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NEW LOCALS OR THE NEWLY-MIGRANTIZED? THE MARKERS OF THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATIONS' VISIBILITY: THE UKRAINE CASE, 2014-2021

ABSTRACT: The article analyzes internal displacement with attention to the visibility of the displaced populations in the host communities. The study is based on the Ukraine case of protracted internal displacement, during the 2014-2021 period, from the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war, and just before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. It employs the methodology of Causal Layered Analysis and secondary analysis of the national survey data on internal displacement. Regarding the distortions of visibility, I suggest hypovisibility (anopticism) and hypervisibility (panopticism), through the VASE-approach that includes visibility, access to decision-making, sense of belonging, and estimation of common perspectives as the indicators of adaptation of the newcomers in the receiving communities. The visibility of the displaced populations is reviewed through the systemic and myth/metaphor levels. The labels of “burden”, “problem” or “capital” applied to the displaced populations in the narratives and official documents are referred to as a visibility-related issue that has an impact on social cohesion.

KEYWORDS: migration, (in)visibility of displaced persons, Ukraine, protracted internal displacement, blind-spot effect, anopticism, panopticism

1. Introduction

While the framework analysis and normative evaluations of armed conflicts nowadays are reasonably centered on the negative and positive peace concepts transformation, the discussed issue goes beyond the political theory and is extremely relevant to the migration studies as well. For instance, E. Forster and I. Taylor (2021, 14) suggested a minimalist approach that implies restrictions that “largely outlawed the use of force except in cases of direct physical violence against individuals”. The idea to reduce the potentially manipulative and vague vocabulary on warfare and thus limit the legitimate reasons for wars and forceful response is backed with the reference to M. Idris’s suggestion to replace the notion of “peace” with the “honest” idea of “truce” (ibidem, 15).

At the same time, the series of internationally supported “truces” in the context of the Russia-instigated hybrid wars in Georgia and Ukraine has led, beyond some decrease in the factual violence at the contact line, to the protracted internal displacement of populations and the syndrome of their chronic awaiting the conflict resolution and further deoccupation and reintegration of the territories.

The internally displaced persons (IDPs) appear in the situation of being migrants and citizens at the same time for an indefinite period. To address it, the state systemic response to the challenge and the discourses on displacement either balances the social cohesion in the communities transformed due to the migration or further alienates¹ IDPs by putting the “migrant” component before the “citizen” one. The visibility of IDPs in communities can be related, metaphorically, to the blind-spot effect inherent in the human acquisition of reality when the eyesight efficiently compensates for the absence of visual information in the area of the optical nerve so that we can be completely unaware of the information being missed. Thus, the disappearance of the displacement-related issues from the agendas in communities with time may look like successful assimilation and was sometimes reported as such in surveys (2017-2018 2018, 9) or remained unnoticed by the communities’ members. Therefore, there is a need for a study on the visibility distortion indicators that might allow for distinguishing the successful adaptation of IDPs to the host communities from the less desirable invisibility and hypervisibility associated with the systemic colonization of the citizens’ lifeworld, however beneficial the intentions of the state representatives might be.

The present paper is grounded in the case of protracted internal displacement in Ukraine due to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 and Russia-backed armed combat in Donbas, before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In the 2016 Forced Displacement survey, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) added Ukraine to the list of the countries with the highest score of new IDPs worldwide (Global trends 2016, 30). The Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts form a region of Ukraine close or adjacent to the so-called contact line localizing the armed conflict area. The total number of the IDPs living in the oblasts, as estimated according to the 2020 National Monitoring System Report on the Situation of Internally Displaced Persons (NMS Report), is 1,053,100 (National 2020, 5). In 2020, the number of IDPs permanently living in the government-controlled areas (GCA) was estimated as the baseline figure of 730,000 (Humanitarian Needs 2020, 66). According to the data provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ukraine, the general number of IDPs in Ukraine was 1,467,720, as of May 2021 (IOM’s 2021, 1).

