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Stereotypes in Ukrainian Society Related to Internally Displaced Persons from Donbass

Abstract: Stereotypes have always existed in Ukrainian society. The main reason for their occurrence as a rule, was the differences in the historical development of certain regions. With the influence of time, some stereotypes disappeared, but others appeared in their place. The war in the Donbass, has led to the emergence of new stereotypes, which began to firmly take root in the minds of people. Basically, these stereotypes relate to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Donbass and have a negative connotation. The main disseminators of stereotypes are public figures, community activists and the media. The purpose of the article is to analyze the most widespread stereotypes in some regions of Ukraine not covered by the conflict and to find out the reasons for their occurrence.

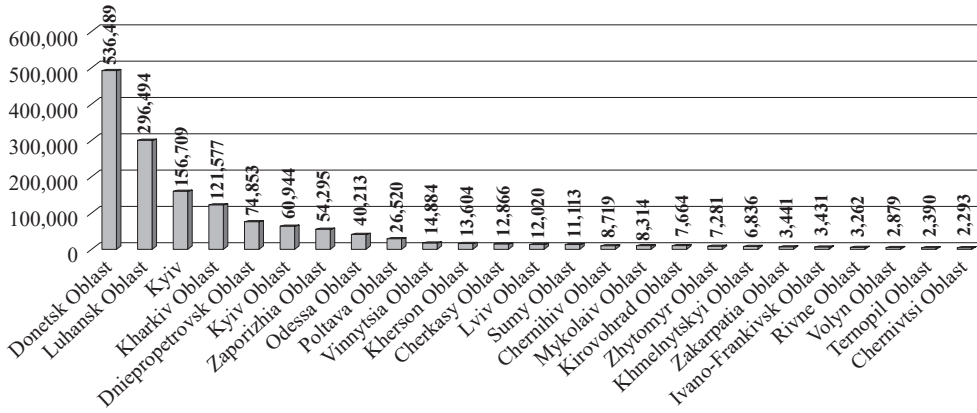
Key words: stereotypes, Internally Displaces Persons (IDPs), Donbass, Ukraine

Introduction

One of the most recognizable contemporary phrases in Ukrainian, introduced to the language four years ago, is *Internally Displaced Persons* (IDPs). This phrase stands for the people who fled from occupied Crimea and from war-torn Donbass. The events of 2014 resulted in increasing intolerant attitudes towards IDPs, particularly these coming from Donbass. Intensified population inflow from the occupied regions at war contributed to a numerous stereotypes being formed. Lots of these stereotypes had been present within Ukrainian society for years, deeply enrooted in the society, related to historical events. It is the result of the fact that the territories of contemporary Ukraine were under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire – that is why the relations between the inhabitants of Western and Eastern Ukraine to each other were diverse. Several stereotypes appeared quite recently, in spring 2014 when the first refugees from war-torn Donbass and occupied Crimea appeared, to rise dramatically in number afterwards. The stereotypes was a serious obstacle to the IDPs from Donbass in the integration process.

In April 2014, when Donbass faced the first riots, the inhabitants began leaving the regions of unrest. In the first place, people tried to move to neighboring *oblasts* – Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (74,853 people), Zaporizhia Oblast (54,295 people), Kharkiv Oblast (121,577 people), Luhansk Oblast (296,494 people) and Donetsk Oblast (536,489 people) that were controlled by Ukrainian government as well as to Kiev Oblast (60,944 people) and to the capital (156,709 people); see, Graph1 (Дорош, 2016). It might be explained by people's efforts not to move far from their homes and the fact these are Russian-speaking regions, where IDPs could feel more secure. Total number of IDPs from Donbass according to the data of 31 of November 2017 achieved as many as 1,488,051 people (Динаміка, 2017).

Graph 1. Number of IDPs from Donbas in the oblasts of Ukraine at the end of 2017 (thousands of people)



Source: Own study based on: Динаміка, 2017.

The smallest number of IDPs from Donbass was received by Chernivtsi Oblast (2,293 people), Ternopil Oblast (2,390 people), Volyn Oblast (2,879 people) and Rivne Oblast (3,262 people). The low number of IDPs in certain western regions can be explained by difficulties to find employment as well as numerous fears and stereotypes related to people coming from the west of Ukraine.

