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NEW EDITION ON HISTORICAL URBANISTICS OF DONBAS

[Review on the monograph: **Labour, Exhaustion, and Success: company towns of Donbas** / M. Ilchenko, K. Kuzina, V. Kulikov and others; edited by V. Kulikov and I. Sklokina. Lviv: FOP Shumylovych, 2018. 244 p.]

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НОВЕ ВИДАННЯ З ІСТОРИЧНОЇ УРБАНІСТИКИ ДОНБАСУ

[Рецензія на монографію: **Праця, виснаження та успіх: промислові мономіста Донбасу** / М. Ільченко, К. Кузіна, В. Куліков та ін.; за ред. В. Кулікова й І. Склогіної. Львів : ФОП Шумилович, 2018. 244 с.]

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НОВОЕ ИЗДАНИЕ ПО ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ УРБАНИСТИКЕ ДОНБАССА

[Рецензия на монографию: **Труд, истощение и успех: промышленные моногорода Донбасса** / М. Ильченко, К. Кузина, В. Куликов и др.; под ред. В. Куликова и И. Склокиной. Львов: ФОП Шумилович, 2018. 244 с.]

Nowadays more and more scientists are turning to the Donbas theme. Impartial retrospective study the characteristics of this Ukrainian region have to answer the question of how well-known tragic events of 2014 could have happened at all. Moreover, it is expected that the examination of the past will provide an essential hint of how to resolve the strong point of the problem of returning Donbas to Ukraine in the future.

Recently the book “Labour, Exhaustion, and Success: company towns of the Donbas” was published in Lviv. It belongs to the team of authors, namely: Mykhaylo Ilchenko, Volodymyr Kulikov, Kseniya Kuzina, Tetyana Portnova, Iryna Sklokina, Marta Studenna-Skrukva, and Olena Styazhkina. The editors of the collective monograph are Volodymyr Kulikov and Iryna Sklokina. It is noteworthy that they played the most important role in writing the book. In particular, those two persons became the authors (co-authors) of 5 out of 8 publication chapters.

The book is an attempt to represent the history of Donbas of the XIX-XX centuries through the lens of life of local citizens and founders of industrial company towns. It was hard work of workers, managers, and businessmen that led to success. However, success also comes at a price – it is the exhaustion of human and natural resources. The book tells about who the residents of the company towns were, what were their daily routines, work, and leisure time; how the relations were developing between people and different social groups. Special focus is on natural, built and social landscapes of Donbas, on how they changed in the process of industrialization and urbanization, and also how the attitudes to them were changing, along with the cultural insights, both from a perspective of residents themselves, the travelers, and newcomers.

The first chapter “Introduction. Industrial Company Towns: Characteristics, History, Future Prospects” (by Volodymyr Kulikov and Iryna Sklokina) tells about the phenomenon of industrial mono-towns in general and in Donbas in particular.

One and a half centuries ago the Donbas steppe became the territory where one of the most ambitious industrial projects of Europe was implemented. At the end of XIX century this project united imperial officials, entrepreneurs, investors, engineers and workers. The discovery of rich deposits of coal and iron attracted people from all over the Russian Empire and Europe. The region that was at the periphery of business interests before became the main fuel and metallurgical base of the Russian Empire and one of the largest industrial centers in Europe. The staggering industrial upsurge was made possible by the work of people of factory and mining settlements – industrial outposts, moving its frontiers into new areas of the empire. Most of the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk Lands appeared as factory or mining settlements, where the whole rhythm of life, infrastructure and people-to-people relations was closely linked to founding enterprises. The researchers define the dominance of one company or one industry, isolation from large population centers and corporate paternalism among the typical features of company towns.

The second chapter “Realm of Coal and Iron. The role of Industrialization in the Process of Social Change in Donbas” (by Marta Studenna-Skruckva) offers a generalized view of the Donbas history in the context of regional and global technological, economic, as well as political changes. The emergence of a large number of factory and mining towns was not a unique East-Ukrainian phenomenon. Such cities have been distributed in almost all countries that have begun industrialization. To a certain extent, they have become one of the symbols of the industrial age. The corporate city model has largely remained in the Soviet era, but now it has been implemented by state-owned enterprises. Their social responsibility to residents survived. Soviet enterprises supported the workers in providing various needs – from physiological to social and creative.

The third chapter “Donbas Landscapes” (by Tetyana Portnova) is devoted to the interaction of the natural and social spaces in the company towns. This text focuses on how the natural landscape has changed in the process of economic development of Donbas and its transformation into an urban environment. It also explores how these changes were perceived and interpreted both within the region itself and beyond. Typical stereotyped images and metaphors (such as “the coal kingdom”, “the barn of the earth”, “All-Union stokehold” or “the edge of slagheaps”, “burnt steppe”, “black dust”, etc.) constantly led to the idea of the exclusivity of the Donbas. At that, this exclusivity could be perceived as positive and extremely negative, depending on the situation.

