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European migrant diasporas and cultural identities

ON COSSACK LEGACY AND MATRIARCHS IN EXILE.

**Linking nation-building process
and rhetorics of womanhood
in Ukrainian labour diaspora**

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What's in a name

The toponym comes from an ancient Slavic root *kraj* that means *limit/edge*: so Ukraine literally sounds as **Borderland**. But another source refers to the verb *kraity* (=to cut): by this way the translation of the name could be “**a piece that is cut**”. ‘*An ambivalence illustrative of the equivocal nature of U. identity*’ (Szmagalska-Follis, 2008).



R. Neubecker 2013

Europe's *terra malecognita* (Finnin 2015), geographically at the center of the continent, in the middle between Ural and Atlantic. A buffer state, a bridge between East and West... a land of extreme conditions and paradoxes:

- Europe's second largest country,
- male population with lowest life-expectancy in Europe (gap with continental average grown up to 11 years)
- main supplier of migrant labour to Europe, and major sending country of irregular migrant workers
- the largest number of victims of human trafficking in the world.

Limbo of unfinished transition

A mosaic, a limbo, a divided nation (sharply polarised), whose reality is one of *blending and mixing*.

KyivWeekly
Ukraine's first eco-friendly publication

BUSINESS IN BRIEF

Ukraine: choosing a face



Matrioska-model: U. belongs to several nested geographies (Hrytsak 2004) with a lot of regional differences. Cultural polymorphism has historically allowed this country to play a relevant mediating role between Slavic world and the West (Pachlovska 2004). Centuries of borderland existence contributed to the fuzziness and fragmentation of U. identity (Plokyh 2007).

Reforms of recent years lack consistency and post-Soviet transition is exceptionally distressing. Not only ethnic divisions, but a general lack of social trust. The dominant type of national identity across the country is the **atomized** (Sotiriou 2016), that points to the inefficiency of institutions towards carrying out a nation-building process.

Many U. prefer to be described as *Tuteshni* (from *Tut*, here): people whose primary identification is with their locality rather than with the State.

The Russian factor

An important support for independence on 1991 was played by the representation of U. as the breadbasket of Europe: depicted as a rich country which suffered from *colonial exploitation* by Russia.



Kyiv Rus' - Kievan inheritance: a common origin and a shared historical destiny?

The reaction - Russia as U.'s constituting 'Other' (Kuzio 2001).

Ethnicisation makes compromise more difficult to reach.

From language politics to demonisation of the opponent (but economies are still intertwined).

The Empire strikes back: unlawful annexation of Crimea and breach of U. sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Searching for national identity

Comeback of nationalist agendas with intellectuals circles discovering *1.000-years-of-history* and beyond: Scythian language (the oldest in Europe!), 'Trypillian culture', Oriians civilization of Dniepr River (Ivakhiv 2005)...the ancestral home of the Indo-European peoples?



F. Krychevskyi, 1910

After independence there have been vary attempts to enroot in the mass consciousness a set of primordial myths about U.

A teleological narrative (based on a semi-religious approach to the past) to create shared meanings of belonging, memory, morality...

History as a **contested ground** for competing identity projects. The past isn't only a point of reference and a 'curing factor, but also a traumatogenic factor' (Yurchuk 2012).

U. so obsessed with their past to become "*prisoners of their imagined histories*" (Kravchenko 2014).

Independence and gender roles: disputed female models

*Berezhnia,
the Hearth-Mother*

Soviet Poster by G. Shegal (1931)
says: "Down with kitchen slavery!
Hurrah for the new everyday life"



Pin-up by
S. Pashchuk



An ideal from the tradition?

Essentialist and traditional gender models were presented as a tool to revitalize U. nation and to renew moral values destroyed by USSR culture.

Patriarchal renaissance and Cossack revival.

A militaristic community (15-17th centuries) which embodies a range of 'virtues': independence, devotion to principles, courage, hegemonic masculinity.

A Cossack is a noble hero: just like Pavlo Polubotok, a rich *het'man* died in prison in St. Petersburg, which was supposed to have left in the Bank of England a huge **treasure for U. nation** (Yekelchyk 1998). A legend about wealth after political subjugation: each citizen would receive 38 kg. of gold...Barrels were never found. Substituted in public opinion and mass-media by the legacy of glorious national past and love of native land...



From a promise of prosperity to a symbol of unfulfilled expectations.

‘Teetering on the edge of default’. ***A tale of economic hardship***

Imperatives of institution building subordinated to personal interests of accumulation produced decline of social infrastructures and depreciation of long-term savings of citizens. GDP =1/3 of Poland, actually ***lower than any european country except Albania and Moldova***. Collapse in first half of 90s; good performance in 2000-07 due to export and foreign investments; new fall...



