

Searching for Ukraine's New Narratives. Arts, Culture, and Culture Diplomacy in Ukraine since Euromaidan[‡]

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Abstract

Culture and arts play a major role in shaping and transforming political and social identities, in particular in conflictual situations. In Ukraine, both in the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan, symbols, colors, street art and public performances were important aspects of mobilization and of protesters' mutual affirmation of their self-image as citizens. Since 2014, culture became even more politicized as a key area in shaping a post-Euromaidan 'Ukraine-ness'. Yet, an overview of the core elements of this transformation process in structural and thematic perspective is still missing. Furthermore, Ukraine's civil society, arts and culture has been embedded in transnational cooperation networks from informal exchange and joint activism to external democracy promotion and culture diplomacy since Ukraine's independence. Consequently, the transformation process is likely to be reflected in strategies and projects of democracy promotion and culture diplomacy as well. However, little is known about both dynamics and their interrelation. This paper aims at providing insights in the transition of arts and culture in Ukraine since 2014 and the respective strategies of culture diplomacy using the example of Germany. A discussion of the relevance of culture diplomacy for democratization will present the overall conceptual framework.

Keywords: Culture diplomacy, external democracy promotion, Ukraine

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1) Introduction

Ukraine's two most recent revolutions – the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Euromaidan in 2013/14 – were not only events of protest, confrontation and brutal attempts to shatter the endurance of the demonstrators, but they were also sites of artistic expression, music, and cultural (re-)framing of a society in transition. From the painted pianos that were placed at several spots at Maidan Nezaleshnosti and Kreshchatik, and the musicians who played on them, sometimes even directly vis-à-vis the brutal special police forces Berkut, to the iconic paintings of Ukraine as a suffering or fighting woman or the references to traditional symbolism of Ukrainian folk culture: these were components of the protest and became symbols for Ukraine's fight for political change. Yet arts and culture are more than symbols of protest – they do also reflect societal transition and political re-orientation, and they may support processes of change. As integral parts of any political protest movement, arts and culture can be used in a targeted way to criticize, to spread claims and new ideas, to motivate participants, supporters and hesitant observers, and to promote new ways of thinking and debating political or societal issues (see, for example, O. Onuch and J. Onuch 2011). Consequently, arts and culture need to be considered a crucial aspect of social and political change. However, the relationship of arts, culture and democratization in transformation processes is not systematically identified yet.

In Ukraine, political change and namely, democratization, was and still is not only a target of a more or less broad social movement, but also of external actors who tried to support internal actors in promoting democracy. External democracy promotion in various styles and culture diplomacy supported domestic actors, initiatives and organizations to implement projects of dialogue or criticism, of artistic or political reflection, of advocacy and many more. Obviously, both approaches of fostering democratization and arts and culture have been overlapping in recent years. Given Ukraine's transformation process since Euromaidan, the question arises in what way culture, democratization, the according external support strategies have developed as a part of broader political and social change.

Therefore, this article aims at illustrating the relationship of arts, culture, democracy and democracy promotion by providing empirical and theoretical findings on the arts and culture sector in Ukraine since the Euromaidan. With its rich tradition of uprisings and civic resistance to authoritarian rule on the one hand and a vibrant arts and

culture scene on the other, Ukraine constitutes an excellent case for investigation to deepen our understanding of this particular relation. Civil society is rather strong in Ukraine – in particular compared to other post-Soviet societies. The development of Ukraine's civil society under the massive influence of Western supporters and agencies is at least controversial. Scholars frequently questioned the impact of democracy promotion via civil society during the last decade (Kutter and Trappmann 2010; Ishkanian 2008; Pishchikova 2010, among many others). Activists and organizations in the field of arts and culture have been longstanding partners of external supporters as well, but their working foci are less on the political system than those of classical NGOs. In what sense they – and their support – can become politically relevant?

The core question that results from these considerations and to which this article will give an answer is threefold. How did arts and culture in Ukraine evolve around and since Euromaidan? Did culture diplomacy strategies and programs react to possible changes and needs? And what is the conceptual bracket between culture and democracy and their respective support?

The article proceeds as follows. In the next chapter, I will present a theoretical framework on culture, democratization and the relation of external democracy and culture promotion. I will also introduce the concept of culture diplomacy and elaborate a distinction of the term from related concepts such as public diplomacy or democratization assistance. In the empirical part, I will present the development of Ukraine's arts and culture sector since Euromaidan and analyze the particular changes it has undergone both in content-related and structural terms since 2014. In the second part of the empirical analysis, I will analyze in what way external actors in the field of culture and democracy reacted to these changes and trends by adjusting their strategies and programs to the demands of the transforming culture sector in Ukraine. I will refer to Germany's Foreign Culture and Educational Policy as an example for the entanglement of culture and democracy promotion.¹ Germany is one of Ukraine's most longstanding and active international cooperation partners since independence, with many foundations and institutions present from the early 1990s. The period of the

¹ Germany has a particular name for its culture diplomacy: Auswaertige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik (AKBP) = Foreign Policy of Culture and Education; see the conceptual discussion in section 2.

empirical investigation covers the time frame of 2014-2018, but takes into account roots of culture actors that reach back to the years well before 2014.

The empirical research is based on methodological triangulation, including a comprehensive qualitative document analysis of policy and strategy papers of the political actors and organizations involved, as well as a set of expert interviews with culture activists, operators and mediators both in Ukraine and in Germany. Data has been collected between October 2018 and March 2019 by the author.

2) Culture, diplomacy and democratization

a. Culture, democracy and democracy promotion

Culture and arts play a minor role in scientific contributions to the analysis of political transformation. In democratization studies, the role of *political* culture and the necessity of establishing a democratic political culture are usually seen as one of the main challenges in the consolidation phase of democratization processes. This includes legitimacy and long-term diffuse support of the political system as early democratization scholars such as Seymour Martin Lipset or David Easton, as well as models of participatory democracy argued. Democratic practices, attitudes and patterns of democratic representation, understood as ‘democratic culture’, are expected to form the basis of a democratic polity and democratic political processes (Diamond 1999). Yet culture itself, culture activists and artists are usually not systematically regarded as primary contributors to democratization processes and the strengthening of democratic political structures. Consequently, concepts and definitions of democracy promotion focus on governments, governance structures and a broad understanding of civil society which may include arts and culture but does not necessarily need to (Beichelt 2012; Carothers 1999). Carother’s (2009) argumentation on democracy promotion as a political or developmental strategy points out that beyond a political approach, democracy promotion can focus other – ‘softer’ – aspects, but culture is not clearly named here. Obviously, the field of arts and culture and its relation to democracy and transition need a conceptualization.

