IDPs, Durable Solutions and Citizenship
Perspectives from Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Donbass IDPs in Kyiv view the role of the state in relation to ‘durable solutions’ to their displacement. Specifically, it examines the expectations on the state as a provider of rights and entitlements vis-à-vis IDPs. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with Donbas IDPs, experiences of displacement and perceptions of durable solutions and citizen-state relations are exemplified. The data collection and analysis methodologies applied allow for the elicitation of the views and opinions of IDPs, in an attempt to mitigate vertical policy-making. The concepts of citizenship, state and sovereignty are applied to analyze the relationship between IDPs and the state. Further, the IASC framework for durable solutions to internal displacement is used to as a structure to outline the views of the IDPs. The results show a large discrepancy between the expectations of the respondents on the states’ role in durable solutions to displacement, and the experience of this in reality. Furthermore, the results reveal high levels of discontent, resignation and apathy towards the state as a provider of durable solutions, especially in terms of returning to Donbass.

Keywords: Internal displacement, Citizenship, Durable Solutions, IDPs, Ukraine

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1. INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Ukraine has passed its 3rd-year mark and has cost the lives of almost 10,000 people, in a part of Europe not far from the heart of Europe (OHCHR, 2017, p.12). The magnitude of the conflict and more importantly the human impact it has had on Ukrainians is hard to fathom and often forgotten and overlooked both in and outside Ukraine (Sasse, 2017, p.1). What started as a political movement for Ukrainian self-determination and subsequently evoked internal and external counter-reactions, has resulted in a war which has caused the occupation of at least 7 percent of Ukraine’s territory and an economic recession which measured 12 percent GDP decline in 2015 (UNIAN, 2015; Economist, 2016).

Discussion about the war in Ukraine often emanate from the perspective of Russian-Ukrainian state-to-state relations. This macro-perspective often fails to incorporate the situation for the actual people that constitute the country of Ukraine, whose reality on a micro-scale is far more complicated than international relations. Perhaps the best example of this is the around 2.8 million Ukrainians, approximately 6.3 percent of Ukraine's 44.2 million inhabitants, who have had to flee their homes due to the conflict in the Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Sasse, 2017, p. 2; CIA, 2017). Although the magnitude of this internal displacement crisis in Ukraine is on par with Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, it is often seen primarily as a humanitarian problem, while the implications this massive demographic shift has and can have on Ukraine as a country is overlooked or goes unmentioned (Foreign Affairs, 2016).

1.1 Purpose and ambition

The purpose of this study is to elicit the voices of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kyiv from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, to collect and analyze their internal displacement experiences and how those relate to the Ukrainian state’s obligations vis-à-vis its citizens. This study explores how Donbass IDPs see and experience the Ukrainian state in relation to their displacement and its obligations towards them, and how that relates to what they believe about durable resolutions to their displacement. And how internally displaced persons, from Donbass, perceive the role and impact the Ukrainian state plays in their internal displacement.

The point of departure of this study is that the relationship between citizen and state is essential to understand the sovereignty of the state and how citizens reproduce it (Storey, 2012, p.40). The supremacy of the Ukrainian state relies on the acceptance of its authority by its citizens, an obligation they fulfill in exchange for rights and entitlements such as the right to vote and security (Delaney, 2009, p.197; Storey, 2012, p.62; Cohen & Kennedy, 2007, p.124). Feelings of marginalization of internally displaced citizens by their state due to non-fulfillment of its obligations towards them can have long-standing consequences for the sustainability of the state, as it may become an obstacle to peace-building and reconstruction in post-conflict Ukraine (IASC, 2010, p.1). The legitimacy of the state is dependent on the recognition of its population (Oosterom, 2016, p.365). By researching the perception of the role of the Ukrainian state towards Donbass IDPs this study will analyze the interdependence of the state and its citizens regarding sovereignty as a prerequisite for a sustainable modern state.

To guide my research and analysis, I have formulated the following three questions:
- What is the background of the respondents’ displacement, concerning conflict, economic and social factors?
- What are the respondents’ views about durable solutions for displacement in terms of either return, local integration or resettlement?
- How do the respondents perceive the Ukrainian state’s role with regard to resolutions to their internal displacement?

The first question, is designed for me to get an understanding of the pushing and pulling factors that explain why the participants left Donbass and why they settled in Kyiv. The second question, focuses on understanding what the respondents think are the main challenges to their durable displacement resolution. The idea was that this would elicit their views on the challenges they face in finding durable solutions to their displacement. And the last question, I formulated to explore the expectations of the state as a provider by the respondents, which also exemplifies the expectations they have of what Ukrainian citizenship entitles (Chouinard, 2009, p.107). By gathering information on the background to the respondents’ displacement, their thoughts on the main challenges to durable solutions of their displacement and how the Ukrainian state relates to these issues, I can analyze the expectations of the state and how it relates to internal displacement from the perspectives of the research respondents.

My ambition with this study is twofold. At first hand, I want to draw attention to the internal displacement experience in Ukraine by evoking the voices of the citizens who are displaced and how the Ukrainian state is related to this. This way, I hope to contribute to the current discourse on durable solutions to internal displacement in Ukraine and finding a sustainable relationship between the internally displaced citizens and the state. In her article, Any place could be home, Suzanne Y.A Tete encourages the embedment of displaced persons’ perceptions in the development of durable solutions (Tete, 2011, p.113-114). Those processes are often top-down, and one of my ambitions is to exemplify the capacity of internally displaced persons to identify the main issues they face as internally displaced and identify durable solutions for them in Ukraine. Currently, the Ukrainian state still does not have a comprehensive strategy for internal displacement in Ukraine while grassroots activities concerning the destiny of IDPs in Ukraine are growing in numbers and scope. My hope is that the findings from research can support the discourse for internal displacement resolution in Ukraine.

1.2 Disposition
To outline this study and my analysis, I begin in part 2, with presenting the research methodologies I have applied for the interviews and analysis. Following that is an explanation of selection of settings and the process for selecting participants for this study, and their relevance for the purpose of this research and how I have reasoned around my choices in relation to the scope of this study and the potential risks and weaknesses this implies. In the following part 3, I present the geographical setting of this study and how that relates to the purpose of this research. Part 4, contains an introduction to the theoretical framework that I use

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1 http://uacrisis.org/46908-strategiya-dlya-pereselentsiv-dopovidach-oon
in this study to answer the questions formulated to guide my research. In part 5, I outline the results and my analysis of my research, in line with the questions I have formulated for my research. In part 6, I draw conclusions based on my analysis in relation to the research questions I have formulated for this study. I end the study in part 7, with final remarks on further research concerning internal displacement in Ukraine.

2. METHODOLOGY

To maximize the potential of my ambition to elicit the voices of the people who are central to the internal displacement crisis in Ukraine (as outlined in part 1.1) I have utilized a semi-structured qualitative interview methodology as my stand-alone primary method of data collection for this study. Longhurst writes the conversational manner of semi-structured interviews allows the participant to emphasize what they believe is important (Longhurst, 2009, p.580). This way the semi-structured interview methodology increases the possibility of highlighting the issues that the respondents want to communicate rather than the issues that I as a researcher have identified beforehand. The interviews were semi-structured, built around primarily three subjects: background, displacement in Kyiv region and durable displacement resolution. This methodology has allowed the interviews to be flexible to the interpretation of the interviewee (Bryman, 2011, p.415).