The internal displacement situation in Ukraine was considered protracted -in the Situation Report on Ukraine (OCHA) as of July 25, 2019 (Ukraine 2019, 5).

¹ B. Anderson (2019, 15) calls it “migrantizing”.

The local communities have been restructured due to the impact of migration-related processes. Thus, the projects, scenarios, conceptions, and strategies on social cohesion have become the focus of informational and legislative documents and reports. The United Nations Score for eastern Ukraine (USE) Index reports and the NMS Reports provide information on the trends in intergroup trust, social cohesion, and integration in Ukraine. Nevertheless, reintegration and reconciliation projects remain uncertain, due to the ongoing war and occupation of several regions of Ukraine.

The main focus of the article is on the impact of the IDPs' visibility on the social cohesion in Ukraine during the hybrid phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, 2014-2021. The article is also aimed at a wider interdisciplinary discussion on the displacement-affected vulnerable groups' visibility in communities, with consideration to otherness shifts and social capital redistribution caused by the abrupt mass influx of a displaced population.

The research question can be formulated as follows: what are the markers of visibility of the internally displaced populations that migrantize them, in comparison with other citizens?

The subquestions are as follows: could (in)visibility of IDPs in host communities affect forming the sense of belonging to the current place of residence? Could hyperattention to the group still cause disappearance from the agendas and decision-making in the communities? What deviations of visibility could be traced through the Blind-Spot Index?

Therefore, the objectives of the paper are as follows: (1) to define the aspects of IDPs' interactions with the state based on visibility; (2) to suggest the visibility deviation-tracing index structure to be incorporated into the displacement-related surveys and policies on durable solutions.

For the study, it is relevant that indicators have an impact on policy-framing, and the policy stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes, and decisions may be influenced by the indicators, though the causal connections are not always obvious, as suggested by D. J. H. te Lintelo and coauthors (2019). Thus, the ratings, rankings, watchlists, and blacklists have the potential to persuade the policy stakeholders "to underpin and/or adjust their framings of policy problems and solutions, and/or to guide programmatic and funding decisions" (*ibidem*). Thus, new policy agendas can be expressed by policy elites, once the robust indicators have been produced, promoted, implemented in non-elite stakeholders' decisions, and employed in framing the policy problems and solutions (*ibidem*). Therefore, the practical contribution of the study lies in the suggested outline of the visibility deviation-tracing index of anopticism and panopticism, to provoke a discussion on visibility transformation in the situation of a protracted displacement. Further incorporation of the index into the surveys and policies on durable solutions concerning the migration-affected persons and communities, in and outside Ukraine, can help to reach the sustainability goals

of inclusiveness and social cohesion. The theoretical contribution of the study is in reviewing the visibility of IDPs through assimilation and pseudoassimilation of the displaced populations in the host communities.

2. Materials and methods

For the purpose of the study, the focus was put on the systemic level of the post-structural method of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). The CLA approach helps to move from the litany of the newcomers' adaptation to the host communities to the deeper level leading, after S. Inayatullah, to the "policy actions that are sustainable, that is, authentically solve problems instead of merely reinscribing the current issues", and enables one to "to see the utility of developing quantifiable indicators" (Inayatullah 2004, 42-43).

As both an analytic method and a process-theory, CLA "provides an analytic tool more concerned with the 'social struggles' of specific actors than with 'purifying' theoretical rigour" (Bussey 2014, 49), and thus it can be applied to the study of migration-related group visibility and the migrants' access to the relevant decision-making. In the paper, the methodology was also used for the IDPs' visibility study as a process-theory with multiple projections of reality within the process map of the preferred future scenarios' evaluation, therefore "(1) revealing the role the context has in shaping meaning and (2) the role people have in shaping context" (Bussey 2014, 56).

Application of the futures-studies methodology to the IDPs' visibility study is justified by the current "incasting phase of the scenarios writing" (Inayatullah 2004, 42) in Ukraine. Against the background of the ongoing war, the peacebuilding and reintegration projects in Ukraine, and the durable solutions concerning the internal displacement inevitably lack the planning possibilities and are restricted in their functionality as the maps of the preferred futures.