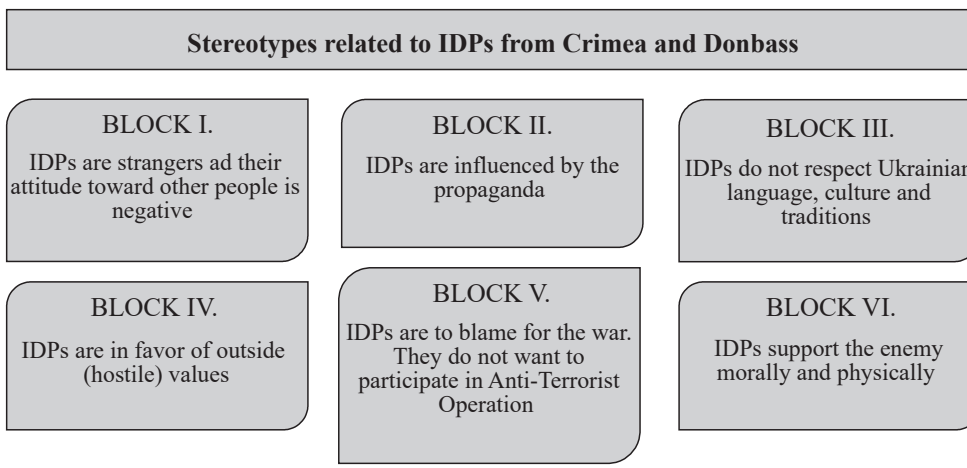
The issue of internally displaced persons is regarded to be a new research topic. Since the proclamation of independence in 1991 up to 2014, Ukraine has only once witnessed the abusive influx of repatriates. In the late 1980s of the twentieth century Crimean Tatars that Stalin’s regime in 1944, deported to Central Asia, gained the right to return to Crimea. Their repatriation was to be gradual, but the collapse of the Soviet Union accelerated this process. The aim of this article is to analyze the contemporary stereotypes towards the inhabitants of receiving regions and the reason why they appeared among the IDPs from Donbass as well as the stereotypes related to the migrants from Donbass.

Methodology

The aim of this article is to analyze the contemporary stereotypes towards the inhabitants of receiving regions and the reason why they appeared among the IDPs from Donbass as well as the stereotypes related to the migrants from Donbass. The article is based on the sociological investigation conducted during the first years of Crimea occupation and the war in Donbass. It is worth mentioning the UHCR Reports and the reports of Ukrainian institutes and NGOs that analyze the IDPs’ problems (Ставлення, 2016; Внутрішньо, 2016; Have, 2017; Звіт, 2016a; Міхеєва, Середа, 2015, pp. 9–49). The research on the stereotypes that was done, can serve as an introduction to deeper sociological analysis, as it did not regard all the regions in Ukraine focusing on the biggest towns.

Mutual opinions related to IDPs from Donbass and the residents of particular regions were mainly based on stereotypes. However, it is worth mentioning that most of the analyses conducted in Ukraine tended to focus on the receiving communities while only few concerned IDPs’ opinions. The researchers from Ukraine, Oksana Mikheyeva and Victoriya Sereda, attempted to conduct their investigation among IDPs from Donbass and Crimea in order to gain the information related to the inhabitants of other *oblasts*. The area analyzed included the cities hosting the biggest numbers of IDPs from Donbass and Crimea – Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kiev, Lviv and Odessa. The research was based on 100 interviews – 24 with IDPs from Crimea and 46 with IDPs from Donbass (Міхеєва, Середа, 2015, pp. 9–49). The research was supplemented by UNHCR analyses performed in 5 cities in Ukraine – Kiev, Kharkiv, Lviv, Kherson and Vinnytsia. This analysis consisted of 900 interviews with IDPs from Crimea and Donbass (Взаимоотношения, 2015). The UNHCR research conducted in 2016 in entire Ukraine, apart from occupied Crimea and Donbass, was also a significant analysis, including 200 interviews (Ставлення, 2016). The report *Have you seen Buratino?*, conducted in 10 Ukrainian cities – Dnipro, Kharkiv, Vinnytsia, Kiev, Kremenchuk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lutsk, Chernigov, Melitopol and Izmail, demonstrated the fact that all the contemporary stereotypes existing and increasing in Ukrainian society can be divided into 6 categories (Figure 1.). The analyses were performed in the groups of 25–55 people. When the general research is compared to the research performed in the particular cities, the opinions expressed by receiving communities are convergent. It proves the fact of Ukrainian stereotypes related to IDPs being similar in different regions.

Figure 1. Contemporary stereotypes resulting from Crimea annexation and war in Donbass in Ukrainian society



Source: Author’s own studies based on: Have, 2017.

The first block of stereotypes considers IDPs to be strangers concerning the values of the receiving places; they are not willing to find employment; their problems related to integration result from arrogance and aggressive approach to local residents; they do not

intend to work, demanding the assistance and support; they are wealthier than the other members of society, spoilt by Yanukovych’s regime.

The most common stereotypes within the second block were formulated following Russian propaganda. Receiving communities are convinced that IDPs believe the Russian media insisting Ukraine is governed by fascists, that OUN-B members commit appalling crimes in Ukraine, that the towns in occupied territories are under The Armed Forces of Ukraine bombardment and the population of eastern regions is discriminated against due to speaking Russian.