The interview questions that I used were broad theme, rather than specific questions and I used these themes to initiate an open conversation about issues relating to the research problem. In total I had four themes, each interview would begin with me asking the respondent to describe the background of their displacement, following this we would discuss the experience of displacement in Kyiv; thoughts on the role of the state in their displacement; and realistic solutions to their displacement.

In total, I conducted 19 semi-structured interviews which lasted between 60-90 minutes. They were held in public and neutral places such as cafés to offer a comfortable environment for the respondent, my translator and myself (Longhurst, 2009, p.581). Only in one case was the interview conducted in a respondent’s home, at their request. I began each interview with an introduction of myself and my research project which I followed by emphasizing my gratitude for their voluntary support of my study. At the end of each interview, I presented a small gift, as a token of appreciation for their participation. The participants were not pre-informed about the gift, consisting of 150 UAH in phone credits, which I gave to all participants.

Regarding my impact on the interviews, my main concerns have been around the explicitness of the interview participants. Specifically concerning issues of a political nature in which interviewees would feel pressured in answering questions in a way that I desire from the interviewer, Bryman describes this as ‘Social Desirability’ (Bryman, 2011, p.224). It is especially relevant as a local interpreter accompanied me during the majority of the interviews, which could potentially have created pressure on the interviewee not to provoke what they believed would be our conceptions of social desirability. In the Ukrainian context topics regarding the nature of the conflict in Donbass and the regions’ inhabitants can be very sensitive and evokes strong feelings among many locals. It was sometimes challenging to ask questions
related to such topics that were relevant for the research purpose. I tried to find middle-ground between the distanced scientist and an empathetic human, to collect the data I was looking for while still showing sympathy.

My ambition was to conduct interviews that allowed me to elicit the voices of the participants, without my role and opinions as a researcher interfering too much. Much of the policy-making and reporting on the situation for displaced persons removes the actual victims from the center of the phenomena, with this approach I want to bring them closer to the solution-finding process.

To analyze the data that I have collected for this study and compare them to the theoretical framework that I have chosen for my analysis I have applied a Grounded Theory in which there is a close connection between the data collection, analysis and the resulting theories (Bryman, 2011, p.513). Several of the concepts that I use in my analysis, I base on concepts established in the data collection, which I have compared to my theoretical framework, back and forth, during the research process.

2.1 Selection

2.1.1 Kyiv

I chose Kyiv as the actual physical setting for my data collection for two reasons. The primary is of course that there is a large community of IDPs from Donbass who live in Kyiv, so the requirement of a relevant population for the research topic is fulfilled. Although there are other parts of Ukraine, which are also closer to Donbass that have even higher concentrations of IDPs that perhaps would make even better settings for this study. Why I chose Kyiv out of the other areas with large Donbass IDP populations is also my secondary reason, and it is the fact that I have a fairly established network of contacts in Kyiv, specifically within civil society. It is through these connections that I have set up contacts with the interview participants for my data collection. A substantial IDP population from Donbass and proximity to my established networks are the two primary reasons that I chose Kyiv as the setting.

2.1.2 Participants

The IDP population in Ukraine is far too vast for me to be able to do any quantitative research on their experience of displacement within the scope of this research study. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the number of internally displaced persons in Ukraine had surpassed 1.6 million in December 2016 (IDMC, 2016, p.1). Therefore, I have limited my research, as outlined previously in this document, to IDPs from Donbass currently residing in Kyiv. My ambition with this study is not to prove what IDPs think and believe; rather it is my goal to show exemplify the experiences of IDPs from Donbass (Tete, 2011, p.109).

I built the selection process for interview participants on a snowballing methodology (Longhurst, 2009, p.580). At every meeting with a new contact, I asked if respondents had other contacts that would be interested in participating in an interview. Through my contacts at the Ukraine country office of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in Kyiv, I came in touch with a local organization CVU Donetsk, which works on IDP rights. Many of
their representatives were IDPs themselves and could provide me with contact information to other displaced persons from Donbass residing in Kyiv.

For translation purposes, I solicited an interpreter that could help me with setting up the interviews, interpretation, and transcription. Through my contacts at the Ukraine country office of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), I received a recommendation to employ Hanna Manolienko, a Kyiv local fluent in Ukrainian, Russian and English with previous qualitative research experience and an M.A. in Gender Studies from the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. Beyond the logistics of the interviews, Manolienko was able to help me to find additional participants for the interviews.

Beyond representativeness in numbers, there are of course other factors that I could take into consideration such as gender and age. At the outset, I had the ambition to select interview participants that in total would represent a decent sex and age representation. But I realized after a few interviews that with my snowballing method for finding interview participants it would be very hard to achieve a balanced gender and age representation while staying within my schedule and the budget for translation. I have also decided not to delve very deep into analysis of gender and age factors as this would require a paper with a larger scope.

3. SETTING

Ukraine has a complicated territorial history, in large part due to the Tsarist and Soviet occupations dating back approximately 250 years (Britannica, 2017). The borders of the country have changed dramatically throughout modern history, a continuing pattern with the Russian and separatist occupations of Crimea and parts of the Donbass area. The IDP phenomena is new to Ukraine and currently the 9th largest in the world according to some measurements (Ferries et al, 2015, p.10).

3.1 Donbass

The usage of the name Donbass by mainstream media might give the impression of Donbass being an actual administrative division of Ukraine. From an economical and historical perspective, it is, in fact, a trans-national region that encompasses primarily South-Eastern Ukraine but also parts of South-Western Russia (Britannica, 2017). The name Donbass refers to the Donets Basin, which is an area with vast coalfields, which have been instrumental in the development of the Donbass area since the beginning of coal exploitation in the early 19th century (ibid). Today this definition of Donbass is rarely used, except in the case of the Euro-region Donbass, which was established three years before the start of the Donbass conflict.

The definition that I use in this study, which is also the one that I have come across while researching, is that Donbass is a collective cultural name for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine. By using this definition to describe two separate Ukrainian regions, I risk of reinforcing the general unawareness, outside Ukraine, of the fact that Donbass is not an administrative body within the Ukrainian state. Why I still decided to use the term Donbass, to describe the Donetsk and Luhansk regions is primarily due to the relatively strong feelings of regionalism and local identity that exists in Luhansk and Donetsk, which are often referred by
name as a Donbass identity (Sasse, 2017, p.10). Donbass as a common cultural region has a meaning among many people from the area and other parts of Ukraine and is, therefore, the use of the term as a collective name of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions is relevant.

The Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone (ATO)² is the name that is given by the Ukrainian state to the areas of Donbass currently occupied by separatists. The seed to the occupations began as a reaction to the development of the Maidan revolution in Kyiv. Demonstrations flared up in several cities in Eastern Ukraine, protests that are described by some as the “Russian Spring” (Sakwa, 2015, p.185). The demonstrations quickly turned into a rebellion and a full-scale war between the Ukrainian state and separatists supported by Russia (ibid). The separatists are divided into two factions the People’s Republic of Donetsk (DPR), which holds parts to the Donetsk region and the People’s Republic of Luhansk (LPR) which occupies parts of Luhansk (Ferries et al, 2015, p.13). For simplicity, I refer to the DPR and LPR factions as the separatists thought-out this study.

