. And that's all, nothing more.

Vladislav, moved within Donetsk region

It's such a very strong feeling of nostalgia, when you arrive there. It's like, you already have your own life, friends, meetings, studies, work, but when you come back, this feeling that you grew up here, you can't deny it. I still consider Donetsk to be my home.

Nina, moved from Donetsk to Kharkiv

As noted before, because of the complexity of the home concept, the feelings of missing home are dependent not only on the physical comfort of the space, but on social relations, life moments shared with others and overall feelings of stability and happiness. Thus, drawing from the interviews of this sample, I have noticed that those students who have had a relatively positive childhood and good memories of years before displacement were more likely to express the feelings of missing home and nostalgia, compared to those who did not have a supportive environment at home or were not tapped into social networks that would bring them positive experiences.

Understanding Ukrainianness after 2014. Juxtaposition of Donbas identity and Ukrainian identity.

At least a third of the interview questions in one way or another touched upon the identity of IDPs. Participants were asked about their thoughts on patriotism, civic identity, in particular whether they experienced any identity shifts or change of attitudes in the aftermath of the outbreak of hostilities. Participants were free to interpret 'patriotism' and 'identity' in a way closest to them in order to provide them with the space to articulate any point of view. Participants chose to talk either about regional patriotism and love for abandoned home cities or national patriotism - attachment to being the citizen of Ukraine,

or both. But before we delve into students' testimonies, it is essential to discuss how Donbas identity and consequently IDP identity became a spoiled one and why it is often not seen as a part of larger Ukrainian identity.

Lazarenko states that in addition to the resettler identity, the identity of a Ukrainian citizen and regional (origin) identity may also have a significant meaning for IDPs. This theory echoes the Matryoshka doll concept, which is sometimes used to describe complicated identities, such as those of migrants (Herrmann & Brewer, 2004 cited in Kozachenko, 2018). Similar to a Matryoshka doll, one complex identity can be made up of several smaller identities, which paradoxically may not be always be in tune with one another. Yet for an outsider, the only identity that is seen - is the one on the surface that the individual is most comfortable with and it is the most beneficial identity to be performed depending on the environment.

In the case of the displaced Ukrainians, the 'bigger' identity would be the one of a Ukrainian citizen, and the identity of origin and resettlement identity would remain hidden and only uncovered for those that IDP feels safe around. Although I hypothesize that the identity of a Ukrainian citizen is generally the one on the surface, there is a need to acknowledge that this is not always true. IDPs that feel mentally or culturally closer to Russia than to Ukraine have not been given much attention by scholars (it is relatively difficult to reach this community due to the high level of politicization of the issue), thus it is hard to say how big their share is.

Based on the findings of Sasse and Lackner, regional identities which combine both ethnic and linguistic identities, became more salient for IDPs as a result of the military conflict (Sasse & Lackner, 2018). Additionally, even though IDPs are those that were affected the most, Ukrainians living away from the conflict zone have also found their perception of Ukraine as a country change. Sasse and Lackner concluded that while both language and ethnicity (Russian/Ukrainian) remain important for the self-perception, 'Ukrainian citizen'

turned out to be the most popular self-reported identity both among IDPs and those who are not displaced (Sasse & Lackner, 2018). Haran et al. second this in their research on Ukrainian identities and public attitudes (2019). This shows a change from earlier findings of Sasse's study of 2017, when only 30 per cent of IDPs said that they 'felt more Ukrainian' since the war has started, and 15 percent reported identifying themselves as 'both Ukrainian and Russian" (Sasse, 2017).

The increasing numbers of IDPs identifying themselves as first and foremost Ukrainian citizens (rather than invoking their regional identities) demonstrates their loyalty to the country and strengthening of Ukrainian civic nation (Kulyk 2016, cited in Haran et al., 2019). If twenty years ago Kubicek wrote that "the inherited regional divisions [in Ukraine] were so acute that more polarization would be difficult to imagine" (Kubicek, 2000 cited in Gentile, 2015), now more and more authors confirm the fact that despite Russia's expectations, Ukrainian civic identity has been on the rise since Euromaidan (Haran et al., 2019; Sasse & Lackner, 2018).

Under usual circumstances, the rise of patriotism and civic identities would be considered a good thing, however, given the different perceptions of what a true patriot should look and act like and political cleavages in different regions of Ukraine, this added further strain to the interactions between the displaced and locals. While many of the non-displaced Ukrainians experienced the growth of patriotic and nationalistic feelings, their understanding of what it means to be a Ukrainian citizen remained narrowly defined. One of the main features of being a Ukrainian for some may mean shedding any connections with Russian culture, especially the Russian language. This obviously contrasts with Donbas identity that encompasses many features of Russian culture, mostly due to the popularity of Russian media in these regions.

To mark the significance of the pro-Russian sentiment, many scholars even describe Donbas identity as a hybrid or a dual identity (Gentile, 2015; Giuliano, 2018). However,

oftentimes academic literature reaches a standstill trying to understand what exactly this hybrid identity and the so-called pro-Russian sentiment mean.

The following questions have yet to be answered and could potentially be addressed by future research: is it possible to measure the pro-Russian sentiment? Is the existence of pro-Russian sentiment mostly linked to the propaganda and media narratives employed by both Ukraine and Russia (in this case one can argue that any pro-Russian views are imposed through brainwashing and cannot be considered as indicators of ideological 'betrayal' committed by IDPs and those still residing in NGCA)?; or is the pro-Russian sentiment stronger than shallow media throw-ins, and instead is deeply rooted in the consciousness and collective memory of the people united by the common historical past and language? To what extent does Donbas identity contain this sentiment: is it possible that in particular situations, Ukrainian civic and national identity takes over and pro-Russian sentiment becomes blurred of vice versa? And, more importantly: how strong is this pro-Russian sentiment and what exactly does it mean for the Ukrainian nation-building? Was it strong enough to become the primary cause for the support of the self-styled republics by some Donbas residents? And if not, then what essentially happened during spring 2014?

As Sasse states, displaced in Ukraine are highly politicized, although are not homogenous in their political opinions (Sasse, 2017). Thus, the political cleavages arising from this kind of difference in perceptions can lead to serious social conflicts not only between displaced and not displaced, but between the displaced as well. What is meant here is that some IDPs may hold more of pro-Ukrainian views, although not consider themselves full-fledged patriots of Ukraine (and distinguish themselves from Ukrainians in other regions) and some may hold more pro-Russian views but choose not to advertise those since they reside in Ukraine.

Further analyzing Donbas identity, it is also important to provide a bit of historical perspective. The territory of modern Donbas together with few other regions adjacent to

Russia and Black and Azov Sea coasts was named 'Wild Fields' because of the raids of nomads and desertedness. Even though the territory had rich soil suitable for cultivation, it was scarcely populated up until 15-16th century, due to the danger of raids. In 16th century Ukrainian kozaks populated the area and established their own democratic state with a strong freeman tradition. Soon after the imperial Russia colonized this historical region, coal mines were discovered and the first Russian settlers were sent to work in mines to provide resources for the empire. In the beginning of the Soviet Era, industrial development of the region became the number one priority, so the goal was set to populate the area with workers and create an artificial identity which would serve as a motivation to work for the Soviet Union (Ilchuk, 2017; Lashchuk, 2018). Many settlers were sent from both Ukrainian and Russian regions and other Soviet republics, among them were misfits and past prisoners, who would agree to do hard mining work in order to survive. The fact that some of those who arrived had a bad reputation likely influenced negative stereotypes and the usage of the word 'trash' ('cattle' in some translations, bydlo - in Russian/Ukrainian) to describe the underclass that some consider the dreg of Ukrainian society.

The question of shaping a unifying identity for different kinds of people who came from different places and had different cultures and ethnicities, was soon solved by the Stakhanovite movement, supposedly started by Aleksey Stakhanov - a 'super-worker', who was awarded as a Hero of Socialist Labour (Lashchuk, 2018). This new cosmopolitan identity was meant to eliminate all kinds of attachments - ethnic, linguistic and regional and instead promote a socialist collective consciousness glorifying hard work as the main value in Soviet society (Ilchuk, 2017). With no common historical memory, the identity of Donbas citizens was thus based on conscientiousness, pioneering tradition and necessity to survive in severe conditions of newly-created industrial centers.

