

**SEVASTOPOL IN GUIDEBOOKS
OF THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES:
URBAN SPACE BETWEEN MEMORY,
WAR, AND THE TOURIST NARRATIVE**

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This study examines Sevastopol as an urban space in which military experience and narratives of heroism shaped urban identity, spatial organization, and cultural memory. The object of analysis is a corpus of guidebooks published between 1857 and 1969. The central research question addresses how the spatial traces of war—bastions, ruins, and memorial sites—combined with heroic myths, were reinterpreted within tourist and cultural narratives that ultimately formed the symbolic geography of Sevastopol.

The theoretical framework draws on concepts of military urbanism (Stephen Graham; Eyal Weizman), *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora), politics of memory (Aleida and Jan Assmann), and symbolic geography. Methodologically, the study employs content analysis, narrative and discourse analysis of textual and visual materials, as well as a comparative approach that allows for tracing continuity between imperial and Soviet narrative regimes.

The comparative analysis of guidebooks and their narrative structures demonstrates a transformation in the image of Sevastopol—from a “city of ruins” and a symbol of sacrifice in the nineteenth century to a canonical “hero city” in the Soviet period. Guidebooks functioned not merely as sources of information for travelers but as instruments of ideological construction of urban space, where memory, myth, and tourism were closely intertwined. The study highlights the role of cultural texts in shaping memory politics and in producing the symbolic space of urban landscapes.

Keywords: Sevastopol; guidebooks; military urbanism; politics of memory; symbolic geography; urban narratives.

INTRODUCTION

Sevastopol is one of Eastern Europe's most prominent examples of a city where strategic location and military functions shaped spatial planning structure, social organization, and collective memory. Ever since its founding in 1783 as the primary base for the Russian Empire's Black Sea Fleet, Sevastopol combined the features of a fortress, port, and city, with its distinct commemoration trajectories and traditions. The development of its memorial landscapes reflects a complex interaction among the imperial, Soviet, and post-imperial memory regimes, from the sanctification of its defense in 1854–1855 to the cultivation of the post-WWII Soviet hero-city myth. Jan Kubik emphasizes that memory regimes define not only *what* is remembered but also *how*, *by whom*, and *with which political function* this past is represented¹.

Therefore, each of these memory regimes leaves a deep mark on urban spaces, visual cultures, and text representations.

This approach views the memory not as an aggregate of texts and symbols but as a structured system of power over the past, in which various genres (museums, monuments, textbooks, and guidebooks) have coordinated, although different, roles. Kubik emphasizes that a change of political regime does not necessarily entail a full change of memory regime. More often than not, old narratives are reinterpreted and adapted rather than destroyed. It is especially noticeable in the genre of guidebooks. Rather than describing Sevastopol's urban space, they built its symbolic image for various audiences, e.g., sailors, pilgrims, tourists, veterans, imperial officers, and Soviet visitors.

As Kateryna Dysa shows in her studies of the end-19th- and early-20th-century Kyiv guidebooks, they are semiotic objects that shape a canon of the city's perception, as well as a source of information for the reader. Guidebooks determine which spaces are significant, which narratives need to be emphasized, and which social groups are represented in the city's symbolic landscape².

As in the case of the Kyiv material, in which Dysa demonstrates how the city's image transformed depending on the political regime, target audience, and evolution of guidebooks as a genre, Sevastopol guidebooks also served as intermediaries between the military history and civilian everyday life, ingraining military experience in the narratives of the city's identity. They worked as cultural selection mechanisms, amplifying some narratives (e.g., battle glory, defense, heroic chapters of Black Sea Fleet's history) and marginalizing or outright suppressing others. As a result, a cultural topography formed, in which memory, tourism, and politics coexisted, while the military trauma gradually integrated into the city's civilian image—a phenomenon that the broader memory theo-

1. "A theory of the politics of memory," in *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, eds. J. Kubik and M. Bernhard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9–11.
2. К. Дися, «Образ современного міста у путівниках по Києву межі ХІХ–ХХ ст.», у *Живучи в модерному місті: Київ кінця ХІХ – середини ХХ століть*, упор. О. Бетлій, К. Дися і О. Мартинюк (Київ: Дух і Літера, 2016), 82–95.

ry describes as *lieux de mémoire* (P. Nora)³, cultural memory systems (A. Assmann)⁴, and reflective nostalgics (S. Boym)⁵.

