

Soziologisches Werkstattgespräch

May 13, 2025, 12:30-14:00,
Meeting room, 4th floor, hybrid

What Becomes Normal When the World Falls Apart? Narrative Reconstruction of Normality and Normativity in Wartime Diaries from Ukraine (2022-2023)

Ilami Yasna

Prolonged wars gradually transform what is considered acceptable, shifting the boundaries between “normal” and “abnormal”. What begins as minor changes – sleeping in bomb shelters, adhering curfew, or working during blackouts – often escalates into joking about dead enemy soldiers or treating violence, torments, and genocide as ordinary. I conceptualize these sequential shifts as “norm cascades”. While normalization of previously abnormal have been extensively theorized in sociology of everyday life, and cultural anthropology, these studies mainly draw on tradition laid down by Husserl, Schutz, Goffman, Garfinkel, Douglas and others, examining anomalies or abnormalities as deviations from an otherwise stable everyday world. What is still missing is understanding how normality is reassembled within total disruption that undermines multiple structures of everyday life. I address this gap by elaborating on “inverted phenomenology of normality” (IPN), a social-phenomenological framework for analyzing processes of bottom-up normalization in such conditions.

Empirically, my research draws on the thematic and narrative analysis of 350-400 published civilian diaries written during Russia’s war against Ukraine – rich source of first-hand evidence that has proven effective in historical wartime research but remains understudied in this specific context. While still at the pilot stage, early coding suggests a basis for a phenomenological periodization of disrupted experience by demonstrating how “norm cascades” narratively unfold from bodily habits and daily routines to moral judgments, from unconscious and emotional to rational and reflective modalities, and from unspoken expectations to formalized rules.

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On-site: Meeting room, 4th floor (Institute of Sociology)

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