The third block embraces the stereotypes of IDPs’ unfriendly attitude towards Ukrainian language, Ukrainian national symbols, like national flag, national anthem, passport, their objection to Ukrainian values, such as culture, history, literature, Christian ethic, the fact they did not support Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and they do not support The Armed Forces of Ukraine that are widely supported and respected.

The fourth block includes the stereotypes related to Russian values. The receiving societies regard IDPs as those who believe in Russkiy Mir and its values, aim to separate Donbass and Crimea from Ukraine, feel nostalgic about the Soviet Union, Stalin and Lenin, objecting to Ukraine joining the EU.

The fifth block maintains the stereotypes related to the Anti-Terrorist Operation: there are the accusations of contributing to Crimea annexation and the war in Donbass through certain passivism, the unwillingness to fight for the cities as well as for the reluctance to join the Armed Forces of Ukraine and to return to the motherland.

The stereotypes collected in the sixth block concern various forms of support for the aggressor state (Putin, DPR, LPR, warfare participation in favor of separatist forces) (Have, 2017).

Stereotypical Attitudes to IDPs from Donbass

The data collected by KrymSOS NGO are convergent with the stereotypes mentioned above. Common convictions concerning IDPs from Donbass underline their particular needs, their reluctance to work, their demands for state and volunteers’ assistance, the arrogant and aggressive standpoints they express, their support for armed forces in the self-proclaimed republics, their financial ostentation, believed to be unacceptable during the crisis (Graph 2) (Скібіцька, 2017). Moreover, members of local communities when asked about their opinion about IDPs from Donbass often stated that it depends on IDPs’ performance, their support for Ukraine and, generally speaking, their decent behavior. If they behave in a decent way, people treat them in the same manner (Взаимоотношения, 2015).

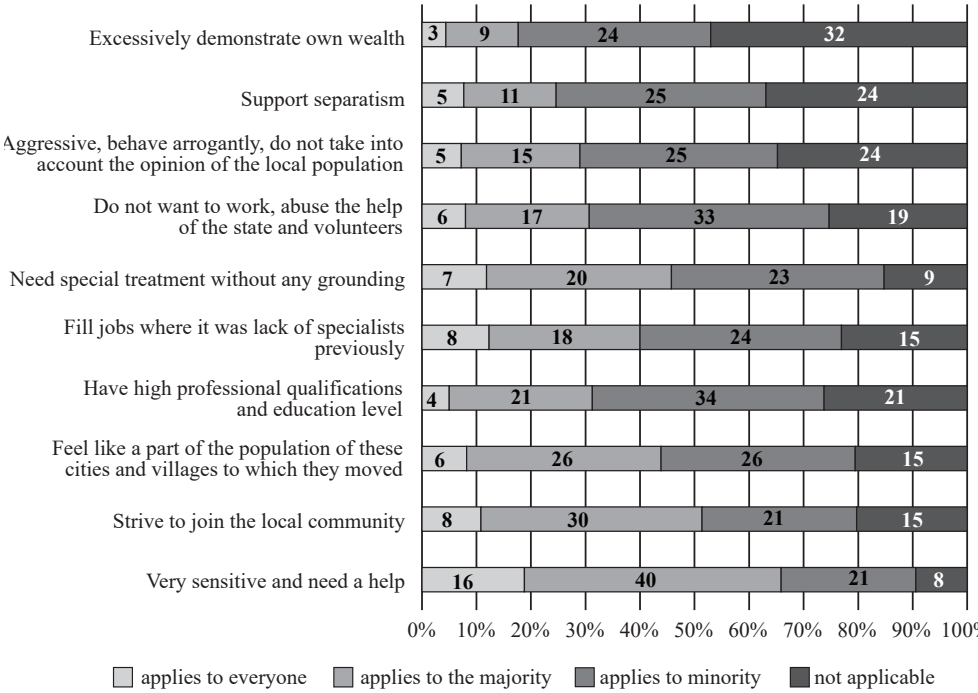
Here are several quotations demonstrating the opinions related to IDPs from Donbass:

> “*Negative. They’d better fight for their land. They betrayed Donbass, now they’re so poor*.” Alexander, Vinnytsia;

> “*If you were real Ukrainian, you left the East at once. Now, the majority is leaving, those who shouted ‘Russia!’, ‘Putin, bring your army!’, ‘Parasites that we have to kill!*” Dmitrii, Vinnytsia;

“*My attitude to these people is negative, I don’t understand how they could arrive in Kiev, go to restaurants and nightclubs and demand the support. It was when all men from Ukraine volunteered for ATO*.” Anton, Kiev (Ibidem).

Graph 2. Are the following characteristics specific to the IDPs,%?



Source: Own study the based on: Ставлення, 2016, p. 14.