It gains special importance in the Ukrainian context. As in the case of Kyiv, where the analysis of guidebooks reveals the shift of accents from sacral narratives to national and modernization-related ones, Sevastopol guidebooks reflected political transformations, from the imperial through Soviet to post-Soviet. Tourist guidebooks became exactly this kind of instrument for institutionalizing the official memory regime in the Soviet-era Chernivtsi. As widely circulated texts for “external” users, they simultaneously normalized the desired historical perspective. As the research⁶ convincingly demonstrates, guidebooks reproduced the state-approved canon while also actively supplanting the experiences and the memory of local “others,” reducing the city’s multicultural past to marginal or negatively marked fragments.

Outside Kateryna Dysa’s and Orest Kostiv’s research, however, tourist guidebooks remain only fragmentarily analyzed as sources for constructing urban memory in other regions and historical eras. It is methodologically important to address sources of this kind. Aside from helping reconstruct predominant narratives about the past, this provides an opportunity to trace, from a comparative perspective, how various cities experienced the representation of military heritage, transformations of collective memory, and the formation of urban identity.

Consequently, the analysis of Sevastopol guidebooks fits within the broader framework of memory studies and urban narrative-making. Ukrainian research provides a crucial methodological toolkit for understanding how texts of this genre not only describe urban spaces but also actively construct their images, normalize the presence of the military, and form a specific perception of the city, reproduced and ingrained in the cultural memory of future generations.

Besides the necessity of conceptualizing Sevastopol’s historical heritage, this study’s relevance arises from a broader task: understanding the mechanics of interactions among memory, ideology, and space in urban landscapes of military origin. By analyzing guidebooks as cultural artifacts, we can see how they document and transform collective perceptions of heroism, loss, and revival.

The purpose of this research is to uncover the mechanisms that enabled the transformation and reproduction of historical narratives and cultural symbols through guidebooks—the texts that combined tourist, educational, and ideological functions and can be conceptualized as a specific “memory technology” (according to A. Assmann⁷).

3. P. Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>.

4. A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

5. S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

6. O. Kostiv, “‘The Other,’ Official History, and Memory of the City in Soviet Guidebooks to Chernivtsi,” *City: History, Culture, Society*, 15 (1) (December 15 2023): 87–104, <https://doi.org/10.15407/mics2023.01.087>.

7. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*.

MILITARY GUIDEBOOKS AS A DISTINCT HISTORICAL SOURCE TYPE

The analysis of Ukrainian historiography indicates that using guidebooks as sources for studying urban narratives is nothing new. However, scholars have done so primarily in civilian or religious contexts. Specifically, the works of Kateryna Dysa consider guidebooks as semiotic texts that shape the canon of the city's perception. However, her analysis is focused primarily on civilian urban routes. While Ukrainian historians' research has already examined specific elements of guidebook literature across various contexts, it has never conceptualized guidebooks as a distinct category of historical sources. E.g., Antonina Kizlova analyzed mentions of the Kyiv Institute for Noble Young Ladies in the Kyiv guidebooks of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, demonstrating how urban objects are included in the guidebook canon and represented as significant elements of the city's image⁸. However, the guidebooks focusing on military events, monuments, and battlefields have not been conceptualized in Ukrainian historiography as a distinct kind of sources thus far. The existing studies either neglect such texts or use them fragmentarily as illustrative material for broader narratives about wars or memory politics. That attests to the lack of conceptualization of military guidebooks as a specific genre of historical writing.