The Luhansk and Donetsk regions have played a significant role in the Ukrainian state economy: in 2014, the population of the two regions, combined, constituted 15 percent of Ukraine’s total population (Kirchner & Giucci, 2014, s.4). Donetsk had a significantly higher GDP per capita than the national average in 2012 and combined the two regions’ shares of industrial product sales constituted 25 percent of Ukraine’s industrial product sales in total (ibid, p.5-6).

3.2 Kyiv city and region
The Capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, has a special autonomous status in Ukraine. Unlike other subdivisions, Kyiv City does not answer to the Kyiv region, which is the typical case. Kyiv City is directly subordinate to the national government of Ukraine. The city is by some measurements the 7th largest city in Europe³ and the seat of the national government. It is also where the Maidan revolution began in 2013 and ended in 2014, which resulted in the death of more than 100 demonstrators, the feeling of the former president Yanukovych to Russia and early elections which brought the current government under President Poroshenko to power (Euromaidan Press, 2016).

Kyiv region has the same status as the other 23 regions, including Donetsk and Luhansk. By area, Kyiv region is the 8th largest region of Ukraine and has a population of more than 1.7 million inhabitants (Wikipedia, 2017). Combined with Kyiv city’s around 2.9 million people, the two divisions have at least 4.6 million residents. Although it is important to point out that these numbers might not be entirely accurate: there is substantial urbanization in Ukraine, which affects the Kyiv city and region and since the beginning of the Crimean and Donbass conflicts, there has been a significant influx of IDPs from the conflicts seeking refuge in Kyiv. Although the city and region of Kyiv are two separate divisions, I will henceforth refer to them both as one Kyiv, for simplicity.

4. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

³ http://www.citymayors.com/features/euro_cities1.html
The following theories constitute the main theoretical framework that I have applied to my analysis of the data collected in this study. The following approaches have several subcategories that I also reference in my analysis, although many of these sub-theories are vast and merit their categories within my theoretical framework, I have chosen to limit myself to following selection regarding the scope of this study.

4.1 Internally Displaced Persons

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines IDPs as (UNHCR, 2006, p.8):

> Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

Based on this definition we can understand that it is if an individual in question has crossed an international border or not that defines the difference between a refugee and an IDP. The definitional reasoning behind this is primarily a practical issue: a refugee that has not crossed an international border is still only under the jurisdiction of the sovereign state of that territory (Oosterom, 2016, p.364). While a refugee, which is a person who has crossed an international border while fleeing, for example, a conflict falls under the jurisdiction of the sovereign state of the territory of arrival as well as the United Nations.

Although there is an interesting difference between the definitions that has less to do with practicality and jurisdiction and more about the relationship between the citizen and the state. In Ukraine, many choose to avoid the term internal refugee when they refer to the IDP crisis in Ukraine. This approach builds on both the stigmatization of refugees and on the viewpoint that a citizen cannot be a refugee within the boundaries of the state its citizenship.

4.2 Durable solutions

The framework for durable solutions for IDPs was developed by the Brookings Institute-University of Bern project on internal displacement, and endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (IASC, 2010, p.1). IASC coordinates inter-agency humanitarian aid such as in the case of the cooperation between the University of Bern and the non-profit public policy organization Brookings Institute. The publication outlines three different durable solutions to displacement as follows (IASC, 2010, p.5):

- Sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (hereinafter referred to as “return”);
- Sustainable local integration in areas where internally displaced persons take refuge (local integration);
- Sustainable integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere in the country).
The durable solutions are almost identical to the three displacement solutions for refugees. The main difference is that the durable solutions for IDPs all involved settlement within the country of origin, while solutions for refugees involve settlement solutions both in the country of origin and foreign (UNHCR, 2011, p.28; IASC, 2010, p.5). The solutions build on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a non-binding but internationally accepted, overview of the rights of IDPs and the responsibilities of national authorities and non-state actors towards them (UNHCR, 2006, p.32).

The IASC Framework also sets out a number of criteria that may be used to determine if a durable solution has been achieved. Safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective remedies and justice (IASC, 2010, p.27). I will use IASC’s criteria to analyze the situation for the internally displaced persons from Donbass, lay out their needs and explore the relation of the Ukrainian state to these findings. UNHCR build their strategies for internal displacement resolution on the durable solutions outlined in the IASC framework (UNHCR, 2006, p.5, 13). Based on the substantial utilization of IASC’s Framework, and specifically durable solutions, I decided to utilize it for the analysis of internal displacement resolution in this study.

4.3 Push and pull
The size of research into available research into the push factors behind why people flee their country is far larger than the reasoning behind internal displacement (IDMC, 2017, p.59). The main factors that push people to leave their home and resettle in another part of their country of residence are predominately security risks (World Bank, 2016, p.29). Important to point out is that reasons behind displacement range from being strictly forced to more voluntary.

The pulling factors, reasons for why people choose to seek refuge at a particular place over others are often similar to the push factors, concerns being primarily security (IDMC, 2017, p.59). Beyond that pushing and pulling for internally displaced may be akin to that of economic migrants, resettling for more advantageous opportunities for well-being, but also social and cultural factors (World Bank, 2016, p.81).

4.4 Citizenship
Chouinard describes the concept of citizenship as a way for people to be situated within and respond to a community and how it is governed (Chouinard, 2009, p.107). In the case of the internal displacement crisis in Ukraine, this concept becomes very relevant, as it puts the capacity of the state to provide and protect its citizens’ rights and entitlements to the test. A citizen who relocated from Donbass to Kyiv legally has the same rights no matter if they stay in Donbass or go to Kyiv. And this is how the citizen sees the state, as a provider of security, including benefits and rights (Flint & Taylor, 2011, p.181). Is the Ukrainian state able to fulfill its obligations towards all of its citizens, specifically those suffering of displacement? Similar to refugees, internally displaced persons might have fled because of security issues, lack of access to basic needs, and loss of property (Oosterom, 2016, p.364). And when they seek refuge in another part of the country they rely partially on the state to provide for those needs. How
does the relationship between state and citizen express itself in the internal displacement experience for persons from Donbass?

4.5 State
The state defined by Storey as the political apparatus that accompanies the cultural concept of the nation (Storey, 2012, p.71). The function of the state relies on primarily two features: territory and sovereignty, which is a condition that often is more imagined than real (Storey, 2012, p.28). Although in the case of the Ukrainian state, its sovereignty status is very tangible, in the sense that separatists challenge it by force in Donbass. In the case of Ukraine, the tradition of international recognition of sovereignty has clearly collapsed with the Russian interference (Ferries et al, 2015, s.5). The ongoing war is perhaps a textbook example of how the stability of a state has as much to do with external as it does with internal issues (Storey, 2012, p.38). But from this starting position, Ukrainian sovereignty perhaps has to rely more on the reproduction by its citizens, whom the Ukrainian state controls and whose reproduction of Ukrainian state sovereignty are at least as important as reproduction by the state itself (Delaney, 2009, p.197). It is the reproduction of the State and the role that IDPs from Donbass play in this, to which I apply the concepts of the state in this study.