During the Soviet Union era, this artificial identity shaped the image of Donbas citizens in the perception of other Ukrainians. After the Soviet Union collapsed, as Ilchuk states, Donbas citizens initially faced an identity crisis, but then still 'retained nonpolitical

attachment to Russia [nevertheless] considering themselves "full-fledged members of Ukrainian nation."' (Szporluk, 2002 cited in Ilchuk, 2017). The features of industriousness, strength, severity, straightforwardness, strictness were also carried into modern times as Donbas maintained the reputation of a massive industrial center, which supplies the national manufacturing of Ukraine with products of metallurgy, energy resources and other supplies. Stereotypes attached to these features were transferred into the 21st century as well, having been somewhat adopted for modern realities.

We are not completely Ukrainians

Juxtaposition of Ukrainian national identity with Russian cultural elements created confusion for many IDPs, especially right after the conflict broke out, when everyone was expected to choose a side, since the narrative of 'Us' versus 'The Enemy' was at its peak. The debate behind Donbas identity intensified, since it combined characteristics which were now considered on the edges of the opposing camps (Rimpiläinen, 2020). To better illustrate this, here is the account of Mariya:

*I don't really identify myself as if I'm from Donetsk, because we … historically we had a lot of Russians living there and maybe **we are not completely Ukrainians in this regard**. I probably feel different than those people from Western Ukraine, but well, I grew up in Ukraine and I don't have anything in common with Russia. Well, I have, but only in historical sense. I do not identify as Russian, or as Donetsk Public Republic. That is, I have a nationality of Ukraine, but maybe I'm a little more proud that I am from Donetsk than people who, I don't know, are from small towns, like Vinnytsia.*

Mariya, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

I present this quote in full, because we can actually see how several controversial statements repeatedly converge. Mariya says she 'doesn't have anything in common with Russia', except history, but then she states that she does not see Donbas citizens and herself as

'completely Ukrainian', even though she is a citizen of Ukraine, thus providing an assessment of her 'Ukrainianness'. According to Mariya, because of the geographical and historical proximity to Russia, residents of Donbas are not defined by some in other parts of Ukraine as authentically Ukrainian. In the beginning of the quote she states that she does not have an identity of a Donetsk citizen, although in the last sentence she clearly expresses some special feelings of pride for her hometown, and believes that this sense of pride is unique to Donbas residents.

I am proud that I am from Donetsk

Similar to Mariya's account, the concept of pride, as in being proud of one's origin and background, region or city, came up in the interviews many times. When asked about their identities or feelings about home, participants often used words such as 'pride' or 'proud', and would say that they never hid their origin intentionally or refrained from revealing it:

*I am proud that I am from Donetsk, I am not shy about it, I have never hidden my origin from others. For me it is important and **I don't care what anyone thinks**.*

Vadim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

*I am very proud that I am a Donetsk citizen and... for me it means a lot, because for me the Donetsk people are **hardworking** people, although we are **often called trash** (Ukrainian: bydlo) here and so on, it does not bother me. I have never been shy about this, if it is appropriate, I will say that I'm from Donetsk.*

Maksim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

In both these accounts we can note the added assertiveness with which participants felt it was necessary to answer this question. Both Vadim and Maksim first stated their position and then confidently expressed that they disregard opinions of others, implying that those are often negative. This can be thought of as a backlash reaction that has formed after identities of IDPs repeatedly clashed with those of people from the host communities.

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Interestingly, in many cases participants were not even asked about how they feel about their origin specifically, or prompted whether they felt generally bad or positively about it. Quite often, even though the question did not have an emotional charge, participants would bring to the forefront not the identity of an IDP or resettler, but the region and/or city/town where they come from. For instance, the above quotes were the answers to the question: "Does being a resettler (IDP) constitute an important part of your identity?" The majority of the participants chose to interpret this question from a standpoint of their Donbas identity, and more importantly - how it is different from the identities of the members of the host communities.

Moreover, as the above quotes demonstrate, they would often become defensive about it, stating that they are never shy away from their identity when interacting with others, or even that they never felt ashamed of it. Some stated that they were not afraid to tell surrounding people about their origin or present themselves as people from this region. This serves as a strong evidence that there is a huge stigma against people from Donbas, which has been extremely amplified after the escape of Yanukovych and the events that followed it.

Nevertheless, the reaction of displaced students is quite empowering: 21 out of 28 students (out of the remaining, three are from Crimea) strongly embraced their identity as citizens of Donbas and actually even promoted it in order to actively confront common stereotypes. It seems that in combating prejudicial attitudes, IDP students chose the strategy by which they did not reject the stereotypes surrounding their origin, but on the contrary - they accepted their existence, and transformed the negativity coming out of those stereotypes into traits that have a positive meaning for them, thus making their own 'brand' of people from Donbas. For example, one of the common negative images of people from Donbas is as villagers working the soil; many IDPs choose to redefine this as evidence of hard work,

strength, dedication, and as something that deserves respect, rather than shame. I will discuss other stereotypes in the next section.

I have chosen to use the word 'brand' here because it seems that IDPs are finding their strength in promoting their otherness, all those features that some may see as negative - but they see it as something that makes them unique, special, stronger. Moreover, in promoting their otherness they do not wish to be considered something other than Ukrainians. To a greater or lesser extent they identify as Ukrainians, but 'being Ukrainian' for them definitely has a broader meaning than what is promoted by Western Ukrainian media. Somewhat surprisingly, in some of the testimonies it even seemed as if IDP students have taken this strategy to a new level, by adopting a superior attitude. In promoting this identity inside their group and among the non-displaced, they are making a statement that they are special, 'the chosen ones', because others do not work as hard, are not as intelligent or strong. They do not express this superiority directly, but it can definitely be sensed in the views they expressed. For example, in the following quote, Nikolay emphasizes how hard-working people from the region are, implying that he is making the comparison in relation to those in the host communities:

Now in Kyiv every third taxi car has the plates of Luhansk or Donetsk or Crimea. Some people working at construction, for instance, like you start talking to them and then it turns out, they are also from there. It always felt nice to me that people from the East are workaholics. They will work their asses off for any kind of job, it is clear that they like to work, like it's the opposite in Kyiv. In Kyiv, people can be lazy. And in Luhansk... I don't know, people got used to always work there, they always do something.

Nikolay, moved from Luhansk to Kyiv

Nina makes the same comparison in relation to culture, education and community-orientation:

...We had a higher cultural heritage in Donetsk, so to speak. At least my family and my friends, whom I know, would often go to the theaters, or opera, to the cinema and other

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places. Here, when I arrived, I understood that it's not a usual practice... I noticed that everything good that I acquired in Donetsk, I try to transfer it to my friends here as well. For example, our kindness of heart, that is, I think that Donetsk people were very hearty and welcoming. There was nothing like "it's not in my backyard, so it doesn't concern me".

Nina, moved from Donetsk to Kharkiv

The next quote also adds to the understanding of the special identity which has emerged as a consequence of resettlement:

*The very fact that I'm a resettler, I don't say to people, but when they ask me where I am from, I proudly say that I'm from Donetsk, we can say that this is a... like a stereotype in Ukraine, yes, but we are somehow perceived at work and everywhere else as strong guys and no one even feels sorry for us. This is connected with the background of Yanukovych and the Party of Regions, of course. (laughs) It's like when you say that you are from Donetsk is not the same as that you are from Kharkiv or Dnipro and so on. And... well, in short, I don't feel any pity, on the contrary, even some **respect that I went through all this**.*

Mariya, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

While it may seem that this finding is not consistent with most recent research concluding that Ukrainian civic identity now comes first for most Ukrainians and regional identities come second in their importance (Haran et al., 2019; Sasse & Lackner, 2018), I would say that simplified view does not capture the multi-layered identities of Ukrainian IDPs. I believe that this special kind of superiority and promotion of regional identity is another coping or defense mechanism used as a shield to protect perception of Self and one's home from negativity and prejudice of the Other. Displaced students may be considering themselves different from other Ukrainians, but this perception does not necessarily impact the overall loyalty to Ukraine as a nation.

I don't go around with the flag of Ukraine, I am very modest patriot

It was also interesting to find out what IDP students think about the concept of patriotism and its rise in Ukrainian society after 2014. Differing views were expressed, and all these perspectives are worth mentioning. For some, the conflict and resettlement as its by-product have triggered the intensification of civic identity; they became more interested in politics and started expressing their patriotism for Ukraine more often. Some said that their choice of major was greatly affected by what happened in 2014 (e.g., they chose to study history or international relations with a focus on conflict resolution). Here are some of the examples:

I can't say at all that I had some kind of stable citizenship position until the moment of moving to Kyiv.