The common understanding of civil society as “a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere [...], the sphere of associations [...], social movements, and forms of public communication” (Cohen and Arato 1992, ix) provides for the inclusion of cultural actors as well. Artists of the

various art genres, cultural agents, publishers, culture associations represent a part of this sphere and in particular, of public communication. Both individuals and organizations establish and shape public spaces – understood as a geographic space, such as street theatre performances, or as an arena of public debate that is formed in journalism or literature. As a strong relation between civil society and democracy can be considered a consensus in the field of democracy research (Burnell and Calvert 2004; Edwards, Foley, and Diani 2001), culture as a part of civil society might have a stronger impact on democratization than pertinent literature on this question allows to expect.

If culture and arts are considered being part of the civil sphere, both are expected to have an impact on democratization as civil society itself has. In democracies and democratization processes, civil society fulfils two ideal-typical functions. Empirically, these functions overlap and are often difficult to separate. Analytically, however, two logics can be identified, which can be described as the republican versus the functional logic of civil society (Hahn-Fuhr and Worschech 2014; cf. Diamond 1999).

In the republican perspective, civil society ideally contributes to democratization by cultivating trust and democratic negotiation through the voluntary association of citizens in local initiatives, campaigns or organizations. Regardless of the issues they are working on, civic associations are realms of pluralistic socialization and thereby, ‘schools of democracy’. Cooperation in associations creates networks among individuals and societal groups, potentially educates and socializes new elites and provides for democratization ‘from below’ when civil society ideally underpins and complements political structures in a democratizing environment (see Hahn-Fuhr and Worschech 2014, 15ff.).

In contrast, civil society in the liberal perspective is seen as a watchdog of democracy, defending citizens' freedoms and political rights against (potential) state arbitrariness. In this understanding, civil society calls for transparency and accountability, provides for alternative information and media, lobbies for marginalized social groups, or monitors elections and election campaigns. Hence, civil society in this perspective is a corrective of (potentially authoritarian) state power (ibid.).

Based on these expectations on civil society’s democratic contribution, supporting civil society from the outside has been part of external democracy promotion strategies of many Western countries, in particular vis-à-vis the post-socialist space (Burnell 2000). Both logics of civil society’s function can be assigned to specific strategies, approaches and outcomes of support: The republican perspective of civil

society as a ‘school of democracy’ goes hand in hand with issues and projects designed to create social and abstract trust, but it affects the political structure and political action rather indirectly. Examples include networking and empowering initiatives or neighbourhoods to develop local infrastructure, social initiatives, as well as arts and culture projects. By contrast, supporting the ‘watchdog’ civil society usually means working with human rights organizations, environmental lobby groups or activists in electoral law campaigns – hence, these actors and activities are more directly focusing the political system (Worschech 2018b, 2021).

Consequently, the targeted promotion of arts and culture, and cultural diplomacy that includes supporting artists, art groups and the like can be seen as a subtype of democracy promotion. Much of the culture support corresponds to the approach of indirect democratization, in which exchange, community building, critical reflection of political and social developments, discussion, negotiation and societal learning processes are fostered. Yet, art projects may also correspond to a certain extent to the ‘watchdog’ civil society, for example documentary films on the subject of human rights, artistic protest campaigns and so on. The core difference to the mere ‘watchdog’ style is that their audience is the public that should be encouraged to debate and take action, rather than the political system itself.

Thus, the strongest link between culture diplomacy and democracy promotion can be seen in a support strategy for cultural actors that primarily aims to foster liberal arts and culture instead of openly demanding political change. In the best case, culture support enables trans-sectoral networking and critical thinking, thereby offering free spaces to artists, culture activists and civil society activists at the same time.

b. Culture diplomacy, public diplomacy, education or democratization?

Culture as a part of foreign policy is usually referred to as culture diplomacy, while the term of ‘public diplomacy’ is often equally used, in particular in the Anglo-American context. Public diplomacy refers to a communication-based strategy of foreign policy that targets external audiences and aims at improving these audiences’ perception of the own nation. This objective is pursued by providing “educational, informational and cultural programs designed to attract foreign audiences and promote mutual understanding” (Davis Cross 2013: 4). Public Diplomacy is expected to be a form of strategic and long-lasting communication that is based on recognizing the demands and culture of the other. Measures of Public Diplomacy may oscillate on a continuum

between the poles of either mutual understanding and exchange or persuasion with regard to domestic cultural practices or values. (Leonard 2002; Leonard, Stead, and Smewing 2002; Auer, Srugies, and Löffelholz 2015). Public diplomacy represents one instrument of soft power or smart power strategies, which are used in foreign policy when governments want to achieve “general value objectives, such as promotion of democracy, human rights and freedom” (Nye 2011: 84). Both core mechanisms of soft power are attraction and persuasion, socially constructed and therefore sensitive towards the audience. Culture can play an important role in transmitting knowledge and values, as it may directly reach society without touching on the political level. Therefore, culture represents one out of three central resources for soft power, along with political values and credibility of a country’s foreign policy (ibid.).

Germany represents a particular case of soft power, public diplomacy, or culture diplomacy. The term of public diplomacy is explicitly avoided in the German debate, while external cultural relations are usually classified as culture diplomacy, or officially, as *foreign policy of culture and education*. A conceptual distinction of the different approaches and terms is, however, lacking, as even the scientific service of the German Federal Parliament notes (Deutscher Bundestag - Wissenschaftliche Dienste 2017). The persistent conceptual vagueness is in particular astonishing, as the foreign policy of culture and education is seen as the third pillar of Germany’s foreign policy. The rather pragmatic recommendation by the Bundestag’s scientific service to equate the terms public diplomacy, intercultural dialogue und soft power (ibid.) is being strongly rejected by the Foreign Office and the intermediary organizations likewise. Due to this particular self-image of Germany’s culture diplomacy and its relevance for the development of Ukraine’s civil society, it represents an interesting case for studying the nexus between culture diplomacy and democratization.

At this point, three guiding hypotheses can be formulated. First, culture diplomacy – and in particular, the approach of Germany’s foreign policy of culture and education – can be considered a particular subtype of external democracy promotion that targets society rather than institutions, fosters information and debate rather than protest or opposition, and follows an open approach rather than narrow project structures. Second, arts and culture are part of civil society that is the main target group of external democracy promotion. Third, and derived thereon, political change and transition processes in a society are expected to affect both culture and civil society in

their activities and interpretations. Consequently, these changes should be reflected in culture, culture diplomacy and external democracy promotion as well.

In the following empirical investigation, I will analyze Ukraine's arts and culture scene and Germany's culture diplomacy along these theses.

