

## INTRODUCTION



In May 2017, the main industries of Kryvyi Rih, a city in South-Eastern Ukraine, came to a halt. The four mines of local iron ore extraction company KZRK (Kryvyi Rih Iron Ore Integrated Plant), the largest in Ukraine, were blocked by a wildcat strike. The workers demanded a revaluation of an average miner's wage to its 2012 level of \$1,000. It had not been cut since then, but devaluations of the national currency had eaten into the miners' real income. A week after the strike had begun at KZRK, it spread to Sukha Balka, the other local mining company, and to the ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih (AMKR) – the giant metallurgical factory owned by the multinational corporation of the same name.

The unprecedented wave of spontaneous militancy empowered workers. Discussing it with me in 2019, they perceived the 2017 strikes as a missed window of political opportunity. According to them, it could have been used not only to get higher wages but to remake the social world on the city scale in a wider sense, shifting the balance of power in favour of the working people. This utopian vision was not completely unrealistic from a historical point of view: twenty-five years before, in 1992, a miners' strike reshuffled the political landscape in Kryvyi Rih and reminded the local elite that it was dependent on political support from the working class.

But in 2017, the social explosion did not become a generalized social movement with city-wide purchase. Disaggregated into isolated workplace struggles, it was dealt with by the respective industrial managers. In the mines, week-long negotiations with the recalcitrant management won the strikers a twenty per cent raise – much less than they expected but enough to bring them back to

work. The negotiation process was especially painful at Sukha Balka, which was owned by a Russian corporation. The nationality of managers and security officers became a factor of embitterment for the miners. A few weeks after the end of the strike, the Russians sold Sukha Balka to a Ukrainian oligarch and withdrew from the scene. At AMKR, workers carried out a radical confrontation by storming the administration building of the factory. In order to calm spirits, management was quick to make generous concessions and offered up to a 70 per cent raise for some professions. Workers accepted. In another large industrial enterprise, Metinvest – which employs around 20,000 people at its iron ore quarries in Kryvyi Rih – there was quiet, and no work stoppages at all.

These different patterns of conflict among the workforce of enterprises with a roughly similar profile and located in the same city are puzzling in themselves. Factors standing behind such a divergence can be plausibly found in the divergent factory regimes, which is one of the foci of this book. However, the puzzle I wish to address is wider than the differences in industrial workplace power configurations. It concerns the contradictory political attitudes and behaviours demonstrated by the workers of all the mentioned enterprises. Regardless of the level of militancy, they all shared a deep suspicion of organized political structures that could have otherwise sustained their struggle. Avid consumers of political news, Ukrainian workers often have strong opinions in this domain while at the same time declaring a totally apolitical stance, where ‘politics’ as such is condemnable. They long for political action that would challenge the domination of a self-serving elite and establish the working people in their rightful place in the symbolic hierarchy, but they remain quite timid and docile in their everyday practices. Criticizing trade unions, parties and all other institutions as corrupt and serving the interests of the elite, they put all their hopes on rare spontaneous outbursts and often criticize modest attempts at self-organizing on the smallest scale as amateurish and useless. They support the ‘lesser evil’ of an incumbent political leader or a vague anti-system message of a nationwide movement. Behind the impressive militancy and growing class consciousness hide uneasy relations between the workers and politics.

The widespread aversion to institutional politics was manifest in two mass mobilizations that shook Ukraine early in the twenty-first century: the 2004 Orange Revolution, dubbed a ‘revolt of the millionaires against the billionaires’ (Matuszak 2012), and the 2013–2014 Euromaidan (or simply Maidan), known in the official

discourse as ‘the Revolution of Dignity’. Both events had a ‘post-materialist’ (Inglehart 1977) agenda of anti-corruption and were a fight for personal dignity; they are now officially celebrated as manifestations of the middle class and/or of a classless Ukrainian nation (Oliinyk and Kuzio 2021; Wynnyckyj 2019). Against this idealized vision, the dominant narrative presents the 2014 counter-mobilization (Antimaidan) as consisting of marginalized sub-proletarian masses with little professional or class identification whatsoever. However, waged workers dominated numerically in all these mobilizations, as they do in Ukrainian society as a whole (Simonchuk 2018; Varga 2015; Zelinska 2017). The ‘millionaires’ revolts’ and the ‘billionaires’ reaction’ were all informed, in a different manner, by lay ideas of political authenticity, fair redistribution, social hierarchies and obligations, hiding subtexts of class behind the headlines of the nation (Kalb and Halmai 2011), or of a European good life (Bulakh 2020).

