

Description for the general public (in English)

Stereotypical connotations that come to mind when mentioning eastern parts of Ukraine, especially Donbas region, are more often than not unambiguous: backwardness, 'soviet people' and lately also a military conflict. However it is the east of Ukraine that become an example of unprecedented civil activity in a public sphere. A lot of grassroots initiatives, emerging organisations, events and actions created by citizens may be surprising only to those who are unfamiliar with local modes of civil engagement. Even more inapparent may be a notion that the roots of this activeness could be derived from Soviet times. At the same time Donbas is a space with high ratio of developmental projects implemented and designed to support the processes of democratisation and civil society building. In my research project I would like to show how this top-down (by governmental and regional authorities) and bottom-up (by NGOs, informal and semi-formal groups and clubs) implemented programmes are adapted by activist and people engaged in change on a local level – both those I call 'new activists', acting in newly established NGOs, and 'old-fashioned' ones, organised around small groups and clubs of interests derived from Soviet past. I would like to do this on a case study of Kramatorsk, a model monotown and recently established capital of Donieck Oblast. Often it appears that mentioned programmes are very Western-centric and not suited to specific conditions of postsocialist, industrial 'mono-town' – a centre built aroun one type of industrial production, in this case mashine building and metallurgy. The point of my research interest will be not only programmes themselves but primarily practices, experiences, ideas and social imaginaries of people engaged in work of local centres of activities. Ethnographic methods used in this project will enable to reach the deep network of meanings that are given to the changes that occur in the space of the town.