

Introduction to the Global South Encounters, 'Breaking stereotypes: Ukraine, Kyiv, the War'

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1. Welcome to the HELSUS Global South Encounters with me Franklin Obeng-Odoom, Currently Associate Professor of Sustainability Science with Global Development Studies as the Chair.
2. If you would like to stay connected between the Encounters, I would like to draw your attention to our new Twitter Account, LinkedIn Account, and *Just Ecological Political Economy: the HELSUS Global South Blog*, links to which you can see in the chat box.
3. Our speaker today is one of Ukraine's finest geographers.
4. Earlier in her career, she wrote about peace and sustainability, cities and change, creating friendly spaces.
5. Dr Olena Dronova, an Associate Professor of Economic and Social Geography at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine, doubles as a Senior Researcher at the Department of Sustainable Development and Environmental Assessment in the Institute of Geography, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.
6. A prolific contributor to Ukrainian geographical thought, as evidenced in her many publications in the *Ukrainian Geographical Journal*, Dr Dronova has been writing about sustainability, urban ecology, and urban development for years.
7. During which she has authored or co-authored over 80 scientific publications, including 13 monographs and 4 handbooks.
8. All these have cemented Professor Dronova's standing as a researcher on peace, the identity of Ukrainian cities, urban employment, economic diversification, urban inclusion, fostering urban resilience after the closure of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station, and sustainability more widely¹.
9. If something concerned her most, it was the rapid threat of unequal and hierarchical urban development unleashed on Kyiv by global forces, what she once called 'neoliberal globalization'².

¹ See, for example, Dronova, O.L. and Kononenko, O.Yu., 2019, 'Formation of the Urban Resilience Capacity in the Conditions of Current Challenges and Threats', vol. 3, no. 107, pp. 22-36, <https://ukrgeojournal.org.ua/en/node/655>

² Dronova O and Brunn S.D., 2018, 'How neoliberal globalization processes are transforming Kyiv's nodal areas', *Urbani izziv*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 96-110.

10. It amplifies 'dark corners', 'highways', and 'markets', which people in Kyiv dislike, and diminish green spaces, cultural heritage, and spaces of social interaction, which residents greatly favour, according to studies conducted by Dronova and her colleagues³
11. In her paper entitled 'development directions of Ukraine according to different globalization scenarios', and published in the *Ukrainian Geographical Journal*, she wrote and I quote
12. 'the prospects for the development of Ukraine and its regions are detailed according to the four very different potential scenarios: globalization ..., polarization, islandization and commonization.... The most probable (symbiosis of globalization and polarization) and the most preferable (commonization)'⁴. Unquote.
13. Here, both the rational and emotional, the objective and the subjective impulses of Dr Dronova clearly exclude a scenario of mass aggression.
14. Her preference is community and solidarity through participatory planning.
15. Indeed, her standing as a pacifist and a passionate advocate of sustainable peace have been recognised both locally and internationally. Locally, she is a member of the Geographical Society of Ukraine, and a member of the NGO All-Ukrainian Ecological League.
16. Internationally, she is a member of the editorial board of the leading global journal, *Environmental Hazards*.
17. In the light of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, she has now had to turn around not only to live but also to learn to research cities, war, and sustainability.
18. Forced into the furnace of unprecedented aggression, she faces a new imperative, researching urbanism under enemy occupation.
19. A familiar, but not an ordinary enemy.
20. It is an Orwellian enemy⁵ for which

³ See p. 111, 'Comparing residents' perceptions of quality of life in three Kyiv neighbourhoods', *Urbani izziv* vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 103-114.

⁴ Dronova O and Nahomyi T, 2021, 'Development Directions of Ukraine according to Different Globalization Scenarios', *Ukrainian Geographical Journal*, vol. 2, pp. 20-30 <https://ukrgeojournal.org.ua/en/node/713>

⁵ For all comments about the Orwellian enemy, see pp. 4-7, of Orwell G, 1949, *1984: A Novel*, Signet Classics, Penguin Group, New York.

21. 'War is peace'
22. 'Freedom is Slavery'; and
23. 'Ignorance is strength', to quote George Orwell.
24. For this enemy, the **Ministry of Truth**, concerned with news produced to make people think the opposite of what is true, but also say the opposite of what they think, works closely with the **Ministry of Love** focused on removing dissent, the **Ministry of Peace**, specialising in war, and the **Ministry of plenty**, seeking or destroying resources everywhere in a strategic calculus to pursue its mandate of satisfying the economic affairs of the Big Brother⁶.
25. Formerly concerned more with rapid Western neoliberalism and cities, Dr Dronova is confronted with a new enemy, a new form of Russian imperialism.
26. At great risk to her life and that of her loved ones, and students, Dronova must rethink space and sustainability.
27. But, do our current theories of resources in peace time stand the scrutiny and scuttling sounds of war?
28. If not, we must theorise, but does geography offer the tools for such theorising?
29. What can we learn from cities at war? What sustainability is possible, probable, or desirable in war?
30. Choices in these difficult times are fraught: creating friendly cities or fortified cities? Western neoliberalism or Russian imperialism? Or is it a fundamentally new transformative and autonomous Ukraine borne out of resistance and resilience?
31. Only Professor Dronova has the education, dedication, and experience to address these questions.
32. So, ladies, gentlemen, and others, to present today's Global South Encounters is Professor Olena Dronova connecting with us from Ukraine, not from her university office because that has long been bombed and destroyed but from elsewhere in Ukraine, details of which we'll not disclose for security reasons.
33. Welcome, Professor Dronova. The microphone is yours.

⁶ For all comments about the Orwellian enemy, see pp. 4-7, of Orwell G, 1949, *1984: A Novel*, Signet Classics, Penguin Group, New York; see also the 'Afterword' by Erich Fromm (on pp. 324-325).