



IDPs and a University in Exile Breathe New Life into a Town

A Case Report of Refugees in Towns
Pokrovsk, Ukraine

Maryna Kabanets

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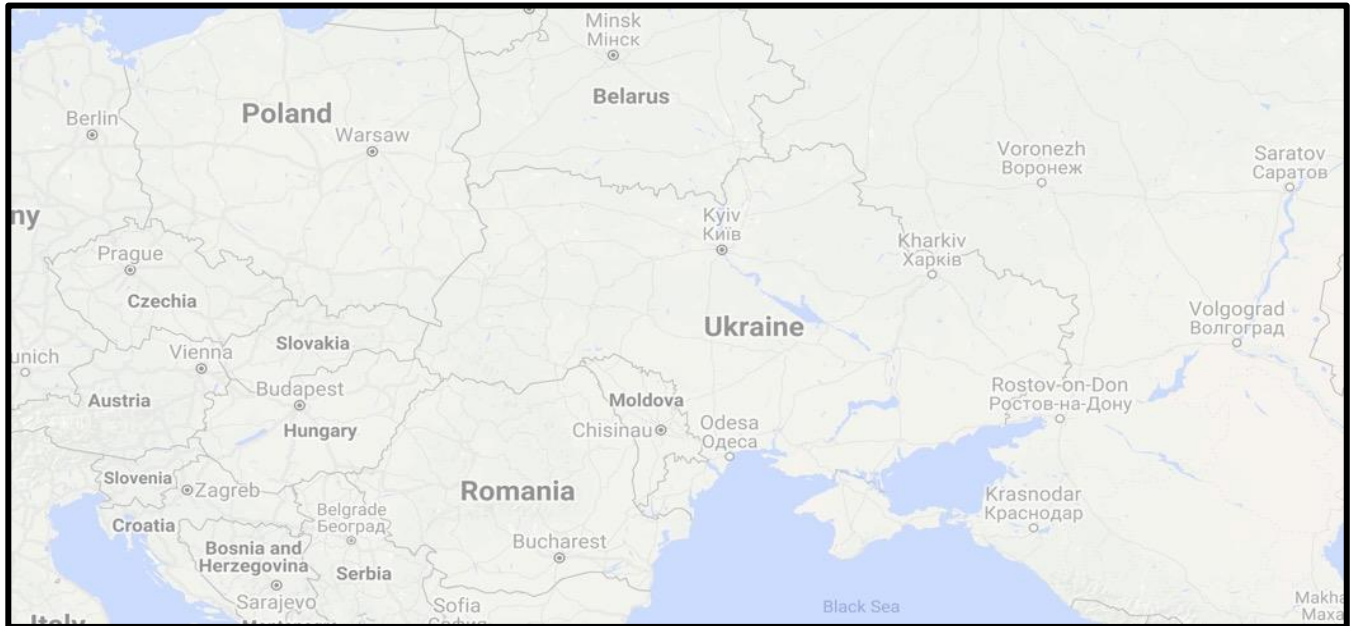
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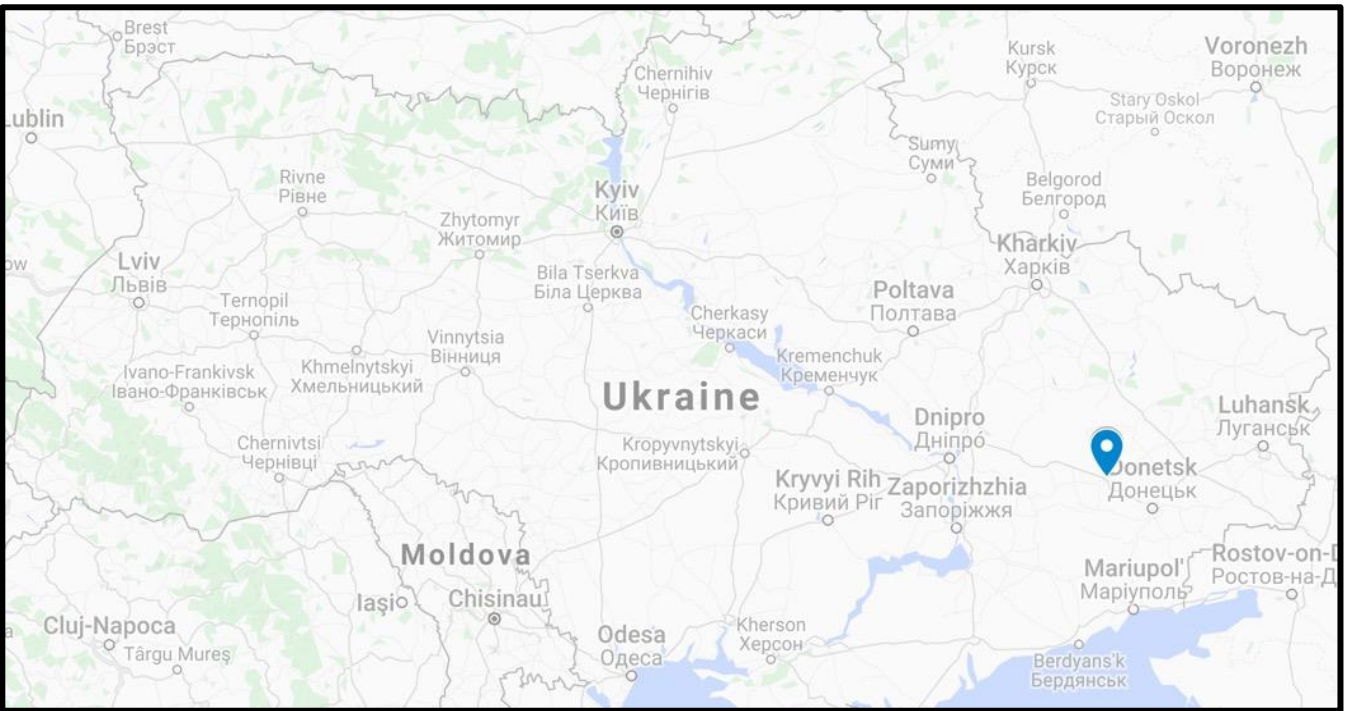
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For more information on Ukraine and Pokrovsk, continue to the appendices. All base map imagery © Google 2019.