Olha, moved from Luhansk region to Kyiv

I don't know if I became more patriotic…I probably have. I began to understand what patriotism means, that is, I don't know, I think earlier…I didn't know what patriotism is. And I really have become more conscious of this and it's like I understood the concept, the point of it. I understood that we didn't have much patriotism here. (in Donetsk - author) And here (in Vinnytsia - author), when I communicate with different people I can see that they are more … they have it in a way.

Katerina, moved from Donetsk to Vinnytsia

Two male participants stated that in the very beginning of the Maidan Revolution and up until the end of 2014 they had highly 'nationalist sentiments'. Here are some of the accounts:

After the war began, I really had such a paradigm shift. I was never particularly patriotic, but after the war, I almost went into radical nationalism ... some time ... I even spent time with the Right Sector[1], ... thought about going to the military to fight as volunteers with friends, but now... now I pretty weakly associate myself as a Ukrainian generally.

Nikita, moved from Donetsk region to Vinnytsia

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[1] Ukrainian nationalist political party and paramilitary movement, generally described as far-right.

I remember when the conflict only just happened and we moved and I had such an aggravation of ... patriotism, you know, like even close to nationalism, and ... a very negative attitude towards the Russian Federation, towards the Soviet Union.

Vadim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

Later, however, after telling me about different situations which demonstrate how the Ukrainian government failed in supporting IDPs Vadim, similar to Nikita, reflected on his disappointment in the following way:

After 5 years, my patriotism has toned down a bit. That is, I love my country, but not to an extent that my eyes would shine. The rose-coloured glasses have fallen.

Nikita, moved from Donetsk region to Vinnytsia

These accounts are consistent with findings of the scholars who state that previously invisible identities tend to become more salient when they are threatened (Sasse & Lackner, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2011 cited in Sereda, 2020). The decrease of patriotic feelings in these cases is simply the result of the Ukrainian government failing to live up to the minimal expectations. As research has shown, the level of trust towards the government among IDPs has fallen to such an extent that in case of emergency or if there is a simple need to find out information or solve documentation problems, IDPs are more likely to reach out to local NGOs and volunteer organizations, rather than governmental structures (Bulakh, 2020; Hnatyuk, 2014).

For other participants the burst of Ukrainian patriotism which began with Euromaidan provoked rather mixed feelings. Some IDP students seem to be skeptical about public expressions of national loyalty, and provided a lot of instances when they believed this patriotism was uncalled for, faked for attention, or simply manifested in ways that are they found disturbing, excessive or too provocative.

You know, now it's very popular in our country to demonstrate your patriotism through language. Well, I speak the language that I speak in my family, and if someone starts speaking in Ukrainian while talking to me on purpose, and you know when it's on purpose because you can see it, in order to make me start talking in Ukrainian, I don't do this. I only do this if I feel like it on my own, most often when I go to Lviv[2], you know, somehow it gets me.

<div align="right">Galina, moved from Donetsk to Zaporizhzhia</div>

This account is especially interesting because one can also trace the complex linguistic identity of a participant: Galina expresses frustration when she feels like others are nudging her to switch to Ukrainian. However in the patriotic atmosphere of Lviv, she decides to perform another part of her identity and switches to Ukrainian voluntarily.

The Ukrainian language is an extremely important part of the image of a Ukrainian citizen that is most often promoted by Ukrainians in the West and frequently Ukrainian communities abroad. Campaigns aimed at making more Ukrainians switch from Russian to Ukrainian to demonstrate attachment to Ukraine have become increasingly popular after 2014. Some researchers have also found that Ukrainian migrants in Canada can use the Ukrainian language as an effective tool to demonstrate their loyalties and to prove to other migrants that they are a part of the 'Us' group (Nedashkivska, 2018), while those that speak Russian are likely to be ostracized. Galina's quote offers an insightful perspective: She is a fluent Ukrainian speaker and likes to speak Ukrainian when she feels like it, but she cannot stand being forced to do so for the sake of grandstanding.

The following quotes are also important to consider to better understand the difference in the attitudes of IDPs and non-displaced Ukrainians:

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[2] Lviv - the largest city in the Western Ukraine.

*I am a patriot of Ukraine, but I don't go to any Maidans, I don't go around with the flag of Ukraine, **I am very modest patriot**. I support Ukraine, if they tell me to choose between Novorossia[3] and Ukraine, I will choose Ukraine, of course.*

Oleh, moved from Luhansk to Kharkiv

I had a classmate, she had a father in military who fought in some kind of battalion and she came to school and hung up such a big black flag with a pirate skull. Turned out that was the flag of this battalion and ... I was like... (Laughs with sarcasm) sooo... that's Ukrainian patriotism now! Okaaay. And at first I didn't have patriotic feelings. I mean... Okay, I thought so bad of our authorities, this and that, that they allowed it all to happen.

Alina, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

For these IDPs, the main indicator of their loyalty for Ukraine is the fact that they chose to move to territories controlled by the government, however hard it might have been. Yet, for those who have not experienced forced displacement the fact that most IDPs prefer Russian over Ukrainian in daily conversations can be sufficient enough reason to consider them as half-citizens at best and traitors at worst. This is exactly the type of rhetoric used in the media to justify discriminatory policies which limit IDPs in their voting rights, breach their privacy and take away their freedom of movement (Rimpiläinen, 2020).

Social interactions in host communities. Why IDPs feel different from their 'hosts'.

If you don't want to be in my shoes - don't ask

Being aware that IDPs are often asked questions by members of the host communities about the political situation 'at home', their experience crossing borders, the dangers associated with visiting home and so on, I decided to explore how IDPs felt about this type of attention,

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[3] Novorossia - historical name of several regions of Ukraine and Russia, currently used by separatists to define the so-called confederation of DPR and LPR.

where they believe this 'interest' stems from and what impact it has on IDPs. As anticipated, the majority (17) of IDP students confirmed being asked many questions, especially in the beginning of their displacement. Having analyzed their answers, I identified that questions tend to follow a consistent pattern. People usually ask IDPs about things that they cannot find out from the media, such as what the procedures of crossing the border with the occupied territories are, what checkpoints look like, and what life looks like there overall.

In some cases people would ask about IDPs' family or friends who remained there, but most often questions were not intended to sympathize with IDP or make them feel better by talking about their home. On the contrary, in the absence of first-hand experience of resettlement, their goal almost always seems to be to satisfy their curiosity about what displacement experience looks and feels like. In addition, questions almost never touched upon IDPs' resettlement experience in a new community. Most questions were about things that were changed by the occupying authorities such as currency, curfew, supply of produce, pensions, etc. - kinds of questions that in no way make IDPs feel comforted. On the contrary, such questions remind them about how bad and unstable the situation at home is. Sometimes their questions can become absurd, such as asking whether people continue working in NGCA, where they get their groceries, etc.

Some IDP students have reported feeling okay about questions. Six students stated that they believe it is normal that people are interested, that interest and curiosity are actually good things, because they promote awareness. Others had mixed feelings. Here are some of the more detailed accounts:

At first, when it only started, of course I told them stuff, why not? I told about it how it was, but the situation hasn't even changed much. (…) but over time I started to respond the way my father responds when I ask him: "what's up in Donetsk? how is it there?" and he says: "consistent. bad.", and I now say the same thing. Nothing has changed, literally zero changes there, bombings, shootings, the city lives on its own. After it was separated, they

have everything on their own, practically no ties to Ukraine, they write new laws and the like.

<div align="right">Maksim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv</div>

*Such questions like: "Oh, is that true that there are checkpoints? Oh, is that true that there are insane prices? Oh, is that true that there is no one outside? And where do you even buy groceries when you go there?" (…) If they ask me something like: "when do you think this is going to end?" and "who is right and who is to blame for this?" I try to change the topic immediately, because … it's not that it's not my business, but it's not something that I can change. (…) I mean when you change the topic, people understand that this is unpleasant for you and they do not insist, and those who insist you can say something like: "Well, let's first put you in my shoes and then try asking this again. **If you don't want to be in my shoes, then don't ask**."*

<div align="right">Nina, moved from Donetsk to Kharkiv</div>

Quite a number of IDPs noted that they used to be asked many questions, but now people do not seem interested as much. When asked whether the attitudes in their host communities have changed over the six years, most of the students said that they feel like the attitudes and perceptions are much more muted now. Some told me that they do not feel any particular kind of interest whenever they introduce themselves and say where they are from. This finding matches the conclusion of other researchers who posit that Ukrainian society is overall tired of the topic of war and displacement (Balinchenko, 2019b; Bazaluk & Balinchenko, 2020). Therefore, questioning IDPs used to be interesting to others while the topic of the war itself was still in the spotlight and people followed the news on a daily basis; but now, since the situation has reached a relative deadlock - Ukrainians seem to have lost interest in the IDP issue as well.

