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## **The Semantic Space of Donbas: From “Wild Field” to “Atlantis”**

### **Abstract**

*The study aims to analyse the semantic transformations of Donbas and the factors that led to the formation of regional identity – the colonisation of the “Wild Field”, Soviet industrialisation and the collapse of the region during the Russo-Ukrainian war. The article examines how semantic transformations in the region’s toponymy and mnemotopes, together with the powerful ideological policy of the Soviet Union, led to the intensification of self-isolation processes in the region, especially after the collapse of the USSR, and made it vulnerable to modern Russian aggression.*

*The results of the study are of significant theoretical value and can be used to develop a clearly defined state strategy for the development of the Ukrainian sociocultural space, which would prevent any cultural or based on regional-identity self-isolation of any Ukrainian region.*

**Keywords:** national identity, values, globalisation, cultural dimension, identity, sociocultural practices, sociocultural transformations, war, cultural dimension, interdisciplinarity, cultural problems, democratic society, totalitarian societies, disinformation.

**Formulation of the problem.** The Russo-Ukrainian war, precipitated in 2014, despite its scale and hybrid nature, was long categorised as a localised conflict within certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. And this is even though the full-scale Russian invasion that began on 24 February 2022 has expanded the geographical scope boundaries of hostilities to the whole of Ukraine and is actively influencing the geopolitical situation in the world. Now, in the fourth year of full-scale Russian aggression and the 12th year of the Russo-Ukrainian war, despite all the changes in the fighting, the main theatre of war is still the eastern part of Ukraine. Furthermore, if we consider the statements made by various public officials and the direct statements of Russian President Vladimir Putin on the need for “Ukrainian troops to withdraw from Donbas”, we can conclude that the localised nature of the war has not disappeared, but only its scale has changed.

**The aim of the study.** This study seeks to deconstruct the semantic space of Donbas, not only as a region but also as an idea and a myth. Its sociocultural space extends from the frontier exploration of the steppe (Wild Field) by adventure seekers in the 16th and 17th centuries, with the subsequent development of this region as one of the most powerful industrial centres of the Soviet Union and independent Ukraine, until its stagnation during the Russo-Ukrainian war. In our opinion, the study of sociocultural practices would make it possible to identify the factors, other than the obvious geographical location, that eventually led to a more active spread of the ideas of the “Russkiy Mir” than in other regions of Ukraine and will also make it possible to develop a strategy for the reintegration of the occupied territories and create conditions and a sociocultural environment that would prevent a repeat of the so-called “Russian Spring” scenario.

**The methodology** used in this article is based on an interdisciplinary approach, which allows for a comprehensive study of Donbas as a sociocultural, geographical, symbolic, and historical phenomenon. The integration perspective includes a semiotic method that deciphers Donbas as a sign system with a list of symbolic dominants that have determined the image of the region in different historical periods. The historical-analytical method allows us to trace the evolution and transformation of the socio-cultural space of Donbas in a historical perspective. The observation method used reveals the specifics of social phenomena. Therefore, the methodology used allows us to study various spheres of the region’s life in a cultural context.

**State of scientific development.** Before providing a list of recent publications, we consider it relevant to note that research on Donbas as a separate socio-cultural space after Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022 is no longer relevant. The main reason for this is the region’s integration into the Russian social-cultural space with its typical practices: the cult of death, the cult of strength, and the cult of the leader, followed by the militarisation of all aspects of life.

Nevertheless, this transformation does not negate the necessity of retrospective research of the socio-cultural space of Donbas in the period preceding the full-scale invasion, and particularly the period preceding the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

With that in mind, we should point out that there's been a small amount of recent research (from 2022 to now) on this topic. As for the existing studies, most of them cover the early years of the Russo-Ukrainian war. One of the first comprehensive scientific studies on this topic was conducted by the Kuras Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and presented to the public in a book entitled *Donbas in the Ethnopolitical Dimension* (2014). The main goal of the researchers is to

reveal the connection between ethnicity and politics in the genesis of the composition, employment and socio-professional stratification, linguistic, cultural, and religious orientations and preferences, regional identity, and characteristics of social behaviour of the population of the Donbas region of Ukraine. A set of proposals regarding the conditions and methods for reintegrating Donbas and its population into the social space of Ukraine has been substantiated (Kotyhorenko 2014, 9).

