

Wars do not only affect people, they also affect ecosystems, and non-human actors that, forced by circumstances, also take part in them. The time of more widespread interest of the humanities and social sciences in relations with non-human actants, including plants, growth of multispecies ethnographies or the ontological turn is intertwined with the war in Ukraine that has been ongoing since 2014. However, the presence of non-human actants in discourses about this war intensified only with the full-scale invasion launched on February 24, 2022. Since then, the issue of the damaged environment has become a widely discussed topic in the media, both traditional and social. Memes with watermelons from Kherson or cherries from Melitopol circulated on the Internet along with posts describing ecocide caused by the Russian army, especially after the blowing up of the dam in Nova Kakhovka (06/06/2023). Posters showing soldiers with rescued dogs and cats appeared on the streets of Ukrainian cities. Photos and videos showing families escaping with their animals and house plants, or stories told by employees of the M.M. Hryshko National Botanical Garden in Kiev about saving plants during the siege of the city, described by journalists, attracted the attention of the whole world.

The aim of the project is to analyse human-plant entanglements during the war in Ukraine with the particular focus on solastalgia (longing for a lost or destroyed landscape), human resilience and nation building discourses. How is environmental destruction caused by warfare viewed? Does war evoke nostalgia for a destroyed or lost environment? How do relationships with other-than-human members of ecosystems influence human endurance and resilience? How is the knowledge (coming from various sources) about the environment devastations caused by the warfare reflected in everyday practice, discourses and human survival tactics and strategies? What is the current role of relations with plants in nation-building discourses? These are the most important questions that the team of researchers will try to answer.

An extremely important context for this research is the ecological diversity of Ukraine, stretching from the steppes in the east to the common beech forests in Transcarpathia/Zakarpattia (the west of the country).

The research will be carried out among people who have experienced environmental changes caused by the war and who have fled their ecosystems (e.g. steppes) in Transcarpathia, becoming internally displaced; and among those whose ecosystems have not been directly affected by the war, but who have mediated experience of the destruction, both through contacts with internally displaced people and through the media. The aim of the project is to bring together all these experiences, discourses and practices and to answer (using methods from various trends in anthropology and natural sciences) the question about the nature of these relationships.

Due to the fact that war is an ongoing process, people and plants are on the move, they create new meanings, and subsequent events overlap, blur and change the meanings of previous events, it is so important that this research is also carried out at a time when it's happening, not just in some post-war future.

As the relationships between different taxa (for example between humans and plant species), as well as ecocide, are topics that concern various Ukrainian artists, such as Alevtina Kakhidze, establishing cooperation with such people will be an important part of the preparatory activities in the project. This cooperation is intended for co-creation of artistic activities together with research participants; the culmination of this process will take place during the last research trip. Co-designing an artistic activity related to the plant landscapes of war, invented by all co-participants, is an integral part of the research project and will potentially benefit all co-creators and will expand the field of research, giving it a completely different perspective. To some extent, it will also protect against the risk of Westsplaining (lexical blend of *west* and the informal form *-splaining* of the word *explaining*).

The inspiration for this project was the PI's previous research on the relationship between plants and people in Ukraine and her personal experience gained during humanitarian aid trips to Ukraine. The project develops multispecies ethnography approach and significantly expands our knowledge of the relationships between humans and other species in conditions of ongoing displacement and war. The project uses new methodologies related to the relational turn and engaged anthropology based on cooperation with the research subjects. As a result of this research, theories about interspecies relationships will gain a more practical dimension.