3) Empirical analysis: Development of arts and culture in Ukraine

Before providing the empirical analysis on structures, issues and cooperation patterns of arts and culture in Ukraine that changed during the last years, it is necessary to reflect upon the becoming of this sphere in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution 2004 and around Euromaidan. I start with this overview before turning to the descriptive analysis.

a. Post-Maidan Ukrainian culture and arts²

Euromaidan is considered a major turning point in the development of independent Ukraine – both politically and socially. Numerous publications and studies have emphasized that, in particular, civil society has become stronger, broader, and more independent since the major protests which led to a turnaround in foreign policy and a renewed domestic transformation (see, for example, the contributions in Shapovalova and Burlyuk (2018)). In fact, many progressive civic reform projects that helped to develop Ukraine from an opaque, kleptocratically organized, authoritarian, post-Soviet state to a democratizing, increasingly pluralistic transformation society, what is primarily demanded and driven by active civil society. Reform-oriented platforms such as the *Reanimation Package of Reforms (RPR)* or the NGO *Anti-Corruption Action Center* are strong civil society actors who have been crucial in shaping the democratic transformation of Ukraine since Euromaidan (Worschech 2016). A diversifying art and culture scene, which also understands itself more politically than before the Euromaidan, has been critically accompanying the transformation process.

However, the real innovation that can be witnessed since Euromaidan are to a lesser degree civil society and artistic organizations themselves but rather their creative influence and political freedom. Many artists and organizations who are today perceived as very present in society, arts and culture emerged during the period between the

²² This chapter is based on eight qualitative interviews with culture activists, representatives of culture support organisations and of cultural NGOs in Ukraine, conducted between October and December 2018, plus on documentary analyses.

Orange Revolution and Euromaidan. In particular, the increasingly authoritarian phase under President Yanukovich can be seen in retrospect as an important founding period for critical artistic initiatives, thus as a phase of increased politicization of arts. In the years 2008 to 2011, political protests associated with street art and organized by activists, culture professionals and young intellectuals took place in particular in Kyiv. Protests against illegal constructing, homophobia, an educational reform and also against stronger censorship by the state and intimidation by right-wing extremists are examples of an increasingly politicizing public in this period.

One of the most important organizations that openly promoted a more political and socially critical orientation of art was the curator's group *Revolutionary Experimental Space (REP)*, founded in 2004.³ The artists of the group – Ksenia Hnylytska, Nikita Kadan, Volodymyr Kuznetsov, Zhanna Kadyrova, Lada Nakonechna and Lesia Khomenko – organized a series of artistic and political events under the title "Interventions", taking place in the public space and focusing at societal transformatory processes. From the REP, the inter-disciplinary curator's collective *Hudrada* emerged in 2008. Today, members of the *REP* resp. *Hudrada* are among the most active and important artists of Ukraine, which are also present in the political discourse.

Another artistic initiative established before Euromaidan and likewise one of the key players in the intersection of art, social criticism and politics during Euromaidan protests and afterwards is the Kyiv-based *Visual Culture Research Center (VCRC)*. Founded in 2008 as a platform for artistic, intellectual and political activism, the VCRC has been one of the central institutions for socially critical artistic events, exhibitions and series of talks since Euromaidan. It gained international recognition as a progressive artistic centre of post-Euromaidan Ukraine as being the organizer and implementation agency of the Kyiv Biennale 2015 ("The School of Kyiv").⁴ The VCRC's executive director, the curator and cultural scientist Vasyl Cherepanyn, is considered one of the most important representatives of the young progressive and political culture scene in Ukraine.

Euromaidan itself constitutes the place where numerous groups at the intersection of arts, politics and transformation have their roots and origins. For

³ <http://www.thegreenbox.net/en/artists/revolutionary-experimental-space>.

⁴ <https://www.tttdebates.org/category/ttt-locations/the-visual-culture-research-centre-kyiv>.

example, the *Art Hundred* group⁵ and the NGO *Congress of Cultural Activists (CCA)* can be considered a ‘cultural product’ of Euromaidan. Founded in 2014, the CCA actively promotes networking of artists and activists on a national and international level through artist-in-residence projects, festivals, symposiums, congresses and the like; in addition, urban development and critical education are important goals.⁶

It is no coincidence that these initiatives, regarded as engines of change, are part of Ukraine's free and independent cultural scene. Since Ukrainian independence, the Ukrainian cultural landscape has been divided into two parts: an official, state-supported cultural sector, institutionalized and partly bureaucratic, stood opposite artists and culture actors of an independent scene who were considerably more critical, more flexible and innovative than the official culture sector. Until 2014, both sides were rather skeptical and nearly hostile towards each other. Especially young and progressive artists could not identify with the official cultural sector that focused classic culture and centralist culture planning while avoiding any criticism. In the eyes of progressive artists, institutionalized culture actors such as ministries, institutes and management were highly discredited because of the inflexibility and socio-political apathy of the official cultural establishment.

In the course of Euromaidan’s subsequent social and cultural transformation, four main tendencies on structure – and issue-related changes can be observed that are re-shaping Ukraine’s culture sector. Structural changes refer to (1) a beginning rapprochement between the formalized and the non-formalized culture sectors and (2) to the decentralization of arts and culture. Issue-related changes include (3) the increasing attention for arts and culture from and in Eastern Ukraine, and (4) new upcoming topics in Ukraine’s arts and culture scene. The next paragraphs will present the details of these changes.

1) *Structural changes I: Transformation of Ukraine’s culture sector*

The beginning and still tentative rapprochement of the unofficial, independent and self-organized culture sector and the official, state-based culture institutions can clearly be considered a Euromaidan result. After the protests, the relevance of state cultural

⁵ “Art Hundred” is a reference to the self-defence groups of the Euromaidan which were called ‘hundreds/sotnya’.

⁶ <http://www.culturalactivism.org>.

institutions decreased significantly: national museums, theatres, operas, philharmonic orchestras and culture administrations have been barely able to react to the events during the winter months of 2013/14 and immediately thereafter. In contrast, it was precisely the young, well (and internationally) connected, politically active arts and culture scene that addressed the protests' core issues– European orientation, democratization, anti-corruption work and civil liberties. At the same time, a demand for serious changes in cultural institutions and cultural policy themselves became obvious.

This desire for transparency and public accessibility of the political system affected many societal areas and led to a previously unique interlinking of civil society and political institutions in Ukraine. For example, activists from NGOs and media joined the parliaments or ministries and administration in 2014. Newly-founded NGOs, such as the *Reanimation Package of Reforms* (RPR), purposefully bundled civil society's expertise in drafting reforms (Worschech 2014).

Similar efforts could be observed in the realm of culture when independent culture activists joined leading positions in official culture institutions, as the former cultural director of the *Achmetov Foundation* who temporarily joined the Ministry of Culture. Others were involved in processes of conception of newly founded state institutions, such as the *Ukrainian Cultural Foundation*, the *Book Institute* and Ukraine's newly established culture diplomacy agency, the *Ukraine Institute*. However, while structural change and diffusion worked well in one place, they may have failed in others as the integration of independent artists or culture activists in administrations was partly hampered by the old, institutionalist culture administrations' skepticism, as it could be observed the case of Zaporizhia.