Eastern Ukraine is usually associated with a contradictive border region, the native field of the *frontier studies*. In such a dimension, we should name the works of Hiroaki Kuromiya (1998), Oleksiy Sukhomlynov (2008), Yaroslava Vermenych (2023), etc.

The study of the socio-cultural space of Donbas as one of the most representative forms of frontier was presented in Yaroslava Vermenych's article “Donbas in the Context of Frontier Theories: A Socio-Humanitarian Analysis” (2015). In this work, the author conducts a detailed analysis of how the frontier nature of this region influenced the peculiarities of individuals' lives and ultimately the formation of the so-called “regional identity”. At the same time, in addition to the analysis of the frontier nature, there are questions about the author's theses that the central “authorities were in no hurry to understand the people of Donetsk and Luhansk” (Vermenych 2015, 129) and “the need to take into account in their policy the objective growth of the regional factor in eastern Ukraine” (Vermenych 2015, 129). Without sharing Yaroslava Vermenych's theses presented above, the author of this article considers it necessary to highlight this position as an example of the pluralism of opinions in the Ukrainian scientific community of that period.

Vladlen Maraiev's work “Deconstructing of the Russian Historical Myth about Donbas and Crimea as ‘Gifted Lands’ for Ukraine” (2023) and Olena Bondareva's work “Overcoming Stereotypes about Ukrainian/Non-Ukrainian Donbas in Contemporary Ukrainian Literary, Artistic, and Essayistic Practices and Cultural Diplomacy Actions” (2021) were written on the eve of and during the full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war and are devoted not only to analysing the socio-cultural past of Donbas, but also to debunking myths and narratives associated with this region, which are actively used by Russia to legitimise its aggression.

We would also like to point out the significant creative output of Ukrainian artists, most of whom were born, grew up, and spent their youth in Donbas, a home they had to leave behind when the region was occupied by Russia in 2014 and, sadly, again in 2022. This is primarily the artistic work of Ukrainian

writer, musician, and current soldier in the Khartia Brigade, Serhiy Zhadan. In all his works, Zhadan, in his characteristic manner, depicts the fates of cities, villages, Donbas, Ukraine, and people — in general, everything and everyone who found themselves caught in the grip of history. The work “I Will Mix Your Blood with Coal” (2016) by Oleksandr Mykhed represents the author’s journey to eastern Ukraine, followed by a retelling of its history through the voices of workers, miners, teachers, and artists who lived and worked there.

It should also be noted that audiovisual art forms, such as films and songs related to the Donbas region, are also important. Among the long list, we consider it appropriate to once again mention the film *Atlantis*<sup>1</sup> (2019), which depicts the dystopian reality and socio-economic crisis in which Donbas finds itself in the hypothetical year 2025, directed by Ukrainian director Valentyn Vasyanovych.

The film *Cyborgs* (2017) by Akhtem Seitablaiev is about the defenders of Donetsk Airport. Musical compositions are primarily dedicated to the hostilities in eastern Ukraine. Among the works of recent years, the song “*Za terykonamy*”<sup>2</sup> (2023) by the Ukrainian group Miusli UA stands out. The lyrics were written by soldier Mykhailo Stasula in 2022 during the battles near Maryinka. The chorus of this song best conveys the semantic significance of Donbas during the Russo-Ukrainian war (Miusli UA 2023):

*Za terykonamy, za terykonamy*  
*Tam, de viyna ide.*  
*(За териконами, за териконами,*  
*Там, де війна іде)*<sup>3</sup>