The conflict-related migration context justifies the convenience sampling of the otherwise inaccessible population for the surveys via phone or face-to-face snowball technique (Impact of COVID-19 2020; Toward 2020, 13-15). Nevertheless, the secondary data analysis based on the surveys by IOM and the Ministry for Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons has evident limitations in the streamlined coverage of the situation. It can be justified as a source of information on the government- and policy-oriented issues during the 2014-2021 period as they were expressed in the questions to the IDPs in the GCA during the interviews. Moreover, the inaccessibility to reliable data on the communities in the NGCA made it impossible to estimate the level of internal displacement within the occupied area and the relations between the IDPs and host communities in the NGCA (Humanitarian Needs 2020, 66; The difficulties of counting 2018).

The main source of information on IDPs in Ukraine is the National Monitoring System Report on the Situation of Internally Displaced Persons. Rounds 12-17 of the report have been analyzed to trace the interrelations between the IDPs and the host community (trust, sense of belonging) and the IDPs' access to decision-making.

3. The IDPs' visibility and social cohesion: literature review

The responsible shared practices, community-restructuring among them, have an impact on futurity and sustainability and, therefore, can be understood as follows: “[w]ithin the shared space, the futurity is the horizon of the still to-be-determined collective fate of subjects and their attachments – which first introduces the primary ethical and political question, ‘how shall I live?’” (Groves 2019, 921). The IDPs' visibility distortions have recently become the focus of migration studies on many affected countries worldwide, for instance, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria (Jones et al. 2019; Njiru 2018; Olanrewaju et al. 2019; Steele 2018). The publications dwell upon the IDPs' targeting and consequences of an increase in the number of IDPs in host communities, as well as IDP-status limitations and invisibility of the IDPs in host communities to government. Moreover, the relevant aspects of the adaptive potential of visibility and its relation to social marking, normalcy, otherness, and vulnerability have been studied by B. Perry in the context of Islamophobic violence in Canada (Perry 2015), and by S. Wallengren et al. in the context of Roma individuals' interactions with the communities (Wallengren et al. 2020).

On the myth/metaphor level of CLA, the frames and images created in the discourses should be taken into account. While in the media texts, the politically laden images are polyphonic and open to interpretation (Krapivnyk 2020, 117), the official discourses and legislative acts produce conceptual frames for the situation and actors' evaluation. P. Pietnoczka's (2019) analysis of the program priorities of the candidates before the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2019 revealed that the candidates widely referred to the territorial integrity and deoccupation issues in terms of the international organizations' support. At the same time, in Ukraine, the metaphor of “burden” was applied to IDPs in the national official discourses (Про утворення 2019; Про затвердження 2018; Про схвалення 2017). The narrative-enhanced polarization of this kind is of importance for the study as it can have an impact on the integration and reintegration scenarios and the durable solutions.

In the paper, both integrational and extraintegrational visibility-related factors are considered. They include the axiological and juridical aspects of the impact of language, identity, and political preferences on the sense of belonging to a community. For instance, the IDPs' vulnerabilities, displacement-related disadvantages, and choice ranges were described by R. Sabates-Wheeler (2019).

K. MacKay (2020) studied the authenticity conditions built into autonomy, as well as the influence of narratives on the co-created personhoods, especially in the context of oppressive socialization (MacKay 2020, 361-363).

A. Favell (2019) and R. Penninx (2019) in their publications dwell upon the integration and adaptation issues in the migration context and the interrelation between host communities and migrants. It is necessary to mention that assimilation and social cohesion in the context of the article refer to an acculturation experience when individuals “do not wish to maintain their cultural identity” and keep to the strategy of adopting “the cultural values, norms, and traditions of a new society” (Sam and Berry 2010, 476). To be exact, social cohesion in the study implies “the quality of relationships between individuals and groups in society (horizontal aspect) and also between people and the institutions that serve them (vertical aspect)” (Social cohesion 2020, 2) and is understood after the basic notion of the UN Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE) for eastern Ukraine.

