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# ”Traditional music comes out of the underground”: Rural folk music in the activities of youth urban grassroots movements in Ukraine after 2014

Anastasiia Mazurenko\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ZRC SAZU – Eslovenia

## Resumen

After the 2014 Revolution of Dignity and the onset of war in eastern Ukraine, the country witnessed a marked rise in youth-driven urban folk revival movements. The struggle for national identification—strongly rooted in folk traditions—was already visible during the musical performances that accompanied the gatherings on Kyiv’s Independence Square in late 2013 and early 2014. Many of the students and young people who took part in these events became passionate advocates of bringing folk culture into contemporary urban life. In this context, the non-governmental organization *Rys’* () was founded in 2014 with the aim of engaging with rural culture through fieldwork and of organizing cultural and educational events for city residents in Kyiv. Over the past decade, *Rys’* has played a pivotal role in shaping Kyiv’s folk revival scene. The organization promoted what it considered ”true” traditional culture—long marginalized by Soviet-era staged folklore, where politically driven folk choirs and orchestras had supplanted rural traditions. Today, this revivalist energy has spread widely: across Ukraine, a growing number of organizations, youth ensembles, and makers of traditional folk instruments are revitalizing folk music in ways that depart from the earlier, academically anchored revival that emerged in the late 1970s within music academies and remains a marginal elite phenomenon. In contrast, the current movement resonates more broadly through media and popular culture, framing folk expression as a tool of national resilience amid ongoing military confrontation with Russia, particularly since 2022. In my paper, I will examine the contemporary folk revivalist initiatives. I will analyse the performative practices, ideological frameworks, and cultural outcomes of these movements, paying special attention to how young activists and musicians reinterpret folk traditions within a changing political and social landscape. Through analysis of concrete case studies—such as the work of *Rys’*—I aim to highlight the complex dynamics between tradition and modernity, authenticity and reinvention, grassroots practices and institutional narratives, all of which shape the evolving meanings of folk music in Ukraine today.

**Contraseña:** folk revival, grassroots movements, music and war, issue of authenticity, transmission of tradition, urban activities

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\*Ponente