Ukraine



Pokrovsk, Ukraine



Introduction

This case report examines the impact of internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the social life and culture of an eastern Ukrainian town: Pokrovsk. It explores the impact on this town of both an influx of IDPs and the relocation of one of the country's largest universities.¹

In November 2013, tens of thousands of people in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital city, protested against the government's decision to abandon plans to sign an association agreement with the EU. The protests erupted into a revolution. In February 2014 about 100 activists were killed by security forces, President Viktor Yanukovich fled to Russia, and the opposition took over. In the spring of 2014 Russian military forces annexed Crimea, the peninsula in the south of Ukraine. Petro Poroshenko was elected president on 25 May 2014. Then in the summer of 2014 pro-Russian armed groups seized parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts,² while Ukrainian government forces launched military operations in response. Now there is a 500-kilometer line of separation between the Russian-supported separatist districts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the rest of Ukraine.

Pokrovsk is an industrial town in eastern Ukraine, in the western part of Donetsk oblast. It is a transportation hub, known as "the western gate of the Donbas."³ It is located about 37 miles (60 kilometers) from the contact line, or collision line, which is the demarcation between Ukraine and territories of the self-proclaimed republics, the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. In 2014 Pokrovsk had a population of 64,500 people, and in 2017 it grew to about 75,200 people as a result of IDP influx.

Between June 2014 and January 2015, thousands of IDPs fled Donetsk City during the conflict and came to Pokrovsk. In October 2014, one of the largest and oldest universities in Ukraine, Donetsk National Technical University (DonNTU), was relocated from Donetsk to Pokrovsk.⁴ The relocation occurred because militants from the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic began to seize university buildings. Students and professors were forced to make a choice, either to stay and work under the self-proclaimed government, or to leave. As a result, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine evacuated 18 universities from the occupied areas.

¹ For more background on the resettlement of the university, continue to the Appendix.

² An oblast (Ukrainian: область) is an administrative unit, of which Ukraine has 24.

³ The Donbas is a historical, cultural, and economic region in eastern Ukraine and southwestern Russia. The word "Donbas" is a portmanteau formed from Donets Basin, which refers to the river Donets that flows through it. Multiple definitions of the region's extent exist, and its boundaries have never been officially demarcated.

⁴ The university had been located in the center of Donetsk, with twelve academic buildings, nine resident halls, and sports facilities. In its best years (in the 2000s) it had more than 25,000 students, 88 departments, and 1,400 professors and lecturers. One of its affiliates, Industrial Institute of DonNTU, is situated in Pokrovsk, the main reason for the university's relocation to this city.



Shybankova Square, the main square of Pokrovsk. Photo by Kateryna Shcherbakova, 2018.

Donetsk is a large city with a million inhabitants, so the IDPs found a very different life in the small city of Pokrovsk.⁵ Those who could not get used to this new lifestyle—slower pace of life, small scale, simple social life, limited economic infrastructure, and lack of leisure and sports facilities—moved on to larger cities like Kyiv.⁶ Amongst those who chose to stay, however, there were many active and ambitious people who have had a significant impact on Pokrovsk: creating public spaces for young people, organizing city social events, inviting local celebrities to take part in social programs, and initiating community building projects.

The city council and public council of Pokrovsk initially welcomed IDPs and actively involved them in the social life of the city. However, the social relationships between IDPs and locals have changed over the four years of armed conflict in Ukraine due to a combination of factors including contrasting social and educational backgrounds between IDPs and the host population, proximity to the conflict zone, and regional labor market conditions.

⁵ For more background on Pokrovsk, continue to the Appendix.

⁶ A RIT report on IDPs in Kyiv is forthcoming.

This report focuses on the social integration of the IDPs who came to Pokrovsk because of the university relocation. It reviews social and cultural activities that involve both IDPs and local residents, especially young people. The report also explores the impact on the local economy, municipal politics, the housing market, and science and technology research activities taking place in the city.

Methods

The case report work started in June 2018 and took two and a half months. I had conversations with 26 IDPs (8 men and 18 women) aged 21-67 years old, whom I know quite well. All had been living in Pokrovsk for at least two years, and, because they had been relocated with their companies, they had jobs already when they came to Pokrovsk. Twenty-four came from Donetsk city and other cities and towns in Donetsk *oblast*. Our conversations covered integration into the host community, plans for the future, feelings and attitudes towards the locals, and perception of their place in the host city. Sixteen of the IDPs I spoke with are DonNTU teachers or masters students, four work for PJSC “Pokrovsk Coal Company,” three are self-employed, and three work in small private companies. I also had conversations with 12 local residents whom I know through work or friends to find out their opinions and feelings about changes in their city after the arrival of IDPs.

In terms of grey literature, Pokrovsk is quite small, so there is not much media reporting about what is going on here. I therefore drew upon local websites, including those of the municipality,⁷ local news,⁸ the university monthly newsletter,⁹ and the DonNTU website.¹⁰

Finally, my findings draw on family’s experiences because I work for Donetsk National Technical University as Head of Department, come from Donetsk, and moved to Pokrovsk with my university in 2014.

The Author’s Position in the Town & Experience Researching this Case

When I heard about the Refugees in Towns project, I realized I have had a similar experience to those described in the reports, and decided I was ready to make my own experience public. I am the head of a department at Donetsk National Technical University, and an IDP myself, who relocated with the university. I realized that the experience of Pokrovsk is unusual because of this relocation of one of the

⁷ Available at: <http://pokrovsk.city/>

<https://ddk.dn.ua/>

⁸ Available at: <https://www.06239.com.ua/>

⁹ Available at: <http://donntu.edu.ua/donpolitech>

¹⁰ Available at: <http://donntu.edu.ua/>

largest universities in Ukraine. Since 2014, I have been living and working with my IDP colleagues, teaching students, many of whom are also IDPs. We went through all the steps of displacement together and became close during our work in exile and now share our feelings, experiences, and problems with each other. I wrote from my own experience and discussed the issues with other IDPs to see if they had the same or different thoughts and feelings about our situation.