4.6 Sovereignty
One of the features that the modern state relies on and an expression of its territoriality is sovereignty (Storey, 2012, p.38). According to Flint and Taylor: *Sovereignty implies that there is one final and absolute authority in a political community* (Flint & Taylor, 2011, p.120). The sovereignty relies on the acceptance of absolute authority by other states, but equally as important is the acceptance by its population, which in turn relies on how the people see the state (Oosterom, 2016, p.365). In this study, I apply the concept of sovereignty to how the respondents experience the state as a provider and how that has affected their view of the Ukrainian state’s legitimacy which in turn shapes its sovereignty. Depending on how the state fulfills its duties its legitimacy among the population can change, as it fails to provide (Oosterom, 2016, p.365).

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this part I outline the findings that I have made from 19 interviews with IDPs from Donbass and analyze them using the theoretical framework presented earlier in this paper (see part 4). In part 4.1, I present the experiences of the people that I interviewed. Using a grounded theory, I have identified two main sub-categories: conflict and social background. I use these sub-categories to outline the relevant background information of my interview participants, in broad terms. In part 4.2 I present my analysis of the participants experience as IDPs and their thoughts on the main obstacles to durable displacement solutions and how they relate the role of the Ukrainian state to these issues. Based on the data I have chosen four main sub-categories to present this analysis: accommodation; state services; economic opportunities and displacement resolution.
5.1 The interviewees

Over the period of approximately two months, I interviewed Ukrainian citizens, who left the Donbass area (Donetsk or Luhansk) due to the conflict that started in 2014. In the first sub-category, 4.1.1 I will present my analysis of my interviewees own experience from the conflict in the Donbass area and part 4.1.2 presents the relevant information about the interviewees social, economic and cultural background.

5.1.1 Conflict backgrounds

From an early stage I realized that the conflict experiences of my interview participants were more diverse than I had expected. The majority of the participants fled from Donbass directly or indirectly due to the fighting between separatists and the Ukrainian army. In several cases participants testified to being directly in the line of fire, plane and missile bombing was referenced during several interviews.

My family had spent two weeks in the basements because of the shelling that was coming from all directions, from planes and Grad (Female G). And I was really scared, scared of military planes and of Grad [missile] that was pouring all around (Female K).

In some cases, the threat from the fighting was less direct. Many referred to the presence of military units and equipment in their residential areas as being the final spark that pushed them to give up on their homes and flee. Several others described the bombing of neighboring towns and cities as the primary reason that they decided to escape.

When tanks came to our street she [Mother] decided to send me somewhere far away (Female H). …the city itself had not been bombed – but we knew from the news that neighboring cities had been… (Female L).

Beyond the interviewees who described fleeing due to the lack of security caused by the fighting, I also interviewed a number of persons who fled because of their engagement in politics and civil society in the Donbass area. I interviewed some individuals who had been politically active in Donetsk around the Euromaidan revolution 2013/2014. All of them described that after the events in Kyiv and with the start of the military conflict, they had to eventually flee Donbass due to being targeted by separatists for their engagement in politics and civil society. Several of them described their exile as a result of a political purge in Donbass, by cleansing Donbass of people who were supporting the Ukrainian state. Often the process of them becoming targets were similar, many of them told me how they learned from friends that they were on “lists” of people that the separatists were looking for. One male respondent described his kidnapping as a result of his political activities before the war. He was eventually released, only to shortly after that end up on a new wanted list which drove him to flee Donbass.
And I was declared as wanted… and I was personally threatened. So I made a decision, I packed up quickly and come to Kyiv (Female M). I was told that separatists were looking for me. People who were kidnapped were asked about me (Male D). …my younger brother… received call from police that we had to go to their office… did not sound like from police officers (Male C).

Additional to security threats being the predominant reason that my interview participants decided to flee Donbass, several also mentioned the lack of access to basic needs as a contributing reason to why they felt that they had to flee. Many described how access to water, food, electricity, and gas eventually disappeared, forcing them to look for shelter elsewhere, putting them at a security risk. Many describe access to healthcare as an additional major reason behind their decision to flee, both the limited movement which was a result of the military presence and the lack of healthcare providers the main causes of this problem. Related to these issues of basic needs access is also the issue of money, which several participants mentioned. Many used up their savings to finance their needs while still in Donbass.

A month passed, we ran out of money (Female C). There was nothing to eat… used rain water to cook and drink (Female B). When the war started it was a big problem for disabled people who were left with their problems… (Female A). And the time was coming for us to take our middle child for a procedure. We had no light, water or gas. We had to cook on fire outside while risking our lives (Female G).

5.1.2 Reflections on conflict backgrounds
An issue fitting the definition of a security issue, but more abstract than the threat of violence is psychosocial health. Most of the interviewees brought up some aspect of how the mental welfare affected them or others around them. But specifically, mental health of several of the participants’ children was brought up as major factors that contributed to their decision to flee Donbass. … we understood that there is a need to save the mental health of (our) children (Female, n.19).

Based on the background stories of the participants reasoning behind their decision to leave Donbass and seek refuge in Kyiv, it is evident that all of them fulfill, to some degree, the definition of internally displaced persons. The majority fled either directly or indirectly due to the fighting between the separatists and government forces as part of the armed conflict in Donbass. In several of the cases, it was obviously direct threats such as bombing and persecution because of political activity, while in other situations the reasoning was connected to the lack of access to basic needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, etc. But concerning the main reasoning behind displacement, the findings from my interviews correspond with the established understanding of security as the primary reason behind IDPs decisions to flee (World Bank, 2016, p.29).

It is interesting to compare the intense persecution that some of my interview participants were under because of their political activities, before the outbreak of the armed conflict in Donbass, with the concept of sovereignty. The imagined concept of complete sovereignty is that one authority exercises absolute control over a territory (Coleman, 2009, s.255). From this outset, one could speculate that the separatists are building their strategy on the expulsion and/or
extermination of inhabitants in Donbass who might not support sovereignty of the separatist, a threat to the separatists’ territoriality ambitions are threatened (Storey, 2012, p. 40).

From the understanding of a state’s responsibilities towards its citizens in exchange for the recognition and reproduction of a state’s sovereignty, those are not currently being fulfilled by the Ukrainian state in the areas from which the people I interviewed fled from (Flint & Taylor, 2011, p.181). Important to point out is that not all of the interviewees fled from areas in Donbass that were occupied by separatists. This failure is an expression of Ukrainian state sovereignty in parts of the Donbass area, as the state cannot control all of its claimed territory it automatically cannot excerpt sovereignty.

5.1.3 Social backgrounds
Analyzing the social background of the interview participants, I found interesting patterns that also correspond with other research: 74 percent of the research participants are female, and I only managed to interview five males. This sex ratio corresponds to the results of a report by the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS) on Ukrainians who are externally displaced in Russia and internally displaced in Ukraine. Their survey showed that 62 percent of the respondents are female a lower number than my research, but still a significant majority (Sasse, 2017, p.2). In my analysis, I discovered some possible explanations of why there is such a large majority of women IDPs: several of the respondents described how their fathers and husbands did not want to leave their home in Donbass. The most common reason for this was the reluctance to leave what they defined as their “motherland”. One respondent mentioned an encounter with a female train conductor who stigmatized her and other people for fleeing Donbass, while “their” men remained to defend (Female, n.17).