A general problem during and after the 2013/14 protests was that administrations and official culture institutions alike faced difficulties in reacting to political and societal changes. For instance, theatres, operas, writers' associations in Ukraine are still characterized by a (post-) Soviet infrastructure, which is barely demand-oriented, causing inflexibility with respect to necessary changes in culture production vis-à-vis transitional processes. As a result, these institutions became increasingly irrelevant in terms of reflecting societal changes and lost their status as partners of external culture promoters such as the German *Goethe Institut*. Today, the latter identifies the grassroots culture scene as its most important partner. The independent arts and culture scene identifies itself with a certain socio-political

responsibility and therefore not remaining apolitical. However, it should be noted that any closer cooperation between the institutionalized and the independent arts and culture organizations is based on societal demands for change that has become apparent equally in Ukraine's cultural sphere, forced by independent artists, initiatives and organizations. The official culture sector had to react in order of avoiding to become more and more irrelevant for society.

The fundamental changes of the structure of Ukraine's arts and culture scene can also be observed in certain areas of Ukraine's culture industry. For instance, a growing video art and film scene is a remarkable. Numerous documentary and feature films have reflected events in Donbas since 2014. In recent years, Sergey Loznitsa can be considered among Ukrainian filmmakers with international reputation; his documentaries such as "Maidan!" (2014), "The Trial" or "Donbas" (both 2018) are known far beyond Ukraine. Marysja Nikitjuk's debut film "When Trees Fall" (2019) was the first Ukrainian feature film to be screened at the Berlinale film festival. With his documentary and feature films on Euromaidan and other topics, Roman Bondarchuk has become a famous filmmaker and part of a self-conscious Ukrainian film scene. An important basis for the development of cinematics in Ukraine is the human rights film festival DocuDays.ua. Founded in 2003, the festival was held sixteen times in Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine; until today it is the most important platform for critical cinematic engagement with human rights, freedom and politics. From the beginning, DocuDays.ua has been supported by renowned Ukrainian human rights NGOs and numerous international supporters. In particular until 2014, a considerable politicization and intensification of the festival can be noted.

Independent media have become more visible and relevant since 2014, including regional broadcasting organized by small initiatives that promote journalism and critical reporting in smaller cities and rural areas. In addition to well-known TV and radio stations such as *Hromadske TV*, *Espresso TV* or *Hromadske Radio*, new initiatives and online journals as for instance the platform *Chytomo.com* have emerged in recent years, linking cultural and public media and broadening access to the cultural scene.

Another field that has gained significantly more influence in Ukraine's culture sector is the creative industry. Design, product design, fashion, living or web design are issues that foster a strong entanglement of creativity and economy, and that bear a connection to other arenas of culture and arts. Creative industries are not necessarily

apolitical, as they raise questions about the use of public space, urban development and the establishment of new forms of working, lifestyle and ecology, as well as international networking. The design agency *Banda Agency*, founded in Kyiv in 2011, was the first Ukrainian agency to receive the internationally acclaimed *RedDot Design Award* as the *Red Dot: Agency of the Year 2018*.⁷

Another section of culture that has changed fundamentally is theatres. Off-theatres and independent groups have been set up in many smaller cities to address how war, displacement or transformation are changing lives on the ground. Independent theatre groups in cities like Kherson or Mariupol and a broader, diversified alternative scene in larger cities reflect a growing variety in Ukraine's theatre scene. Their work is often based on foreign financial support, but sponsoring slowly becomes more popular among local companies or patrons.

Compared with these changes in many areas of arts and culture in Ukraine, some sectors did not see larger transitions yet. The field of dance and performance for example is traditionally strong in Ukraine in the form of classical ballet, which is institutionalized in terms of education, training and venues. In contrast, modern dance or performance art are lacking opportunities for training, rehearsals or shows as well as a systematic cooperation with the institutionalized sector. Therefore, it would be of enormous importance to open up infrastructure, which maintains the classical dance area for the independent scene as well. Likewise, there is little change in the field of museum culture and modern requirements of education and curating.

2) *Structural changes II: Decentralization & local empowerment*

The 'disempowerment' of the institutionalized state-led culture sector and the modernization of existing pre-Maidan structures are closely linked to a second major trend: the decentralization of arts and culture. Since 2015, a shift of responsibilities towards local structures within the framework of legislation, as well as increasingly independent culture beyond urban spaces and major cultural spots such as Kyiv, Lviv or Kharkiv can be observed.

The comprehensive decentralization process in Ukraine is one of the most important post-Maidan reforms. Based on the European Charter of Local Self-

⁷ <https://www.red-dot.org/de/cd/red-dot-agency-of-the-year/hall-of-fame/2018/?r=1>

Government, independent villages and communities are transformed into united communities, the so-called *objednani terytorialni hromady* (OTG, *amalgamated territorial communities*, ATCs). The reform allows for more autonomy in the inter-municipal cooperation and includes a comprehensive transfer of competences and decision-making power to the local level.⁸

These changes and transfers of power to OTG administrations and policy makers allow for more participatory, demand-oriented and situational urban and regional development. Consequently, the local level gained significantly more autonomy in the design of numerous policy areas – including the cultural sector in addition to education, health, youth, security and energy efficiency. A total of ten laws have been enacted or amended since 2015 to enable more self-organization and participation within the local cultural sector. To be more precise, this means in detail that management staff of municipal cultural institutions can be appointed by local officials; municipalities are allowed to independently organize municipal schools offering initial artistic education (for example music schools) and paid services that may be provided by state and municipal cultural institutions (such as workshops, art events etc.). Furthermore, local authorities can participate in processes of creating and maintaining the national list of intangible cultural heritage and make respective proposals. Reforms on the system for providing cultural services to the population and on the provision of public libraries strengthened legal capacities and power of municipalities.⁹

The renewal of leadership positions in municipal cultural administrations with persons from the independent arts scene is an important, albeit difficult, project to make communal cultural work more diverse and participative, and to offer the young art scene opportunities to develop in smaller towns and rural areas.

However, decentralization does equally entail the risk of dismantling cultural institutions. The administrative reform encourages the newly founded OTGs to make structures more efficient and to merge them. This can be observed in the merging of school structures as well as in the closure of small village-based libraries.

Further, it should be noted that thanks to decentralization, municipalities became more autonomous in structuring their own cultural affairs, any systematic integration of

⁸ In March 2018, 3,372 former municipalities and villages were newly merged into 725 OTG; about 15% of the Ukrainian population live in these OTG (Umland, Levitas, and Rabinovych 2018).