**Presentation of the main body of the study. Donbas as a symbol of Ukrainian resilience: the beginning of war.** We consider it relevant to begin this study by clarifying that when we refer to Donbas, we mean the territorial boundaries defined by the current borders of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which actually form the basis of this region. Our second thesis is that Donbas has become one of the main symbols of resistance to Russian aggression. And it was in this region that the Ukrainian nation and its state began their fight for independence. The socio-political instability in 2014 gave Russia the opportunity to launch a military operation to annex Crimea and, together with the local pro-Russian population, attempt to occupy certain areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. However, while the annexation of Crimea took place almost bloodlessly, the struggle for Donbas and Ukrainian independence was only just beginning.

<sup>1</sup> *The movie shows the lives of people living in Donbas. The main characters are Serhii, a former soldier trying to find himself, and Kateryna, a volunteer searching for the bodies of dead soldiers. The events of the film take place in eastern Ukraine in 2025, one year after Ukraine’s victory in the war. Russian aggression led to the closure and flooding of mines, which ultimately resulted in an environmental disaster, people exhausted by war and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and land covered with mines and the remains of soldiers that need to be reburied.*

<sup>2</sup> *Slagheap, spoil tip.*

<sup>3</sup> *Behind the slag tips, behind the slag tips,*  
*Where the war is raging.*

The official start of armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine can be considered 13 April 2014, when “...in the battle near Sloviansk, the Ukrainian military opened fire on the enemy for the first time in the war. Mykola Lavrenchuk follows Vadym Sukharevskyi’s order and fires the first shots of the war from the Vladimirov heavy tank machine gun (KPVT)”<sup>4</sup> (Butusov 2024). It is interesting that the beginning of the first (2014–2022) and second (2022 – present) phases of the Russo-Ukrainian war are consistent in their absent lexical attitude towards the enemy.

The full-scale phase of the war began with the eloquent negotiations of a border guard from Zmiinyi Island, who sent the “Russian warship” on a course that is recognisable today. At the same time, the beginning of Ukrainian resistance and the Russo-Ukrainian war began with a phrase that was shared with the public by Yurii Butusov, editor of the online publication Censor.Net and now a military officer. The order to open fire, given by then-senior lieutenant and now colonel and Commander of the Unmanned Systems Forces, Vadym Sukharevsky was, verbatim: “What the fuck are you looking at?! Shoot!” (Butusov 2024).

Incidentally, the same lexical and semantic characterisation of Donbas as a region was given much earlier, in 2002, during a football match between FC Dynamo Kyiv and FC Shakhtar Donetsk, in which the team from Donetsk won 2-0. At that time, Viktor Yanukovych, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, said, “I will say the words that they love in Donbas: *Donbas poroznyak ne gonit!*”<sup>5</sup> (Genialnyi Shuler 2013).

In 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a similar remark. At a press conference dedicated to the Minsk Agreements, the Kremlin leader emphasised that any attempts by Ukraine to suppress the so-called “Luhansk People Republic” (LPR) and “Donetsk People Republic” (DPR) by force would fail: “There is a well-known phrase: ‘*Donbas poroznyak ne gonit!*’. It’s a bit of a hooligan phrase. Well, proud people live there” (Beha 2019). The use of such slang phrases should be perceived as an important part of the socio-cultural space of this region, primarily as a personification of the dichotomy “friend” – “stranger”, because a “stranger” will never know such an expression. Ultimately, when one of “their own” becomes president of the country, as was the case with Viktor Yanukovych, any of his actions are perceived as aimed at improving the welfare of “their own”, which corresponds to the policy of nepotism that was characteristic of Ukrainian political circles on the eve of the Revolution of Dignity:

Only 7.5% of Donbas residents supported the Orange Revolution in 2004 (for comparison: in Halychyna, this figure was 81.7%, and in Kyiv, 48.1%) and 12.3% supported the Revolution of Dignity (compared to 94.3% of Halychan’s and 60.4% of Kyiv residents) (Libanova and Dmytrenko 2015, 23).