The analysis of the hybrid war context leading to the protracted internal displacement in Ukraine and relevant to the study is present in the following publications: Bazaluk 2017; Dodonov | Kovalskyi | Dodonova et al. 2017. The works that describe the internal displacement in Ukraine in terms of alienation and adaptation in the host communities include those by S. Balinchenko (2019; 2021), K. Ivashchenko-Stadnik (2017), and K. Krakhmalova (2016).

In Ukraine, there are some obstacles on the way to the implementation of durable solutions. One of them is the lack of possibilities for the host communities to formally include IDPs as residents due to the current registration system (Inclusion 2020, 3). Nevertheless, since 2019, there have been some positive changes in the electoral legislation to enable the IDPs’ participation in the local elections in the host communities, regardless of the registration (Vyborchyy kodeks 2019). Thus, the general shifts in the understanding of belonging to a community and the reevaluation of the Soviet-rooted registration system in Ukraine were mostly triggered by the need to search for durable solutions in the situation of the massive internal displacement of the populations.

There were some relevant shifts on the systemic level as well. One of the earlier projects was a pilot study of the internally displaced persons integration index that took place in 2018 and was based on the information on 20 Ukrainian cities with a significant share of IDPs to the locals (Internally 2018). The indicators collected helped to evaluate access to infrastructure, the capability of local authorities, and infrastructure (ibidem). At the same time, the results show that the correlation between the indicators requires a further study. For instance, Uzhhorod was the leader in access to infrastructure with lower levels of capability and cooperation. Lviv was the first in the capability rating in the sample and has one of the lowest levels of infrastructure access and cooperation level. Mariupol and Severodonetsk were rated the first in the cooperation and got medium in the capacity and infrastructure access (Internally 2018a).

In October 2020, in Ukraine, a discussion on the provisions of the Strategy project of IDPs' Integration and Durable Solutions for 2021-2023 (Міністерство реінтеграції 2020) was launched to substitute for the previous Strategy of the IDPs' Integration and Durable Solutions that expired in December 2020 (Pro skhvalennya 2017). The new Strategy aimed to improve the state policy in the sphere of IDPs protection and the application of the due and achievable measures to solve the “*problem*” of internal displacement and its consequences and provide support for the host communities.

Thus, both positive (“social capital”) and negative (“burden”, “strain”, “problem”) concepts were applied to the displacement-affected groups in the officially-supported narratives in Ukraine in 2014-2021. To assess the IDPs' visibility as a distinction between marked and unmarked persons (Brighenti 2007, 334-335) in the social space, the markers of the IDPs' migration-specific vulnerability, adaptation, participation, and belonging to a community will be considered and outlined in the next section.

4. Findings: the VASE-approach project

4.1. The VASE-approach to the visibility of vulnerable groups

The assimilation of the displaced populations in the host communities can be influenced by the newcomers' alienation due to the migration-specific contexts. Based on the data of the National monitoring system reports on the situation of internally displaced persons in Ukraine, a set of indicators have been suggested to trace the visibility of the displaced populations through the Blind-spot Index (the anopticism and panopticism index – Bazaluk | Balinchenko 2019) as the basis for detection of anopticism or panopticism resulting from the implication of institutional means in the situation of the protracted displacement (Fig. 1).

Hence, the factors of Visibility of the IDPs in the agendas (V), Access to power and decision-making (A), Sense of belonging to the community (S), and Estimation of the common perspectives (E) can be understood as the supportive components of a sustainable and cohesive social space. The application of a complex V A S E approach (an acronym of the factors) to a representation of the newcomers within a restructured receiving community can also help to track the visibility distortions and maintain the balance between the institutional means of the displacement regulation, on the systemic level, and the imaginative contexts of otherness acquisition on the myth/metaphor level. Therefore, the multifaceted view of the possible misbalances of the components could allow projecting the hypo- and hypervisibility of the vulnerable group before either anopticism or panopticism having cumulative systemic effects on the society.