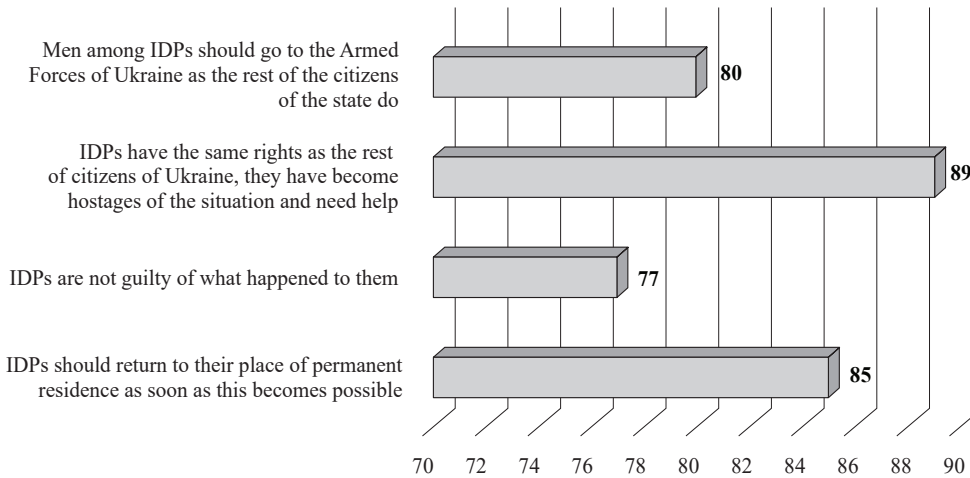
Considering the endless conflict in Donbass, the deterioration of general socio-economic conditions in Ukraine, general decline in living standards and the quality of life, there are certain media that instigate people to behave in an unfriendly way to others, explicit demonstration of the negative stereotypes about IDPs from Donbass is noticeable, so is certain hostility between local people and IDPs. Donetsk Oblast, Lugansk Oblast, Kharkiv Oblast and Kiev Oblast are the areas where the highest levels of unfriendly attitudes to IDPs from Donbass are observed (Експерти, 2017).

Particularly negative approach related to IDPs from Donbass is observed in Kharkiv Oblast. This oblast mainly became a destination to IDPs from Donbass, 46% immigrants come from Luhansk Oblast, 51% arrived from Donetsk Oblast. Xenophobia and discrimination against especially vulnerable groups, including IDPs from Donbass, is increasing in this region. These tendencies are proved by the difficulties related to jobs (20%) and accommodation (35%) (Результати, 2015). It was Kharkiv Oblast where IDPs from Donbass experienced the most considerable amount of intolerance while compared to other receiving regions in Ukraine. According to various statistical data, in 2014–2015 the number of IDPs accounted for 300,000–380,000. The data from April 2018 demonstrate the fall in IDPs number to merely 123,000 (Ярабік, Шаповалова, 2018). The

negative attitude to displaced persons from Donbass was the consequence of increasing costs of living caused by IDPs’ arrival. The groups particularly exposed to intolerance are the retired, single parents and the disabled. This is the reason why IDPs do not reveal, unless it is necessary, where they come from (Ibidem).

It is difficult to assess how common certain stereotypes are in certain regions but statistical data demonstrate increasing unfriendly attitudes to IDPs from Donbass. It can be explained by the fact the war is not limited to Donbass only and it still takes its toll. The inhabitants of regional communities feel indignant with internally displaced men being exempted from military conscription, unless willingly – they believe that internally displaced men should join the Armed Forces of Ukraine and fight for their country (Graph 3).

Graph 3. Do you agree with the following statements,%?



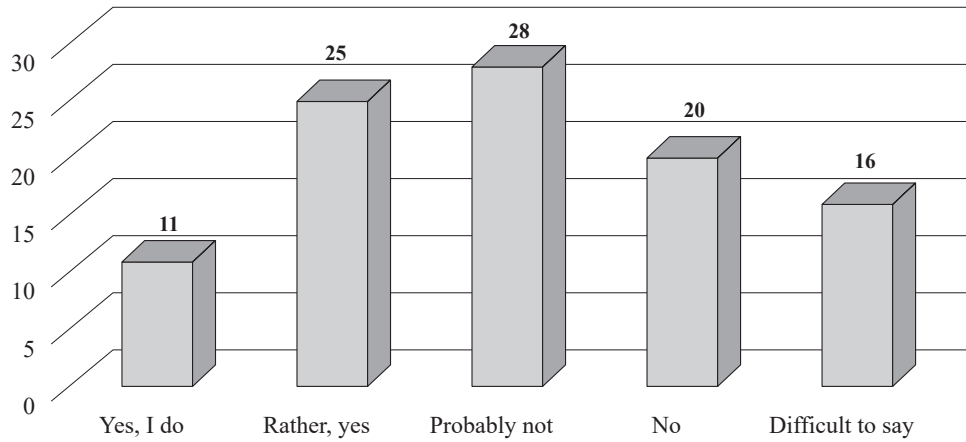
Source: Author’s own translation (UNHCR, 2015).