Although I did not ask about it, several IDPs told me they had become more reserved and would not discuss all those issues with people who do not belong to our community. I also talked to many locals who now work at our university and lived here before the conflict to explore whether they saw the changes taking place in the city as connected with the IDPs' arrival. They described their impressions of the city before and after the arrival of IDPs.

As the head of a department at Donetsk National Technical University, I attend many meetings, events, trainings, and seminars, and take part in different projects, which are described in this case report. The University is situated in the main square of the city, alongside the Town Hall and the Municipal Concert Hall, so we witness firsthand many important events taking place in the heart of the city.

Having found myself in such a difficult situation four years ago, I learned to live in the moment without making plans for the future. After four years, I am still hoping to get back home after the armed conflict is resolved and the territories are returned to the jurisdiction of Ukraine.



The main square of Pokrovsk on the weekend. It is quiet, but new IDP arrivals have breathed new vitality into the city.

Photo by Maryna Kabanets, 2018.

A Note on Displacement Terminology in Ukraine

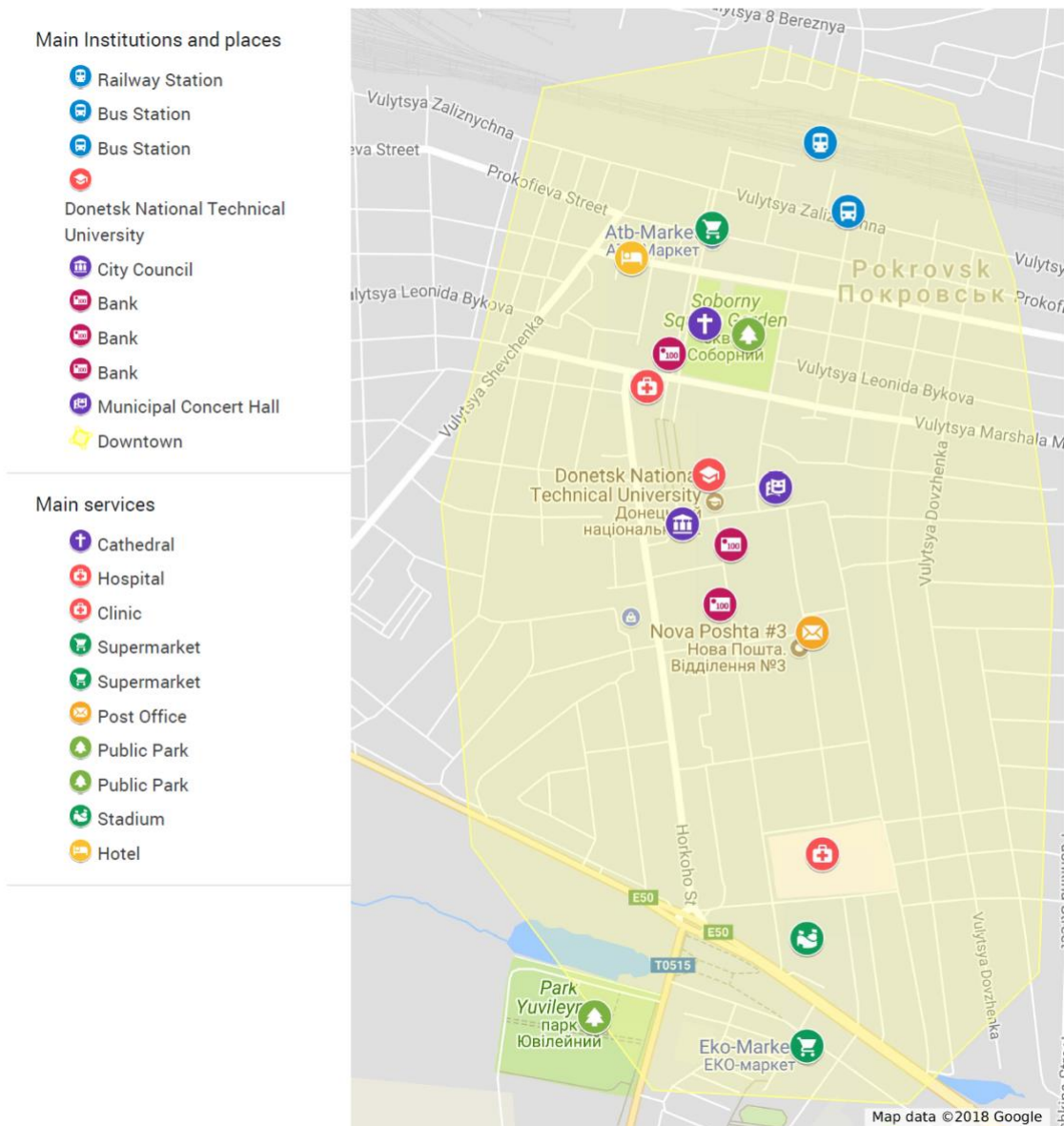
Before 2014, Ukraine experienced brain drain and other forms of domestic and international economic emigration. When the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine broke out, the word “refugee” began to be used. Eventually, as internal migration increased, the state adopted the term “internally displaced person” (IDP), translated as “внутрішньо переміщена особа” in Ukrainian. Researchers and journalists use the terms: “forced migrant,” “displaced person,” and “IDP.” However, the most common words used in Ukraine are “resettler” or “relocatee” (*pereselenets* in Ukrainian), and I use this local term instead of IDP. Ordinary people do not normally use “IDP” and might not even know what it means.

As for “integration,” the Ukrainian language has the same term translated as “інтеграція” in Ukrainian with the same meaning: the process and the result of the process when migrants become accepted by the host society or community. Conducting the interviews, I asked resettlers about the meaning of integration for them personally, and as discussed below there were both predictable and surprising answers.

Mapping the Resettler Population

Resettler homes in Pokrovsk are distributed evenly throughout the city, and there is not one resettler neighborhood or enclave. Most resettlers rent housing in residential areas of the city. Most institutions and services are located quite compactly in the city center, and it is easy to get to any part of the city from any other by public transport.