⁹ See <https://decentralization.gov.ua/culture/legislation> (in Ukrainian).

local authorities and corresponding bottom-up decision-making structures into Ukraine's governance system have not yet been implemented – the OTG are "legally invisible" (Umland et al. 2018). In addition, due to political blockades in the national parliament, it was not yet possible to enshrine the extensive decentralization efforts in the constitution. Despite numerous individual legislative measures, Ukraine remains a central state. Participatory cultural development at the national level, which also draws on the experiences and ideas of the municipal level, is thus not implemented for the time being.

3) *Issue-related changes I: Discovering culture from and in eastern Ukraine*

The third main tendency in Ukraine's cultural transformation since Euromaidan is the geographical shift of attention from central and western towards eastern Ukraine. The 'discovery of the east' involves the emergence and strengthening of cultural institutions and initiatives in cities and regions of eastern Ukraine, the expansion of cultural offerings on the ground, but also a greater engagement with issues directly affecting eastern Ukraine. Topics such as war, occupation and internally displaced persons, as well as culture, language, identity and history of eastern Ukraine have become recognized subjects of culture and arts in Ukraine.

Among artists and culture activists from eastern Ukraine, reflections on the Euromaidan's subsequent developments are far more prominent than on the protests themselves. Alevtina Kakhidze, an artist from Donbas (now living in Kyiv) documents in sketches how the war determines everyday life in Donbas beyond the front line, and how people react to the situation. Her work has been exhibited in Germany, among other places, and she is considered an important figure in the artistic presentation of east Ukrainian reality since 2014.¹⁰ Maria Kulykovska from Crimea is a culture activist or performance artist who became known to a wider Ukrainian public with her pro-Ukrainian protest in St. Petersburg's Hermitage. Working intensively on the issue of internal displacement, in her project "Crimean raft" in 2016, she rode along the river Dnipro with a raft to draw attention to people who had fled from Crimea.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://art-collection-telekom.com/de/collection/k/alevtina-kakhidze> oder <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/veranstaltungen/daten/18943/index.html#>

¹¹ See <https://ua.krymr.com/a/news/27933739.html>.

The internationally recognized photo and documentary artist Yevgenia Belorusets focuses in numerous projects not only on eastern Ukraine but on a comprehensive perspective on Ukrainian upheavals.¹² With a photo-documentary work on Donbas, various interviews, essays and exhibitions, Yevgenia Belorusets is a frequent guest in art spaces as well as in political discussions about Ukraine, especially in Germany. Being among the founders of the culture journal *Prostory* (founded in 2008) and a member of the curatorial group *Hudrada* since 2009, Belorusets represents a younger artist generation in Ukraine who focus on Euromaidan and its aftermath as well as on the back-and-forth period between two revolutions from 2004 to 2013.

Beyond the engagement with these pressing issues that still dominate the eastern part of Ukraine politically and socially – war and violence, displacement and insecurity – culture itself is in transition in cities and regions of eastern Ukraine. Kharkiv is perceived as a booming cultural metropolis, what is underpinned by the lively literary scene, boosted by the well-known writer Serhij Zhadan. With the Yermilov Art Center founded in 2012, Kharkiv is host to one of the most important contemporary art centres in Ukraine. In February 2019, the conference ‘Plan B – Festival of Social Innovation and Music’ took place in Kharkiv, setting an example for civic-artistic cooperation and critical debate. Other progressive spaces such as *Fabrika.Space*, a civil society-based urban center for co-working, culture and innovation reflect a new perception and usage of post-industrial urban spaces.¹³

Similar art centers, festivals, cultural clusters and co-working spaces are currently being developed in numerous Ukrainian cities. The war in the east prompted the creation of civil society and artistic initiatives dealing not only with current topics but also with Donbas history and identity in cities such as Mariupol, Sievierodonetsk, Kramatorsk or Sloviansk. Organizations like *TIO* in Mariupol, *Teplytsia* in Sloviansk and *Vilna Khata* in Kramatorsk emerged from civil society activities around Euromaidan: In some of these towns in eastern Ukraine, the protests were rather intense, thereby changing the local political culture more fundamentally than it was the case in larger cities with more comprehensive protest experiences.

One of the most prominent organizations from eastern Ukraine, understanding itself as ‘the embassy’ of Donbas in Central Ukraine, is the NGO *Izolyatsia*, founded in

¹² <https://belorusets.com>.

¹³ <http://yermilovcentre.org/>; <https://planbfest.com>; <https://fabrika.space/>

2010 in Donetsk.¹⁴ Based on the idea of building up a local or regional cultural scene in and around Donetsk and Luhansk to transform the particular industrial heritage of the region, activists and artists founded a culture center located in and named after the former factory that produced insulating materials for power plants and pipelines in Soviet times. The former factory halls were turned into a stage for readings, exhibitions, or concerts by internationally renowned artists. During the Donetsk Euromaidan, *Izolyatsia* actively supported the protests and provided spaces for artistic confrontation and political debates. In June 2014 however, the factory sites were occupied by the militias of the self-proclaimed ‘Donetsk People's Republic’. Equipment, materials and artistic objects were destroyed or confiscated, and members of *Izolyatsia* were denied further access by gunmen. Facing serious personal threats, the entire *Izolyatsia* team was forced to leave Donetsk and found a new location in Kyiv’s central district Podil. Until today, *Izolyatsia* understands itself as a ‘cultural institution in exile’, documenting the Donbas region, promoting cultural developments in and around Donbas and providing a space for artistic exploration of the Donbas.

The industrial city of Dnipro (the former Dnipropetrovsk) is another example of the significant cultural change and the increasing socio-political relevance of the cultural sector in eastern Ukraine. This dynamic has been initiated, among others, by the NGO *Kultura Medialna* and numerous art galleries that opened in Dnipro since 2014, often supported by local entrepreneurs. *Kultura Medialna* was created in 2005 as an organizational platform for electronic music and media culture, and initially organized techno parties, performances and audio-visual installations.¹⁵ In 2013, the platform was transformed into an NGO, now organizing a festival for new media and audio-visual art in urban space. Members of the NGO were involved in Euromaidan activities and supported the protests with visual and musical effects. Since then, *Kultura Medialna* has been active mainly in Dnipro, but also in national and international networks on New Media and Music, Contemporary Art and Urbanism. The strong influx of internal migrants from the Ukrainian occupied territories to Dnipro is also being addressed by *Kultura Medialna* in arts and research projects.