Another massive political overhaul, which arguably reflected the contradictory political attitudes of the Ukrainian working class, happened in 2019, when the presidential elections were won by the comic Volodymyr Zelenskyi (incidentally Zelenskyi was born in Kryvyi Rih), who offered anti-system slogans and promised to drain the swamp. In a matter of months, the showman and his close associates won an unprecedented single-party majority in parliament. An overwhelming majority of Kryvyi Rih workers voted for Zelenskyi – yet one year later most of them supported the incumbent elite at the mayoral elections, preferring it to the change promised by the candidate allied to the anti-system president.

The universe of Ukrainian nation-level politics, which consists of cabinet reshuffles and negotiations with the large domestic capitalists (oligarchs), the IMF and foreign leaders, may seem very distant from the universe of provincial workers. And yet I argue that there is a two-way connection. By attempting to understand the worldview of Kryvyi Rih workers, one can better understand the way political domination works through shaping subjectivities, linking different temporalities and producing moral economies on the local scale. These moral economies regulate the everyday politics of Ukrainian workers – their claims, expectations and obligations, which, in turn, contribute to forming the party-political agenda on the more noticeable institutional level. I am specifically interested in the way these processes play out on the city level – in my case, Kryvyi Rih, a working-class post-Soviet provincial city – constituting it as a political space.

The question that guides this book, then, can be formulated as: How does the Ukrainian working class relate to politics? In what way does class consciousness interact with everyday politics, and how does this interaction proceed on a city level? The term ‘relation’ is understood here in two senses. The first is the objective relationship between the workers and the domain of the political – that is, the way workers are inscribed into this domain or otherwise structurally interact with it. Here, I am interested in social structures and mechanisms that mediate such relations – for instance, industrial workplaces but also key infrastructure such as transport or housing. The second meaning alludes to the subjective relation, or attitude, of workers to the political field as such, as well as their subjective positioning within it. Here, I pay particular attention to the everyday politics of workers and the way that political consciousness is exercised through mundane gestures, expressions and dispositions – which are often not perceived by the workers themselves as political but which can be taken to express an explicit positioning of self in a system of given political coordinates – as well as key efforts to grasp and explain the social world from specific points of view.

I also distinguish between different analytical scales, of which the city is the most prominent one. The city scale has been traditionally important for studying Soviet and post-Soviet power configurations (Collier 2011; Kotkin 1997; Morris 2018; Rogers 2006; Stoner-Weiss 2002). Another important level at which post-Soviet power relations are set in motion is the workplace (Ashwin 1999; Clarke et al. 1993; Crowley 2021; Varga 2014), and I will examine five different factory sites located in the same city. Finally, the most intimate level is that of individual dispositions, opinions and value hierarchies, as well as the trajectories and survival strategies of workers (Baysha 2014; Clément 2003; Dufy 2008; Humphrey 2002; Ries 2009; Shevchenko 2009). These have been charted by interviewing informants living in Kryvyi Rih. These three scales interact with each other, making it an analytical necessity to move between them.

These scales also interact with the national scale, traditionally privileged by social scientists; with the regional scale of the post-socialist space, marked by shared discursive and material legacies; and with the global scale, marked by flows of capital and ideas transcending national borders. On the highest level of generalization, my book speaks to the problematics of global variegated capitalism (Peck and Theodore 2007), conceived as a unit of analysis. Grounded in a specific location serving as a site of production of economic value and political subjectivities, my research ultimately aims to contribute to

the understanding of the nature of the global capitalist system, which constitutes itself through articulations between different scales, domains (the economic, the political, the cultural) and temporalities (Wolf 1982) in the process of uneven and combined development (Anievas and Nişancıoğlu 2015; Antunes de Oliveira 2020; Kasmir and Gill 2018; Rosenberg 2020).

Accordingly, the sub-questions that help structure this book are the following:

- 1) What mechanisms and legacies mediate the workers' relationships with the political domain at the city level? How does the city scale interact with other scales, and how does the political at this scale interact with other domains (moral economy, culture, national politics)? How do these interactions help reproduce the domination of a city elite, many times, at the cost of genuine worker representation?
- 2) What role does the factory level play in the making and unmaking of the Ukrainian working class? What mechanisms of politicization and depoliticization are at work at the level of enterprise? How do these legitimize power relationships between workers, trade unionists, owners and managers?
- 3) What does the study of personal trajectories and strategies of distinction and survival among a wide set of workers tell us about their relation to politics? How do workers activate, exploit and transform the available toolkit of identities? These identities include ethnolinguistic ones, class identities with historicities from both post-Soviet and Ukrainian times, and also moral hierarchies. What political programme arises from this interaction, and how does it resonate with the institutional political scene?