Main services in Pokrovsk



Resettler Experiences

My personal story as a resettler is quite typical for those living in Donetsk. At the beginning of 2014, I was living with my husband, our 17-year-old daughter, and my elderly mother in a flat in the center of Donetsk City, which is the center of Donetsk oblast, with a population of about 1 million people. I was working for Donetsk National Technical University, one of the oldest and largest technical universities in Ukraine. My husband was employed by a private company with headquarters in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital city. My daughter was finishing a lyceum.¹¹ When the armed conflict broke out in our region, we had to make several big decisions. In May 2014, just before school graduation parties, the city was shelled several times, sometimes so heavily that we had to hide in shelters in the center of the city.

In the spring of 2014, many thousands of people attended peace rallies in Donetsk for a united Ukraine. Participants of the rallies were attacked by people wearing masks, camouflage, and carrying bats, who supported the pro-Russian forces. Many people were wounded, and one activist was killed. It became dangerous to show one's pro-Ukrainian position.

My daughter's lyceum had Ukrainian as a medium of instruction (there were few such schools in Donetsk). In 2014 they had to change some of their traditions. For example, students would normally wear traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirts for all ceremonial events. But that spring it became dangerous to do so, so the graduates had to come to school wearing ordinary clothes and change into embroidered shirts in their classrooms for the ceremony.

All Ukrainian high school graduates have to take independent examinations for admission to universities. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science did not allow graduates from eastern Ukraine to take the exams due to the hostilities. We had to take our daughter to Lviv, which is 800 miles (1,300 km) from Donetsk to support her during the examinations. When we left in June, we planned to be in Lviv for two weeks, so left most of our belongings behind. We did not know that we would not be able to return to Donetsk until October.

In late 2014 our lives changed completely. My daughter entered Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv; my elderly mother moved to Poltava oblast to stay with my brother's family; and my husband lost his job as their offices and warehouses were occupied and robbed by armed locals. I had to make a tough decision—to stay in the conflict zone or to move with my university.

Our friends and neighbors have their own similar stories. Many of them lost their jobs and moved to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, in search of better lives because it became impossible to do business under the self-proclaimed government, which began to expand its sphere of influence and establish new rules and laws. Some of our acquaintances lived close to the areas of heavy fighting, and their homes were badly damaged. They had to escape, first to stay with friends or relatives in safer parts of the city, then to other cities, usually Kyiv or oblast city centers. I also know several families who lost all

¹¹ Lyceum is a secondary comprehensive educational institution that provides education beyond the state educational minimum and conducts scientific and practical training of talented youth.

their property and possessions. Some moved to government-controlled areas where their relatives were, and some families eventually emigrated to other countries such as China, Germany, Russia, and Israel.

My family is one among thousands of others with similar experiences. When the armed conflict broke out, my colleague, Nataliya, was working for Donetsk National University, which was evacuated to Vinnystia, about 550 miles (900 km) from Donetsk. Nataliya has two children and could not afford to rent a flat in Vinnystia, so she had to quit her job at the university and move to her parents' home in Selydove. The small two-room flat houses six people—three generations, who all have different interests, problems, and needs. In 2016 she found a job at Donetsk National Technical University in Pokrovsk and has since been commuting to and from work 12 miles (20 kilometers).

Yet these are only two families' experiences. Ukraine is quite diverse in its culture, mentalities, and experiences of integration among displaced people (i.e. resettlers). Integration plays out in different ways depending on the region, the host city, and the individual. In the capital, Kyiv, which is much more multicultural, resettlers were more or more easily integrated within a year, especially if they had a job. I do not know anybody in Kyiv who is planning to return to Donetsk even after the conflict is over. But still the resettlers feel they belong to the Donbas, and they often gather together as a community within Kyiv.

Differences in experiences also vary depending on whether resettlers move to western or eastern parts of Ukraine. In the western parts of Ukraine, locals have a strong national identity and are very patriotic and politically conscious, so resettlers are usually more assimilated than integrated. They become indistinguishable from the locals. This happens because the resettlers who go to western Ukraine go there because they have similar political views, identify as “more Ukrainian,” and want to feel more protected from possible Russian aggression. This is different from eastern parts of Ukraine where people are usually diverse in their political opinions, religious views, and do not have strong national identity due to multinational composition of the population, mixed marriages, and families commonly with relatives in both Russia and Ukraine.

How Resettlers Understand Integration

When asked how they define integration, resettlers' responses were quite varied. For some, integration was about having access to services: “Integration for me is availability of main services, social contacts with local residents, understanding of the needs of our family by the local authorities.”

For others, their understanding was more abstract and based in feeling: “Integration is feeling somewhere at home.”

Some resettlers have complex feelings about integration:

“I have two worlds in my mind: the small one with my colleagues, neighbors, new acquaintances, day-to-day affairs, and the big one where everything exists, including my family [living on the non-government-controlled territory], my old friends, my previous life, my memories.”

– Female, 43 years old, arrived in Pokrovsk in 2014

“Integration into the local community of a small city is like lowering your educational and cultural level to that of the locals who have a provincial mentality. That is reason why I do not want to integrate.”

– Female, 45 years old, arrived in Pokrovsk in 2014

Almost everyone put the psychological component of integration first: they emphasized the social and community domains of integration and did not seem to connect financial issues with their integration.

Host Population Response

In Pokrovsk, the local population generally has a neutral or positive and sympathetic attitude toward resettlers. Most feel sorry for those who lost their homes or had to flee from conflict zones, they accept the resettlers, and do not meet them with any discrimination. Proximity to the contact line and four years of resettler presence has accustomed locals to the presence of displaced people. In the beginning, the locals tended to ask resettlers many questions about the situation in Donetsk and showed their sympathy and willingness to help. Eventually they started to perceive the situation less emotionally, but without irritation or dissatisfaction. Locals perceive resettlers as “separatists from Donetsk,” “patriots,” “Ukrainian nationalists,” or “passive citizens who escaped from the military conflict.”

This positive response can be traced to a number of factors. First, for the most part, the resettlers in Pokrovsk came with the university and already had jobs, so they have not created pressures on the local labor market. Second, life in Pokrovsk used to be quite monotonous, typical for a small industrial town. According to the locals, since 2015 the social life of Pokrovsk has been significantly enriched through new types of events, such as pop concerts, the National Presidential Orchestra of Ukraine, the National Academic Orchestra of Folk Instruments of Ukraine, theater performances with well-known actors, ballets, and opera performances. Prior to the arrival of the resettlers, locals had to go to Donetsk for such entertainment. After the resettlers arrived and increased demand for cultural events among the urban population, local agencies started inviting performers and were no longer afraid that tickets would not sell. Further, many actors and musicians wanted to support resettlers and soldiers in frontline cities in eastern Ukraine, so they now come to places like Pokrovsk, which they would not have done before the conflict.