The survey data presented indicate a lack of support for actions that are, firstly, incomprehensible and, secondly, would harm the welfare of “their own”. At the same time, there is a significant third factor, which is primarily

<sup>4</sup> KPVT – krupnokalibernyi pulemet Vladimirova tankovyi.

<sup>5</sup> “*Donbas doesn’t speak empty words*” (our translation).

represented by the interests of Russia, for Putin, as a person who seeks to restore the borders of the USSR. From his point of view, the whole of Ukraine is “his” because he needs it completely to fulfil his goal. The occupation of the Donbas region is the first step in conquering Ukraine.

It is useful to begin our chronological examination of the semantic space of Donbas at a time when these lands were not yet under the influence of the Soviet authoritarian regime, whose industrialisation ambitions transformed Donbas and its mineral resources into one of the leading proletarian myths.

**“Wild Field”: the frontier stage of the formation of the socio-cultural space of Donbas (16th–19th centuries).** Long before the construction of any manufacturing or mining facilities, these lands were a wild steppe region known as the “Wild Field”, which served as a symbolic border between the agricultural civilisation of the West and the nomadic East. But this did not prevent these harsh lands from attracting many, as we would call them today, adventurers who, for various reasons, set out to seek a better life in these lands. Finally,

active colonisation of the region began during the war led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, when thousands of peasants from Right-Bank Ukraine were fleeing the war to the lands of modern-day Donetsk Oblast. This process gained considerable momentum after the Bila Tserkva Agreement of 1651, when the Polish nobility began to return to Ukraine to their former estates (Nikolaets 2011, 198).

The reform of 1861 gave a further boost to this region’s development. Shortly after, along with the existing enterprises for the extraction of various minerals, mainly coal, large-scale metallurgical factories gradually began to appear. Nevertheless, adventurers, who were still the main labour force in the region, came here searching for work rather than fleeing or seeking adventure. It was during this period of rapid development in the region that a situation arose that directly influenced the modern development of Ukrainian nationhood.

Ukrainian researcher Yuriy Nikolaets, in his study “The Historical Memory of Donbas” (2011), notes that

in Donbas, approximately 70% of workers were immigrants from the Great Russian provinces. Entrepreneurs were mostly interested in immigrant workers, as it was more difficult for them to leave their jobs. The participation of Russian miners in the exploitation of coal deposits gradually began to be used to change perceptions of Donbas, which involved “erasing the memory” of the participation of Ukrainian Cossacks in the development of the region and the role of immigrants from modern Ukrainian regions in the construction of defence lines against nomads and the maintenance of military units (Nikolaets 2011, 202).

As a result, the large number of migrants who were uprooted from their homeland and resettled in a place characterised by harsh working conditions and constant threats to their lives contributed to the formation of “separation” as one of the fundamental features of the so-called “regional identity”.

Once they found themselves in the factory cauldron, Russians, Ukrainians, and Greeks gradually became denationalised, losing the holistic worldview of the peasant and failing to acquire the skills of the city dweller. The symbiosis of residual patriarchy and radical, egalitarian sentiments created an explosive mixture that was skilfully exploited for their own interests by both left-wing radicals of various stripes and right-wing conservatives — the Black Hundreds (Vermenych 2015, 119).

**Soviet “Atlantis”: an industrial myth and its socio-cultural implications.** Nevertheless, Donbas has undergone the most significant sociocultural transformations during the Soviet period. The Soviet authorities’ desire to create a homogeneous Soviet identity, in which work and service to the state played a central role, had a significant impact on the formation of the sociocultural space of this region. Ultimately, “the artificial ‘halo of glory’ it created around the work of metallurgists and miners, together with a system of awards, distribution of housing and necessities based on ‘labour indicators’, created an atmosphere of patriotic fervour in which workers felt they were masters not only of their own destiny” (Vermenych 2015, 121).