## **Working-Class Politics as a Research Subject**

The set of political and anti-political views and attitudes that are the subject of this book can be called populist. The concept of populism can indeed be useful in analysing contradictions of 'anti-system' political views and movements (Hopkin 2020); however, the connotations of abnormality and exceptionality that this term often carries make it awkward to employ it without reservations.

In Ukraine, politics has always been 'populist' – in the sense of an overwhelming discursive focus on the ambiguously defined virtuous

people, constructed in opposition to a morally compromised elite. This basic populist duality, which might seem scandalous or exotic to Western scholars, has been a structuring feature of the local public sphere since the Perestroika era of the late 1980s (Ries 1997). Similarly, calls for establishing a direct connection between the leaders and the masses, bypassing institutions, and reinstating a natural popular will, would hardly raise the eyebrows of post-Soviet observers (Kasyanov 2007; Wilson 2005; Yekelchuk 2007). The political ‘normality’ of a classical left–right divide and a functioning institutional infrastructure of representative democracy remains a teleological aim in native modernist discourses in Ukraine rather than a lived reality. With this caveat, we can use the term populism as a normal mode of political functioning rather than an aberration.

Academic studies of labour politics are geographically unequal. The most prominent body of research is devoted to the working-class population of WENA<sup>1</sup> countries. There, emphasis is often placed on a populist or even authoritarian political culture of the workers, whose sympathies for the producerist and welfare-chauvinist agenda of right-wing nativist political movements present a challenge to the liberal democratic order (Betz 1994; Derks 2006; Norris and Inglehart 2018; Rathgeb 2021). When the general tonality is less normative and accusatory, the focus is on the post-democratic (Crouch 2004) dealignment of the Western workers from electoral politics: many works explore the depoliticization of the former working class in the context of deindustrialization and the end of social democracy (Braconnier and Mayer 2015; Retière 1994; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2003). The main theme is the historical decline of the working class and its efforts to make sense of and find a new place in a new moral economy of neoliberalism.

Research centred on the working-class condition in the Global South is more pragmatic. The advent of neoliberalism in Africa, Asia and Latin America has put an end to protected flagship industries of developmental states, but overall it rather led to forced urbanization and uneven industrialization, producing new, flexibilized and precarious working classes in those parts of the world. Social scientists studying labour in these countries analyse a rich variety of factory regimes and modes of formal and informal embeddedness that structure political divisions and recompositions within the working class (Breman 2004; Greco 2019; Hann and Parry 2018; Kashmir and Carbonella 2014; Parry 2020; Raj 2013; Smith and Pun 2006; Vadot 2021). The politicization of workers in the capitalist periphery is more often seen through the lens of global connections and of contentious

class politics, but also through the prism of social control mechanisms going beyond the rational-legal classics.

In Eastern Europe, traditional themes of labour studies have been roughly following those of WENA but pay greater attention to global connections and lament the steeper downfall of the working class compared to countries of the capitalist core. The postsocialist deindustrialization and marginalization of the working class went deeper and was more compressed in time than in the West. The liberal democratic institutions were freshly installed and poorly embedded into the local moral fabric. The legitimacy of the postsocialist liberal order was more brittle than in post-Keynesian WENA countries; it crashed quicker, producing the populist wave of ‘democratic backsliding’ (Cianetti and Hanley 2020; Knott 2018; Scheiring 2021) in Eastern Europe well before populism became the main preoccupation in the West. Connecting the surface of the ‘illiberal’ (Enyedi 2016; Hann 2020; Szelényi and Csillag 2015) politics in these countries to the fundamentals of the changing social status and worldviews of the working class, and viewing these connections in the light of the international political economy, has long been the strength of labour studies in Eastern Europe (Ashwin 1999; Burawoy, Krotov and Lytkina 2000; Clarke et al. 1993; Crowley 1997; Hann 2002; Kalb 2009; Kideckel 2004; Ost 2005; Verdery 1996). These authors have focused on the quick and deep destitution of the working class in societies where this class used to occupy the pinnacle of symbolic hierarchy, being celebrated in native moral economies.