The Urban Impact

Pokrovsk is a small industrial city with an economy based on the PJSC “Pokrovsk Coal Company,” the largest producer of coking coal in Ukraine.¹² Prior to the arrival of the IDPs, almost half the population was connected with the coal mine. Locals typically have physically demanding jobs and low levels of education. Before the conflict, Pokrovsk inhabitants all went to nearby Donetsk for the shops, hospitals, and arts, unable to find these services in Pokrovsk itself. There was little need to develop centers of culture and commerce in their own town because of low demand and low levels of disposable income. According to local residents, before 2015, there were no interesting city events except for a local holiday, City Day, in August.



The railway station in Pokrovsk moving people and coking coal. Photo by Kateryna Shcherbakova, 2018.

With the relocation of DonNTU, some 4,000 students and 380 faculty and staff members moved to Pokrovsk. This influx of well-educated people, scholars, and active youth—all of whom were used to the vibrant life of a big city—meant Pokrovsk’s population changed. Along with the university, the “DonetskSteel Group,” one of the largest producers of high-quality merchant coking coal, evacuated its

¹² Coking coal i.e. metallurgical coal is used to create coke, a very important input for the production of steel.

administrative staff from Donetsk to Pokrovsk. Some banks also moved their affiliates to Pokrovsk. Without these relocations, resettlers would not have chosen Pokrovsk due to its underdeveloped infrastructure and the specific skillset of the labor market.

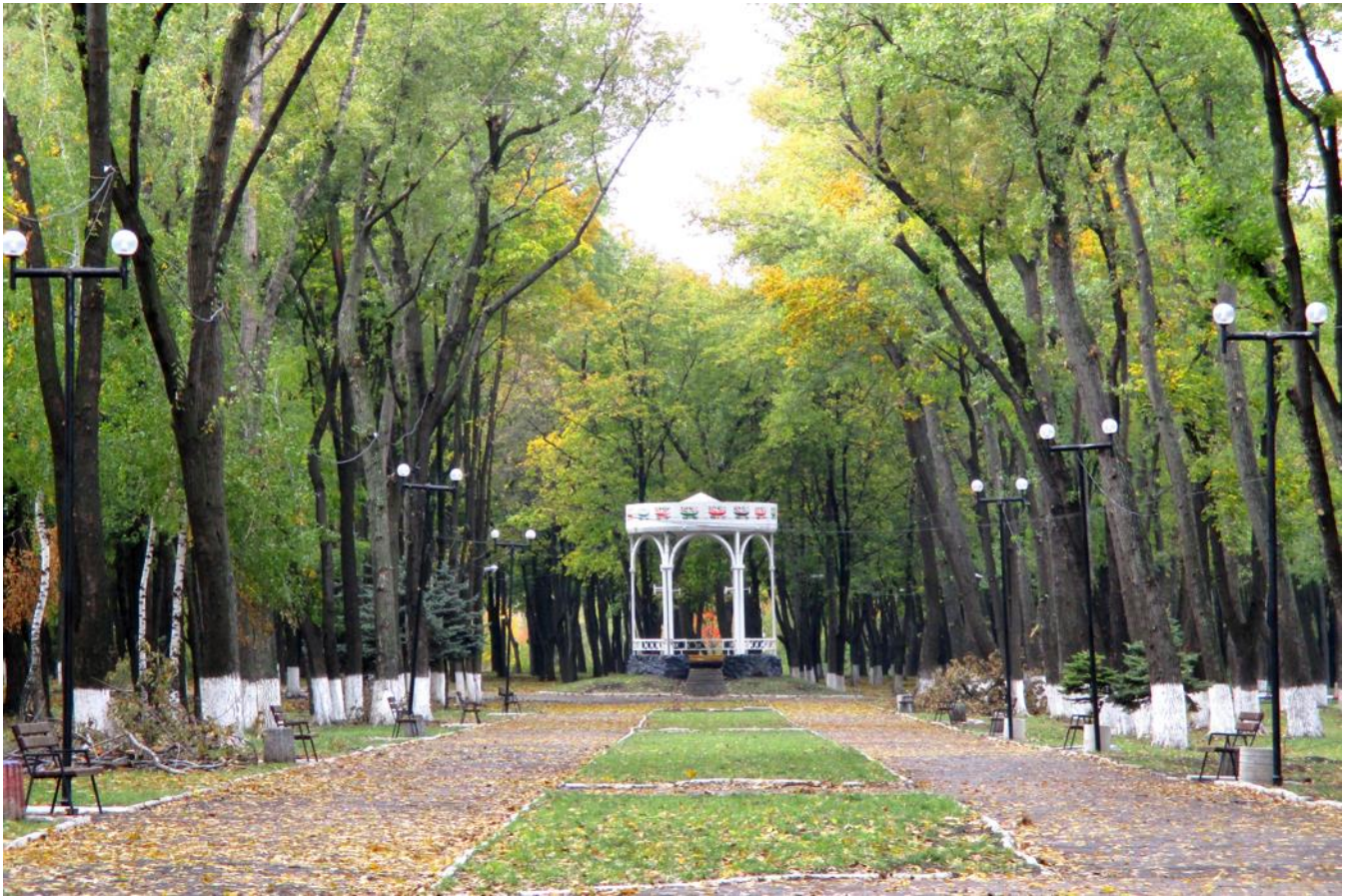


The main square of Pokrovsk with DonNTU students. Young IDPs have transformed the city with new economic opportunities, research, and cultural events. Photo by Maryna Kabanets, 2018.

Youth Empowerment

Ukrainians often have a stereotypical view of resettlers as passive recipients of aid from the government and volunteers. However, in the case of Pokrovsk many resettlers have become active citizens, working to improve their new home. The most noticeable changes in the social and cultural life of the city are both felt and caused by young people. Over the past three years, several creative spaces have opened. These spaces provide opportunities for youth to gather, organize events, develop their creativity, and focus their energy on improving their city and country.