By "military guidebooks," this research means the texts that establish war and war-time experiences as the key principles of urban space organization, through bastions, fortifications, battlegrounds, memorial complexes, and specifically constructed memorial routes. Unlike comprehensive tourist guides, such guidebooks, in addition to informing, program a normative perception of the city as a landscape of heroism, sacrifice, and defense. This article proposes a look at military guidebooks—the texts about military events, monuments, and battle glory spaces—as a separate type of historical source. Although Ukrainian historiography has already examined civilian and religious guidebooks, it has yet to conceptualize military guidebooks as a specific genre that shapes the militarized perception of the urban landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In global and Ukrainian liberal arts, guidebooks are traditionally studied as a particular genre of urban representations—the cultural texts that construct a city's symbolic geography, hierarchize its landscapes, and normalize a certain way for a reader to perceive the city, while also informing about its space.

In the case of Sevastopol, this genre gains a particular importance, as these guidebooks specifically integrated the military experience, narratives of heroism, and spatial traces of war into the touristic and cultural narrative that defined the transformation of the city's image from a space of ruin and a sacrifice to that of a canonized hero city.

8. А. Кізлова, «Київський інститут шляхетних дівчат у путівниках XIX — початку XX ст», *Київські історичні студії* 1 (12) (Червень): 124–133, <https://doi.org/10.28925/2524-0757.2021.114>.

In this regard, the works that interpret guidebooks as instruments of urban narrative-making are important. E.g., the research by John Lennon and Malcolm Foley⁹, as well as the work of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett¹⁰, shows how tourist texts shape the “economy of attention” by defining what exactly is valuable, and what is marginal. Michel de Certeau¹¹ used a similar approach, analyzing guidebooks as rhetorical scenarios for navigating the city that impose a specific tactic of perceiving the space on the reader.

The studies of memory cities and military cities stand out especially, in which guidebooks serve as mediators between the traumatic experience of war and its cultural interpretation. The analysis of Verdun, Ypres, and London during the Blitz period demonstrates how post-war narratives instrumentalize destruction, turning it into a marker of heroism and legitimate memory¹². These studies convincingly demonstrate that guidebooks, especially the post-war ones, are never neutral. Rather, these kinds of texts define the frame for the experience of loss while also creating the possibility for its tourist consumption, a model especially relevant for the late-19th-century Sevastopol.

In the post-Soviet context, the research by Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, and Tetiana Zhurzhenko¹³ is of key importance, as it demonstrates how touristic, memorial, and educational texts convey the official memory policy, particularly regarding the military past. Their analysis shows that guidebooks are among the most disciplined genres of memory, as they reproduce state narratives and symbolic geography of heroism and loyalty with a high degree of precision.

The above-mentioned conceptions of Aleida and Jan Assmann and Pierre Nora are especially crucial in memory studies, as they allow interpreting guidebooks as a “textual memory space,” where the urban space’s material objects and their symbolic interpretations are combined. In the case of Sevastopol, guidebooks from various historical periods reproduce enduring narrative structures that portray the city as a scene of defense, suffering, or victory, ingrained in cultural memory.

At the intersection of these studies lies Greta Lynn Uehling’s concept of “symbolic geography”¹⁴ that explains how urban space becomes a carrier of ideology. Sevastopol is a prominent example of this process: the guidebooks of the 19th and 20th centuries featured it as a “geography of heroism,” where each location has a clear semantic charge.

Modern historiography already has multiple important directions that allow considering guidebooks not only as tourist literature, but also as instruments of the city’s ideological framing. However, Sevastopol remains understudied in this regard. This gap

9. J. Lennon and M. Foley, *Dark tourism: The attraction of death and disaster* (London: Continuum, 2000).

10. B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

11. M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

12. J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); S. Crane, *Museums and Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

13. J. Fedor, M. Kangaspuro, J. Lassila, & T. Zhurzhenko, eds. *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

14. G. Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars’ Deportation and Return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

defines the academic novelty and relevance of analyzing how guidebook texts shaped Sevastopol's military narratives and symbolic geography, and how the narrative changed. Within this frame, we examine guidebooks published between 1857 and 1969 as historical sources and as ideological texts that define ways of seeing, feeling, and consuming.