Moreover, some accounts of IDP students have proven that IDPs are actually already expected to have reached the same level of welfare as locals and should not ask for scholarships or social benefits based on their status. As we can see, more often than not this interest only benefited those who asked, and now, once the topic is not popular anymore - the image of IDPs who used to be seen as 'special' people who have been through near-

death experience, have undergone such 'exotic' things as: shelling, interactions with the military, curfew, checkpoints, etc., has now been transformed into the image of people that are same as others, that do not deserve to receive additional support or resources.

IDPs thus end up invisible, in the eyes of others they are not resettlers anymore, so they should be in the same conditions as others, without any kind of recognition or support. One of the issues trying to place IDPs in the same category as locals that doesn't add up is the fact that IDPs are automatically excluded from the host community group or larger all-Ukrainian group due to the fact that they lost their housing, which is of a primary importance for feeling stable.

At least you have a place here

Housing as a physical space, that is comfortable, clean and adequately equipped is strongly connected to the emotional concept of home - as a mental space, in which one feels safe, loved and free to express their true self (Ellsworth-Krebs et al., 2018). Housing is one of the key determinants of individuals' wellbeing and both physical and mental health. A qualitative study of refugees in Australia by Ziersch et al. highlights that lack of control over housing conditions (due to financial situation or discrimination) is likely to negatively affect migrants' health and social integration (Ziersch et al., 2017). According to one of my participants:

We are talking about Maslow's pyramid of needs. When basic needs are met, you get to the next level. For people who have moved and who don't have their own housing, who are forced to rent it, that means that by their economic resources they a priori lose to those people who have lived in a certain region all their lives. It is important for them to satisfy their basic needs. So for resettlers, the very first question is housing.

Ivan, moved within Donetsk region

Even though five IDPs stated that when they think about 'home', they attach its importance to the people that make this place feel like home to them (relational aspect), follow-up questions and further analysis has shown that the need to have stable housing is essential for IDPs to feel equal to other members of their host community.

Many participants have expressed in one way or another that moving from one rented apartment to another has made them feel 'uprooted', or that it significantly sets them back compared to locals who have their own housing or at least one family housing. This echoes sentiments expressed by participants of Lazarenko's study with mental map sketching (Lazarenko, 2020). Some compared this experience as moving abroad and starting from point zero. Crimean IDP student described feelings of lost connection to the land since most of her family stayed in the peninsula while she resettled in mainland Ukraine.

Having family members remain in the occupied territories has been a great challenge for many IDP students. Obligation to take care of elderly family members, a desire to spend holidays with family, together with the overall longing for home makes IDPs take on a time- and energy-intensive travel to the occupied territories. Here is the account of Anastasia, an IDP from Crimea, who moved to Kyiv on her own, in order to obtain her Bachelor's with recognized credentials:

Every time you want to go there, it is not so easy. You have to plan your budget, because tickets are much more expensive than if you were to go anywhere else in Ukraine, it's a bit far and... you need to coordinate it all, because earlier if it was just 10-15 hours, now it can take an entire day and it's very inconvenient to schedule such large trips into your regular timetable. It's even more convenient to go somewhere abroad, I don't know, to Europe, like it's actually faster than going home.

Anastasia, moved from Sevastopil to Kyiv

Despite the fact that going home is associated with so many inconveniences, she claims to travel there several times a year. And as she states, each time it's a new 'adventure':

Very often some strange things happen, like I get robbed on the border or once it happened that a homeless person took my suitcase away and I ran after him and even gave him 10 hryvnias to get my suitcase back (...) All the time that you cross the border, there is some moment when you have to go on foot and for me usually it's winter, when your hands freeze completely and I always tell people about this horror of crossing the border or about how we stood for four hours from the Ukrainian side because there was only one booth working. It was only when one woman fainted did they open the second booth. And on the Russian border they didn't let us in because they washed the floors and waited until the floors were dry and forty people just had to stand there and wait for them to start working.

Anastasia, moved from Sevastopil to Kyiv

The same is true for Donbas IDPs. Spending 12 hours in a bus, then standing in 3-8 hour lines in checkpoints in the summer heat or winter frost, being checked by Ukrainian military and/or DPR/LPR gunmen is an incredibly stressful experience, yet most IDPs still choose to undertake it on in order to visit relatives, spend Christmas with families or see old friends.

In addition, as previously stated, not having a consistent place IDP students could call their new home (be it a room in a rented apartment or dormitory) is a major reason they feel different from host community members. One can note a great part of disappointment and sadness in the account of Katerina, who compares her own experience with those of other students (not IDPs) from her university:

*About feeling different than others… in sad moments, when someone starts complaining about something, it's only then that I think about it. I think: 'at least you have you place here, you can come home and relax, all good.' It's only at such moments. I don't say it out loud, but I think that I have to travel for an entire day just to see my family. It's just that they often say things like: "I wanted to go home at 2 pm, but something isn't working out, so I can't for some reason", or like: "I have to go home urgently, I have to be there the next day." And I'm like: I also want to go home, but I can't because of how time-consuming it is. It's only in such moments I feel different and I realize that **they will probably not understand**, if I tell them.*

Katerina, moved from Donetsk to Vinnytsia

Thus, IDPs experience othering not only through stereotyping and prejudice; they naturally do not feel the same as everyone else because what constitutes 'home' for them is now a prohibited territory, which is hard to enter, travelling to which is associated with different kinds of dangers, and unpredictability. Because of how cumbersome and time-consuming the procedure is, many IDPs feel that their home has become a faraway place, unreachable by traditional transport methods, requiring substantial emotional strength to get there. I believe that the 'struggle' it takes to get home is also likely to intensify romanticizing homeland.

With children, pets and resettlers - do not bother

Logically, finding new housing in a host community is a number one priority for IDPs. According to the survey-based study by Kuznetsova and Mikheieva, interviewed NGO representatives stated that housing issue remains the main unresolved problem (Kuznetsova & Mikheieva, 2018). Having to spend a significant amount of a monthly salary on a low-end rented apartment knowing that there is a family-owned apartment in an occupied territory is traumatic enough. However, even if IDP is financially stable and can pay rent without delays, they are likely to find it difficult to secure housing because of their status.

When asked about any instances of discrimination in host community, almost all IDP students mentioned problems with finding housing. Because of the instability of the situation in the occupied territories and negative prejudices, participants reported that landlords are more than just hesitant to rent their apartments to people who have passport registration 'from there':

Discrimination was mostly about housing, yeah. They write announcements like: "With children, pets and resettlers - do not bother."

<div align="right">Mariya, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv</div>

Yes, in Chernihiv, when my mother moved here, there were problems with renting a place because many people didn't want to accept resettlers from Luhansk and Donbas, because they said that you would rob the apartment, throw stuff around, because there were already such rumours and it was really insanely difficult to find an apartment at that time. We changed the apartment three times in two years because we were simply kicked out from the first apartment for no reason. We paid rent and everything was fine, but at some point they just said like 'sorry, but you do not live here anymore'.

Denis, moved from Luhansk to Chernihiv

When this situation just started ... they perceived it very negatively. They were like: "aha, aha, yeah, yeah, goodbye, goodbye". Like when we were just inquiring about apartments.

Nikolay, moved from Luhansk to Kyiv

When asked why in their opinion, landlords are prejudiced against IDP renters, the most common guess was about negative stereotypes, but media has also been brought up:

There were some such moments when people from Luhansk, Donetsk came to Kyiv and supposedly rented an apartment and then didn't return the keys, didn't pay. There could have been like maybe five such cases and all those cases were shown on TV and after that, it doesn't matter - like it's been half a year or a year, you call them and they say: "no, because you are from Luhansk, because you will deceive us". And I say: "Why are you generalizing so much? Why all people from Luhansk are thieves? Why do you think that? We actually work really hard."

