

Abstract for general public

Non-Ukrainians in Revolutionary Ukraine, 1917-1921: (Trans-)National Agency in the Struggle for Emancipation and Survival

The project aims to re-examine one of the most crucial periods of modern Ukrainian history - the revolutionary transformation of 1917-1921 - by synthesizing the diverse experiences of the non-Ukrainian population living in Ukraine. While the existing historiography of the revolution in Ukraine has focused primarily on the state-building efforts of Ukrainian national elites, the lives and activities of non-Ukrainians have been largely overlooked. Yet, Ukraine was a multicultural space in which linguistically and confessionally heterogeneous people lived side by side. We argue that no sincere history of revolutionary Ukraine can be written without incorporating the non-Ukrainians into the narrative.

Analyzing the political, cultural, and socio-economic agency of non-Ukrainians in Ukraine from a transnational perspective is at the core of this project. The study will focus primarily on Poles, Jews, and Russians, the most numerically and historically relevant nationalities, but will also examine Germans, Greeks, Belarussians, Czechs, and Moldovans. The project's research questions are structured in five larger thematic clusters: the analysis of in-group transformations among non-Ukrainians, non-Ukrainians' interactions with state authorities, non-Ukrainians' external relations with co-nationals outside Ukraine, the interactions among non-Ukrainian groupings themselves, and the ways in which non-Ukrainians have experienced violence.

The methodological approach has been conceptualized in studies of transnational and entangled history slants, which allows us to explore intergroup and transnational interactions between Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians. We reject essentialist approaches to nationalism and instead explicitly examine the complex interplay between the state's varying national categorizations, nationalists' mobilization efforts, the population's ambivalent national sentiments, and people's situative and flexible identifications. In analyzing the activities of non-Ukrainians, we use a mixed institutional and biographical approach, looking at both non-Ukrainian organizations/institutions and individual trajectories. This mixed-methodology approach includes extensive use of primary sources from archives and libraries in Ukraine, Poland, Austria, Germany, Israel, and the United States.

The originality of our project lies in our aim to involve non-Ukrainians in the study of the post-imperial transformation processes in revolutionary Ukraine. We introduce innovative approaches, such as a transnational and entangled perspective, and a bottom-up approach to exploring the actions of non-Ukrainians. In addition, our attention to the gendered phenomenon of political emancipation and violence will provide insights into the intersectionality of nationalism and gender/sex. The results of the study will have a significant impact on the broader fields of history of revolutions and nationalism studies.