The indicators of Visibility in the agendas (V), Access to power and decision-making (A), Sense of belonging (S), Estimation of common perspectives (E)

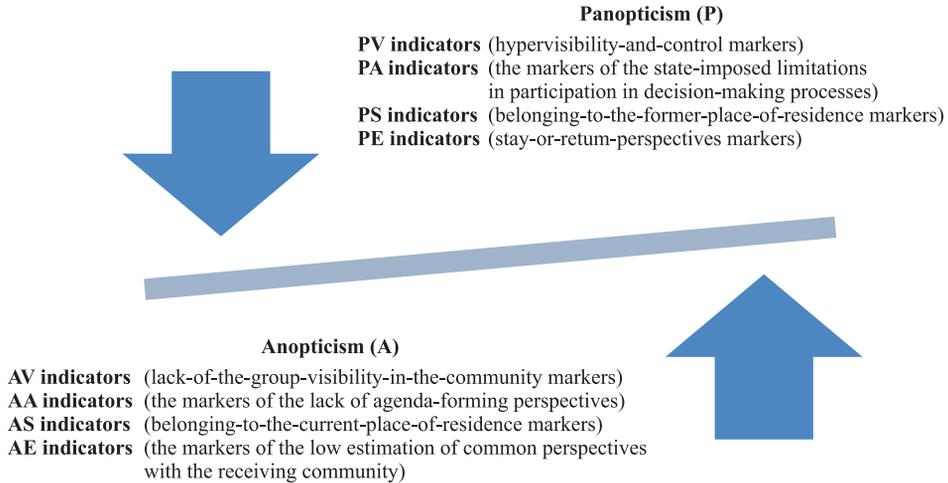


Figure 1. The VASE-approach to the markers of the IDPS' visibility distortions

Within the wider scope of potential implication, the index of anopticism and panopticism (the Blind-spot Index) can be further studied in social philosophy and applied in migration studies and policy evaluations for measuring the group-authority relations to detect the situations of the in-/hypo-/hypervisibility of the migration-affected vulnerable groups. The VASE-approach requires further discussion of the applicability of the indicator set to the various displacement contexts beyond the Ukrainian one, and the possible implementation of the anopticism and panopticism detection instruments into the surveys on the migration-related challenges.

4.2. The indicators of the Blind-spot Index and their application

The Blind-spot Index is a project of the criteria to assess the visibility of vulnerable groups, for instance, IDPs, in communities. An issue to discuss further is whether the disappearance of vulnerable groups from agendas in communities should be associated with successful assimilation and adaptation or visibility distortion (the blind-spot effect).

The situation of the protracted internal displacement in Ukraine can serve as an illustration to the field of the potential application of the above-mentioned VASE-approach. Therefore, for a discussion, I suggest reviewing the anopticism and panopticism-triggered changes through the following set of indicators. The criteria mentioned in the VASE-approach description are considered in A (anopticism) or P (panopticism) variants.

General visibility of the vulnerable groups affected by migration (V)

AV-indicators – the anopticism effects on the visibility. They can be traced when the vulnerable groups disappear from the agendas on the legal grounds that they have the same rights as other citizens. The decrease in the displacement-related topic of public discussions is associated in the surveys on social cohesion with integration into the community, though there is a possibility of some specific vulnerabilities being unaddressed. For instance, the IDPs' necessity to rent an apartment may seem a challenge similar to those of locals if we do not consider the displacement-intensified challenges such as the IDPs' lack or absence of the social and family links in the place of their current residence after displacement.

PV-indicators – the panopticism effects on the visibility – include living conditions evaluations that imply control over private life and movement for the resettled persons to get the IDP status-associated benefits.

Access to power and decision-making (A)

AA-indicators – the anopticism effects on the access – include a lack of agenda-forming perspectives for addressing the specific migration-related challenges. If the displaced persons have a limited impact on decision-making, especially in the regions where the share of the IDPs is relatively low, the displacement-related disadvantages become mingled with the similar local ones in the spheres of employment, education, and income.