Nikolay, moved from Luhansk to Kyiv

As Kuznetsova and Mikheieva note, most of Ukraine's property rental market is informal, meaning that each landlord chooses their own procedures for screening applicants (Kuznetsova & Mikheieva, 2020). While the practice of requesting recommendation letters and credit checks is not common, landlords frequently ask to see the passport of a rentee. Seeing registration - 'propyska' in Donbas or Crimea often becomes the reason for rejection. After multiple negative experience and rejections based on their origin, some IDPs have been forced to resort to tricks, such as asking a friend with propyska in a different

city to rent apartment for them or 'fixing' their documents to hide their propyska. It is logical to assume that such activities further promote corruption and nepotism culture, and nurture suspicion both towards IDPs from host community members and vice versa. Three of the participants reported asking another person to provide their documents or signature in order to rent an apartment. Kuznetsova also notes that lack of transparency in the rental process often makes IDPs vulnerable, since landlords can give short notice for moving out or raise rent (Kuznetsova, 2017).

Stereotypes about IDPs

The literature largely acknowledges that stereotypes are the driving force behind negative attitudes towards IDPs. Voytyuk states that stereotypes among Ukrainians about residents of different regions have always existed and were primarily dictated by the difference of influence of the empires Ukraine were a part of several centuries ago (Voytyuk, 2019). Nevertheless, she posits that the military conflict has brought about the emergence of new stereotypes, which are mostly of a negative character (Voytyuk, 2019).

The negative context of the stereotypes could be thought of as a mosaic of different actors and circumstances, which have led to the catastrophic chain of events of 2014. For example, the primary reason for Maidan protests was the decision of Yanukovych to retract his promise to sign an agreement with the EU. However, the reason the protests became such a massive force was not only because of this political decision. It was rather a cause, the impetus which served as a last straw for Ukrainians, prompting them to take to the streets. Ukrainians were not only dissatisfied with the authorities' ignorance in terms of foreign affairs, they were angry with the top-level corruption and nepotism which have swamped Ukraine during the years of Yanukovych's presidency. It is essential to note that Yanukovych came originally from Donbas and that he and his Party of the Regions' primary support has always been from South and Eastern Ukraine. Most of his associates were also from the Donbas region. Thus, we can see how the stereotype was formed:

*Yanukovych is corrupt - he is from Donbas, Donbas citizens got him electe*d - *all Donbas citizens are corrupt, dishonest, thieves, etc.*

However, dishonesty is not the only stereotype which can be traced back to Yanukovych. Voytyuk organizes all stereotypes about IDP into six blocks and four out of these blocks could be construed as having a connection to Yanukovych's and his party's actions. In particular, "IDPs do not respect Ukrainian language, culture and traditions", "IDPs are in favour of outside (hostile) values", "IDPs are to blame for the war", "IDPs support the enemy morally and physically" (Voytyuk, 2019).

The anger with Yanukovych as president has been so strong, that it did not just end when he fled. Instead, the blame was shifted to IDPs who as Donbas residents were Yanukovych's primary electorate, who were not so active during Maidan protests, and who 'let' the enemy take away Ukrainian territories or, taking it to the extreme, 'invited' the enemy to intrude. Russian aggression and the crisis it begot were not anticipated, so the reaction was the spike of intolerant attitudes based on the old and new stereotypes. In addition, negativity was boosted by economic reasons: with big surge of IDPs, the market of housing became tight (Kuznetsova, 2017) and the cost of living in cities increased significantly (Voytyuk, 2019).

Here we are still the weird ones

In addition to frequent discrimination in a search for housing, interviewees reported being an object of insults and sarcastic jokes. Four participants mentioned people they know of who have been victims of not only verbal, but physical abuse. Interestingly, quite a big share of participants (8 out of 28), when asked about negative attitudes or discrimination, stated that they are not aware of any such things or that they do not quite remember. Many also expressed in similar ways that they had a few friends who were insulted, but 'luckily',

participants themselves claimed to have only been meeting 'adequate people', so they have not had to engage in any confrontations. Others stated that because of their good communication skills and once again, 'luck', they had been able to avoid negative responses.

Some of these eight participants, by the end of the interview, would remember a few instances which could constitute discrimination, which makes me wonder if the students could be minimizing, downplaying or subconsciously choosing not to remember the open expressions of negativity or rude attitudes as another coping mechanism.

In any case, a lot of participants reported unpleasant memories they had from encounters with those prejudiced against them. They ranged from arguments with random people (e.g., taxi drivers, people in public transport) to those they had semi-close relationships with (professors, colleagues, peers) and even in-laws. As anticipated, the most negative attitudes were reported by IDPs that resettled in Western Ukraine (Lviv, Chernihiv, etc.), quite often in Kyiv and in Central Ukraine as well, but without a particular pattern or frequency, and the most tolerant attitudes of others were reported by those who resettled closer to the contact line.

Interestingly, this is inconsonant with the results of the research on stereotypes about Ukrainian IDPs by Voytyuk, who found that the most negative attitudes were recorded not in the Western Ukraine, but in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Kyiv regions, with Kharkiv being marked with the highest level of intolerance (Voytyuk, 2019). It is important to note that the sample of Voytyuk's research is much larger than mine - she analyzed data from several different sources which involved hundreds of participants. The discrepancy could be explained by the following. As Voytyuk notes, the primary reason of intolerance was likely the increasing cost of living in those places (Kharkiv and Kyiv are the most populated cities in Ukraine with high rent costs) and the fact that these places received the biggest numbers of IDPs (Voytyuk, 2019). Thus, while four of my participants reported mostly

normal attitudes in Kharkiv for instance, the larger sample could reveal that even in Eastern Ukraine discrimination towards people with Donbas origin is still prevalent.

In addition, while the reports of participants who relocated to Lviv provided the brightest examples of intolerance, the data that was analyzed by Voytyuk (she does not describe her methods in detail) was likely based on surveys that inquired about general negative attitudes IDPs experienced, and it is possible that many of them reported overall lack of tolerance, but did not describe them as bizarre treatment.

Most often, negativity would be provoked by IDPs speaking Russian. This is arguably the most obvious marker of IDPs' 'otherness', otherwise it may remain invisible before the first conversation. Miroslava, who moved from Donetsk region to Vinnytsia (Western Ukraine) with Donetsk National University (which was evacuated to Vinnytsia), worked in a supermarket for a year to provide for housing and living expenses. In the following quote she describes Vinnytsia people's attitude towards Russian language after the Law "On ensuring the functioning of Ukrainian as the state language" came into force:

Recently I had two cases in one week that two people attacked me for speaking Russian. This is mainly after they introduced this law here, that people should speak Ukrainian[4]. *As far as I remember, it was only appropriate in state institutions, but many people very much got off the chain just when they introduced this law and they don't know all the information and they think this gives them the right to insult people simply for speaking another language. I now experience more bullying than when I just moved, for the fact that I'm not just an IDP, but that I speak Russian.*

Miroslava, moved from Donetsk to Vinnytsia

According to the law, Ukrainian was made a requirement for civil servants, doctors and teachers, however it was not supposed to affect private communication or limit the rights

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[4] Ukrainian parliament introduced a new law on language policy in April 2019, according to which Ukrainian language is to be spoken during educational activities, in media sphere, cultural activities, used in the official documents, in the parliament, in public spaces. Some people viewed this law as discriminatory.

of ethnic and national minorities (Verkhovna Rada, 2019). In their study Haran et al. cite Onuch and Hale, who identified four essential dimensions to Ukrainian identity: language preference, language embeddedness, ethnolinguistic identity and nationality (Onuch & Hale, 2018 cited in Haran et al., 2019). They make the point that cleavages in Ukrainian society may arise not solely on the basis of language, ethnicity or nationality, but on how those are utilized and interpreted by each person. In this case, as Miroslava told me, when the man who insulted her for speaking Russian in the supermarket claimed that speaking in Ukrainian was a matter of a principle to him, she replied that he must have developed such principles after 2014, but before it did not matter that much.

Anna, who has a Ph.D. degree in translation from Luhansk, married a man from Lviv and moved there with him. Despite the fact that she is fluent in Ukrainian and has no problem speaking only in Ukrainian in her new city of residence, the following comment demonstrates the unwillingness of her husband and his family to be open about her Donbas origin and IDP status:

My second husband, he's from the locals, he's absolutely normal, but somehow…I see that he still tries to keep silent, to **conceal the fact that I am from Luhansk**. *When I speak Ukrainian, no one notices this, absolutely no one, no one can hear my accent or anything, but he still says: "Don't tell anyone". And again, his parents were shocked when they found out where I am from, and it was also somehow like this: "well, yes, well, yes, we have a daughter-in-law. Well, yes, yes, everything is cool." And then silence. That is, such details are omitted.*

<div style="text-align: right">Anna, moved from Luhansk to Lviv</div>

Anna also told me about many cases of discrimination at work, with neighbours, in hospitals and other governmental institutions. Her experiences demonstrate that the problem lies deeper than just the language, although it is perhaps the first thing that IDPs are likely to get attacked for:

As I said, speaking in Ukrainian is absolutely no problem for me. But still, here we're still weird ones, Donbasians (pejorative: Donbas people) in the best case, in the worst case - separs (separatists - author), Ukrainophobes and so on. That is, these radical moods are always there.