V. Zadorozhnyi, 1984

Shadow economy estimated near 50%! Diffusion of subsistence farming (*dacha economy*). Widening inequalities: 7 out of 10 stay below poverty line according to Koshulko 2015. Poverty risk associated with presence of children in household: «*Children have become a luxury*» (Wanner-Dudwick 2003).

National currency in last 2 years has lost more than 60% of its value. In 2015 Average salary 130 USD per month; Minimum wage 51 USD, substantially lower than needed for survival. Employment can't provide a solid pathway out of material deprivation.

Many faces of decline

1/3 of total population in U. have experienced migration (Tolstokorova 2015). The main sending areas are rural *oblast* with dramatic surplus of labour-force and weak economy, like Lvivska, Volynia, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankyvaska and especially Zakarpat (where almost 70% households have some family members which has gone abroad).

Significant regional divides (coming from Soviet times) have even grown. But no in-land mobility ...



M. Boichuk, 1922

Demographic crisis remains more severe in rural areas.

Not only low birth rates and fertility decline, but also decrease of living standards and worsening of health conditions.

U. has lost 11% of population in first 15 years after independence:

52 mln in 1990; 45,9 mln in 2010 - Projection to 2040: 38 mln

In this scenario current migration works selectively, because people who leave U. are mostly active and well-skilled.

Average age of U. migrants: 36,2 years.

Another wave of the Diaspora

Diaspora started at the end of 19th century: over 12 mlns moved in previous waves (including deportation to less populated region of USSR). Last decades' mobility regards approx. 6,5mlns of people, but analyses are limited because *70% of flows* aren't registered (Lapshyna 2012).



M. Kuznetsov, 1882

In early 90s half population showed aspiration of leaving the country (political and ethnic motivation behind 650.000 people gone to Russia). In 1998 42% of workers became unemployed, non standard mechanism (like unpaid leaves or reduction in hours of work) became widespread, and labour migration became a mass phenomenon. Main destination after Russia are Poland, Italy, Czech Republic, Spain. Every year almost 1mln of U. are granted short-term visas to Schengen countries, but majority of flows is illegal.

According to an IOM report, “emigration has become the main type of occupation and way of life”. U. as “**Europe’s Mexico**” (Duvell 2006)?

A strategy for survival

Migration decision is to be considered as a household maintenance strategy, balancing needs, opportunities and resources. Women have a *prominent role* in flows to Southern Europe. The main reason to go abroad is *getting a job* paid enough: a survey in 2008 showed that a 600 USD salary would keep people in homeland. Even now migration aspirations are particularly related to *negative perception of Quality of Life* in U. (Van Mol et al. 2016). Another driver is *endemic corruption*.



T. Boichuk, 1920

Hybrid war with Putin can obviously exasperate this scenario of deprivation: it has already implied loss of markets for domestic products, damage of infrastructures, breakdown of foreign investments, closure of main companies, fall of tourist flows, *growth of IDP...*

Which will be next scenario: bailout, normalization of relations with Russia, or continuing decline (with new flows to EU)? Expert in any case forecast new big exodus when the current conflict ends.

Side effects of migration

Transnational family is a *potential source* of improvement of living standards for all its members. A process of constant creation: not simply *being a family*, but *doing a family*. Mobility in case of female migration tends to be connected to transgression of moral codes. And transnational arrangements are considered dangerous and deviant.



O. Murashko, 1914

Family disintegration may be the most painful *side effect* of migration (Ivashenko 2013). U. migrant women have often been stigmatized for their choice to leave: the argument is that their *absence disrupts the unity of the family (and the Nation)*.

Problem of *social or Euro-orphans*. While migrants suffer from precarious employment abroad, children enjoy a middle-class lifestyle at home, thanks to economic remittances. Commodification of relationship with parents and risks of bad behaviour (dropping out of school, alcohol, drugs abuse). On the other side, children can develop a sense of guilty for sacrifice made by their mother.

Maternal capabilities

Moving from one place to another (and from one employer to another) requires special adaptation capabilities. It implies facing demoralization and risks of exploitation. Bogdan (2010) reports evidences of deteriorating health as a result of labour migration for 42% of U. respondents.



M. Zhuk, 1919

Psychological distress is normal. Coping with loneliness is hard. The repertoire of *working with the self* (Psimmenos 2011) is endless.

No regular or positive coverage of migratory issues: U. media only save room when sensational events occur. New *folklore made of horror stories* of incidents abroad (Shostak 2004).

Need to recontextualize women's roles reconsidering simplified images of 'victims of transition': not only a scenario of loss, but also of *achievements*.