SOURCE BASE

The choice of the chronological period covered in this study (1857–1969), rather than being externally imposed or arbitrary, is rooted in the specificity of sources and methodological approach to analyzing guidebooks as a particular type of cultural text. This study examines guidebooks as more than neutral informational references. These are semiotic objects that shape, stabilize, and convey the city's symbolic image.

The source corpus of this study encompasses Sevastopol tourist guidebooks, published in 1857, 1907, 1909, and 1969. According to available bibliographic overviews and catalogs (specifically the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and the digital collections of state and university archives), 20+ guidebooks on Sevastopol in general and its specific landmarks were published throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of these publications were lost or survived only partially and are not available for robust analysis. In view of this, this study relies on five full texts, all preserved in open or archival collections and demonstrating high representativeness, recurrence of narrative motifs, and structural typicality for the period in question.

In the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century, guidebooks increasingly portrayed Sevastopol as a symbol city combining the memory of war with its integration into the civilian practices of tourism, recreation, and modern urban life. The transformation of narrative is already apparent in the corpus of these texts: from “the city of ruin” to “the city of memory” and, later, “the hero city.” In addition to informing, the guidebooks of the late 19th and mid-20th centuries also standardized the modes of perceiving the city, combining a touristic experience with national and military memory. The ruins of bastions, harbor panoramas, monuments to defenders, military necropolises—each of them became a *lieu de mémoire* (memory space), in Pierre Nora's terms.

The earliest of the available guidebooks, *A Guide to Sevastopol, Its Bastions, and Environs*¹⁵, was printed in the Black Sea Hydrographic Depot Typography in Mykolaiv shortly after the end of the Crimean War. Its author, Dmitry Afanasiev, conceived the publication as a charity effort, with proceeds from its sales going toward helping the residents remaining among the city's ruins. The text deliberately ignores the 70 years of Sevastopol's pre-war history, defining its heroic defense as the only source of interest for visitors. Because of that, the guidebook describes the city's urban space as a sanctified topography of military trauma, where each location—from Malakhov Kurgan to ruined

15. Д. Афанасьев, *Путеводитель по Севастополю, его бастионам и окрестностям, изданный с целью благотворения на его развалинах* (Николаев: Типография Черноморского гидрографического депо, 1857).

bastions—is marked with the memory of the admirals and rank-and-file defenders who died there.

Another significant example of a historical guidebook is *Sevastopol Before the Crimean War and After. A Historical Description*¹⁶, created and published by Fedor Livanov in Moscow, 19 years after the city's defense. The author addresses the text to travelers but imbues his description of Sevastopol with a deep religious fervor, portraying the city as a “long-suffering martyr” and its territory as a “sacred ground” before which travelers must kneel. The sources show how guidebooks incorporated wartime trauma into urban geography, describing the ruins of once-majestic buildings as “stone skeletons” and “colossal, impenetrable graves” waiting for revival.

The next two sources—*A Historical Guidebook of Sevastopol, Compiled on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Its Defense at the Behest of the Grand Duke Aleksander Mikhailovich by the Lieutenant-Colonel Protopopov and Captain Ovsianikov Under the Editorship of Major General Zayonchovsky*¹⁷ and the 17th edition of the *Illustrated Practical Guidebook of Sevastopol and its Environs*¹⁸ authored by Grigory Moskvich, document the stage of the final transformation of the city from a settlement destroyed by war to a highly developed touristic and commercial hub. Unlike the early charitable descriptions of ruins, the 1909 publication is pronouncedly utilitarian, containing details on cab fares, electric tram and steamboat schedules, and a list of top hotels and restaurants, suggesting established urban infrastructure. The author remarks that Sevastopol became a “gorgeous European city” in the early 20th century, with granite cobblestone streets, electric lighting, and busy trade and military harbor.