Anna, moved from Luhansk to Lviv

She also described some bizarre cases of verbal insults coming from her neighbours:

My husband and I decided to paint the yard in spring. Not only did nobody help us, we were told: "well, of course you came from some village, you are used to plowing". And here they are, such pans (misters - author), unwilling to deal with this. (…) They constantly told us: "That's what you do in your Donbas, work the soil", because we planted flowers and stuff like that. "What village did you get out of?" We installed a lock on the entrance of the building, gave out the keys to everyone, but they started leaving it unlocked to prove their point, because "no, it's in your Donbas you have weird people, we don't do it here, we have no one to lock away from."

In the following quote, she comments on difficulties finding employment:

I understood that it's not enough to be the best, the most qualified. If you are from Donbas, then you should not just be the best, but to show them something that nobody else can.

Anna, moved from Luhansk to Lviv

I didn't like being called Donetsk person

While the direct question about stereotypes about people from Donbas was not included in the interview guide, as anticipated, the topic was often brought up in the stories of IDP students. Although many research articles discuss cases of discrimination of IPDs in Ukraine, only Voytyuk's paper offers a structured summary of all stereotypes that she identified (Voytyuk, 2019). Although the primary focus of this thesis is not stereotyping, I have been able to discover quite a bit of evidence that generally aligned with what has already been discussed by other researchers and also obtain new findings.

Interestingly, having put together all stereotypes and images that IDPs described, I could not help but notice that many of them have an opposing nature. For example, often IDP students complained that many people from their host community seem to think of them as 'poor', 'beggars', 'deadbeats', 'rabble' or 'trash' (Ukrainian: bydlo), 'hobos'. However, some other participants mentioned the following words: 'rich', 'entitled', 'privileged', 'lavish', 'glamorous', 'powerful'. The image of Donbas residents being comfortably well-off was mostly linked to the mining industry in the region, and presumably, oligarch Rinat Akhmetov.

The image of poverty was also connected to another stereotype – the 'criminal nature' of Donbas residents, expressed in such words as 'gangsters', 'mafia', 'bandits', 'gopniks', 'criminals', 'thieves', 'corrupt'. As previously mentioned, the origin of such associations is most likely traced to Yanukovych and his allies (Voytyuk, 2019). One can also observe how some stereotypes can be seen as representing two extremes of one trait, for instance: 'mafia' (rich, powerful) versus 'gopniks' (poor, with no influence). Stereotypes connected to the criminal element also involve image of violence. As one of the participants mentioned, the image of uneducated bullies who "only want to beat someone up or offend someone" is also popular.

At the same time, such traits as 'genuineness', 'sincerity', 'straightforwardness' (in the sense of honesty, directly saying what is on someone's mind) are also attributed to people from the region. As participants stated, they are often seen as strong guys, who are respected for going through the traumatic experience of war and for their strong character. This description obviously contrasts with other popular characteristics: 'deceitfulness' and 'rudeness', 'impudence'.

Researchers believe that negative attitudes towards IDPs are due to the fact that the displaced essentially became the scapegoat for the strained economic position of

Ukrainians after 2014 (Kuznetsova, 2017; Rimpiläinen, 2020; Voytyuk, 2019). The irrational character of the stereotypes I described can serve as evidence that negativity is based off a necessity 'to find someone to blame'. Another example of this is provided in a recent media study by Rimpiläinen, who finds that in media reports and news pieces IDPs were often portrayed either as 'victims' or 'villains', or even both at the same time, since they are the only ones to blame for what happened to them (Rimpiläinen, 2020). Bazaluk and Balinchenko repeat the point about contrasting perception of IDPs in their study on comparison of displacement in Ukraine and Georgia, stating that at different points of displacement IDPs were viewed as 'victims and perpetrators' (Bazaluk & Balinchenko, 2020). They further develop the argument about the emergence of 'euphory-aggression-indifference' pattern in host communities. (Bazaluk & Balinchenko, 2020).

Among other negative perceptions the following words were often mentioned: 'uneducated', 'stupid', 'trash', 'cattle' (bydlo), 'hillbillies'. The stereotype of lack of education is likely also linked to the industrial specialization of the region and proliferation of traditional working class occupations. Interestingly, some negative images connected to alcohol were often brought up (connected words: 'drunks', 'lazy drunkards').

As expected, anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian character of residents of Donbas was also commonly mentioned. More importantly however, what is not often brought up in the literature and what IDPs seemed to focus on, was actually not the popular perception of them as Kremlin agents (overall pro-Russian outlook), but the language issue. Those who moved to the cities where Ukrainian is used more than Russian, reported a widespread presumption that based on their origin, they would not know or be able to speak in Ukrainian language. This also often served as a topic for passive-aggressive jokes.

One more popular and perhaps the most obstructive stereotype emerges from a generalized connection between Russian language and politics of Russia - 'IDPs support the enemy morally and physically' based on Voytyuk's suggestion. Since Donbas is largely

Russophone, one may assume that an average IDP would have a more 'friendly' attitude towards Russian culture and politics as well.

Overall, while participants sometimes became emotional describing these stereotypes, the majority of them seemed to have already come to terms with the existence of such beliefs. Moreover, some of these stereotypes were normalized and are often used in a joking manner by IDPs themselves in different contexts - between friends or in schools, universities. Participants could not properly explain where the stereotypes come from or how they were shaped - in their accounts they spoke in a manner that only acknowledged their existence as a regular thing. This leads me to conclude that IDPs are now used to feeling as 'Other' or intentionally 'othered', and that all the negative images described above - are normalized, meaning that any of these expressions can be brought up in a daily conversation either as a joke, or in its literal meaning (usually expressing generalized impressions) about IDPs or someone they know from Donbas.

Many of the life situations IDP students described demonstrate the flexible nature of stereotypes, which means that the stereotypes continue to exist only because they are constantly reinforced in the society. Thus, it is non-displaced public who decides which meaning to give to a particular event and whether associate it with a stereotype or not. In choosing to validate their stereotypes, they may adapt them in a way to better match the situation. In this case, the goal of the majority group, which presumably aims to defend its values and lifestyle, is to portray the 'other' as different by all means. In this way, for example, if an IDP is dressed in a fancier way than others - they are entitled and rich and consider themselves superior. Simultaneously, if an IDP is dependent on social benefits - they are poor, lazy, they did not work much back at home and now expect the government to provide for them (Voytyuk, 2019).

An interesting point worth mentioning was brought up by Nikolay, an IDP from Luhansk, who expressed frustration with the fact that people often referred to him as if he was from

Donetsk (donetskiy - adj.), even if they knew his city of origin. It seems that most of the stereotypes are attached to the city of Donetsk, as the capital of Donbas, and most known city of the region. The stereotypes and their association primarily with Donetsk and Donetsk people are so strong, that the boosted popularity of Donetsk seems to overshadow other places in the region:

So, when you say you are from the East, they are like that right away: "Ahhh, from Donetsk? Probably from Donetsk, right?" I'm like: "No, from Luhansk." Sometimes people don't even really know where it is located.

Nikolay, moved from Luhansk to Kyiv

This quote shows the extent of generalization in the stereotypes: the characteristics (and stereotypes) of Donetsk and its residents are discussed so often, that people who meet an IDP, automatically think about Donetsk. The accounts of other participants confirmed that negative stereotypes are now linked to the word 'Donetsk', and calling someone 'a Donetsk person' (donetskyi) can be meant as an insult. While Nikolay might have been simply upset by the fact that his city is overshadowed by a larger city, he also stated the following:

I was very furious with this comparison with Donetsk, I don't know why. I don't really know! I didn't like being called Donetsk person, I don't know why.

Nikolay, moved from Luhansk to Kyiv

I wonder if his intense emotionality stems from trying to keep away from being associated with all the stereotypes that seem to be mostly about Donetsk. Although Luhansk is a city with a similar infrastructure and belongs to the Donetsk Basin, its name does not usually come up in the 'othering' rhetoric, at least not as often as Donetsk does.