*My father said… he grew up here, this was his home…So he refused to move (Female K). …my husband was against resettling: if you are about to die then it is better to die in your motherland (Female L). My husband stayed in Donetsk to guard the land. He is dead now. But he was a patriot (Female F).*

It also became apparent in my analysis that many of the respondents are highly educated (post-secondary education) or in the process of gaining a degree in higher education (students). I could draw this conclusion from the professions they held in Donbass before the beginning of the armed conflict in Donbass. Concerning this many respondents also pointed out that they believe it is in fact primarily highly educated people who have fled from Donbass, while people with less education remain in Donbass. In general, the point many made was that people from the Donbass area who had more financial assets would flee in a higher degree, while those who had less would stay, which many implied included those with less or no education, as well as retired senior citizens.

*Mainly intellectuals have left (Female J). …all the professionals have left (Female G). People who have stayed are mostly retired, they receive pensions, and they don’t need much (Female B).*
Apart from most respondents having a higher education, it also clear that the majority of the persons I interviewed for this study had a connection to Kyiv. In several cases, respondents had relatives and friends who had lived in Kyiv for many years. Some respondents had professional connections in Kyiv and had visited and lived in the city previously. These social and professional connections were also pointed out as important in gaining access to accommodation and work when seeking refuge in Kyiv.

I had no idea about where to live. But I had my sister living here [Kyiv]; The situation was also easier for me since I had my father living here [Kyiv] (Female H). We chose Kyiv since I have been working here. I have some people I knew here, a female friend of mine from Luhansk moved here 10 years ago (Female E). I have a lot of friends here [Kyiv] and I had a room when I arrived (Male E). We have been living here [Kyiv] with my sister… here in Kyiv my sister has a two-room apartment (Female C).

A topic that often came up during the interviews concerned the political environment of the respondents’ communities, before the outbreak of the armed conflict in Donbass. Concerning this, I heard very different assessments of the level of support of the Ukrainian state. Some respondents believed that a majority of the inhabitants in the Donbass area were more supportive of Russia than Ukraine before the conflict. At the same time, many made the point that the popular perception of people in Donbass being against Ukraine is not accurate. Regarding a similar topic, the respondents often described how friends and family sometimes shared opposing views of the conflict, which often led to broken relationships.

Many hope that the region comes back to Ukraine and many are strongly pro-Russian; There has been an opinion about people from Donbass being separatists and that people who have stayed are separatists. But both are unfair (Female F). There were really a lot of people who supported Ukraine (Female M). It would be unfair to say that Donetsk is pro-Ukrainian because it is not (Female I).

He [neighbor] said that he would like Russia to come to the region (Female D). We have a really difficult relationship with them [parents] because of different political views. We do not talk politics (Male E). In Donetsk, many families have been fighting because of politics (Female I).

About the Russia-Ukraine dynamic in politics that many respondents described, it is also interesting to point out that a number of my interview participants described having connections to Russia. A number of respondents described that their ancestors are from Russia and that they have relatives living in Russia today. One participant described belonging to two worlds because she had Russian and Ukrainian heritage (Female E).

All my relatives live in Russia: parents of my parents, parents of my mother and some of my father’s relatives (Male E). I am Russian by blood, from Ural [region] (Male A). We wanted to take tickets to Moscow, where my brother lived, but there were not trains to leave that way soon (Female K).

5.1.4 Reflections on social backgrounds
The importance of economic and social resources seems, based on my interviews, to play a major role in understanding internal displacement in Ukraine. As clearly explained by most of my respondents, their social and professional networks were decisive in the decision to seek refuge in Kyiv. According to the report by ZOiS, the situation is similar when asking Ukrainian refugees about connections to their place of displacement (Sasse, 2017, p.4). The importance of resources correlates with the idea that persons fleeing conflict choose a location based on security but that other factors such as social and economic come close at hand (World Bank, 2016, p.31).

The political environment, before the outbreak of the political and armed conflict that my respondents described gave an impression that there existed a political divide in their local communities concerning Ukrainian state sovereignty in Donbass. Although no one described this as something that was dominating political and social life, and nothing that locals would turn into an armed conflict. The presence of different opinions concerning loyalty towards Ukraine or Russia shows that there were disagreements regarding the national community in the Donbass area before the outbreak of the armed conflict.

The emphasis that many of the interview participants put on the difference in educational background between IDPs and the people who have stayed, which many equate to having more assets, shows that there are perhaps certain segments of local societies in Donbass who have left, while others have stayed.

5.2 Displacement

Before I began the process of interviewing the respondents, I knew little about the situation for IDPs in Kyiv and what they thought about the conflict in Donbass. In this part I will present relevant findings I made while analyzing the displacement experience for IDPs from Donbass and how they perceive the challenges to durable displacement resolutions and the Ukrainian state’s role in this. To outline my findings, I have separated them into four sub-categories: Accommodation; Public services; Opportunities; Displacement resolution. A reflection of the findings I have made about that topic follows each sub-category.

5.2.1 Accommodation

The struggle with finding affordable and decent housing seems to be one of, if not the main issue that the respondents I interviewed faced when they eventually fled to Kyiv. The resettlement of Donbass IDPs to Kyiv has resulted in rental increase, a problem many respondents reported. Additionally, many mentioned discriminations by property owners against people from Donbass. The reason for this discrimination was in some situations clear, land owners did not like or trust people from the Donbass area. In other cases, the reasoning for discrimination was not as clear and could be due to stereotypes around IDPs.

The biggest problem at the moment is accommodation as the rent is really high and it has continued increasing (Female I). The key point for many is accommodation. Not everybody has an opportunity to earn enough for it (Male B). For some reason IDPs from Donbass are not much welcomed by landlords (Female
D) …being from Luhansk has caused me a lot of problems…It was almost impossible to find an apartment (Female E).

Another issue several respondents described was the problem of leasehold properties not being officially registered with local authorities. The main reason for this is that many property owners do not want to pay property taxes and therefore do not register the property. Property registration is a problem for IDPs as their status of a ‘registered IDP’ is based on them residing at an address officially recorded in Kyiv. Several of the respondents reported living in terrible conditions, sharing rooms with multiple non-family members of mixed age and gender.

We cannot get subsidies because our landlords do not want to pay taxes [address is not registered] (Female D). We have spent almost a year in a room for seven people (Female L). …three families were gathered in a two-room apartment (Female C). So, I talked to my father and he found a dormitory for me… A young woman could hardly survive there. And there were many men around (Female H).

Some interviewees described the stress that the poor living standards were causing them and their family members and the stress-relief they experienced when finally finding private accommodation. As mentioned in part 4.1.2 the respondents’ social networks in Kyiv were important and this is very clear in the case of housing. Many of them found their first place of residence in Kyiv though family and friends

As soon as we came back to the crowded flat he [son] would have mood shifts (Female E). People who have resettled have not made a choice with a map in their heads, thinking of where they should move. No, they moved where they could, where they had some support… (Female L).