Despite modernization, the sanctification of military memory remained the publication's central theme, with most of the text dedicated to describing in detail the 1854–1855 defense line, Kornilov, Nakhimov, and Totleben monuments, and the newly built Franz Roubaud panorama. The guidebook structures the city's space around “historical holy places,” suggesting a pilgrimage to the Brotherhood Cemetery and Chersonesus Monastery, and includes the city environs—Inkerman, Balaklava, and St. George Monastery—in the sightseeing routes. The 1909 publication demonstrates a synthesis of commercial success and imperial heroic narrative, in which each detail of everyday life sat alongside a historical excursion into the Crimean War.

Petr Garmash's Sevastopol¹⁹ sketch guidebook is a classic example of Soviet memorial topography, representing the city as a “symbol of courage and resilience” and a true “school of patriotism.” The author builds his text on the idea of the succession of

16. В. Ливанов, ред., *Севастополь до Крымской войны и после оной: историческое описание, составленное и изданное для путешественников* (Москва: Типография скоропечатни Плетнева, Знаменский пер., и И. Пантелеева, 1874).

17. А. Протопопов и С. Соваж, *Исторический путеводитель по Севастополю*, ред. генерал-майор Зайончковский (Санкт-Петербург: Типография Главного управления уделов, 1907).

18. Г. Москвич, *Иллюстрированный практический путеводитель по Севастополю и окрестностям*, 17-е изд. (Одесса, 1909).

19. П. Гармаш, *Севастополь: очерк-путеводитель*, 2-е перераб. и доп. изд. (Симферополь, Крым, 1969).

heroism, connecting “the first epic” of the 19th century to the 250-day-long defense of 1941–1942, underground resistance, and the city’s liberation in May 1944. The guidebook emphasizes that Sevastopol, like the legendary phoenix, rose from the ashes owing to the all-peoples’ labor feat, becoming an embodiment of socialist progress, with its perfectly clean streets, developed industry, and new household culture. The publication’s purpose is to walk the reader along the “route of glory,” through a network of monuments, panorama museums, and bastions that turn the urban space into a sprawling open-air museum, where every square foot of land holds the memory of heroes and demands special concentration and respect from the visitors.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Sevastopol tourist guidebooks became mass-produced, standardized, and oriented primarily toward domestic tourism. Devoid of narrative or conceptual novelties, they mostly reproduce the narrative model and structural solutions from the 1950s–1960s publication with somewhat updated illustrative materials and statistical data. For this reason, there are no post-1969 guidebooks in this study’s pool of sources, as they do not represent any further development of the urban narrative but rather document its transition to inertial reproduction.

The following criteria guided the selection of the texts for inclusion in the corpus:

1. The availability of text in full or nearly in full (print publications, digital copies, digitized archival materials)
2. Clearly structured description of urban spaces, significant from the standpoint of military history or memorialization
3. Route-based or structured descriptions that allow tracing the city’s arrangement logic as a narrative space
4. Representation of the period in question, e.g., recurrent motifs, reissues, and influence in popular culture

Of the 20+ historical guidebooks identified from bibliographic summaries and archival catalogs, only 5 were analyzed in detail in this research: 4 imperial-era and 1 Soviet-era publications. This configuration of source corpus enables the tracing of urban narrative, from sanctification of ruins and military sacrifice in the late 18th century (1857) through the attempts to reconceptualize the urban space through the lens of modernization (1874, 1907, and 1909) to the formation of the state heroic canon that cemented the image of Sevastopol as a “hero city” (1969).

Therefore, the sources were selected based not on their formal completeness but rather their analytical richness. The chosen chronological frame enables tracing the entire cycle of urban narrative formation, from its initial construction to canonization. It is, therefore, methodologically justified within the framework of studying Sevastopol’s symbolic geography.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This analysis of the Sevastopol guidebook corpus is subject to several methodological and source-critical limitations, stemming from the genre and the historical context of its formation.

First, it is incomplete preservation and availability. A large part of the 19th-century and early-20th-century guidebooks is known only from bibliographic mentions, reviews, or catalogs. Meanwhile, their full texts are either lost or confined to private collections. Fragmentary brochures and official handbooks were the most widespread during the interwar period, which complicates the reconstruction of their original structure. As a result, the corpus is fragmentary, as the analysis covers the texts preserved in their physical form or available digitally.