In contrast, the city of Mariupol became popular as a threatened front town on the Sea of Azov. Less well-known, yet remarkable, is the highly dynamic development

¹⁴ <https://izolyatsia.org>

¹⁵ <http://kulturamedialna.org/#about>

of the city's cultural scene. New cultural venues like the art space *VEZHA*, the free educational space *Halabuda* or the *Izba Chyitalnia*, a mixture of café, restaurant, meeting and reading room, often founded by Donbas refugees, reflect a new politico-cultural self-confidence that stems from the artistic occupation with the war in the city's immediate vicinity. In 2016, internally displaced persons and activists in Mariupol also founded *Platforma THO*, which quickly became the main venue for concerts, public discussions, film screenings and exhibitions.¹⁶ Both the city and *Platforma THO* gained a special appreciation and nationwide – if not international – popularity when Mariupol was declared ‘culture city’ in 2018 and the highly respected arts and culture festival *Hoholfest* took place in Mariupol in 2018, and again in 2019.¹⁷ This annual festival has been one of the most outstanding events of contemporary art and culture since 2009 and was previously located in Kyiv. A special attraction, which should shift the attention towards the city and region around Mariupol, was the establishment of a particular night train, the Art Hohol Train, with artistically designed cars bringing visitors from Kyiv to Mariupol and back during the festival.

In numerous other cities and regions along the front line, cultural initiatives, free spaces and events series have emerged in recent years. The wave of civic and artistic engagement since Euromaidan has notably facilitated the first-time creation of initiatives and projects in smaller cities in eastern Ukraine. A growing awareness of civic responsibility in cities and regions, the entanglement of cultural activities with socio-political issues and post-industrial development, and critical reviews of Soviet cultural heritage contribute to a gentle flourishing of arts and culture in Donbas. Further initiatives establishing local culture spaces are for example *Teplytsia* in Sloviansk, *KhochuBudu* in Sievierodonetsk, *Druzi* in Kostiantynivka or the *Dobro Foundation* in Dobropillia. These cities with a remarkable dynamic of arts and culture initiatives are either those exposed to war – sites that were or are contested such as Sloviansk or Mariupol – or cities that were assigned a new role in in the region, such as Sievierodonetsk and Kramatorsk, which became the administrative capitals of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts respectively.

A considerable contribution to the cultural development in smaller cities in eastern Ukraine has been made by the project *MetaMisto*, a subproject of the larger

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/tumariupol/>

¹⁷ <http://sugf.org/>

project *Kod Mista* (Code of the City), which is implemented by the NGO *Garage Gang* from Kyiv.¹⁸ *Garage Gang* is one of those progressive Ukrainian NGOs founded in the years following the Orange Revolution with the aim to promote social innovation and critical thinking at the interface of arts and culture, politics and creative industries. In the *MetaMisto* project, six medium cities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (Kostiantynivka, Pokrovsk, Dobropillia, Bakhmut, Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk) have been promoting approaches to artistic and participatory urban development, the establishment of cultural institutions and free spaces since 2016. Another initiative arose from a west-east-Ukrainian reconstruction project called ‘Building Ukraine Together’ where volunteers from Lviv went to Kramatorsk in September 2014 to help rebuilding war-torn houses. An unexpected result was the creation of a public space, the *Vilna Khata* (Free Hut), as a meeting place for citizens, initiatives and a venue for creative action, communication, education, arts and project development. In addition to artistic workshops and forums on participatory urban development and civil society development, lectures and discussions take place in the *Vilna Khata*.¹⁹

These projects are indicators for growing arts and culture in eastern Ukraine, and for a more politicized perception of arts as a way to express criticism and reflection on social issues. Beyond the war, questions about participation, urban development, ecology, education and exchange are issues that are increasingly taken up and discussed in a lively and critical civil society of Eastern Ukraine.

4) Issue-related changes II: New issues and arenas

While the structural changes in the Ukrainian cultural landscape are more attributable to societal and political change as a consequence of the Euromaidan, most culture issues are predominantly characterized by war, violence, annexation and displacement. However, having experienced a new quality of freedom of expression and political efficacy, new and persistent initiatives and subjects came up. In the wake of political reorientation, new issues such as Ukrainian identity in the European cultural context have become more relevant. While human rights had been a niche topic for specialized NGOs before Euromaidan, since 2014 many artists started to address human rights issues and social justice. For example, a yet controversial project was the photography

¹⁸ See <http://kodmista.com.ua/>, <http://kodmista.com.ua/metamisto-2017/>

¹⁹ <http://vilha.pp.ua>

documentary book 'Ukrainian Night' by Miron Zownir and Kateryna Mishchenko, where both show marginalized social groups, such as homeless, addicts or victims of violence. Addressing the upheavals of social change in such an open and demanding way might have been nearly impossible before 2014.

Urban development, local participation and the reorganization of public space were issues that had been picked up by a few organizations before 2014, and hardly by artists. Since then, debates on public space, urban art, and participatory urban development are among of the most prominent topics of Ukrainian civil society, including a high involvement of cultural actors.

Decommunization and the reappraisal of the Soviet heritage are likewise newly relevant topics. In numerous cities of Ukraine, projects in various formats have been recently implemented to analyze Soviet modernity, architectural monuments and buildings, as well as mosaics from Soviet constructivism, thereby raising questions about cultural heritage and modern Ukrainian identity.²⁰ Independent publishing houses such as *Medusa* or *Ostnove* took up this critical self-reflection of the past. These approaches were an important counterpoint to the state-organized culture of remembrance represented by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, whose former director Volodymyr Viatrovych defended the institute's key task to be Ukraine's Decommunization, and who promoted an understanding of memory as hardly self-critical but rather patriotic. In contrast, young independent artists increasingly ask critical questions about Ukraine's collaboration with German National Socialists or the KGB. Research and art projects on the totalitarian past at regional and local levels can be witnessed increasingly albeit still occasionally.

The examination with Ukraine's Soviet past and recent identity is related to efforts of Ukrainization and therefore benefits Ukrainian publishers, writers and musicians. Publications in Ukrainian and genuine Ukrainian music are becoming more popular in all parts of the country, while international literature is being translated into Ukrainian more often. The agency *Ensemble Ucha* from Kyiv, promoting new classical music in Ukraine, is an example of this new development and a new awareness of Ukrainian music. In the field of popular music, Ukrainian-language pop and especially modern interpretations of Ukrainian folk music such as ethno-folk or ethno-jazz are

²⁰ See, for example, a project implemented by *Izolyatsia*: <https://sovietmosaicsinukraine.org>

becoming more popular, and the Ukrainian-language singer-songwriter scene is increasingly successful.

Another issue that has become part of public debates is the topic area of feminism, gender justice and identity. Overall, a differentiating, more sensitive reporting on the issues of LGBT, homosexuality or Gay Pride events can be observed, although right-wing activists often create a climate of fear. Noteworthy, however, are projects such as the *Izolyatsia*-organized exhibition on LGBT people serving in the Ukrainian army. The photographer, Anton Chebytko, conducted interviews and produced portraits, illustrating the interconnectedness of two strong and often opposing stereotypes in Ukraine - that of the heroes of the defense with that of LGBT people. That exhibition, including public panel discussions with representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, would have been unimaginable before 2014 and illustrate the cornerstone of a new discourse culture in Ukraine. However, this should not hide the fact that the topic of feminism and LGBT in Ukraine is still fragile and activists must expect verbal and physical attacks all over the country.