5.2.2 Reflections on accommodation
Several of the issues raised by the respondents about accommodation fall within the IASC criteria for durable solutions to internal displacement. Criteria number two sets out “adequate living” (see part 4.5) as one necessity to sustainably solve internal displacement (IASC, 2010, s.27). The high costs and low standards of living that are reported by several of the respondents does not seem to live up to their definition of adequate. Additionally, the stress caused by poor living standards and sharing housing with non-family members are not just due to insufficient accommodation quality, but it is an issue connected to security. Several interview participants did point out that they believe the state is not living up to the obligations they feel the state has towards them which they see as duties (Oosterom, 2016, p.365). On the other hand, I also interviewed respondents who pointed out that citizens need to take more responsibility for their own well-being and the state should interfere less. Interestingly those respondents were able to receive accommodation thought their social networks in Kyiv at their time of arrival.

The issue of address registration to fulfill the criteria for an IDP status, and the subsidies that registrations entail is an interesting case of the dynamic between the state and its citizen. The status of IDP qualifies a citizen to receive grants from the state, which is an example of the state fulfilling what has been determined as an obligation it has towards its citizens. At the same
time, according to many of the respondents, the address registration requirements are primarily put in place to stop people from abusing the IDP subsidy system. And several respondents did describe how they believe many citizens abuse the IDP subsidy systems, although there were more comments on how the IDP status system and address registration discriminated IDPs and made it very hard to fulfill the requirements. This issue puts the state in a situation where the attempt to prevent abuse of IDP status risks antagonizing its citizen and fail in is obligations towards them.

The issue of discrimination while looking for work is a more indirect challenge for the state to mitigate. It is a matter that relates to the 8th criteria for IASC’s durable solutions, which stipulates the need to provide IDPs with justice. The fairly common cases of discrimination described by my respondents is a clear case of injustice an issue that is challenging for the state to address.

The accommodation issues seem to be push factors (see part 4.3) from the perspective of my respondents. The topic was only brought up in negative terms and some respondents emphasized that Kyiv is overcrowded and more people should not move there. During the interviews, a few respondents mentioned that they knew of IDPs who had to go back to Donbass because they cannot afford to live in Kyiv, which is an extreme example of the risks some people have to take to have a roof over their head.

5.2.3 Public services
As mentioned in the previous section (part 5.2.2) there is a Ukrainian state IDP subsidiary system which relies on a person registering as an IDP in a place which is not their official place of residence. The size of the grant depends on a number of different variables such as employment status, health, etc. Some respondents described this system as overly bureaucratic and very time-consuming. Some even stating that the time that it required to pass through the registration process to receive IDP subsidies is more valuable than the amount of money the subsidy provides.

*Quotes have been enormous. And that was not it, we had to reregister every six months (Female D). And through out that period my friends and my landlord were encouraging me to apply for it [IDP subsidy]. But I knew it would take me a day [to apply] and I would have to ask for a day off my job (Female K). First of all, because I did not want to deal with our governmental bureaucracy machinery. Secondly, I do not think that the amount of the assistance [subsidiary] was significant (Male F).*

In a number of cases, the issue of accommodation was discussed in the context of public services. Several respondents pointed out that the Ukrainians state should provide accommodation for IDPs. The feeling for many of them is that currently the state is doing nothing to help IDPs with housing:

*I do not know if there is a project of social housing for IDPs…And this should be available for vulnerable groups (Female I). Why would not they [state] provide us with at least some accommodation as in Georgia? (Female B).*
Similar to discrimination concerning accommodation, respondents described discrimination and negative attitudes towards them and other IDPs, by the employees at offices for social services in Kyiv. Several respondents described experiencing that they were not wanted there by local authorities. Other respondents pointed out the challenge that the influx of people from Donbass has had on the state, reasoning that there is no way the Ukrainian state could accommodate all of the people who needed social services. In contrast to failures of the state, many interviewees described the enormous value of the support provided by different humanitarian organizations as well as help from regular citizens in Kyiv:

*I can hardly imagine what the Government of Ukraine could do for such a large number of people* (Female I). *We have applied for assistance [state subsidies], but we have been told that we are not needed in Kyiv.*

*It is only thanks to volunteers who help IDPs…that we survive here* (Female G). *We receive some assistance from Samaritans [charity organization], some food, so, we are not hungry, and clothes as well* (Female F).

*Do you know that nobody needs you [IDPs] here? You have fallen as snow in simmer and we do not know what to do with you?* (Female E)

Perhaps the issues that IDPs face in Kyiv and Ukraine that receives the most attention is the residency registration, the Propiska system (IFES, 2016, p.7). To gain access to social services it often requires the individual to be registered as a resident in the region they are seeking services from. Some respondents described issues related to this. Additionally, the right to run for public office and the right to vote is also regulated based on the same residency registration system, which means that many IDPs in Kyiv are not able to use their democratic rights as citizens:

*…when the time came to remove the cast [orthopedic] hospital workers [in Kyiv] told her that they should go to the place of their registration [Luhansk] (Female E). Kyiv city municipality refuses to [support children’s cancer treatments], with an argument that IDP children are not locals* (Female K).

5.2.4 Reflections on public services

Issues related to the state delivering social services and ensuring democratic engagement rights are perhaps one of the clearest examples of a right and entitlement that a Ukrainian citizen would expect from the state as part of their citizenship, one of the relationships between citizen and state (Valentine, 2001, p.306). It is a clear example of how some citizens from Donbass cannot enjoy the same rights as the local citizens, a common issue facing IDPs (Oosterom, 2016, p.354). The fact that so many of the respondents pointed to the bureaucracy as one of the main problems of accessing social services such as IDP subsidies is alarming, several of them described this as a feeling of not being wanted by the state. It is an expression of injustice towards IDPs as well, as a failure to assure adequate living and the livelihoods of IDPs, as the subsidies often are the primary sources of income for many IDPs. The survey by ZOiS shows that 65.8 percent of IDPs in Ukraine receive financial state support (Sasse, 2017, p.8).
Some interview participants argue that the issues they and other IDPs face while dealing with the state, such as extreme bureaucracy, is something that all Ukrainian citizens face, not just internally displaced persons. Although the issue of residency registration preventing people from accessing social services and political participation primarily affects IDPs. In the sense of durable solutions to internal displacement it is a violation of a citizen’s rights and a failure by the state to fulfill its obligations.

Furthermore, there is a connection between accommodation, social services, and the state. Several respondents pointed out that they believe that the state is not doing enough for their displaced citizens in the sense of accommodation. Many noted that the state needs to provide accommodation for those in need, this means that they believe that housing for IDPs needs to be part of the obligations that the state has towards its citizens. The extent of the state’s role in this becomes a question of the extent of its obligations towards, its citizens, what do people require in exchange of the reproduction of the state’s sovereignty? Interesting to point out is that a number of interviewees believed that they believe people need to rely less on the state and more on themselves, which is contrarian to the idea of extending the state’s obligations.

5.2.5 Opportunities
Finding work and develop self-employment is an issue that was raised by several respondents. Some respondents specifically mention the challenge of finding employment with decent conditions. Simultaneously, a number of respondents have emphasized that there are still more opportunities in Kyiv than where they came from and other parts of Ukraine. These individuals described that they think they now live in the right place for better opportunities:

“It was a lot harder to find a job. In many cases people had to work in the position that would not suit their background (Female D). Of course, it is hard to find a good job (Male A). I could have found a job in Horlivka [Donbass] but not here [Kyiv] (Female C). … [if a person] wants to have a good job, then I would suggest moving [to Kyiv] (Female M). And so far, I live here. Why here? Because here are more job prospects (Female K).

