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Zjawisko przemocy
w życiu osób z nie-
pełnosprawnościami

The Phenomenon
of Violence in the
Lives of Persons
with Disabilities



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Scientific Conference “Social Change in Ukraine” in Lucerne, Switzerland

With the military aggression against Ukraine, global media attention, and widespread support in Western countries, the integration of Ukraine in the European community of states is being discussed in renewed circumstances. Ukraine sees itself on the threshold of a transformation from a post-Soviet to a European model. However, if one considers the writings of specialized social scientists, many hurdles are still to be overcome on this path. Indeed, there is often a gap between political declarations of intent and their realization – this is true not only for Ukraine. The depiction of a linear development is too simplistic to account for complex social processes. The instrumental logic of economic reform and development policy may conflict with informal institutions, unwritten rules, or corrupt practices. Such mechanisms can hijack good intentions and steer processes in a different direction. We therefore must investigate local realities and ask: Where are the levers for change? Which hurdles exist? And how can they be overcome?

The contributions of international experts at the conference „Social Change in Ukraine – Obstacles and Opportunities”, held at the Lucerne University for Applied Sciences and Arts (Hochschule Luzern, HSLU) on November 16-17, 2022, create a better understanding of this country and enable to assess the opportunities and risks of integration efforts, reconstruction aid, and business investments. For the choice of speakers, the organizers requested the willingness to openly address weaknesses in Ukraine’s setting of formal and informal institutions, which is not in contradiction to favoring Ukraine’s European path.

In his introductory lecture on „the practical use of institutional economics and economic sociology for business and international cooperation”, the

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initiator of the conference, *Michael Derrer*, a business consultant, and lecturer of HSLU, expressed his conviction that projects may fail due to insufficient knowledge of local realities. This is true for private companies, governmental agencies, and for non-governmental assistance. Economic sociology highlights the fact that societies are always specific, regarding legal culture, societal values, and norms, as well as unwritten rules, and informal practices. Furthermore, people formulate their thoughts using the words and concepts at their disposal. Also, power structures, on an economic, political, ideological, and informal level, shape the possibilities open for a society at a given moment. Social change should be analyzed considering these multiple perspectives. This position was later seconded by HSLU economist *Christoph Hauser* who provided a handy definition of what institutions are – the formal and informal rules of the game in a society.

In his official address, *Simon Pidoux*, the Swiss Ambassador-at-large responsible for the “Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC22)”, which took place in June 2022 in Lugano, echoed Michael Derrer’s perspective by stating that specific in-depth expert knowledge of local issues is necessary for the implementation of the principles formulated by the international community in Lugano. These principles stress the need to undertake reforms, provide for transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, ensure democratic participation, and strive for sustainability. He also drew attention to the fact that Ukraine’s reforms of the past were more successful than expected, which can be illustrated by the 70% of trains still functioning in Ukraine, even in war conditions.

In the lecture „Re-democratization and anti-patronal transformation: chances and possibilities”, *Bálint Magyar* dismantled the illusion that the post-communist governments undertook a linear path towards liberal democracies after the change of the political regime three decades ago. Magyar characterized the different power structures to describe the development paths of the post-communist countries. Using this framework, one can say that after 1989 Ukraine transformed into a “patronal democracy” with a captured state, in which competing patronal elite networks dominate the state and the economy, without being subdued in a single power vertical.

Bálint Madlovics, in his presentation „Relational economy and oligarchs in post-communist regimes” elaborated Magyar’s ideas and cleared up misconceptions about the Ukrainian economy. Just as the main actors of political competition are not parties in the Western sense but informal patronal networks, the main actors of economic competition are not entrepreneurs in the Western sense but oligarchs. These oligarchs’ informal networks dominate Ukraine’s economy.

Ukrainian institutional economist *Volodymir Dubrovsky*, in his presentation on „Ukraine’s socio-politico-economic system” asked what is needed for Ukrainian institutions to become truly European. He highlighted the distinct political culture and values prevailing in Ukraine. The weaknesses of the country’s formal institutions are at least partially compensated by an active civil society, which plays an important role in this country and often replaces the government for such tasks as drafting laws or providing social assistance. Since informal institutions play such an important role in Ukraine, it will not be sufficient to simply adopt EU standards. To be sustainable, new formal institutions should be based on existing informal institutions. Premature harmonization could have a negative impact. Instead of discretionary powers by officials, transparency, accountability, and civil society oversight will have to be developed simultaneously.

David Dalton, a researcher from the UK, talked about „The oligarchy as Ukraine’s dominant post-communist political economy regime” and complemented these considerations. Oligarchs are to be seen as a governance institution anchored in Ukrainian society. This helps explaining why institutional reforms have struggled to take root. Future post-war reforms should focus on replacing the institution of the oligarchs. This includes broadening participation in rulemaking, and disrupting linkages of reproducing the flow of wealth and power. The EU may hereby serve as a guide rather than as a ready model to be emulated. One challenge to overcome is the fact that Western elites recognized oligarch power by defending their property in the western legal system.