It is worth mentioning the opinion expressed by the Ukrainian citizens considering IDPs’ from Donbass possible return to their homes. Among those, whose attitude to IDPs is positive 81% support their return home; those whose approach is neutral form 88% group supporting the idea of IDPs returning to their place of permanent residence whereas among people ill-disposed towards IDPs this rate reaches 98%. The average rate in Ukraine is 85% (Graph 4). On the contrary, the number of people being against EDPs’ return home after the war is finished accounts for 6% in a group of people with a positive attitude and 4% among those whose attitude is neutral. In a regional perspective, the majority of people in favor of IDPs’ return to Donbass after the war is over, come from the western and central regions, while in eastern and southern ones this tendency is not noticeable. These attitudes might suggest future negative relations to IDPs in the west and south of Ukraine.

According to the interviews from 2016, over 48% IDPs from Donbass have no intention to return to their previous place of residence. As many as 25% IDPs from Donbass want to return home, 28% do not express this aim, 25% find it difficult to say, 18% de-

clared they might return in future, only 2% respondents declared the intention to return home soon while 2% refused to respond to the question (Graph 4).

Graph 4. Do you intend to return to your place of permanent residence after the end of hostilities, %?



Source: Панченко, 2017.

The majority of these returning to the occupied territories are the retired, the disabled and the parents during parental leave. The employed account for 27% returning persons while the elderly and the disabled constitute 65% and the unemployed make 8%. Among the reasons causing people to return home 60% are connected with the property – houses that provide shelter; 44% are family reasons; 18% due to employment possibilities; 6% being unable to integrate into a new society; 5% because of the limited access to public services, like medical care or education; 8% being made to return by other reasons; 8% refused to answer (Переселенці, 2017). These are women who constitute the biggest group of people returning to the temporarily occupied territories in Donbass – they make 61%, 49% of this group are retired persons. 94% people having returned to the occupied territories live in their own houses, 6% do not have this possibility, as their property was destroyed. Safety is the major problem in the occupied territories – 46% people who decided to return to Donbass do not feel safe. The biggest problem faced by the IDPs who stay out of the occupied zone is related to renting a flat (70%) while the safety rate reached as little as 2%. 63% people who returned to Donbass do not intend to come back (Звіт, 2017b).

Fear was the emotion shared by two sides of the conflict. In western and central regions people were mainly afraid of “separatists,” “bandits,” “donetskye,” whereas in eastern regions they tended to be afraid of worse economic conditions, increase in crime and social tensions. IDPs feared “Banderites” (Rudling, 2011),[1] “Right Sector,” “Zapadentsi” (How, 2018),[2] intolerance and discrimination, so they were not eager to

[1] Banderovtsi or the Banderites.

[2] Westerners or Zapadentsi – used to mean anti-Russian, nationalist, fascist Ukrainians who live in the western part of the country.

move to western regions of Ukraine. In western Ukraine, including Lviv oblast, the stereotypes about the IDPs from Donbass are common – IDPs from Donbass tend to be called thieves, as they were raised to become ones. This kind of prejudice results from the fact many detention houses and prisons were located in Donbass due to high crime rates there. “Donetskye” are believed to be stealing like Yanukovych, who was mainly elected by them. Moreover, many Ukrainians do not identify Donbass with Ukraine and IDPs from Donetsk and Luhansk are opposed to the inhabitants of other regions. In Lviv, IDPs from Donbass are thought not to be religious enough, believing in Father Christmas rather than St. Nicholas, they are contrasted with the inhabitants of Galicia presented as religious, honest people, cherishing Ukrainian tradition (Петрик, 2014).

There is trust problem on both sides, both IDPs and the receiving communities – it was so considerable that IDPs from Donbass (before the material support was introduced) did not even officially register in their new places of residence, so they were not granted IDP status. The other reason is Donbass IDPs’ unwillingness to be registered due to lack of sufficient trust to the state and its structures. These are mainly the poorest social groups that are willing to be registered (Ibidem).

IDPs from Donbass and inhabitants of western regions are the groups permeated with the mutual stereotypes; the most of these stereotypes are based on negative grounds. They usually focus on pro-Russian inclinations among IDPs, their unwillingness to work on the same conditions as other people, their efforts made in order to achieve a special status resulting from their difficult living conditions. Moreover, the inhabitants of western regions tend to blame IDPs from Donbass for the complex situation in the eastern part of Ukraine (Ставлення, 2016).