The fourth chapter “Urban Development and Urban Planning Experiments” (by Mykhaylo Ilchenko) shows the specifics of spatial organization and architectural image of towns, which were a kind of continuation of a plant or mine. Subordination to the production tasks led to chaos and rapid building, its temporality and low quality. On the other hand, building in an “empty environment” around the enterprise opened up opportunities for the accurate implementation of city planning plans, which did not need to be accompanied by intentional destruction (demolition) or attachment to existing historical traditions and architectural styles. That is why it is possible to see both rational planned development and chaotic private sector in company towns. There was also a place for the manifestations of experimentation and architectural fantasy.

The fifth chapter “People of the Company Towns: Paradoxical Unions and Divides” (by Volodymyr Kulikov and Iryna Sklokina) describes the social portrait of Donbas industrial mono-towns and those social roles that were attributed to people of all ages, sex, status etc. The authors deny the stereotype that the workers of the key enterprise were the majority of the population in the mono-towns. However, even under such conditions, the plant or mine retains its influence on groups excluded from production (children, pensioners, etc.). The section analyses one of several contradictory features of company towns – the dichotomy of unity of inhabitants as a pledge of harmonious production and their social and spatial segregation, caused by the diversity of origin, status, age and sex. The authors critically regard the assertion about the Donbas as a “melting pot” because during the imperial and Soviet times attempts at social engineering have been constantly confronted with the realities of the diversity of inhabitants’ interests.

The sixth chapter “After Work” (by Olena Styazhkina and Iryna Sklokina) is about everyday lifestyles, working ethos, architecture of human relations, and entertainment since the XIX century until present day in the towns that developed around factories and mines. The solution to household problems, as well as the ways of recreation, formally belonged to the sphere of care and control of local enterprises and the state. Industrial enterprises built a dwelling for workers, developed a recreational infrastructure and provided the population with the goods of the first need. The enterprises carried out social support of local residents literally from birth to grave: they built a nursery for babies and paid for the burial of the dead workers. It does not mean that the inhabitants of Soviet mono-towns did not have any need: the goods were distributed unevenly. As in the imperial era, corporate paternalism was called to keep the most valuable workers, so it was mainly distributed to skilled workers. Exactly that group was provided by comfortable housing, scarce goods (cars, TVs, refrigerators) and vouchers to resorts as a priority. But at the same time a whole series of informal practices took place. They were officially not approved, although they were tolerated de facto. The researchers paid great attention to such a serious aspect as drunkenness, which traditionally flourished among the workers of industrial company towns. It was massively distributed both in the imperial era and in the times of the USSR.

The seventh chapter “The Price of Success” (by Kseniya Kuzina, Volodymyr Kulikov, and Iryna Sklokina) highlights how the criteria for success changed in mono-towns during the last century. If the speed and quantity of mined coal or smelted steel was the main priority during the industrial era, then the orientation towards sustainable development, the possibility of economic diversification and environmental safety are valued in the post-industrial era. The inconsistency of the success of the industrial version is shown: the more successful a key enterprise, the sooner it exhausts the resources, without which the very existence of the company town becomes inappropriate. Industrial disasters, environmental problems, massive occupational illness, as well as social and political conflicts caused by the processes of de-industrialization have been paid for industrial successes of Donbas. The section indicates the special risks that threaten the city in terms of dependence on one enterprise or one industry and a significant impact of the economic conjuncture.

The eighth chapter “Photo Images of Donbas: Creating, Social Life, Archiving” (by Iryna Sklokina) makes a special focus on the collection of photographs that were put into the basis of the book. Important materials for analysis of different aspects of urban life in Donbas were photographic sources. In the book, they serve not only as illustrations but also as the food for thought about strategies of visual representation of the XIX–XX century industrial town. This section serves as a reflection of the whole visual series that is built into the book. This large array of photographs was found by the editors in the archives (first of all, in the Central State Cine Photo Phono Archives of Ukraine named after H. Pshenychnyi in Kyiv), local history and art museums of the Donbas cities, as well as in the collections of private collectors.

The authors mainly rely on scientific works of domestic and foreign scholars, publications of periodicals of the past, materials of official statistics, narrative sources (memoirs, autobiographical works, and oral history) in their study. Note that visual materials (photos) were most fully used among archival sources. At the same time, we can assume that this work would become even more brilliant and informative from the wider use of documents of Ukrainian central and especially regional archives. However, the foregoing does not detract from the scientific achievements of the comprehensive study and the enormous efforts of its authors. The book “Labour, Exhaustion, and Success: company towns of the Donbas” deserves the title of a “pearl” among researches on historical urban studies of Ukraine.