Polish legal sociologist *Jacek Kurczewski* shared his „Considerations on the difference in post-communist transformation of Poland and Ukraine” with the audience. His research led him to consider corruption as a dynamic phenomenon, "a liquid concept", which is "difficult to shoot at". Institutionalized corruption has a long history since the tsarist empire, which included most of Ukraine. And already in the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Rzeczpospolita, the region of today’s Ukraine was known for individuals quite similar to today’s oligarchs. He underlined the crucial role played by the Polish Solidarność movement in his country’s transformation – as a teacher of grassroots democracy, work ethics and self-government. Little known to foreigners, in Poland, a first transition already started before the end of the communist regime, between 1981 and 1989. The construction of a capitalist system after 1989 could then build on this fundament of self-organization and incipient institutional reform.

On the second day of the conference, Ukrainian political consultant *Mikhail Chaplyga* called to prepare for winning the peace, which will be

a task not less challenging than waging the war. Believing that an open discussion is necessary even in these difficult times, he regrets overly self-censorship in many Ukrainians. He shed light on the recent fundamental changes in the structure of the Ukrainian economy in an engaging speech with the title „What is the economic future of Ukraine after the war?“. Given that Ukraine has become fully dependent on external financial assistance, there is a risk that western assistance flowing into the country will destroy the Ukrainian economy – an outcome, which he had observed in Bosnia. On the other hand, Chaplyga mentioned that with the war, social volunteering and financing military equipment from private funds have become widespread. In these circumstances, laws are not enough to steer social change, and the reputation of an individual becomes the most important capital for transformation.

In her presentation „Continuity and change of the social contract in Ukraine: The case of contested anti-corruption policies,“ Ukrainian political scientist *Oksana Huss* distinguished centralized from decentralized corruption. Corruption includes much more than bribery. In Ukraine’s political system, corruption has been used as a means for incentives and rewards, as well as for blackmailing and selective punishment. For decades, elections were conducted like a business project.

The post-Maidan anti-corruption policy focuses on different stakeholders who develop solutions in cooperation, civil society playing an important role. Since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there have been setbacks regarding open data and accountability, as elections and rights to protest have been suspended. But on the other hand, one can observe a growing demand for justice. Citizen ownership of the state is increasing. Huss’ conviction is that one does not fight corruption by fighting the corrupt, but by enabling access to the system for more stakeholders.

Ukrainian researcher *Svitlana Shcherbak* addressed the subject of „The rise and fall of populism in Ukraine. During the 2019 presidential campaign, Volodymyr Zelensky’s rhetoric met many of the criteria of populism. Zelensky developed an inclusive concept of “the people,” based on citizenship, multiethnicity and regional heterogeneity, and contrasted it with “the corrupt elites.” In contrast, former President Petro Poroshenko promoted an exclusive ethno-nationalist, anti-liberal concept of “the people” that required homogenization based on a common language, culture, and faith. Voting for Zelensky can be considered as a democratic uprising against a right-wing conservative nation-building and a corrupt political system. After the outbreak of the war, populist discourse lost its relevance, and we are witnessing a nation-building process based entirely on nationalist grounds. Under the

current circumstances, the desire for more democracy and pluralism is waning.

In his presentation on „The temporary labor migration from Ukraine from 2014 to 2022fl, Ukrainian social scientist *Denys Kiryukhin* stated that there were no structural prerequisites in Ukraine for the high labor migration dynamics during the past years. It was the sociopolitical environment that played a dominant role in causing migration, notably widespread poverty, and social inequality. This threatens demographic and social crises, and shortages in the labor market due to a brain drain.

The final presentation "Sociological perspective of Ukraine's transformations since 2014: main shifts and potential for development" by *Kateryna Ivashchenko-Stadnik* dealt with the social changes observed in Ukraine since the revolution of 2014, which represented a bottom-up appeal by civil society. The Russian aggression of 2022 triggered the need for national resilience and unity. The consolidation of the national Identity ("I am a citizen of Ukraine first") became the dominant self-identification in the hierarchy of other identities (local, post-Soviet, cosmopolitan). In the past years, the awareness of the oligarchs' overwhelming role has come to the fore. Confronted with the destructions of the war, groups of Ukrainian citizens began to collect funds for repairing the buildings on their own initiative. Ivashchenko-Stadnik calls this a "new civic optimism." For a successful social transformation, horizontal structures in Ukrainian society will have to be strengthened. Civic ownership and critical thinking must be developed.

On the concluding day, *Michael Derrer* closed the event with the presentation of his doctoral thesis, which applies the methodology of economic sociology to phenomena of widespread corruption, observed in the two countries Ukraine and Russia. It is on condition that the logic of corrupt phenomena is thoroughly understood that one can act sensibly and effectively. Derrer invites policymakers and anticorruption activists to concentrate on the critical issues, which he finds in systemic rent-extraction mechanisms, phenomena of extortion, and unsecured property rights. His research distinguished the situation in Ukraine from that of the authoritarian Russian system, in which a single vertical system subdued preexisting corrupt pyramids. Ukraine should go beyond lip-service for anticorruption and not limit itself to the criminal persecution of perpetrators. The western community of states can support Ukraine in this endeavor for true systemic reforms.

As a conclusion, the conference asserts there is no simple linear process. A broad-based movement from within society is central to the success of social change. What is needed, then, is further democratization that goes beyond the electoral processes.