One of the first youth efforts was the establishment of a platform of initiatives called “Lampova” in 2016. Lampova is a youth hub where anybody can come with ideas for events, projects, and improvements of the city life. They find support, advice, and like-minded people who will help to implement their ideas. It is also a place for informal education and creative expression for new arrivals as well as residents. At first the local residents were suspicious of Lampova; they called it a sect, they tried to find out whose



Public park in Pokrovsk. Photo by Kateryna Shcherbakova, 2018.

business interests it represented, they were hostile, and they did not understand why they needed it. As Lampova activities began to brighten the monotonous life of the city however, people's attitude changed. Since Lampova's success, many new similar initiatives have popped up across the city.

As a result, the idea of creating youth hubs has become contagious in Pokrovsk. DonNTU launched "Pokrovsk Youth Hub" and an academic business incubator "YEP!" The participants of these hubs have already set up several innovative projects, hosted meetings with famous people, organized workshops, and held trainings to build students' confidence and develop skills for modern jobs. Youth have also involved the local authorities to raise financing for numerous projects aimed at improving the city (see Box: "Promotion of Ukrainian and European culture").

City Transformation

Local public organizations, in which resettlers actively participate, are changing the city. For example, a team of volunteers from the “Meta-City” project opened a street space, *Zaliznyak*, where community activists and residents can host and hold cultural events, meetings, and workshops. In February 2017, Pokrovsk hosted the Eastern Education Forum, the first significant event in the field of education in Donetsk oblast since the beginning of the armed conflict. The event gathered 250 professionals in

Cultural Renewal

Resettlers have brought a variety of cultural events to Pokrovsk. The people I interviewed noted that most such events since 2015 have been organized by resettlers. Locals see Pokrovsk as a more interesting place to live now, as it hosts new events like the music festival and celebrations of national holidays due to the cooperation between the local authorities, the university administration, and international organizations. Among the most exciting events were “Europe’s Day,” “EuroFest,” festival “From the Country to Ukraine,” the cultural festival “#CooltourFest In Springtime” (#CoolтурФест «Навесні»), the international festival “Fête de la Musique,” and many others.

Some of these events are politically motivated, and usually funded by the mayor’s office, with the obvious aim to promote himself to the higher authorities. On the one hand, some people support the pro-European movement of the government, including resettlers. On the other hand, there are a lot of local residents who hold pro-Russian views and are irritated that the municipal government wastes money on such large-scale events.

Science & Technology

With its relocation, DonNTU brought scholars from across Ukraine and around the world and attracted representatives of large corporations and industries. For example, DonNTU has a long history of working with the Consulate General of Germany, which was situated in Donetsk until 2014 when it relocated to the city of Dnipro. Despite no longer being in the same cities, DonNTU and the Consulate have maintained strong relations. No large-scale event in Pokrovsk takes place without guests from Germany. Wolfgang Mössinger, Consul General of Germany in Ukraine, is a permanent guest of Pokrovsk and DonNTU. German partners have supported DonNTU in its exile, equipping its laboratories and inviting undergraduates, Ph.D. students, and faculty members to participate in research programs and trainings.

Additionally, DonNTU has invited local citizens onto its campus for conversations about how to improve the situation in Pokrovsk. For example, DonNTU professors regularly conduct trainings and seminars in a wide range of disciplines, such as accounting and entrepreneurship. Since early 2018 DonNTU has been participating in “Start-up Model ‘Sikorsky Challenge’ Unites Donbas,”¹ a project aimed at transforming the promising but war-torn eastern region of Ukraine into a Ukrainian Silicon Valley. Now the university teachers and students in Pokrovsk dream about turning a city of miners into a city of IT people.

education and science. One of the main topics was “Innovative Ways of Donbas Development,” where participants discussed the scientific and technical potential, youth projects, and prospects for rebranding regions of Donetsk oblast with the help of scientific and educational development.

The business life of the city has changed too. Since 2015, entrepreneurs, including many resettlers from Donetsk, set up small businesses in Pokrovsk, like corner shops, hair and nail salons, coffee shops, pizzerias, and clothes shops. Within a three-minute walk from the university and the city council, there are now five cafes and fast food restaurants, three of which opened recently targeting university students.

The infrastructural situation is also changing in Pokrovsk, although it is not clear whether it is the resettler arrival or the wider political situation in the region that has caused these changes. In November 2014 a new intercity train was launched between Kyiv and Pokrovsk. In 2016 and 2017, two more express trains started shuttling between Pokrovsk, Dnipro, and Kyiv.

Changing Bureaucracies & Municipal Services

Local perceptions of resettlers in Pokrovsk have changed from “the victims” to “the active arrivals” who are trying to change the city for the better. The locals often call resettlers “donetskiye,” a positive adjective used to describe people from Donetsk who are accustomed to a more active and responsive municipal government which contrasts the historic city bureaucracy of Pokrovsk.

One young woman, Kateryna, worked as an accountant before the conflict in Donetsk, quit her job in 2014, and moved to Pokrovsk. She has set up an education center for children and managed several projects for both resettlers and local residents to provide seminars and trainings. She said when she arrived in Pokrovsk she complained about the low level of municipal services in the city, long lines, and lack of bureaucrats’ respect for residents’ time. When she visited a municipal office, an old man standing nearby identified her as “donetskaya,” and told her, “Do you come from Donetsk? It’s okay, girl, you’ll get used to it soon.” But she did not want to get used to it, and being a civil rights activist, is fighting against breaches of law, inactivity of the local authorities, and failure by the municipal government to meet legal requirements at kindergartens and in other schools.

The Housing Market

Many faculty and staff of DonNTU had to resume educational activities as soon as we arrived in Pokrovsk. During the first academic year it was easy to commute so we did not rent apartments in Pokrovsk. However, by the second academic year, we were required to resettle our residences from Donetsk to Pokrovsk.

It is common in Ukraine for families to buy a flat or a house if they decide to settle in a particular place: rented residences are always considered temporary. In Pokrovsk most resettlers did not buy housing; they rent flats or houses, and some even share with their colleagues. They continue to pay for their properties in the non-government-controlled territories they left, not wanting to sell their property

because they plan to return home after the conflict. However, after the four years of conflict, people are beginning to give up their hope.