Another sensitive issue of contemporary art approaches is critical reflection on militarization and nationalism in Ukraine. Activists such as video artist Mykola Rybny, who deals with issues of illegal possession of weapons, aggression, or militarization, point to hitherto little discussed effects of the permanent threat posed by the war. Reactionist thinking, patriotism and right-wing populism in Ukraine are strengthened by the war, and critical artistic reflection of these issues is not always welcome. The lack of independent institutions, appropriate funding and a critical discourse culture in this realm is also associated with insufficient independence of academic institutions whose functions are rather seen in education than in intellectual reflection, social criticism and academic freedom. Still, critical examination of contemporary nationalism and patriotism from an artistic or intellectual perspective can have dramatic consequences on the individual level, as recent cases of layoffs or personal intimidation demonstrated.

Given these enormous changes and transformation processes in Ukraine's arts and culture sector in structure and issues, the question is whether culture diplomacy reflects changing requirements and eventually integrates them in cultural support, exchange and promotion. The next section will therefore shed light on cooperation patterns between Ukraine's new culture scene and German culture diplomacy.

b. Transition of culture diplomacy?

The analysis whether the transformations of Ukraine's arts and culture sector are reflected within Germany's culture diplomacy will be analyzed with respect to targeted concepts, programs and activities.

As mentioned above, German culture diplomacy, developed in the 1970ies as a political strategy of Western Germany, follows a particular understanding of exchange rather than presentation of culture, and of culture going beyond certain art disciplines but includes a wide range of intellectual values (Maaß 2015). In particular, intercultural learning became a core component of culture diplomacy, all the more so after 1989. The most wide-ranging conception of culture diplomacy had been developed in the early 2000s when culture diplomacy became strategically entangled with other policy areas, and systematically embedded policies of education and science, media, language, culture dialogue and the like. The most important step of the '*Conception 2000*' was, however, a clear commitment to the fact that culture diplomacy is crucial for conflict prevention, peace consolidation, and democracy. The most recent concept of German culture diplomacy dates back to 2011, when a reformulation of the '*Conception 2000*' explicitly emphasized a bias of culture diplomacy activities with regard to Western versus Central and Eastern Europe. Though, in the very first part of the 2011 conception it is noted that the culture-oriented cooperation with Eastern European countries *within and beyond* the European Union should be intensified (Auswärtiges Amt 2011). Until today, a process of fundamental reformulation and reconceptualization of Germany's culture diplomacy did not gain momentum. Although culture diplomacy has a considerable weight as one of three broad pillars of German Foreign Policy, the conceptualization process itself does not mirror this weight.

Consequently, the term of *foreign policy of culture and education* provides for a broad range of interpretation. Based on this designation, German foreign policy is less interested in presenting domestic culture abroad but in combining culture, support and educational activities. As not only Germany's culture institute, the Goethe Institute, is a relevant actor, but the Political Foundations are implementing organizations of foreign policy of culture and education as well, the aspect of political education, civil society, political culture and democratization is an inherent part of this policy. Therefore, the cultural diplomacy approach that is deployed in Germany's foreign policy can be regarded as an approach that aims at promoting culture, values, political education and a

broad range of actors who share these aims as well. It can be understood as a form of democracy promotion that takes up explicitly the approach of strengthening the ‘school of democracy’ civil society, including all organizations and initiatives who foster progressive and critical debates on societal, cultural or political issues. Culture diplomacy in this sense is a strategy of indirect democracy promotion via civil society in its broadest and inclusive sense.

Ukraine has become one of the focus countries for Germany’s foreign policy since 2014, but is referred to mainly in the context of security and peace issues. In recent documents of the Foreign Office, Ukraine is frequently named albeit not in the context of culture or at least democratization strategies. As Germany’s culture diplomacy is embedded in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and in particular, in the ENP’s Eastern Partnership program, the broad perspective of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe marks the frame for Germany’s culture diplomacy. Since 2014, numerous bilateral civil society projects in countries of the Eastern Partnership have been supported by the Foreign Office’s program *Enhancing cooperation with civil society in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia*. In 2018, the 17 Mio. € per anno program supported projects in all seven targeted countries, while from 2014 and 2017, between 46 and 54% of the supported projects were related to Ukraine.

In 2015, a new Action Plan for reconstruction and stabilization of Ukraine was elaborated as the basis of Germany’s Ukraine policy.²¹ In this strategic paper, civil society, education, science and media are named as one out of five segments of bilateral action where intensified cooperation should be fostered. In particular, consultation for the process of transforming Ukraine’s media landscape and establishing a public broadcasting organization were among the most relevant targets. Furthermore, the establishment of a new research institute in Eastern Europe – the ZOiS, founded 2016 in Berlin – was based on the Action Plan. In fact, the Action Plan does not particularly address recent needs and transitional demands of the Ukrainian arts and culture scene, but rather mirrors the *Conception 2000* with a particular focus on Ukraine, but without going beyond that concept.

²¹ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/laender/ukraine-node/-/201848>;
<https://donezk.diplo.de/blob/1427350/ce7a3e44c3f8115d95e08e999c036cb2/aktionsplan-ukraine-data.pdf>

With respect to single ministries, institutions and implementing agencies of Germany's culture cooperation with Ukraine, a polarized picture appears. Notwithstanding the 2015 Action Plan, Ukraine-related activities of Federal Ministries except the Foreign Office did not change significantly –the Federal Ministry of Education and Science even reduced their financial volume for German-Ukrainian scientific exchange since 2013. This stands in clear contrast to the Action Plan's attempt to intensify cooperation in education and science.

In comparison, Germany's official intermediary organizations of culture diplomacy, first and foremost the *Goethe-Institute*, showed a clearer reaction and adaption to Ukraine's changed culture landscape. Being located in Kyiv-Podil and close to relevant cooperation partners such as the *National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*, the *British Council* as another relevant culture agency, and numerous art spaces and NGOs, the *Goethe-Institute* is well connected to artists, NGOs and creative actors which provides for closely witnessing changes in Ukraine's arts and culture scene. Although the institute's core tasks are language education and German studies, cultural cooperation and the presentation of a modern image of Germany's culture in Ukraine are crucial elements as well. The institute runs German libraries and language schools country-wide, but equally supports literature and film festivals, book fairs, culture management trainings in particular and small and medium cities, and different culture projects of Ukrainian NGOs, artists and art organizations.