Where should we situate Ukraine on this map? It certainly belongs to the postsocialist region with its dramatic social crisis of capitalist transformations. However, on the lower analytical level my case allows me to weave together different strands from geographically distinct schools of labour studies. Similar to WENA workers, and contrary to the cases of Poland and Hungary, which are over-represented in the literature on Central and Eastern Europe, the dominating mood for Ukrainian workers is disenchantment in all institutional politics rather than trust in the national elite or in any other really existing political force. Contrary to WENA, and similar to examples from the Global South, the Ukrainian working class is not entirely undone as a socio-economic category: for all the losses taken by some industries, other industries have survived and are currently profitable parts of global value chains, employing tens of thousands of the local population in cities like Kryvyi Rih. In Kryvyi Rih, just like in other peripheral cases known from the literature (Greco 2019; Hann and Parry 2018; Parry 2020; Sanchez 2016), symbolic

hierarchies and moral economies enact temporalities and historical layers from different periods of global capitalism, mixed together in a peculiar combination that, while locally expressed, sustains global commodity flows. Contrary to many cases from the Global South, my Ukrainian interlocutors cannot fall back on the social safety net of rural extended families, being more dependent on the state and/or the employer for their livelihoods in the postsocialist setting.

The very question of the existence of the working class as such in contemporary Ukraine is polemical. Certainly present as a class in the economic sense of a social category defined by its place in the relations of accumulation and exploitation, the working class is not so evident in the sociological sense – be it as a Thompsonian class, as a set of dynamic social relationships (Thompson [1963] 1980), a Bourdieusian class, as a system of social reproduction of habitus (Bourdieu 1979), or a Marxian class-for-itself (Marx and Engels [1847] 1963). Contrary to Thompson’s narration of the making of the English working class, a large part of the literature on the postsocialist working class postulates its unmaking (Kideckel 2002). Many scholars would say that the notion of class and class consciousness is inseparable from class struggle – in this sense one can hardly talk about the working class in today’s Ukraine. This work traces the processes of class formation and decomposition without giving a definite answer – the ambiguity remains in the book title. In any case, the anti-teleological spirit of the present work refuses deductivist assumptions about a working class with a pre-ordained kind of class consciousness that automatically implies a pre-formulated political agenda once such consciousness develops. Discarding the uniform and linear vision, I aim to mark the relations between the workers and the domain of the political that unmake or reconfigure them as a social class.

Taking an ethnographic approach from below, I focus on the perspective of workers as my departure point. However, throughout the book I situate their emic perspective in wider structural contexts. In the terms suggested by Michael Burawoy, I aim to encompass both the ‘participant truth’ – that is, the common sense of the subalterns populating my field site – and the ‘sociological truth’ – that is, examination of wider forces that determine and explain the participant truth (Burawoy 2017: 282).



## Methods and Data

Methodologically, this research follows the extended case strategy (Burawoy 2009). Contrary to adepts of the grounded theory approach of the Chicago school, researchers belonging to the tradition of the extended case method do not nurture ambitions of building a new theory from the field data (Tavory and Timmermans 2009). Instead, they typically start with a ‘favourite theory’ that already exists but fails to explain a certain observed phenomenon (Eliasoph and Lichterman 1999). The theoretical ambition of such research is then to improve the existing theory, enriching it with new insights that help take account of previously ignored facts and interpret them within a given conceptual approach.

The role of a deficient ‘favourite theory’ here is played by the linear model of social change in the postsocialist countries, which Marxism shares with the modernization theory. According to this vision, capitalist transformations would destroy barriers that prevented class formation and open class conflict in the Soviet Union. With mechanisms reproducing social atomization and political passivity no longer in place, the reorganization of the economy on the basis of the law of value would push industrial workers to form a proper class-for-itself and produce a strong social democratic movement on the national scale (Clarke 2007; Ticktin 2002). This Marxist prediction chimed with the liberal normativity of transition from the aberration of state socialism to the ‘normal’ capitalist society with a left–right cleavage organizing national politics (Cianetti and Hanley 2020; Minakov 2021). This latter vision, initially hegemonic among Western scholars of postsocialism, lost its clout by the late 2000s but remains dominant locally, where the native discourse marries it to the rhetoric of a European civilizational choice (Gressgård and Husakouskaya 2020). Regardless of the political connotations of this prediction, it clearly failed: instead of capitalist and liberal democratic normalization of the local politico-economic field, the transition produced unorthodox polarizations and populist political templates that were later exported westwards, reversing the expected direction of the flow of ideas and models (Kalb 2015).

