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**Appraisal of BA Thesis *The Impact of War on Ukrainian Women Refugees in Czech Republic* by Anastasiia Stepanenko**

In this thesis Anastasiia Stepanenko sets out to examine the experiences of war-related Ukrainian women refugees in the Czech Republic, with respect to the social and psychological challenges they face, the ties they build and envision there and those they maintain and forge to Ukraine with the aim of contributing to understanding ‘gender-specific impacts of war and displacements’ (7). A literature review chapter starts with a brief mention of the war and broadly summarises some literature on the ‘multi-dimensional’ (11) situation of refugees (across very different countries and continents), referring to the stresses and responsibilities of female headed households, women’s un- or underemployment (working below one’s occupational qualification), and unstable housing, as well concomitant psychological troubles, such as worries and anxiety, survivor guilt and feelings of uprootedness. The chapter also refers to factors that are found to be ease these troubles including reference to existing support services in the CR and possibilities to raising financial contributions for the war effort. A methodology chapter specifies the qualitative research design where Anastasiia conducted and analysed semi-structured interviews with six mostly well-qualified women from the eastern parts of Ukraine ranging in age from 24 to 67 years. She also lays out how she as a Ukrainian student in Prague and her family have been affected by the ongoing war. Qualitative content analysis in chapter 3 focuses on areas flagged in the topic guide and literature review, describing when and with whom women fled (often in mother-daughter dyads), their ‘family dynamics’, ‘mental health’, coping strategies, integration and contributions.

While the thesis is fluently written, a key problem is its generality and a certain circularity where the literature review in general terms describes women’s refugee situation (without accounting for differences in refugee/migration regimes in time and space) that from the outset is assumed to pertain to ‘Ukrainian women refugees’ (pp. 9, 11, 15...) – without, however, citing any of the recent studies that analyse the situation of these women in Poland and CR (e.g. Preiss et al 2024; Andrews et al 2023; Dryjanska et al



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2024). The empirical analysis remains oriented to the themes of the topic guide (and broad research questions) and, in an attempt to identify patterns and generalise from the six cases (e.g. 'younger women...' , 'older women...' ), cites from individual narrations only very briefly (usually no longer than two lines) without describing or commenting on particular context such as the affect and ways in which things have been said (e.g. 'it is what is is') and what could not be said that Antasia observed when conducting the interviews. This means the nuances and contradictions also *within* cases or the patterns identified remain under-explored, with respect to, for example, different experiences within and between specific mother-daughter dyads or differences of trauma experienced by a 24-year-old student who left before the war and a 67-year-old war widow who lost her children to war and political developments. As much is described in the literature review in general terms, it remains unclear what exactly has been *under-explored to date* and what precisely the research contributes to the literature on 'gender-specific impacts of war and displacement' – augmented by the fact that most of the literature predates the current war by decade/s and emerging literature on Ukrainian war refugees is not referred to.

In view of this, I would like to ask Anastasia in the defence to specify what she considers the most significant and surprising findings and to which studies they might add new layers of knowledge.

I recommend the thesis for defence and based on the defence suggest the grade 2-3.

Prague 19.9.2024

Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer, Ph.D. (supervisor)