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# Ukraine: “The most important thing is self-organisation”.

Monday 17 June 2024, by [KITRAL Alexander](#), [LE TRÉHONDAT Patrick](#) (Date first published: 16 June 2024).

**Alexander Kitral is a journalist for the Commons website. His investigative social journalism gives a voice to the voiceless in war-torn Ukraine. However, he does not lapse into pessimism and highlights positive experiences where the exploited and the dominated find their own ways of solving their problems. His articles speak of solidarity, cooperation, mutual aid and humanity. These are essential values in a country at war and, as we can see from his writings, they are the only means of survival. He was kind enough to answer our questions.**

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## **Can you introduce yourself to our readers?**

My name is Alexander Kitral, I'm 39 years old. I live in Kyiv. I started working as a journalist in 2005, when I was studying at the Institute of Journalism at the Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv. Since then, I have published in a number of print and online publications. I have also gained experience working in television and in a news agency.

## **You have published many articles for *Commons* on social issues: on social workers, schools and hospitals, the disabled, housing and work. Why did you choose to do this when Ukraine is at war?**

But what subjects should you write about during the war? I'm interested in the life and development of society, in its potential. So these are the subjects that help us to understand and support society and that seem to me to be the most relevant. The hostilities will come to an end sooner or later and the country will have to be rebuilt. To do this, we need to understand which development mechanisms in the social sphere do not fully correspond to the realities of today and a fortiori of tomorrow, in order to improve them.

## **Did you have to travel to Ukraine to write these reports? What surprised you most during these trips?**

To find out someone's opinion, you don't have to meet them. I communicate with all my heroes and heroines from different parts of Ukraine exclusively by telephone. It's a quick way of getting information. Believe me, many of them agree to talk about their difficulties and share their thoughts without meeting a journalist in person. What's surprising compared with the pre-war period is the changes that can be seen in some people's attitudes to the reality around them. It's a new way of

looking at life, material values, relationships with others, the values of life. This is most clearly seen in people who have lived through critical situations. For example, those who survived the siege of Marioupol. During the interviews, some of the heroes and heroines admitted that they had begun to value simple things such as simple food, accommodation and family more highly. Because in a critical situation, your money and your relationships are worth nothing. Many also emphasised the desire to get more involved in supporting those going through difficult times. In Marioupol and other places where there has been fierce fighting, helping each other is the basis of a group's survival. It is very difficult to survive alone in such situations.

**In your articles, you explain how people have organised themselves to deal with their problems. You sometimes cite the example of cooperatives. In Ukraine at the beginning of the 20e century, there was a strong cooperative movement. On the question of self-organisation and cooperatives, is this really an important phenomenon?**

The most important thing in this matter is self-organisation. It is only by joining forces that people can achieve their goals and protect their rights. And I cite cooperatives as an example of this self-organisation, as well as people coming together in organisations, trade unions, ad hoc associations to achieve common goals. I like the example of cooperatives as an illustration of a sustainable association. In my articles, I don't promote cooperatives as a new form of agriculture, for example, or as a way of solving people's financial problems. The cooperative movement, as you rightly noted, has already appeared several times in the history of Ukraine and is very popular in Western European countries, mainly Germany. At the same time, cooperatives pursue the interests of a limited circle of people, without solving the urgent problems of society as a whole, since they are disparate associations. I repeat, the important thing is the experience of people's self-organisation, the protection of common interests, the ability of people to participate in supporting others - this is what attracts me to the example of cooperatives.

**You also denounce the government's anti-social policy. How do you think it weakens Ukraine's defence against Russian imperialist aggression?**

At this turning point in history, creating a new environment for development is of the utmost importance. And the most important element is society, its quality, its needs, its strength, its education. And unfortunately, the government, in this understanding, underestimates the potential of society. And this applies not only to Ukraine, but also to other countries.

**What are your next subjects?**

Everything to do with the acute problems facing society today. These include support for people with disabilities, the protection of civil rights, education and health issues, as well as positive examples of grassroots self-organisation, etc.

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Articles by Alexander Kitral

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