In order to make sense of these developments, I focus on the case of Kryvyi Rih, the provincial Ukrainian city that was the scene of the opening vignette above. Situated far from the typical sites attracting social scientists in Ukraine (most research is focused on big cities like Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa, Kharkiv or Lviv), it represents the country’s industrial backwater. Kryvyi Rih stands out from other industrial

settlements in South-Eastern Ukraine in several respects. First of all, its size (600,000 people) makes it a city rather than a town; local residents complain that they do not receive as much attention from the central media as they should, given the size of the city and its significance in the national economy. This significance is the second trait that distinguishes Kryvyi Rih: in fact, the very period when it disappeared from the radar of the national press was the time when it gained in economic importance, becoming the site of profitable export-oriented extractive and steelmaking activities while the more advanced industries lost their significance.

My fieldwork included eight months of on-site observations (July–August 2018 and January–July 2019). During this time, I contacted and observed employees of the city’s largest industrial enterprises: the two mining companies belonging to Ukrainian oligarchs, the steelmaking factory privatized by a multinational corporation, and a vertically integrated metallurgical corporation owned by a Ukrainian oligarch.

Besides this, I spent two months employed as a manual worker at a small-scale factory that makes reinforced windows. Having initially planned to get a temporary job at one of the large enterprises mentioned above, I soon had to give up on this idea, since circumstances on the ground made it impractical. Instead, I discovered the second tier of industrial enterprises flourishing alongside the large ‘city-forming’ ones. Due to the extremely flexible procedure of hiring and firing at these factories, working in the grey zone of legal regulations, I found a job as a fitter at a window manufacturer, which features in this book under the fictional name Screenwind. This was hidden ethnography: I chose to maintain discretion about my research agenda, instead putting into the limelight biographical details that allowed me to construct a plausible working-class trajectory. I disclosed my double status at the end of my employment period in order to arrange for follow-up interviews with my co-workers. This strategy ensured my quick immersion into the labour process, the hierarchical relations of power and the informal horizontal social networks. Political talk in the changing room and dining hall were not infrequent in this period of the presidential campaign; participant observation revealed a lay perspective on politics that would have not been so clear had I limited myself to interviews. Moreover, I had the opportunity to participate in and observe the industrial labour process at this post-Soviet greenfield enterprise, with its specific configurations of informality and autonomy – factors that are important in explaining the workers’ relation to politics.

After my departure from the field, I continued the fieldwork through the methods of digital ethnography (Góralaska 2020). Namely, I kept following the discussions among my informants on Facebook, which is the main online social network platform in Ukraine. A number of groups created by Kryvyi Rih workers supplied indispensable data during the major miners' strike and the protest movement at the steel mill, which took place in 2020 and 2021. Apart from the Facebook groups and various streaming services that enabled me to follow the protests in real time, I made use of workers' chat groups on Viber – the smartphone messenger application popular in Ukraine. The Viber group of the steel mill workers, which had 1,500 members, provided valuable insights into the way workers interact with the world of the political. These online observations were mostly made in the period from September 2020 to September 2021.

Another part of my fieldwork was dedicated to the archives of *Chervonyi Hirnyk* (Red Miner), the newspaper published by the city council. This is the only local media that existed throughout the whole period of Ukrainian independence. Being the voice of the local elite, its materials certainly cannot be taken at face value. My work with this newspaper, hence, was also informed by the ethnographic approach (Cohen 2008; Descamps, Weber and Müller 2006). It allowed me to reconstruct the changing discourses that dominated the city's public sphere and to analyse events that did not leave any other explicit trace elsewhere.

The data I gathered consist of the following: forty-two semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations (participant and non-participant, traditional and digital), and newspaper archives. Most of my interlocutors were manual workers and/or trade union leaders; however, I also talked to several white-collar employees. Among my observations, collected during the half-year of my uninterrupted presence in the field, several episodes and themes are worthy of a special mention. In February and May 2019, I participated in a number of public events: the commemorations of the liberation of Kryvyi Rih from the German army in 1944 and of a battle that a Kryvyi Rih regiment lost against the Russian army in 2015; celebration of the May Day, organized by independent labour unions; and celebrations of the 1945 Victory Day. Apart from this, I witnessed a wildcat strike of Kryvyi Rih miners that took place in early May 2019. Another, more powerful miners' strike happened after I left the field, in September 2020; I was able to observe it from a distance by watching numerous livestreams and following online discussions in

miners' groups on Facebook and Viber. My fieldwork coincided with the presidential campaign, which became a separate theme of my observations, spanning the period from the beginning of the electoral period in January to the popular vote in April and the first steps of the new president in the summer. Finally, the last important element of my field observations consists of my employment at the window factory from the beginning of March till the end of April.