Inhabitants of western and central Ukraine mention several significant differences between them and the IDPs from Donbass:

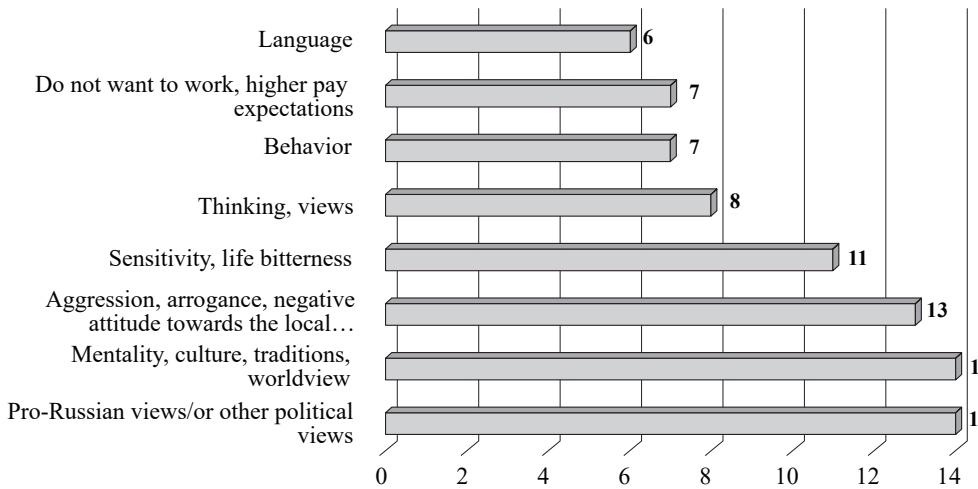
– political attitudes – it is believed the IDPs’ political opinions are pro-Russian (paternalistic) ones; they are responsible for the war in eastern Ukraine; they are fascinated by pro-Russian propaganda; they support the separatists, being the people still living in the Soviet Union;
– ways of thinking, culture, traditions, life outlook, behavior – people from Donbass had always been connected with Ukraine only sharing the same territory, being in fact mentally and culturally related to Russia (Донбас, 2014);
– IDPs from Donbass frequently express as negative attitudes as aggression, arrogance, hostile approach to local communities. They are unwilling to seek the possibilities of compromise, focusing on conflict;
– oversensitivity, difficult life situation;
– language is an important factor – Crimean Tatars are easily excused for their poor competence in Ukrainian whereas IDPs from Donbass are not so willingly excused.

IDPs from Donbass do not share these accusations, being rather afraid of returning home due to possible inability to find common ground with the members of their previous local communities – they could be thought to be traitors, having retreated from the difficulties and challenges of the conflict. Sometimes IDPs’ relations with their friends broke after they moved to the territories controlled by the government. Similarly, conflict in Donbass was the reason to weaken family bonds. There are many people who, for some reasons, stay in the occupied Donbass territories. The most common reasons are

the following:
- the unwillingness to overburden their children and grandchildren with additional problems;
- older people who stayed in Donbass take care of the property even if they have to risk their life;
- they do not have enough money, they cannot imagine starting new life in a new place;
- their financial condition does not let them leave the occupied area;
- they cannot see any prospects of starting new life in new reality, being devoted to their past in Soviet circumstances (Ставлення, 2016).

Graph 5 demonstrates the fact people in Ukraine support the opinion of IDPs not being different from other Ukrainian citizens. However, in the context of particular regions the statistics are different, especially in western regions where as few as 27% people can see no difference between IDPs and themselves whereas 51% notice the difference. It is slightly better in the central part of Ukraine where 41% do not notice the difference while 35% declare the difference is real. In the south of the country, 43% do not observe any difference but 38% do. In the eastern regions 54% inhabitants do not distinguish any differences and only 26% notice certain distinctions (Ставлення, 2016). The comments expressed among the inhabitants confirm the statistical data:

Graph 5. How IDPs differ from local residents of cities, %?



Source: Ставлення, 2016.

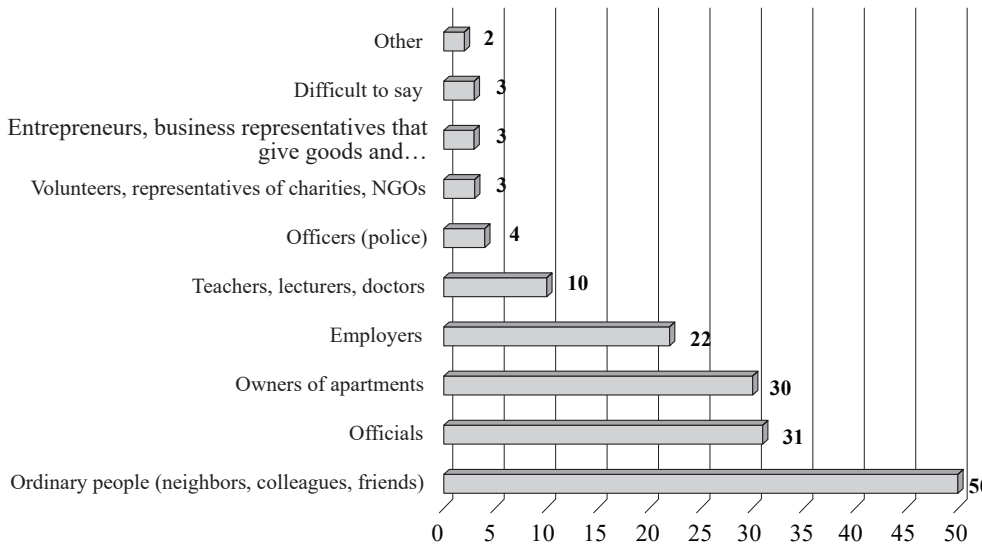
> “There are people from Donbass among my friends. They are normal people, they aren’t different from others. I learned they were from the east by chance, if I hadn’t seen their passport I wouldn’t have believed. There are so many stories about them in the society. I offered them some help but they refused to use it. So, don’t listen to rumors, focus on particular people.” Oleg, Kiev (Взаимоотношения, 2015).