As a result of this influx of renters, in Pokrovsk today the most pressing problem for resettlers is housing. Most resettlers are families with children and middle-aged people who were forced to leave their comfortable homes¹³ and now live in dormitories or rental flats with rising rental prices. When we arrived in Pokrovsk four years ago, it was possible to rent a flat for 1,000 UAH (35 USD) a month. Since then, the rent has doubled and even tripled, while the quality of housing has remained the same. This situation has not affected the locals because they hardly ever rent flats, but resettlers are suffering from the rising rates.

Future Integration in Pokrovsk?

On the one hand, my resettled colleagues have tried to make the host city a better place to live so that it will become more exciting, modern, and have more responsive local government, services, and infrastructure. On the other hand, like resettlers all across Ukraine,¹⁴ resettlers here consider Pokrovsk a temporary place and very few want to settle there permanently. They have not tried to integrate into the local community, have not bought new homes, spend most of their time with other resettlers, and do not feel that they truly belong. Even though almost all of the resettlers I spoke to feel welcome in Pokrovsk, they also feel more vulnerable than before, burnt out, unsure about the future, and have not developed strong social connections with the host population. Most resettlers left their relatives behind, have lost their intimate and supportive relationships, and developed a defense mechanism of keeping their feelings to themselves while holding people from the host population at arm's length because they feel unrelatable and haven't had the same experiences with the conflict as resettlers have.

¹³ Occasionally resettlers visit relatives in Donetsk and check on their property. Although Donetsk is only 37 miles (60 km) away from Pokrovsk, the journey can take up to 12 hours because of lines at the checkpoints. Since checkpoints only operate during daylight, resettlers need at least two days to go to the occupied territory and come back.

¹⁴ According to a national survey in Ukraine, only one-third of all resettlers plan to integrate or have already integrated into local communities rather than return (Van Metre, 2017).



Ukraine has a long history of resilience through conflict. This is a Pokrovsk monument on a mass grave to soldiers killed in World War II. Photo by Kateryna Shcherbakova, 2018.

There are many factors that determine whether someone stays in Pokrovsk or might one day return to Donetsk. For one, residents who remained in Donetsk and support pro-Russian forces consider resettlers to be “traitors” and treat them with hostility when they come to visit their relatives or the house they have left. This discourages return. However, in Pokrovsk—while the general attitude is positive—sometimes resettlers encounter negative and biased local resident attitudes towards the migrants who “came to their city,” hindering activists’ efforts to improve the general living conditions in the city. They encourage return by making Pokrovsk feel unwelcoming. Also, unreasonably high prices for rental housing (almost as much as in Kyiv, Odesa, and other large cities) are gradually depleting the patience of resettlers and encouraging them to leave. Age is another factor. University graduates try to move to big cities, creating opportunities out of the situation to either complete their studies or take part in new cultural and economic projects. However, older people often have their partners staying in the non-government-controlled territories and want to stay close to the contact line.

As for the local people, they are pleased to see positive changes in the city, and they will definitely remain in Pokrovsk while supporting new initiatives and development projects.

Conclusion

Pokrovsk is a welcoming place for resettlers because of its closeness to the contact line and because the language and culture is the same between local hosts and IDPs. The only obstacles to integration have been the minor differences in culture and education level that have slightly hampered resettlers' integration, and the absence of governmental programs for resettlers that has meant migrants have to rely on self-organization and self-awareness. Overall, the resettlers in Pokrovsk have had a positive influence on various spheres of the city life. In fact, the problems that have arisen due to the influx of large numbers of people—like increasing housing rents—affect only the resettlers themselves.

The case of Pokrovsk shows good practices for taking advantages of resettlers' presence in the city. On the one hand, the city has benefited from resettlers' skills and experiences, their social and economic differences from locals, and their desire to introduce positive changes to the city. These changes were only possible because the city gave them opportunities to introduce changes. Since our arrival, the cultural life of the city has become much livelier and more diverse; several new cafes, restaurants, and shops have opened, and young people have been empowered with more opportunities to study and spend their leisure time doing interesting and useful projects across the city. There are new opportunities for both long time residents and new arrivals, like cultural festivals, tech "hubs," and jobs at the university. This openness has helped the resettlers successfully integrate into the community, or at least feel more comfortable and secure in a new place.

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Appendix A: The Ukrainian Crisis

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine became an independent state with a population of more than 52 million people. Since then, the population has been declining at a rate faster than any other country, the main reasons being fertility decline, progressive aging of the population, and growth of labor emigration to Europe and former Soviet countries. Migratory movements of skilled and highly skilled professionals have become a major component of emigration since the 2000s.¹⁵ In 2017 Ukraine's population was estimated at 42.5 million people.

The Ukrainian Revolution of 2014 was caused by the Ukrainian government's decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union. This decision led to the Crimean crisis, which resulted in Ukraine's autonomous Republic of Crimea being annexed by Russia. In 2014 parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which border the Russian Federation, were seized by anti-government pro-Russian separatists, and they declared independence from the rest of the country.

Since then fighting between pro-Ukrainian forces on one side and forces supporting the self-proclaimed republics on the other side have escalated into war. As a result, about two million people were forced to leave their homeland, which is now occupied by pro-Russian forces.

Internal migration in Ukraine

Ukraine has the world's ninth largest population of displaced persons.¹⁶ According to a report by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and The World Bank (2017), there are more than 1.7 million IDPs in Ukraine, who represent about 4% of the population of the country. More than half of these IDPs are settled in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, referred to together as the Donbas, which is near the conflict zone.

In 2014 there were several waves of migration. The first wave consisted mostly of women with children who left because they worried about their children's lives and mental health in the conflict zone. Men stayed behind to take care of their property and wait for the government to resolve the conflict. This wave of displaced people often had to stay with relatives or at collective temporary accommodation provided by the government.