My access to the field was conditioned by my personal background – a native of Kryvyi Rih and a former anarchist activist during my life in Kyiv. By reactivating my old activist connections there, I was able to get in touch with my first informants in Kryvyi Rih, independent trade union activists allied with leftist circles in Kyiv. One of them, a well-connected patriarch of the city's independent union scene, was crucial for the success of my research at its early stages. One enterprise, nevertheless, remained impermeable to independent unions, and hence inaccessible to me via this channel. I was able to get a foothold there thanks to another gatekeeper, a manager in that enterprise who helped me because of his old friendship with one of my family members.

Gradually, I moved further away from committed union activists to work with less conspicuous workers in the first case, and from the management to more subaltern employees in the second. Despite these efforts to provide a more complete picture, all the usual ethnographic caveats apply. Besides unequal access opportunities, my own positionality as a researcher played its part, inevitably closing off some avenues and opening up others. My male gender conditioned my access to certain informants, and my class background as a grandson of labour aristocracy and a son of engineers structured my field possibilities. As an 'outsider in one's own land' (Ergun and Erdemir 2010), I had to constantly negotiate my identity, switching between the position of a native ethnographer and that of a stranger coming from a distant metropolis. The resulting fluid status did not lead to either full inclusion or exclusion, allowing me to maintain a certain level of useful distance from my interlocutors (Beaud and Weber 1998).

## **Structure of the Book**

This book consists of ten chapters grouped into four parts. The first part presents the general context: theoretical and empirical. My conceptual toolkit, developed in Chapter 1, is centred on the notion of

moral economy (Götz 2015; Palomera and Vetta 2016; Thompson 1971). Bringing agency and reflexivity into structural politico-economic analysis, this concept allows dichotomies between economy and morality, between embedded and disembedded systems and between macro and micro levels of analysis to be overcome. Besides moralizing the economy – that is, seeing it as a set of lay expectations, obligations and claims regulating the work of institutions and defining their legitimacy – I am interested in politicizing it – that is, using the moral economic prism to analyse the everyday politics of Ukrainian workers. Everyday politics (Tria Kerkvliet 2009) is the other key concept that orients this research. It expands the conventional understanding of politics, looking at mundane gestures and routines, which are political as long as they concern production, use or allocation of resources and the ideas underlying these activities. These concepts will help me make sense of the place of populism, understood as the general logic of the political (Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2005), in the processes of class formation and the reproduction of political domination in Ukraine, studied from the perspective of post-Soviet workers.

In Chapter 2, I systematize and historicize Ukrainian political and moral economy. Basing my narrative on the existing research, I put together studies on different periods and different aspects (electoral politics, ethnolinguistic relations, changing property relations and the recomposition of the class structure, and the changing structure of the national economy and its external dependencies and connections) of post-Soviet Ukraine to produce a periodization and a consistent interpretation that provides contextual references for the subsequent chapters.

The second part analyses the city as a single case: Chapter 3 presents an evolution of power configurations and legitimation regimes employed by the Kryvyi Rih elite over the three post-Soviet decades. These changes are connected to macro-level political developments, the change of ownership regimes and the dynamics of global markets. I show how the miners' strike of 1992 has reconfigured the local political field, activating the moral economy of survival that defined the modality of the governance by the recomposed local elite in the 1990s. This moral economy of mobilization, corresponding to the macroeconomic emergency situation in the 1990s, clashed with the context of economic boom and privatization in the subsequent decade. Frictions between the logics of disembedded neoliberalism and embedded mobilized economy were articulated in a language of identity cleavage, imposed by political actors competing on the

national scale. The local elite bloc had to reinvent itself once again, based on the changed political discourse and politico-economic power relations. These multiple reinventions produced a multiplicity of legitimation regimes that structure the local society.