> “We are all human beings, so we have to live somewhere; there is unrest in their country, so we must receive these people in our towns.” Nina, Vinnytsia (Ibidem).

The statements quoted above correspond with the research conducted by DonbasSOS that indicates the fact of discrimination to IDPs on the interpersonal level being not so critical as it is sometimes believed (Середа, 2017a).

The source generating such a big number of stereotypes is a significant factor. According to the statistical data, the most considerable part of the prejudice about the IDPs comes from their environment – neighbors, friends, colleagues. 50% IDPs from Donbass experienced certain negative situations related to these groups. Then, these are the people representing official institutions that are the source of prejudice – 31% respondents chose this option. Third place indicated landlords – 30% declared they were the source of biased attitudes (Graph 6).

Graph 6. Who showed a biased attitude to IDPs, %?



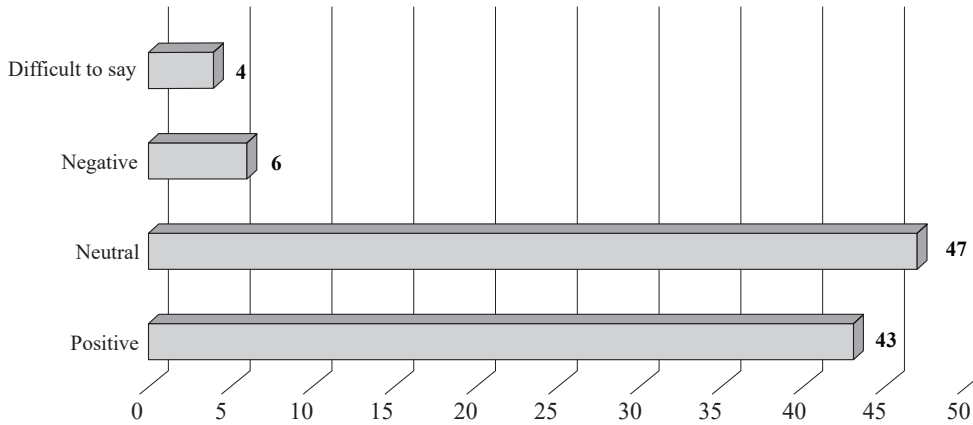
Source: Звіт, 2016a.

As a comparison, in Lviv: it takes more time to rent a flat to the IDPs from Donbass than to the Crimean Tatars, it is a considerable problem, as only one out of ten landlords is willing to rent a flat to IDPs from Donbass whereas 90 people offered to rent a flat to 10 Crimean Tatar families (Середа, 2017a).

Both UNHCR reports and Kiev International Institute for Sociology (KMIS) report prove the attitude towards IDPs in 2014–2016 was rather neutral – 47% UNHCR and 44% KMIS, positive – 43% (both UNHCR and KMIS), negative – 6% UNHCR and 5% KMIS, don’t know option was chosen by 4% UNHCR, it depends on IDPs themselves – 8%, see, Graph 7 (Звіт, 2016a).

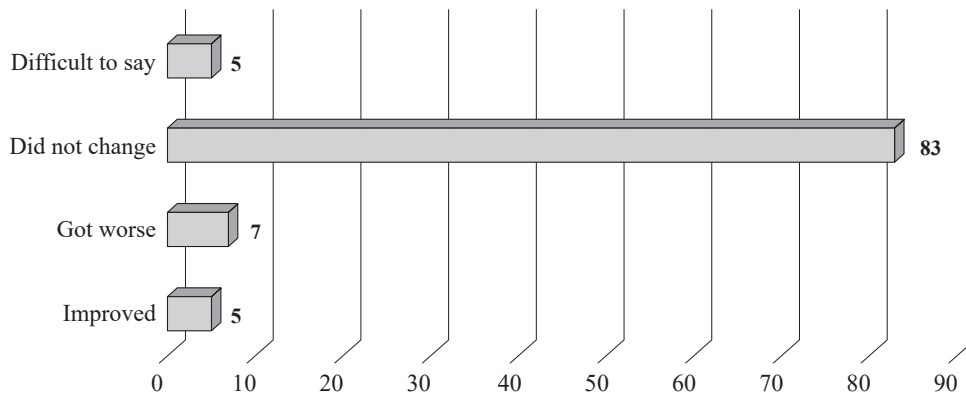
Graph 8 presents the data proving the attitude to IDPs did not change during two years after the onset of the conflict. UNHCR report demonstrates the fact women IDPs are perceived more favorably than men, the poor and these earning medium income gain more sympathy than the rich, the employed deserve better treatment than the unemployed, the retired are perceived in a more positive way than the employed (Ставлення, 2016).