A topic related to opportunities are the possibilities for entrepreneurial activities, which some respondents considered the same as employment. Several interviewees mentioned different issues related to self-employment, specifically the level of taxes was pointed out by several participants to be a hindrance for people who are trying to develop their businesses. Related to this is also the issue of lack of access to credits, and bank services in general, which several respondents pointed out as a problem:

Credits were closed for us immediately even for credits of 4000 to 5000 [UAH] (Female E). … people like me do not need free accommodation – we need resources and opportunities … while changing the tax system strongly repeals potential investors (Female J). I think that the government should not define people’s lives but give people possibilities… But our government has started doing more regulative laws, for example, taxes for businesses have been raised (Male E)
5.2.6 Reflections on opportunities
According to research by the World Bank issues of well-being such as economy are usually the second most important factor, after security, which IDPs consider in displacement (World Bank, 2016, p.30). According to a number of my interview participants, the state needs to focus more on creating an economic environment that creates opportunities for people to develop businesses and find employment. The fact that several interviewees attributed the lack of such opportunities to the interference and corruption of the state is alarming and a conflict between citizen and state that seems quite prevalent. It is an issue that is also closely related to accommodation as many IDPs struggle to afford rent in Kyiv due to high prices but also the lack of decently profitable occupations. According to the IASC Framework for durable solutions, the state has to provide the possibility for livelihood, which would include the economic opportunities (IASC, 2010, p.27).

5.2.7 Displacement resolution
The topic I was most interested in hearing the interview participants opinion on was durable displacement resolutions, from the perspective of IASC’s durable solutions (IASC, 2010, p.5). In all the 19 interviews this topic was touched upon to some degree. A majority of the respondents, about 60 percent, do not believe in returning to Donbass as a durable solution. This number correlates with the results from the ZOiS report, which also showed that 64.9 percent of the IDP respondents intend to stay where they are currently residing (Sasse, 2017 p.3). The primary reason that I could identify for this belief was that most of the respondents did not believe that there would be anything to return to, especially with regard to employment and self-employment opportunities.

...if people come back home to places with 60-70% of damage what are the prospects to find a job? (Female D). ...still I do not consider an option of going back [to Donbass] as I understand that the life there is finished (Female I). The process of returning would be extremely challenging. I doubt if youths would come at all (Female F). Large factories have been robbed there [Donbass] and brought to Russia by pieces… I do not see the future [in Donbass] (Female B).

Although most of the respondents were quite pessimistic towards returning to Donbass as a durable solution to displacement, most of them expressed hope for the situation in Donbass becoming normalized and the region returning to Ukraine. Several respondents pointed out the need for peace as the most important issue right now, more important than the actual outcome of the conflict. Interestingly the point that many brought up as a hindrance to peace is that there are stakeholders on both sides of the armed conflict in Donbass who are financially gaining from the continued status quo.

We don’t have politics in our country – it has been substituted by business (Female J). People in the region [Donbass] will not forgive Ukraine, they will not (Female E). I see that it is beneficial for a lot of people to have the war continue (Female C). …where people have experienced occupation, I could see them realizing the importance of peace (Male D).
Even though the conflict cuts the respondents’ physical relationship to Donbass, and the outlook for return is bleak, the majority of them showed a willingness to maintain close relations with friends and family who were still in Donbass. Several of the respondents told me that they had visited Donbass since they fled and were intending to continue to do so. Some interviewees described that it was this connection to people in Donbass that helped them understand what was going on because the Ukrainian and Russian media were not providing a truthful image of the situation.

*It has been two years since we have stopped watching news at all. We listen to people who live there and who fight here. This is the truth – not what we are being told in the news* (Female G). *While living here and visiting the region I see the situation a bit different from what people see on TV* (Female E).

Many of the respondents identified similar factors as the main challenges to return as a durable solution. The rebuilding of local infrastructure and development of the economy was noted as the main problem and something the Ukrainian state has to focus on. Additionally, many describe political tension as a security issue, pointing out that it is too dangerous to cohabitate due to political differences. Several of the respondents think that the political tensions will continue for a long time, even if there was peace today.

*We should take care of investment, of building new factories, establishment of new working places…* (Male B). *I think that on the political level we will have peace in 5 or 10 years but I think there is a big crack in the relationship between the people [from Donbass] and it will take maybe 50 years, maybe a century [to heal]* (Male E). *There is a kind of sick revolution based on the artificial division of people…* (Female H).

As presented in the previous parts there were many grievances in relation to displacement in Kyiv and examples of how challenging it was to find a sustainable livelihood and decent, affordable accommodation. Simultaneously a considerable number of interview participants expressed content with having ended up in Kyiv, as they saw the opportunities that the city offered as superior to what any other place in Ukraine could provide. Some described how living in Kyiv was partially a dream that they had, previous to the outbreak of the conflict in Donbass and their displacement.

*I am convinced that if there is a need to move it has to be a place with bigger prospects, such as the capital (Male A). I perceive the resettlement as an opportunity to develop our potential* (Female C). *I have changed my perception of life completely [since resettlement]. I can put 10 pluses to everything that has happened since August 2015 [when they left Donbass]* (Female L).

On the topic of settling in another part of Ukraine, it is evident from my analysis of the interviews that this probably not an option that anyone considered, as it was not brought up a single time as a durable solution. What was prevalent was the option of moving to another country, which alas is not part of IASC’s durable solutions to internal displacement (IASC,
Some respondents mentioned friends and relatives who moved abroad and how they either rely on them partially or were also considering this option due to the lack of opportunities in Ukraine as well as feelings of apathy towards the current state of the country.

*I am trying to find some opportunity to work abroad because I do not see future in this country, I am afraid* (Female I). *My daughter knows English and she keeps learning it and it has been two months since she started working in Qatar* (Female F). *So, people from Donetsk [IDPs] are likely to leave the country. My partner and I are thinking about it as well...I cannot see the evolutionary development of Ukraine* (Female J).

### 5.2.8 Reflections on displacement resolution

According to my respondents returning to Donbass was not a durable solution, although there was still hope among some participants. These feelings of hope seemed to rely on economic development in Donbass, which most of them claimed relied primarily on the state. Several possible solutions of how the state must support the development of Donbass was described as follows: an equal dispersion of state funds between the regions of Ukraine; focus on industrial and agricultural development, etc. The main issues people saw with economic recovery in Donbass was the state’s own inability to organize it, primarily due to corruption. And the reasoning behind staying or leaving Kyiv was similar.

It is evident that the lack of trust towards and disappointment with the state is affecting the respondents’ perception of how their displacement can be solved sustainably. If my findings are at all representative of the general opinion of the total IDP population, then the current relationship between citizen and state in Ukraine is in a dangerous condition. The lack of trust in the Ukrainian state’s ability to provide for its citizens seriously threatens the sovereignty of the state, as its authority to rule over its claimed territory and inhabitants put into question when the citizens no longer feel that its advantageous to them. The ZOiS report partially correlates with this: part of their survey shows that 41.5 percent of Ukrainian IDPs do not trust the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko at all, while 29 percent “rather do not trust” him (Sasse, 2017, p.16).