In Chapter 4, I trace the ways in which these dynamic moral economic regimes have been shaping three urban infrastructure systems: public transport, heating and housing. The two former infrastructures became highly politicized in the course of the post-Soviet transformations. Both public transportation and heating used to be purely technical systems, not problematized politically in the initial period, but the *ad hoc* survival-oriented solutions that reshaped them in the 1990s turned them into hotly debated political issues in the subsequent decades, when the city residents began contesting increased heating tariffs and the sociopolitical function of the municipal transport. Housing, on the other hand, used to be an important political issue in the early post-Soviet period, when the efficiency of the local elite was judged based on the intensity of the construction of new housing blocks. Arrested by the crisis of the 1990s, housing construction never resumed, but this does not present a noticeable political problem. After the privatization of housing and the change of demographic trends, the issue underwent a marked depoliticization: housing moved from the public into the private symbolic domain.

The third part, consisting of three chapters, works at a lower analytical level, interrogating political dynamics at the workplace. Chapter 5 presents the history of the specific Soviet factory regime, with its paternalism, informality and workers' autonomy. It also analyses the post-Soviet factory regime that emerged as an adaptation of the pre-existing regime to the extreme conjuncture of the 1990s. Many of these adaptations, taken for Soviet residues today, were new inventions, at that time associated with the ingenuity of liberal capitalism (e.g. in-kind exchange, reinforced non-monetary elements of the social wage, or the expansion of the economic profile of the enterprise). Chapter 6 traces the transformations of the latter regime in the twenty-first century, conceptualizing a post-post-Soviet factory regime of decomposing industrial paternalism, exemplified by the mining enterprises of Kryvyi Rih. In it, I show how the mechanisms developed in the urgency of the 1990s conjuncture remained in place afterwards due to the management's unwillingness to normalize their investment and other policies in the times of economic growth. Yielding social stability and good profitability in the short term, in the long run the main pillars of this regime were subjected to erosion. In Chapter 7, I analyse the two alternative factory regimes, more

stable politically and economically and more efficient in legitimating the domination of the employer. These two new regimes are the neo-Fordist paternalism of an oligarchic corporation and the disembedded hyperflexibility at a small window factory. The two mutually opposing subjectivities produced by these regimes – the loyal client of the paternalist capitalist boss and the neoliberal subject cherishing their economic and social autonomy – are equally legitimate in the same working-class milieu of Kryvyi Rih.

In the fourth part, I deal with the level of individual trajectories and political behaviours. Chapter 8 presents individualist strategies of distinction adopted by my interlocutors and puts them into dialogue with the post-Soviet imperative of proactivity and personal development. I show how class dissolves in the personal strategies of workers that strive to become members of the respectable middle class. At the same time, the criticism of the working class as passive and atomized, internalized by such individuals, contradicts the everyday ‘accidental’ activism, performed by my interlocutors in their survival strategies. Chapter 9 complicates this picture by discussing the identity landscape of Kryvyi Rih: the default working-class identity of my informants coexists with the two competing ethnopolitical identities developed on the macro level. These two identities, the ‘ethnic Ukrainian’ and the ‘East Slavic’, stand in uneven relation to each other: the identity dominant nationally becomes subaltern locally. However, both of them are peripheral on the global level; this peripherality occupies an important place in both narratives. In Chapter 10, I interrogate the anti-political attitudes of my working-class interlocutors. In light of all the complexities dealt with in the previous chapters, I analyse the rejection of politics demonstrated by my informants, their moralizing approach to public matters, and their populist political ideals that can be summed up as authoritarian anti-corruption.

In the conclusion, I will indicate the ways in which this research contributes to the theoretical framework employed here and sketch the prospects for further research on the moral economy and everyday politics as local articulations of the global variegated capitalism. I will discuss other concepts that can be productively mobilized to these ends, as well as other promising fields and perspectives.

## Notes

A note on transliteration: this book uses a modified ALA-LC standard without diacritics to romanize Ukrainian and Russian. I have further simplified it by omitting apostrophes, ligatures, and soft and hard signs (e.g. Zelenskyi instead of Zelens'kyi). Given the multilingual character of my fieldsite, I transliterate local terms both from Russian and Ukrainian. The choice of the source language depends on the frequency with which a given word is locally mentioned in Russian or Ukrainian. However, I use Ukrainian versions of official toponyms and names of government bodies, even when most of my interlocutors refer to them in Russian (hence Kryvyi Rih, Donbas, and vykonkom instead of Krivoy Rog, Donbass, and ispolkom).

1. Western Europe and Northern America.