The second wave of internal migration was in the autumn of 2014, when it became clear that the conflict would drag on. IDPs had to decide whether to stay in government-controlled areas or return to non-government-controlled areas. Their decision to stay or go was determined by four main factors:

¹⁵ "Ukraine 2020: demographic and migration security dimensions," 2018

¹⁶ Van Metre, 2017, p.2

- 1) Before the conflict, many IDPs had been employed in coal mining or heavy industry, and having moved to agricultural areas, they were not able to find jobs. Therefore, they returned to their hometowns and resumed their work in non-government-controlled areas;
- 2) Many families with children had to decide whether to put their lives in danger and return home or settle in a new place, rent an apartment, and look for a job;
- 3) Most public corporations, state-owned companies, administrative offices, and higher education institutions relocated to government-controlled areas, and consequently, their employees had to move with their companies or resign;
- 4) Thousands of buildings were damaged or destroyed in artillery attacks, so many Donbas residents had nowhere to return to, could not go back, and often depended on humanitarian aid. Since 2014, 17,000 buildings are reported to have been damaged or destroyed by military activities.

According to official statistics and IDP surveys,¹⁷ the local authorities and host communities across Ukraine have been able to gradually absorb the IDP influx and provide basic public services to additional school pupils, university students, hospital patients, and recipients of public funds.

Despite the scale of displacement, the impact of IDPs on Ukraine's economy has, on the whole, been fairly neutral. Kuznetsova et al. (2018, p.9) have not found "sufficient convincing evidence to indicate a measurable positive effect of IDPs on their host communities either in terms of increased consumer demand or faster economic growth. The main reason for this lies in the demographic composition of Ukraine's IDPs, which is heavily skewed towards women (comprising 60% of the IDP population), old-age pensioners, and people with disabilities. The share of working age people amongst Ukraine's IDPs accounts for just 29% in total."

¹⁷ Kuznetsova *et al.*, 2018

Appendix B: The Evacuation of Donetsk National Technical University

Occupation of Donetsk forced one of the largest educational institutions in the country—Donetsk National Technical University (DonNTU)—to experience its second evacuation in its almost century-long history. The first evacuation of DonNTU was in 1941, when, during WWII, the university moved to Novosibirsk, almost 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometers away). It returned to Donetsk in 1944.

In 2014, the tense situation in the eastern Ukraine, in particular in Donetsk, made it impossible to begin an academic year properly. The continuous shelling, outflow of personnel, and uncertainty about the future forced a group of students, faculty, and staff to request that the university be relocated. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine supported this initiative and issued an order for the university to carry out its educational activities in its affiliated institute in Pokrovsk. The university was evacuated to Pokrovsk in the fall of 2014.

On November 3, 2014, the university officially changed its campus and legal address. The Industrial Institute in Pokrovsk, as an affiliated branch of DonNTU, became the base of the university. Two thirds of the students and a third of the teaching staff moved to Pokrovsk in 2014. The majority of students who moved were master's students and undergraduates in their third and fourth years.

They were pulled by a range of factors:

- The possibility to continue working and studying at a State Higher Educational Institution under the jurisdiction of Ukraine, as all state institutions ceased operating on the non-government-controlled territories;
- Patriotic feelings, and unwillingness to collaborate with self-proclaimed authorities;
- The possibility of obtaining higher education in accordance with European standards;
- The desire not to lose their record of service before retirement, mandatory to get a state pension;
- The desire to receive wages and scholarships in accordance with the current Ukrainian legislation. Wages and scholarships were delayed due to the armed conflict when Ukrainian banks ceased operating in Donetsk in June 2014.

According to a survey, many IDPs from Crimea and the Donbas chose to flee within Ukraine, rather than to Russia, because they considered themselves Ukrainian and thought staying within Ukraine provided a better future for their families. They emphasized that this was not a forced displacement but rather chosen displacement.¹⁸

¹⁸ Van Metre, 2017

About the RIT Project

The **Refugees in Towns (RIT)** project promotes understanding of the migrant/refugee experience in urban settings. Our goal is to understand and promote refugee integration by drawing on the knowledge and perspective of refugees and locals to develop deeper understanding of the towns in which they live. The project was conceived and is led by Karen Jacobsen. It is based at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University and funded by the Henry J. Leir Foundation.

Our goals are twofold

Our first long-term goal is to build a theory of integration from the ground up by compiling a global database of case studies and reports to help us analyze and understand the process of immigrant/refugee integration. These cases provide a range of local insights about the many different factors that enable or obstruct integration, and the ways in which migrants and hosts co-exist, adapt, and struggle in urban spaces. We draw our cases from towns in resettlement countries, transit countries, and countries of first asylum around the world.

Our second more immediate goal is to support community leaders, aid organizations, and local governments in shaping policy, practice, and interventions. We engage policymakers and community leaders through town visits, workshops, conferences, and participatory research that identifies needs in their communities, encourages dialogue on integration, and shares good practices and lessons learned.

Why now?

The United States—among many other refugee-hosting countries—is undergoing a shift in its refugee policy through travel bans and the suspension of parts of its refugee program. Towns across the U.S. are responding in different ways: some resist national policy changes by declaring themselves “sanctuary cities,” while others support travel bans and exclusionary policies. In this period of social and political change, we seek to deepen our understanding of integration and the ways in which refugees, migrants, and their hosts interact. Our RIT project draws on and gives voice to both refugees and hosts in their experiences with integration around the world.

For more on RIT

On our website, there are many more case studies and reports from other towns and urban neighborhoods around the world, and we regularly release more reports as our project develops.

www.refugeesintowns.org

About the Author

Maryna is currently living in Pokrovsk, Ukraine. She holds a M.Ed. from Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages, and a Ph.D. in Education from Donetsk National University. Maryna works as Head of the Department of Language Training at Donetsk National Technical University, which is one of the oldest technical universities in Ukraine. In 2014, when a military conflict broke out in eastern Ukraine, Donetsk National Technical University was relocated from the conflict zone to the government-controlled part of Ukraine. Being an internally displaced person herself, Maryna is trying to help make her colleagues and students resilient. Her case for the RIT project focuses on the displacement of their entire university to Pokrovsk, and the impact this had on the host community, as well as the political, social, and cultural life of the town.

Email: maryna.kabanets@donntu.edu.ua

Refugees in Towns is a project of the Feinstein International Center. More information on the project, including more case study reports, is available at <https://www.refugeesintowns.org/>

The Feinstein International Center is a research and teaching center based at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. Our mission is to promote the use of evidence and learning in operational and policy responses to protect and strengthen the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of people affected by or at risk of humanitarian crises.

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