The *Goethe Institute Ukraine* first opened its doors in Kyiv in 1993 and successfully established broad contacts to artists, culture activists and organizations in Ukraine. Based on this embeddedness and closeness to Ukraine's independent art scene as well, the *Goethe Institute* was able to take up new demands and directions in Ukraine's arts landscape that emerged in 2014. For instance, the project 'Cultural leadership academy' can be seen a reaction to the structural changes in Ukraine's culture sector, underlining the need of closer cooperation and mutual understanding between administrations, culture support agencies and progressive art managers of a new generation.

In the most relevant field of the Institute's activities, however, a strong decline has to be noted: The number of Ukrainians learning German decreased significantly by about 6.4 per cent in 2020, compared to 2015. It is particularly interesting here that in Ukrainian schools and adult education, numbers did not change much, while at Ukraine's universities, the share of German language learners has fallen by about 50 per

cent in 2020 compared to 2015.²² Nevertheless, in 2017-18, both countries launched the bilateral German-Ukrainian Language Year. Based on a budget of 450.000€, more than 60 projects in the areas of language, literature, arts, history and music could be implemented in Ukraine and in Germany, coordinated by the *Goethe Institute* and the Ukrainian Embassy in Berlin. In particular the projects in Germany can be seen a preparation for new approaches of culture cooperation in the framework of Ukraine's newly established culture diplomacy.

A second relevant actor in the field of culture and art is the *Institute for Foreign Relations (Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen, IfA)* in Stuttgart. Founded already in 1917, it is the oldest intermediary organization in the field of culture diplomacy, and it deliberately promotes transnational exchange in arts, culture and dialogue. Among 15 thematic areas, six have an explicit focus on Ukraine. In particular the programs 'Artist exchange' and 'Zivik' do actively combine culture cooperation, civil society support and democratization. While the first fosters artist-in-residence-projects and exchange of culture activists, the latter has a strong focus on democracy and political empowerment via culture and arts.

Beyond official policies, strategies as well as intermediary organizations, civil society itself is probably the most important realm of culture diplomacy through exchange, learning and cooperation. Since 2014, civic activism in Germany related to Ukraine increased in several dimensions. First, Ukrainians living in Germany had been a rather unpolitical community for a long time, less active in transnational activities and public visibility. Parallel to Euromaidan protests, more and in particular younger Ukrainians in Germany felt responsible for drawing the German public's attention to Ukraine's pro-European movement and supporting Ukraine by organizing solidarity events, humanitarian aid and raising awareness for Ukraine's uprising in the German society. There is, however a tendency of polarization among the Ukrainian diaspora community in Germany: while the younger generation of Ukrainian students or young adults in Germany is clearly politicized, the older generation was far less involved and interested in day-to-day political issues of Ukraine. Since 2014, both fractions at least started to build bridges over their differences.

²² https://www.goethe.de/resources/files/pdf204/bro_deutsch-als-fremdsprache-weltweit.-datenerhebung-2020.pdf; numbers from 2015 collected by the author, but online no longer available.

Second, in addition to Ukrainians living in Germany, an active civil society interested in cooperation with Ukraine evolved since Ukraine's independence, and the interest in building transnational ties with Ukrainian civil society has seen a significant increase since Euromaidan. Most civil society projects between Ukraine and Germany benefit from the Foreign Ministry's funding line for "Co-operation with civil society in the European Neighborhood Countries and Russia" which started with a budget of about 4,75 Mio. € in 2014 and increased to an amount of 17 Mio. € in 2018. Of this total, between 46 and 65 per cent were attributed to civil society projects with Ukraine annually.²³ This strong increase of civil society cooperation between both countries implies a remarkable share of culture and arts projects. Therefore, civil society exchange needs to be considered a core element of Germany's culture diplomacy vis-à-vis Ukraine, and this element has gained more and more relevance in the past years.

Finally, and in close connection with civil society cooperation, town twinning is a promising yet often overlooked realm of bilateral cultural relations and democratization at eye level. Within these projects, structurally supported by the federal ministry of economic cooperation and development, issues, intensity and forms of cooperation are developed and decided on the local level, what implies that demands and ideas can be directly integrated in the exchange and cooperation patterns. The realization of this approach of culture and democracy promotion depends of course very much upon administrations and individuals involved in both parts of the twinning projects – given a good communication and understanding on a regular basis, these cooperation patterns might bear a great potential for demand-driven culture-, arts- and democratization-related issues. However, town twinning programs are officially not part of Germany's culture diplomacy, but of its development policy, although the contribution to democratization via culture and civil society exchange is obvious.

4. Conclusion

This article aimed at exploring two questions. First, the central question was how Ukraine's arts and culture landscape changed since Euromaidan, and how artists and culture activists as well as organizations were involved in Ukraine's democratization before, during and after Euromaidan. The second question aimed at exploring whether

²³ Numbers are not available publicly, but to the author and can be consulted.

and how Germany's culture diplomacy, which is closely linked to democracy promotion, did react to the transformation and potentially new demands and issues in Ukraine's arts and culture landscape.

The analysis related to first question underlined that since 2014, the Ukrainian arts and culture scene has changed dramatically – in structural and content-related terms. In particular, arts and culture did undergo a clear politicization, which resulted in formulating ideas on Ukraine's further democratization and demanding a path of pluralization and Europeanization. At the same time, in particular institutionalized culture actors such as administrations, universities, but also culture institutions are still reluctant in cooperating and taking up the new generation's progressive demands and issues.

The analysis related to the second question provided a three-fold picture. Taken together, it becomes clear that concepts of culture diplomacy did not yet take up the fundamental changes in Ukraine's arts and culture scene, neither systematically not in parts. Recent demands and potentials the transformation process bears are not addressed, and policies towards Ukraine still separate the perspectives of culture, democracy, and stability or peace. With regard to concepts, the Post-Maidan-Ukraine did not yet arrive in Germany's culture diplomacy.

Support projects, however, are more adjusted to recent demands. The volume and supported projects within the Eastern Partnership Program show that the support of culture, democracy and civil society work in practice, and organizations formulate their project proposals in the ways that culture and democratization are linked.

Finally, the organizations that are present in Ukraine and have been supporting culture issues in Ukraine since its independence are aware of demands, issues and actors. They are mainly in line with the approach of promoting democracy via civil society by providing spaces for deliberative debates, critical thinking and societal or political innovation.

As a conclusion, the case of Ukraine shows the high potential of culture and culture diplomacy as well as cultural exchange for democratization, Europeanization and progressive political development. This strategy of indirect democracy promotion through civil society and culture, which corresponds to the *modus operandi* of most European cultural institute and the (German) political foundations, is capable to take up demands and requirements that lead to an active, critical and civil society based arts and culture scene. In the longer run, thee pluralism fostered by these actors may contribute

to changes in the political culture, but in policies and politics equally. Culture diplomacy should therefore be taken more serious as a core feature of external democracy promotion.

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