Consequently, these changes also affected the renaming of cities: Yuzivka became Stalino, Mariupol became Zhdanov, and Luhansk became Voroshilovgrad. In other words, instead of names associated with geographical features that reflected the creation of a cultural space in the place of the “Wild Field”, such as Luhansk, named after the Luhansk River, or in honour of the founders of the cities, such as Yuzivka (now Donetsk), which was founded by British engineer John Hughes, the new names no longer glorified human labour but rather leading party figures: Zhdanov, Voroshilov, Stalin, etc. (one of the few exceptions was Soledar, which during the Soviet era was renamed in honour of one of the leaders of the labour movement, Karl Liebknecht).

It should be emphasised that the planned economy, with its strict requirements for production and sometimes even overproduction (the famous phrase “Five-year plan in four years!”), led to a situation in which the life of the individual was levelled out. Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Rafeyenko, who was born and lived in Donetsk for most of his life, believes that it was precisely the lack of a human-centered approach by the Soviet authorities that led to

the so-called working environment being organised to meet economic requirements. People as individuals were never of particular interest here. The main and decisive factor was their professional and business suitability. All other aspects of personality were ignored. Even with the label “enemy of the people”, you had a good chance of getting a job in a mine in those days. And while you were working there, you could count on the special department not making any special claims against you (Rafeyenko 2014).

It is also noteworthy that in 2011, Rafeyenko wrote a book titled “The Demons of Descartes”, which took place in a fictional city called “Z”, modelled after his native Donetsk. Interestingly, the book ended with troops entering this fictional city. From today’s perspective, it can be said that the choice of the city’s name and the mention of the use of troops were surprisingly prophetic. However,

even the perception of people as mere cogwheels in the production machine did not hinder the rapid development of the region, especially its urban and industrial capacities. At the same time, it was this fast growth, combined with a planned economy, that created favourable living conditions for the average person, in which the most important thing was confidence in the future: guaranteed employment with the possibility of obtaining living space, decent wages, and other social privileges in exchange for extremely hard work. The guarantee in the formation of a working-class community was the state policy of the USSR, which was aimed at the “merger of nations” and whose slogan was “the dying out of national languages” (Kotyhorenko 2014, 139). The brief period of Ukrainization in the 1920s was replaced by a policy of rapid Russification of the region, which began in the 1950s. At the end of the 1980s,

the overall picture for Donetsk Oblast was as follows: there were 634,300 schoolchildren in total, with 15,995 attending Ukrainian-language schools, meaning that only 2.5% of pupils were taught in Ukrainian. These schools did not have the necessary equipment, had not been replenished with teachers for decades, and, understandably, could not be considered prestigious (Kotyhorenko 2014, 139).

The struggle of the *Shistdesiatnyky*<sup>6</sup> movement, like any other effort to defend national identity, clearly demonstrated what true “friendship between nations” in the USSR meant: accusations of “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism”, arrests, long prison sentences, as was the case with Ivan Dziuba, and ultimately the physical elimination of certain individuals, as happened to Vasyl Stus. The socio-political processes on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union also became the starting point for the collapse of this industrial “Atlantis”. At the same time, it should be noted that Ukraine’s declaration of independence was supported by most residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Table 1

**Comparison of the results of the All-Ukrainian referendum  
on 1 December 1991 in Ukraine as a whole and in the Luhansk Oblast  
(Kotyhorenko 2014, 170)**

	Voted		Yes (persons, %)		No (persons, %)		Invalid	
	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%
All-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991 in Ukraine	31891742	84.1	28804071	90.32	241754	7.58	670117	2.10
All-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991 in Luhansk Oblast	1682344	80.65	1410894	83.86	225589	13.41	45861	2.73

<sup>6</sup> Shistdesiatnyky or Sixtiers. This term refers to the generation of Ukrainian intellectuals who were trying to reawake national consciousness in the 1960s.