The number of my interviewees who intend to stay in Kyiv demonstrates how important possibilities of well-being in terms of economic opportunities are for IDPs when reasoning around resettlement (World Bank, 2016, p.30; IDMC, 2017, p.59). This fact correlates with the grievances some respondents had concerning the uneven dispersion of state funds in Ukraine, an unequal development which favors Kyiv also turns it into a pulling factor, due to the better opportunities created by the higher development. And let’s not forget that the pulling power of Kyiv seems adamant even though there are so many issues related to for example access to the rights and entitlements of citizenship when living in Kyiv as an IDP.

From the perspective of IASC’s durable solutions and returning to Donbass, it is of course understandable that the state cannot currently provide its citizens with most of the criteria that IASC outline as necessary to sustainably solve displacement, in Donbass, due to the armed conflict. Specifically, large parts of Donbass are not safe, and this is usually the primary reason behind the decision to flee in the first place.
6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The reasoning behind displacement
What is the background of the respondents’ displacement, concerning conflict, economic and social factors? The assumptions made by the World Bank research is accurate in the case of my study (World Bank, 2016, p.29): All of the 19 respondents fled because of the conflict, in one form or another. In many of the cases, it was due to direct security issues while others were fleeing because of the lack of access to basic needs that the armed conflict brought to large parts of the Donbass area. Seven respondents described expecting to return from their displacement after a couple of months, thinking that the conflict would end quickly. This reasoning reinforces that most of them left because of the security threat and intended to return when security is restored.

The factors which pulled my interview participants to seek refuge in Kyiv are more diverse: of course, the need for safety was the primary factor when the respondents decided where to go, but the vast majority of Ukraine is perfectly safe and not occupied by separatist. Why Kyiv? It seems that the primary reported reason was social networks, such as relatives, friends and business contacts seem to have been a pulling factor in the majority of my respondents’ decision to seek refuge in Kyiv, in total eight respondents pointed out their networks as essential to their decision to resettle in Kyiv. Social networks have been vital in accessing affordable accommodation for many of the respondents, an issue which forces many IDPs to leave Kyiv. These finding correlates with established research which shows that social networks often are critical in displacement patterns (IDMC, 2017, s.59). Beyond social networks, economic factors also seem to have played a role for a number of the younger interviewees, in total three respondents specifically described Kyiv as a place they went to for opportunities. Two of these respondents also expressed that Kyiv could offer an environment where people similar to them live, showing that other forms of social factors also played a part.

6.2 Durable displacement resolutions
What are the respondents’ views about durable solutions for displacement regarding either return, local integration or resettlement? Opportunities to improve livelihoods are often central in understanding the settlement of internally displaced persons I interviewed. Many respondents emphasize issues with livelihood opportunities, 13 of the respondents pointed this out, both in reference to returning to Donbass, integrating where they are currently residing and settling elsewhere in the country. Returning to Donbass was seen as unrealistic to 12 of the respondents, not only due to issues of security but also because it is viewed as an option not offering sustainable livelihoods. The solution of settling elsewhere in Ukraine was not brought up as a durable solution by any respondents, while many respondents pointed out Kyiv as the area with the most opportunities for finding a livelihood. Five respondents referred to moving to another country as a possible durable solution to their displacement. This phenomenon is problematic as IASC’s Framework does not include it as a durable solution, which is the basis that the UNHCR builds its work for internal displacement resolution on. My impression is that with
time the number of IDPs displaced in Kyiv who decide to remain in the capital will increase dramatically. The probability of return or settlement in other areas of Ukraine relies on the state’s capacity to effectively deal with its current issues of fulfilling its obligations towards its citizens.

6.3 The state’s role in displacement resolution

How do the respondents perceive the Ukrainian state’s role with regard to resolutions to their internal displacement? My conclusion is that the respondents have higher expectations on the state to provide displacement resolution, than what the respondents believe the state is currently doing for them, 12 of the interviewees specifically said that they expected more effective state support for IDPs. From the perspective of IASC’s criteria for durable solutions to internal displacement there are specifically large issues with state provision of adequate living; livelihood opportunities; political participation; and access to justice and remedies (IASC, 2010, p.27). The discrepancy between expectations of the respondents as citizens of the state and the reality of what the state is offering is a testament to a dangerous dynamic. Further degradation of the perception of the state as a provider of rights and entitlements can prevent the states capacity to exert sovereignty, which relies on its legitimacy among the people (Delaney, 2009, p.197). In the long-term, this relationship between citizens and the state in relation to obligations and the reproduction of legitimacy in return, is what the Ukrainians state’s sovereignty is built on (Oosterom, 2016, s. 365). For the Ukrainian states sovereignty to become sustainable, control over territory will not suffice, it needs to find a balanced relationship with the inhabitants of the territory (Storey, 2012, p.38).

7. FINAL REMARKS

The research process for this study has been a tremendous learning experience. During data collection, I came across a multitude of topics and issues, related to the situation for IDPs in Ukraine, which I could not convey or address in this paper. To give a few examples: The gender aspect of internal displacement in Ukraine requires attention from academia, from the perspectives of how it relates to migration patterns and concepts such as home, belonging and nationalism. Further, the role of IDPs as communicators between Donbass and government-controlled Ukraine is fascinating, especially in a media environment where lack of information and abundance of misinformation on both sides of the conflict is prevalent.

I hope that the precarious position that Ukrainian IDPs are in will receive the necessary attention and sufficient state support, as I believe it is essential for durable solutions to displacement, which in the long-term are inter-linked with the state’s sustainability. The state has to develop and conceive a comprehensive national strategy for displacement resolution in cohesion and collaboration between the Ukrainian state, civil society, international organizations and most importantly internally displaced persons. Such a strategy needs to be dynamic both in relation to short- and long-term solutions as well as the development of the conflict with time.
I want to take the opportunity to thank the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) for the opportunity to conduct this research project, and the MFS-stipend was decisive for the existence of this paper. I also want to thank all of the respondents who have participated in my research, without your openness and generosity there would be nothing useful to convey in this paper. Additionally, I want to thank Tetyana Durnyeva and Kateryna Zhemchuzhnykova, from the organization ‘Group of Influence’, your networks were crucial in finding participants for the interviews. And at last, great thanks go out to Hanna Manolienko who helped me with language, logistics, and contacts throughout the research process. Your engagement and curiosity went far beyond what I could have expected.

8. REFERENCE LIST

8.1 Literature


8.2 Articles


### 8.4 Interviews

Female A, age unknown, from Luhansk

Female B, age 51, from Luhansk

Female C, age 39, from Donetsk

Female D, age 63, from Donetsk

Female E, age unknown, from Luhansk

Female F, age 68, from Donetsk

Female G, age 37, from Luhansk

Female H, age unknown, from Luhansk

Female I, age 28, from Donetsk

Female J, age unknown, from Donetsk

Female K, age 31, from Donetsk

Female L, age 47, from Luhansk

Female M, age 25, from Donetsk

Male A, age 30, from Donetsk

Male B, age 48, from Donetsk

Male C, age 32, from Donetsk

Male D, age 39, from Donetsk
Male E, age 32, from Donetsk

Male F, age 27, from Donetsk

8.5 Internet resources


