



Donbas Studies Summer School 2019: *The Plant Gave Us Everything: the role of art and community engagement in the cultural transformation of Donbas monotowns*

23 June - 6 July

De-industrialization and Conflict in Donbas: Capacity building in Ukraine to make Donbas (mono)towns inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Centre, Kyiv, Ukraine; CRSCEES at the University of St Andrews, UK; Center for Urban History of East Central Europe, Lviv, Ukraine)

The Donbas Studies Summer School is a school for young researchers and artists with a special focus on the cultural potential of the communities of monofunctional cities of the Donbas, namely: Sievierodonetsk, Lysychansk and Rubizhne.

Main themes: the (mono)town, the revitalisation of (post)industrial spaces, cultural and creative practices for building communities, cultural memory, cultural studies, the transformation of public spaces and sustainable urban ecosystems.

“The plant gave me everything: it gave me a flat, and a life, my kids are working, the lads, doing no worse than their father. So I have something to be proud of,” says one of the characters in Piotr Armianovsky’s film [In the East](#) (2015). The city around the plant, the city after the plant...What is a *monotown*, how does a city-forming enterprise affect the life of a community and its ideas of the past and future? Deindustrialisation and conflict are the main challenges faced by the communities of the monofunctional cities of the Donbas today. What is the role of cultural and artistic practices in defining and redefining cultural identity in this context?

As initiatives that have already taken place in the region show, the successful revitalisation of local cultural economies is only possible from within the community. Culture and art are key instruments in this process since they model new approaches to developing a shared future for the community, and, at the same time, unite the community and establish a common sense of identity in the city. Although temporary cultural interventions rarely result in high-quality transformations, they help build sustainable connections between individuals and institutions. For example, talking about the Centre

for Contemporary Art in Sieverodonetsk ([an installation piece](#) where the artists fenced off some land in the town and put up posters announcing the establishment of a non-existent art centre), an inhabitant of the city identified the need for institutions that support the development of the community's potential: "Without art people degenerate". Thus, art and culture are the foundations of civil society.

Goals:

- Strengthening of the potential of local activists and the creation of new opportunities for their growth via interregional and international collaborations;
- The creation of a space for the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and practices;
- Research of urban and regional identities and post-industrial transformation;
- Gaining an understanding of the cultural and political peculiarities of an industrial region and participation in the formation of media discourse;
- Reflecting on artistic and research practices, the way we use them and their possibility of being employed from within the community rather than as tools by external actors;
- The advancement of values connected to the preservation of heritage and the creation of new forms of community cooperation within a formerly industrial region;

STRUCTURE

The theoretical element of the school will take place in Kyiv. Seminar themes and leaders may include the following (participation is dependent on funding):

- Life After the Plant: the revitalisation of the industrial heritage objects; [Dr Irina Sklokina](#) (Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe)
- Cultural memory and identity in transformation; [Dr Victoria Donovan](#) (University of St Andrews)
- The Political and the Aesthetic in the construction of sustainable communities; ([Dr Jeffrey Murer](#) (University of St Andrews)
- Public history: [Dr Mykola Borovyk](#) (Taras Shevchenko National University) (To be confirmed)

Field work will take place in Sieverodonetsk, Lysychank and Rubizhne. Field work activities may include: visits to the Nitrogen Museum, the Mining Museum, Shakhmatnoe, the Rubizhne dye plant, a meeting with local photographers, taxi-quest.

The result of the school will be group and individual project-reflections about the situation in post-industrial regions, both in Ukraine and other parts of Europe. The intention is that these projects will stimulate the further local initiatives and present models for making art and undertaking cultural initiatives with minimal resources and the active participation of the local community. It is hoped that participants at the school will not only work on studying the local context through their practice, but will also help shape the local community's understanding of their own history, legacy, landscape and environment.

Who can apply? Artists, curators, researchers, NGO activists, urbanists, students, and postgraduates, as well as people who were born, live or are familiar with the cities of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

The school's working languages: Russian, Ukrainian, English.