PA-indicators – the panopticism effects on the access – point out the state-imposed limitations for the IDPs to participate in the decision-making processes. The lack of legal possibilities of residential registration in the current place of residence while being registered in the occupied regions has an impact on adaptation and sense of belonging. Limited access to policy framing is another example of a PA-indicator, and the narratives of “burden” are important in the case as they picture a destabilizing image of the IDPs in the host communities. It should also be noted that some issues of the IDPs' participation in local elections and getting medical care locally had been rooted in the registration system (*propyska*) adopted from the Soviet period but they were successfully addressed in Ukraine in 2019 and 2020.

Sense of belonging to the place of residence (S)

AS-indicators – the anopticism effects on the sense of belonging – include the sense of belonging to the current place of residence. The indicator could help to trace the situations in communities when resettled persons are not regarded prospectively, in terms of possible reintegration into the community of refuge, for

instance, after a cessation of the current conflict. It could be the reason for the current issues not to be duly addressed, being considered non-specific and irrelevant for the community in general.

PS-indicators – the panopticism effects on the sense of belonging – imply the policymakers' assumption of the displaced populations as belonging to the former place of residence. The indicator could help reveal the situations when the resettled persons are controlled as being socially hazardous concerning their region of origin and in the context of the past and/or current situation in the former place of residence.

Estimation of common perspectives (E)

AE-indicators – the anopticism effects on the estimation of the common perspectives with the community – include adherence to the biases associated with the group in the host community. Lack of vulnerable group visibility endangers effective policies implementation. For instance, the current residential registration system in Ukraine makes it difficult to estimate the exact picture of a territorial community (hromada) population. It slowed down the application of the decentralization efforts on the local level during the 2014-2021 period.

PE-indicators – the anopticism effects on the estimation of the common perspectives with the community – could help to outline a lack of deliberation and the biases concerning the stay/return perspectives. On the myth/metaphor level, the perspectives are framed as a set of concepts invading the policies in a mythologeme-like way. For instance, the mythologemes of historical, language- and ideology-based contradictions between the populations from different regions appear in the agendas of the opposing political parties. Another indicator is that reintegration, reconciliation, and durable solutions were realized during the period analyzed as state-imposed means lacking public engagement and evaluation on the local level.

The set of indicators is meant to summarize the visibility-related aspects of social cohesion evaluation with attention to the vulnerable groups such as IDPs that are prone to be omitted from the agendas with time, regardless of the specific challenges.

Conclusions and recommendations

The displaced populations' access to the decision-making in their current communities and the elimination of the contradictions associated with the official, registered, and actual place of residence can be viewed from the angle of the groups' visibility and its distortions, hypovisibility (anopticism), and hypervisibility (panopticism). The correlation between the administrative regulation of the displacement issues and the myth/metaphor approach to migrants as a "burden" or a "problem" could be considered through the visibility-related criteria.

Due to the full-scale Russian invasion and ongoing war, the migration situation in Ukraine changes rapidly. The indicators can be applied for a further adjustment of the new Strategy regulating internal displacement and for the much-needed registration reform in Ukraine afterwards. The study results can also be of interest for the civil society activists, in and outside Ukraine, to promote the attitude towards the IDPs and other migrants as the human-capital-bearers and not as individual survivors, victims of the war, or a burden to the receiving community.

The set of the indicators suggested in the paper – visibility in the agendas, access to power and decision-making, sense of belonging, estimation of common perspectives – could be further analyzed, adjusted, and included in the national and regional surveys on the internal displacement to test the issues of the assimilation, accommodation, or integration of the IDPs in the host communities. The further blind spot effect study using the suggested indicators could be focused on the issues of the Sustainability Goals 16.3, 16.7, and 16.9 (Transforming 2015, 25). It might enhance the communication with the international donors on the migration-affected communities' needs and capacities.

The further research question based on the visibility evaluation in the migration-changed communities could be formulated as follows: are migrants' needs and claims considered in the durable solutions, policies, and practical discourses as authentic ones, reflected as abstract patterns or constructed instrumentally?

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