In general, IDP students expressed similar reactions to many different cases of bullying and insults they faced due to their otherness. They mostly calmly attributed it to the lack of

education, inability to analyze information and to tell truth from false, or mere silliness of the abusers, thus marking it as something unworthy of attention. As I described earlier, IDPs do not seem to internalize negative feelings or despise their origin and try to distance from it. The only situations where they might omit mentioning their birthplace or IDP status is if they feel like it might cause a dangerous violent conflict (for instance, during interactions with radical Ukrainian military). By and large, the stereotyping even pushed them to delve deeper into their identities and use the buildup about it to their own advantage, by constructing a positive image out of negative characteristics and embracing the negative regardless of the opinions of others.

Coping mechanisms

They've chosen my fate for me

Unexpected and involuntary change of the place of residence has a significant influence on mental health. The hardest part is at the beginning, when IDPs may find themselves in denial. 15 out of 28 the interviewees reported feeling depressed, lonely, isolated, hopeless, devastated, not willing to communicate with anyone or build new connections in the host community for quite some time (from several months to a year). Several participants complained about not having someone to rely on, to ask for help in case of an emergency, or not having a social support net.

As explored by literature on migrant health, migrants are more prone to mental health deterioration (Kuznetsova et al., 2019) and alcohol use disorder (Ramachandran et al., 2019). From a sociological point of view, deterioration of mental health (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic syndrome) can be explained by not only being away from home, but also due to sharply experiencing lack of control over the situation, feeling unstable and not being able to predict near future. Thus, by the very fact of displacement IDPs have been denied their agency.

The following is an example of IDP student account of feeling disoriented and disempowered because of the displacement:

*I did not want to move, all this shit started happening at some point and ... damn! How to explain this... it's as if **they've chosen my fate for me** ... that now you have to live here, yeah, now you have to study here, and it doesn't matter whether you want it or not. It's unpleasant, you know. Hmm… I don't even know how to express this! All the first time I thought: shit! Somehow it happened ... I did not expect it to happen... Ah, how is it ... I actually feel **deceived** somehow…used…**abandoned.***

Vadim, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

Alina noted that when she was attending her graduation ceremony in her new place of residence, she couldn't help but feel out of place:

When I was standing among others on my graduation, I had a feeling that I came to someone else's graduation. I could not somehow relate myself to the other people standing there, because… I had a normal communication with others, but I felt like all this stuff going on… it wasn't mine, like at all, I was there temporarily, like a guest or something.

Alina, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

Alina describes that she could not help but translate her feelings of frustration with the situation on the people from the host community, and due to that she was unwilling to talk to anyone:

I didn't want to stay here and I somehow lost my interest in life, lost interest in any activities, in close communication with people. In some way it seemed to me that everyone around me was to blame for this, and I felt the most unhappy and the most offended person.

Alina, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv

Overall, feeling depressed, disappointed with the government's lack of efficiency and interest, together with stigma and prejudice triggered defense mechanisms for some IDP

students. Many had a hard time fitting in their new groups at the universities, making new connections and friends. The easiest way to make friends was to find another IDP or a person from Donbas/Crimea and communicate with them, because they could understand their situation in a much better way than locals. Thus, one of the important coping mechanisms was to create groups of IDPs or groups of people with Donbas/Crimea origin and support each other. The majority of IDPs noted that having IDP friends significantly helped them adapt to their new places of residence. While this strategy is a common among many migrants - such divisions and overall unwillingness to blend in may create further alienation between those that are thought of as 'Us' and 'Them'.

Personal growth as a result of displacement. Building resistance through interactions with the government.

Being worried about safety and health of relatives, security of property, constant stress over financial situation (mostly due to rent bills) have turned into a daily reality for most IDPs. What is striking, however, overwhelming majority of the interviewees described the influence of displacement as 'positive' or 'very positive' for the development of their personality and building their character. It looks like the main difference between the young IDPs (students, young professionals) and the older generation (adults and pensioners) is the ability to adapt to such unpredictable events. While many of older IDPs are still likely to indulge in nostalgia for older times when they had stable jobs, lived in their apartments and felt secure about future, young IDPs seem to be more accepting of the reality. They chose to perceive this negative or even tragic experience as a valuable life lesson that polished their personalities and made them stronger, less attached to places and ready for everything.

IDPs' accounts speak for themselves:

Obviously, you wouldn't wish anyone to experience what I have experienced. It's like acquiring a character trait through a whip. This is not something you would like to go through again, but if this were to happen the second time, I'll feel perfectly fine moving somewhere else and there will be no problems at all.

<div align="right">Mariya, moved from Donetsk to Kyiv</div>

It is a little disappointing and upsetting, but this also helps to strive for something. You understand that you need to move on, to live. At such moments, I try to think that if I stayed at home, there would be no guarantee that I would have what I have now, these **opportunities.**

<div align="right">Katerina, moved from Donetsk to Vinnytsia</div>

It helped the continuous development of my personality, let's say… in conditions of discomfort twice as fast as if it had developed in comfortable conditions. Of course I do not want to say that… well, war is war, but in any case, the war came to **my advantage**. *Growth is so colossal - these five years feel like it's been ten years. It really taught me a huge number of things and, in general, strengthened my spirit, developed my personal qualities so much that I cannot characterize the impact of this displacement any less than positive.*

<div align="right">Ivan, moved within Donetsk region</div>

Overall, it was somewhat surprising to hear in most cases emotionally positive answers to the question: 'How did war influence your personality, your perception of yourself?' The focus of almost absolute majority of the answers to this particular question bore no traces of depression, complaints or victimization. Feelings of depression and other mental issues did come up in the answers to the other questions, but IDPs seemed confident describing the positive consequences of displacement experience in general. Answering this question, IDP students often used such or similar expressions as: 'colossal growth', 'development', 'made me stronger', 'made me more mature', 'became more responsible', 'pushed me to my limits', 'brought me new opportunities', 'made me realize what is important'.

It is also worthy to note that many participants reported that being an IDP made them become more pro-active in their interactions with the governmental and other authorities,

for example, when applying to transfer to another university, register as an IDP or receive social benefits. This can be seen as both good and bad, since through increased interaction with the governmental bodies, IDPs become more knowledgeable about policies and laws, more interested in how the state operates, and more politically active as well (e.g., perceived importance of voting increases). However, the necessity of going through enormous amount of cumbersome procedures only proves that the government failed to create an effective mechanism to ease the integration of the displaced. Basically, IDPs are expected to do all the work:

When you are in a stranger territory it is more difficult to take what's yours. I'm talking about registration and getting the IDP certificates, other exchanges of the documents, you had to knock on so many doors to get what you need. Everything had to be negotiated for. Like even getting the placement in the hostel. So probably if we talk about character, perseverance appeared. You realize that if you do not do it, no one will not help you just like that. Especially the government. I mean it helped, but not to the extent that it's capable of.

<div align="right">Vladislav, moved within Donetsk region</div>

Bulakh concludes that the system that has been put in place 'has forced IDPs to engage proactively with the governmental apparatus' (Bulakh, 2020). Too often IDPs found themselves in situations when in order to survive, they had to continuously visit pension funds and social organs, standing in long lines, attempting to find out why they are not paid their pensions or benefits. Too often they are asked to present the IDP certificate when they are simply trying to access basic banking services, such as opening an account or making a money transfer (Brenzel et al., 2015). Bulakh characterizes this situation as a 'controlled citizenship', when in order to still be considered an equal citizen and have access to all the privileges (obviously, not the rights) that come with it, IDPs are forced to put up with additional obstacles put their way by the government (Bulakh, 2020).

This raises a question of whether the situation would be the same if the IDPs were not from Donbas, but from Western Ukraine, for example. Many IDPs normalize their experiences

of discrimination through shifting the burden of negativity towards their migrant identity, rather than Donbas identity, assuming that if a similar situation happened in other regions of Ukraine, negative attitudes among the population and othering would be also prevalent. However it is more likely that the government officials base their policies on the stereotypes that are associated with Donbas specifically and further perpetuate them in a cyclical pattern.

When you go to some organizations yourself (means social organs, etc.), you demand something, you work for yourself, you make stuff happen, you fight for everything, for your life... it wasn't pleasant, but I was driven by this kind of feelings inside me, the feeling that I made a decision in which country to live in (laughs) and I had to stick with it.