Table 2

**Comparison of the results of the All-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991 in Ukraine as a whole and in the Donetsk Oblast (Kotyhorenko 2014, 170)**

	Voted		Yes (persons, %)		No (persons, %)		Invalid	
	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%	persons	%
All-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991 in Ukraine	31891742	84.18	28804071	90.32	241754	7.58	670117	2.10
All-Ukrainian referendum on 1 December 1991 in Donetsk Oblast	2957372	76.73	2481157	83.90	372157	12.58	104,058	3.52

**The Downfall of “Atlantis”: From Independence to Occupation (1991–2014).** The almost unanimity of the vote shows that people wanted change and hoped that their socio-economic situation would improve significantly in the new sovereign state. However, the demise of “Atlantis” stretched out in time and space, and the collapse culminated with Russia’s occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast in 2014 and the full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022.

As early as the 1990s, it became clear that Donbas, producing 1/5 of all industrial output, was on the verge of economic disaster. The density of harmful emissions from industrial enterprises reached 60 t/km<sup>2</sup> and was almost 9 times higher than the average for Ukraine. More than 100 hectares of land were occupied by landfills and dumps, but not a single plant for the processing and disposal of toxic waste had been built (Vermenysh 2015, 124).

The 1990s were marked by the rapid privatisation of various city-forming enterprises in Donbas. This phenomenon was known as “*prihvatization*”<sup>7</sup> and was characterised by their extensive exploitation, which led to an even greater socio-economic crisis in the region. The Ukrainian government also implemented a program to close unprofitable mines, which led to a further deterioration of the situation. In the end, the new local authorities were represented by shrewd entrepreneurs who managed to take control of the region’s production facilities, which brings us back to the beginning of this study, when at the aforementioned football match between FC Dynamo Kyiv and FC Shakhtar Donetsk — Viktor Yanukovych and Rinat Akhmetov — celebrated their team’s victory, first at the football match, and then in the 2010 presidential elections.

Assessing Viktor Yanukovych’s state policy from today’s perspective, we can confidently say that its main goal was to create a social crisis and destabilise all state institutions to create a situation favourable to Russia, in which an attack on Ukraine would be instantaneous and effective.

<sup>7</sup> Illegal appropriation of state property during privatization.

With the establishment of the so-called occupation administrations and quasi-state entities “LPR” and “DPR” for Donbas, the “Atlantis” phase begins, which we have decided to name after the 2019 film of the same name by Ukrainian director Valentyn Vasyanovych, which takes place in 2025 in Donbas and depicts a region destroyed by war and shattered human destinies. In this final part of the article, we consider it appropriate to highlight the reception of Donbas by cultural figures. According to Ukrainian literature scholar Vira Ageyeva, the key to future attempts to reintegrate this region lies in the fact that “schools need to talk about how Donbas was Ukrainian, Donetsk poets need to be promoted there, and Vasyl Stus or Ivan Dziuba must be promoted as symbols of Donbas. We have symbols, we just haven’t worked with them. Culture is, after all, an opportunity to partially reintegrate territories” (Aivazovska 2024).

Another well-known Ukrainian writer, musician, and now soldier, Serhiy Zhadan, highlights the socio-cultural space of Donbas in many of his works *Internat*<sup>8</sup>, *Voroshilovgrad (The Wild Field)* and *Hlibne peremyrya*. In his interviews, the writer repeatedly emphasises that “unfortunately, the feeling of one’s country as an “internat” applies to the whole of Ukraine, and it is not very objective or honest to reduce Ukrainian problems to Donbas alone. As a result of the post-colonial years, we are all very unloved, neglected, and unspoken”. Finally, we should also note that the formation of regional identity was not unique to Donbas. In particular, Ukrainian researcher Ruslana Demchuk, in her article “Humanitarian Strategy of Ukraine ‘Donbassization’”, notes that the reasons for the formation of this type of identity before 2014 were “the enormous catastrophes of the Holodomor and the Holocaust, Stalin’s and Hitler’s concentration camps, as well as the policy of industrialisation and the formation of the Soviet nation (“Soviet people”) laid the foundation for modern identity divisions – forming “Bandera’s” Western part of Ukraine and the “proletarian Soviet Donbas” (Demchuk 2017, 23). Only the Revolution of Dignity and the Russo-Ukrainian war demonstrated that the Ukrainian nation is united in its desire to live in a free and independent Ukraine.