Men in distress

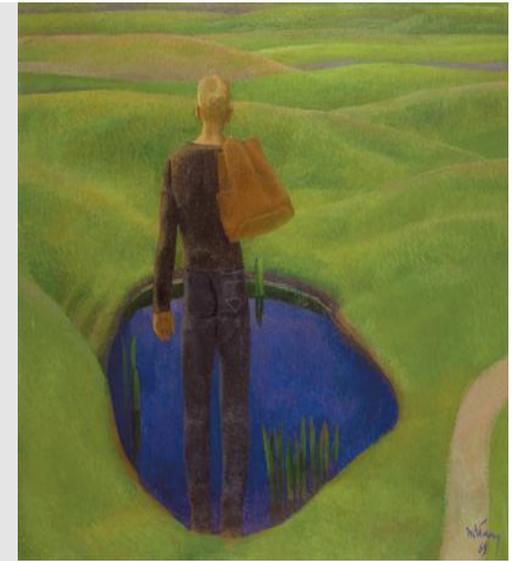
Transnationalism can result in both gain and losses for people left behind. When husbands migrate, wives are usually able to play both roles. But if the parent who leaves is the mother, her spouse often stands aside from child-rearing, that usually becomes grandma's responsibility.

Father's traditional role is perceived as undermined.

In U. inability of earn a good wage threatens masculinity.

Social passivity of men:

- Male suicides out number female by 5 to 1
- Chronic disease due to unhealthy styles
- 20% alcohol abuse
- High rates of HIV and TBC
- High death rates of males (esp. in working age).



T. Yablonska, 1969

A silenced issue

Scholars in U. have enlightened high expectations for welfare but also the lowest assessment of utility of social policies and lowest trust in public institutions (Kutsenko-Gorbachyk 2015).

Post-Soviet U. is being *constituted transnationally*. But the issue is absent from public agenda.



H. Havrylenko, 1966

Who's gonna provide help for transnational families? There's no designated public institutions that could offer support, even in return perspective.

Absence of a comprehensive migration policy due to lack of interest and long-standing institutional crisis. In 2008 Parliament developed a draft law to allow temporary guardianship of left-behind children, but the proposal was rejected. Draft Act on External Labour Migration started in 2013 but was stopped.

Transnational parenting remains a private affair.

Remittances' place

9,3 Billions USD: first amount in Europe (World Bank 2013). Only 1/3 of money is transferred through bank or formal channels. Last year value of official remittances was three times the total of FDI (Petro 2016).

U. abroad transferred in 2000 a sum that was 6-times bigger than the State Budget (Keryk 2004). According to National Bank of U. this important source of income increased 46-fold between 2001-11: big jump in 2006-07 and new growth after 2009 in terms of value and in % of GDP.

Greatest sums proportionally from Spain and Italy (Coupè-Vakhitova 2013). Money is used for housing (acquisition, maintenance) and for education investments. Money is sent to mean that geographical mobility is accompanied by successful class mobility: migrants as *victims of narrative of upward mobility* (Amelina 2009). **Indulgences** for leaving home (Ambrosetti et al. 2013)?

Freezing effect. remittances replace missing social policy and prevent a complete fall to the bottom.

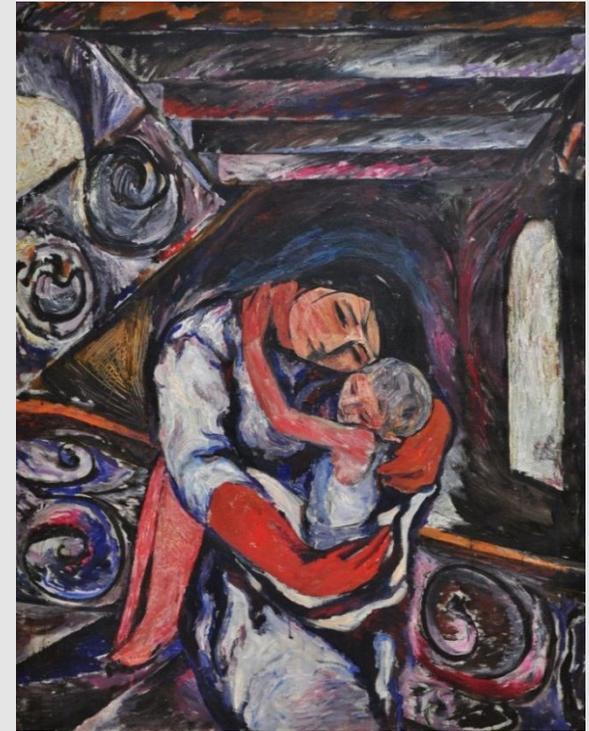


Feed the Nation!

Mutual constitution of migration and nation, achieved through the *manipulation of gendered relations* (Solari 2011), that isn't still recognized.

Difficult to say what the future of U. split-households will look like. There's a huge need to improve conditions by social supports, development of credit facilities, establishment of family business...and also to acknowledge added value and social relevance of migrants' sacrifice.

Post-Soviet *hybridity* (Portnov 2015): U. as a complex society which requires nuanced inquiry, not to be based (only) on ethnic issues. But also on social dimensions like gender.



Z. Lerman-Lutskevych, 1969

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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