Anastasia, moved from Crimea to Kyiv

According to Bulakh, frequent interactions with state apparatus make IDPs experience new modalities of citizenship, which do not aim to provide welfare assistance to the displaced as much as subjugate them to the mechanisms of control (Bulakh, 2020). Thus, government institutions seems to have taken on the task of isolating IDPs instead of helping them integrate. As Shyshatska notes, legal paperwork in the case of migrants is Ukrainian context is used to hierarchize and separate IDPs from other Ukrainians (Shyshatska, 2020). Such factors as establishment of mandatory additional documentation for IDPs, the fact that Ukrainian laws are written in Ukrainian language and public workers are required to speak Ukrainian while IDPs are Russophone essentially constitute otherness of IDPs, radically changing their relationship with the state.

The literature generally agrees on the fact that the discriminatory practices and overall ignorance Ukrainian government has for IDP problems are more than likely to backfire in the future. For instance, studies have found that the majority of those who reported to vote for independence of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics, were not motivated by the need to 'reintegrate' with Russia. In their responses, people seemed to mostly complain about how they felt abandoned by Kyiv, not appreciated and

misunderstood (Giuliano, 2018). It would appear that after 2014, the government would have learned its lesson, but the despair most IDPs report during the last couple of years, including disappointment my interlocutors have expressed with how they were treated, indicates that much more steps need to be taken in order to prevent their marginalization.

Conclusion

Much research is yet to be done on the role stereotypes and stigmatization play in the social integration of Ukrainian IDPs. What is clear is that Donbas identity remains strong and is much more salient compared to other regional identities. Its salience is one of the factors that aggravate the integration of IDPs. Non-displaced public is likely to feel threatened by this identity especially due to the fact that their knowledge about it is based on media messages and speeches of government officials.

Future research should consider the bigger role media plays for the public perception of IDPs. While some studies have covered this to some extent, it is still not clear why after six years of living in the same communities as IDPs many still choose to think of them in terms of monolithic categories - as pro-Russian traitors, for example. Another question for both quantitative and qualitative research could be exploring the experiences of IDPs who do not hold pro-Ukrainian views. While access to such a group may be challenging, it could help better understand the reasons for divisions in Ukrainian society and help prevent them in the future. Along these lines, research could also attempt to measure the so-called pro-Russian sentiment attributed to the residents of Donbas and Crimea. Deeper understanding of the peculiarities of cultural russification these regions have been subject to throughout the years and how its features were transferred through generations could be beneficial for designing an inclusive national identity that would unite all Ukrainians.

As many research participants noted, after six years of war and resettlement, Ukrainian society is tired of these topics and no longer perceives them as something extraordinary. This is not beneficial for IDPs: normalization of displacement does not mean that the stereotypes are gone as one may assume (e.g., based on contact hypothesis); it likely signals the fact that IDPs have now essentially become invisible for the Ukrainian society (Bazaluk & Balinchenko, 2020). Not only have IDPs not been granted the support they needed, but they were excluded from decision-making by the government and many of them still have

not been fully accepted without the behind-the-scenes talk or negative connotations in the local communities. Yet the whole topic of displacement has already been swiped under the rug making IDPs disappear among other marginalized groups.

IDPs' needs always been painted with a broad brush by the Ukrainian government, but now they may not even be considered displaced, so as not to give them a special status of a vulnerable population, which leaves them to fend for themselves. In cases when IDPs were accepted without reservations and not thought of as 'Them' at all, most likely they were in some way disconnected from the identity of an 'IDP' or a 'resettler', which has had a humiliating meaning in Ukrainian society from the very beginning of the displacement.

Responding to the social disempowerment IDPs seem to have developed many stigma management strategies such as concealing, downplaying, ignoring, deflecting, rationalizing, detaching and normalizing. Depending on the situation and the level of 'threat', IDPs may choose not to reveal their identity so as not to provoke any kind of reactions, which according to the study participants is the most commonly used strategy. Thus, if they were asked where they were from, they may name their host city instead of the home city and generally refrain to speak about the conflict so as not to display their otherness. If an IDP faces stigmatization from someone directly - through an insult or a negative comment, they are likely to ignore it, stating that it is senseless to get offended by a comment of an uneducated person and thus minimize the impact of this insult.

Sometimes IDPs may choose to deflect stigma through humour: many participants acknowledged that they often made jokes about the whole situation as well as about the existing stereotypes about IDPs/Donbas residents. This strategy is not beneficial for breaking the stigma in the long run, as it is likely to reinforce the stereotypes and further contribute to stigmatization. Through rationalizing IDPs may justify their stigma by detaching it from their origin and explaining that if Ukrainians from other regions became displaced, they would also be stigmatized based on the fact of displacement itself. In some

cases IDPs choose to detach from their regional identities and state that they feel indifferent about their home cities or the past more generally so as not to be associated with anything bad that surrounds the image of what used to be their home.

The most beneficial stigma management technique identified in this study is the recreation of the regional identities of IDPs. IDPs thus reimagine and promote the features associated with Donbas commonly thought of as negative, in a positive way and reinforce the sense of their uniqueness, strength and perseverance. This way IDPs strengthen the positive image in their own perception as well as redefine themselves for the non-displaced public. Regardless of how helpful the stigma management strategies prove to be over time, by employing them IDPs resist being put into 'these arrivals' box and fall victims to stereotypes that demonize them as dangerous and dishonest criminals.

Overall, I believe that the main reason why IDPs cannot feel completely at ease in the host communities is not because they are different from their members in one way or another, but because there is a much bigger problem of lack of understanding in Ukrainian society. Although we cannot completely disqualify or underestimate the power of media, but the messages sent through all the channels of communication would have had much less power, had there been an option for understanding that if something is done differently by someone somewhere else - that does not mean that this way is inherently wrong.

Therefore, if there was a generally accepted 'agreement to disagree' on what being Ukrainian means among Ukrainians from different regions, stereotypes would not be used as a justification for the lack of tolerance. However, in a post-Soviet society which has several national (Ukrainian, Russian, binational, bilingual, etc.) and regional identities, it is easy to play on the strings of the things people hold dear - they can be easily manipulated for the purposes of those in power. As Lashchuk fairly notes in the discussion of her interviews, one of the traps this conflict has set, is the fact that there is no option to stay 'neutral', one needs to choose a side they are on and thus be considered Us or Them, and

the slightest deviation from one side could turn into a fire hazard (Lashchuk, 2018). Hence even though the Ukrainian civic identity has been raised to a new level after 2014, it did not result in political unity of all Ukrainians due to its lack of inclusiveness.

In conclusion, since it is the feeling of neglect and lack of any other attachments to lean on to other than historical closeness to Russian (Soviet society) that has largely influenced support of separatist sentiments, Ukrainian government should focus on effective nation-building and fostering a strong national identity, the foundation of which is not exclusion and measurement of patriotism in static terms. IDPs would not feel as second class citizens, if the government adopted a more inclusive approach and implemented policies that are based on considering IDPs as assets, rather than a strain.

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Appendix: Interview guide (English version)

1. In what way did displacement affect your life and yourself as a person? Did your perception of yourself change in any way after the displacement? How?

2. If yes, what does being an IDP (resettler - pereselents) mean to you exactly? Do you consider being an IDP (resettler) as an important part of your identity?

3. How likely are you to disclose your IDP status to a new person you meet? What are the usual reactions? How do you feel when introducing yourself and saying where you are from? Did you ever avoid doing this?

4. Do you have a stronger attachment to being Ukrainian today, than before? In which way is this expressed? Do you feel more or less patriotism than before?

5. What feelings do you have right now about home? Did you visit home since you left? Did you consider coming back then/ do you think of it now? How does that make you feel?

6. How often did/do you think about your past life? Which feelings did/does that spark?

7. If the conflict did not happen, where would you most likely be right now? How would your life go, if you did not have to move? What plans did you have? Were they significantly different from where you are at this point?

8. Did you ever feel like an outsider in the host community? When exactly? Why? Do you still feel like this? How often does that happen?

9. How likely were or are you still to compare the environment/streets/places with those at home? How does that make you feel?

10. In your opinion, which perception of IDPs is prevailing in the Ukrainian society at the moment? Have people been treating you mostly tolerantly/negatively?

11. Do you feel happy about your life right now? Do you like the community you are living in? Do you have a sense of belonging in the new community? in Ukraine? Do you miss home?

12. What do you think about your future? Is it in Ukraine - current host community or somewhere else - or abroad? Do you feel confident about future? What are your plans and expectations?