**Conclusions.** The study of the semantic component of the socio-cultural space of Donbas demonstrated and confirmed its development from a dangerous but promising frontier region to a planned and stable industrial region of the Soviet Union and Ukraine and ultimately to a socio-economic catastrophe during the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Ultimately, it is clear that the occupation of this region was made possible not only by the formation of an antagonistic confrontation between “us” and “them”, but also due to significant Russian influence, which, thanks to powerful ideological propaganda, represented nostalgia for the Soviet Union with its myths about “friendship between nations” and “prosperous Donbas”, which is falling into decline because it “feeds the whole of Ukraine” (and not because its coal industry was plundered and destroyed by pro-Russian oligarch politicians).

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<sup>8</sup> The orphanage.

Describing the perspectives for further studies in the chosen direction, we consider it appropriate to emphasise that research on Donbas should be conducted simultaneously in the context of research on the contemporary Russian sociocultural space as one that poses a constant threat to the Ukrainian sociocultural space, as well as in the context of research on the frontier and the peculiarities that have influenced the development of domestic sociocultural practices and space. Undoubtedly, it is possible to claim that new experiences have been gained through reflection and rethinking of the historical past and identifying those decisions and trends that would have allowed the development and implementation of successful strategies for the reintegration of occupied territories in the past.

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## **Семантичний простір Донбасу: від «Дикого Поля» до «Атлантиди»**

Повномасштабне російське вторгнення 24 лютого 2022 року актуалізувало потребу в дослідженні вітчизняного соціокультурного простору, особливо Донбасу, адже саме в цьому регіоні розпочалося збройне протистояння українських військових проти російських окупаційних військ. Теоретичним підґрунтям цієї розвідки є концепція регіональної ідентичності. У статті простежено формування регіональної ідентичності

Донбасу в умовах тривалих соціокультурних трансформацій: від колонізації Дикого Поля у XVII ст., розвитку промислових потужностей у XIX–XX ст. до нинішнього занепаду внаслідок бойових дій. Наголошено на семантичних змінах у топоніміці (Юзівка — Сталіно, Маріуполь — Жданов, Луганськ — Ворошиловград), поступовому витісненні пам’яті про козацьку спадщину та боротьбу на фронті, зміні її на радянський культ вождів і партійних керівників; на політиці русифікації, денаціоналізації та радянзації людей, для яких Донбас став новим домом. Розпад СРСР і криза в ранній період української незалежності призвели до самоізоляції регіону та його ідентичності, внаслідок чого він виявився вразливим до російської ідеологічної експансії.

З огляду на неодмінну післявоєнну відбудову України акцентовано на потребі формування системної державної стратегії реінтеграції не тільки Донбасу, а й усіх тимчасово окупованих територій України, задля створення спільного національного соціокультурного простору. Реалізація такого підходу унеможливить самоізоляцію будь-яких інших «регіональних ідентичностей» у загальноукраїнському контексті.

**Ключові слова:** національна ідентичність, цінності, глобалізація, культурологічний вимір, ідентичність, соціокультурні практики, соціокультурні трансформації, війна, культурний вимір, міждисциплінарність, культурні проблеми, демократичне суспільство, тоталітарні суспільства, дезінформація.

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*Main research fields:* decolonisation; memory studies; sociocultural transformations; national identity.



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