Graph 7. What is your general attitude to the IDPs, %?



Source: Ставлення, 2016.

Graph 8. Did your attitude towards IDPs change in 2014–2016, %?



Source: Ставлення, 2016.

It is media coverage that affects the attitudes towards IDPs largely. Crimea occupation, war in Donbass, the thousands of IDPs – these newsworthy events and phenomena make journalists seek appropriate words so as to present the news in an unbiased manner, to avoid dividing people and promoting hatred. Today, there is no appropriate range of vocabulary that could depict what is happening in Crimea and Donbass. Each TV channel, each radio station – they all use their own words in order to illustrate the events occurring there. Journalists are still seeking the best methods in which they could reflect the reality of Donbass and the whole area of conflict (Кузнєцова, 2016). There are many journalists who employ the stereotypes in their job, making them present IDPs in a negative manner. Reporters in Ukraine seem not to have a critical approach to the opinions expressed by the politicians and officials who often do not talk about IDPs with a sufficient amount of honesty or consideration. Publications containing unfriendly attitudes often result in certain tensions between local communities and IDPs (Зінченко,

2017). Media often focus on crimes and fraud committed by IDPs; frequently presented subject in the media is “benefit tourism,” when the inhabitants of occupied territories pose as IDPs, abusing social benefits and finally turning out to be DPR/LPR supporters (Аналіз, 2017).

Conclusions

Contemporary stereotypes relating to Donbass population are mainly spread by public figures, including officials, social activists, political scientists. They do not care about the words they use referring to IDPs while participating in various political talk shows. Their words depict IDPs as stupid and arrogant separatists (Середа, 2017a). Donbas-SOS reports prove the fact the public statements strongly influence both public opinion and IDPs’ integration into the new community, particularly if the statements expressing discrimination are used by politicians, officials or biased media. People who have never met any IDP in their life and receive the information from unreliable media tend to have particularly hostile attitude towards Internally Displaced Persons (Середа, 2017b). Statistical data demonstrate that 88% IDPs integrated into the new communities, 32% partly integrated, 11% failed to integrate. The main obstacle in integration process are the difficulties in renting the flat (65% – 77% respondents in big and medium towns respectively and 57% in villages), regular income (49–54% in big and medium towns, 62% in villages), employment (41–36% in big and medium towns, 52% in villages) (Звіт, 2017b). The above presented data support the thesis on the stereotypes and myths circulating in Ukrainian society as the ones being groundless and abused by propaganda in the mass media in Russia. In order to prevent this situation and reduce tensions generated by the stereotypes in the society, issues related to IDPs need to be presented more competently in media; politicians and public actors ought to employ tolerance speech rather than hate speech, contributing to uniting Ukrainian society instead of dividing it. The events of 2014 demonstrated clearly the fact of the divisions occurring both before and after the Orange Revolution as resulting from the unfair game of Ukrainian political elites, contributing to social splits. Concurrently, the Revolution of Dignity revealed the fact that most of the divisions, including the stereotypes related to Donbass and its inhabitants, were invented deliberately to help particular politicians achieve short-term political goals. Conflict-triggering potential in many regions will be reduced if Ukrainian society becomes united, overcoming the divisions.

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Stereotypy w ukraińskim społeczeństwie w stosunku do osób wewnętrznie przemieszczonych z Donbasu

Streszczenie

W ukraińskim społeczeństwie zawsze istniały stereotypy. Główną przyczyną ich występowania były z reguły różnice w rozwoju historycznym niektórych regionów. Pod wpływem czasu niektóre stereotypy zniknęły, ale inne pojawiły się w ich miejscu. Wojna w Donbasie doprowadziła do pojawienia się nowych stereotypów, które zaczęły mocno zakorzeniać się w świadomości społecznej. Zasadniczo te stereotypy odnoszą się do osób wewnętrznie przesiedlonych (IDP) z Donbasu i mają negatywną konotację. Głównymi dostarczycielami stereotypów są osoby publiczne, działacze społeczni i media. Celem artykułu jest analiza najbardziej rozpowszechnionych stereotypów w niektórych regionach Ukrainy nieobjętych konfliktem oraz poznanie przyczyn ich wystąpienia.

Słowa kluczowe: stereotypy, osoby wewnętrznie przemieszczone, Donbas, Ukraina

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