Second, archives and collections in the temporarily occupied Crimea became inaccessible after 2014 (at least, physically). Without studying the specialized collections of Sevastopol museums and the Crimean Museum of Local Lore, it is impossible to verify publication histories and compare the various editions, reissues, and limited-circulation local guidebooks. Therefore, the internal evolution of the genre at the level of urban institution has gaps in its reconstruction.

Third, it is the ideological markedness of a substantial part of the sources. In particular, it is the case of Soviet guidebooks dating back to the 1960s and later years, created under strict censorship and with due regard to the official memory policy. In these texts, the heroic military narrative prevails and is normatively stipulated, shaping the selection of locations, route structure, tonality, illustrative materials, and the representation of ruins and monuments. In addition to reflecting reality, the guidebooks of this period actively model it, distorting the genre, which must be taken into account during their analysis.

Fourth, it is the genre limitations of the guidebook format itself. Selective by design, guidebooks build a specific “appropriate” route, ruling out inclusive descriptions of the city. Only the things that the author or publisher deems important for creating “the right perception” make it into the text. It results in the canonization of some locations and the marginalization of others, e.g., worker quarters, industrial zones, or sites that did not fit the ideological narrative.

Finally, there are comparative losses. The lack of a comprehensive corpus of guidebooks about the nearby port or military cities (e.g., Odesa, Mykolaiv) makes it impossible to fully reconstruct the comparative dynamics between the cities and determine the extent to which Sevastopol's narratives were unique and to which they were typical for the imperial and Soviet tradition of navy centers.

Despite these limitations, the corpus is sufficiently representative, as it combines heterogeneous sources (e.g., full printed texts, cartographic addenda, illustrative materials, bibliographic overviews, and reissues), enabling the tracing of major stages in the transformation of Sevastopol's urban image.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological foundation of this research is a combination of the historical-comparative and cultural-semiotic approaches, which enables us to trace the transformation of textual, visual, and symbolic representations of Sevastopol through almost a full century, from the imperial to the Soviet period. This work considers tourist guidebooks not only as a reference and informational genre, but as a particular kind of cultural text that functions within the field of official memory and serves as a tool for ideological work with the urban space.

This research is based on a multilevel analysis of a corpus of guidebooks spanning the period between 1857 and 1969 with the involvement of contextual sources, e.g., official historical reference books, cartographic materials, city plans, and illustrative visuals. At the first stage, we use content analysis to determine how frequently the key concepts, toponyms, symbolically charged objects (bastions, monuments, battlegrounds, memorials), and recurrent thematic blocks related to war, sacrifice, heroism, and statehood occur. It allowed us to record each text's structural accents and compare them between various historical periods.

The second stage involved discourse analysis, focused on the means of linguistically constructing urban spaces, e.g., glorification rhetoric, value epithets, narrative framing, and modality, employed to propose a particular interpretation of the past to the reader. This approach lets us analyze how guidebook texts normalize military presence in urban space, legitimize political authority, and integrate military experience in a regular tourist route.

The third analytical level is narrative analysis, which aims to identify the predominant narrative models used to construct a coherent image of the city. We are talking about narratives such as the "sacrifice city," "ruin city," "fortress city," and "hero city," as well as the logic of transitions between them across various historical periods. Narrative analysis helps us identify how the spatial traces of war are redefined in the tourist text and included in the city's symbolic geography.

A comparative analysis of imperial and Soviet guidebooks reveals the disruption and continuity of symbolic codes associated with the city's military image. The methodology employed combines qualitative discourse analysis, visual cartographic interpretation, and cultural-anthropological interpretation of space, which allows us to consider Sevastopol not only as a city with a heroic past but also as a dynamic symbolic construct in which politics, memory, and the materiality of urban space intersect.

The analytical assumption of this research is that touristic guidebooks simultaneously reflect and produce historical memory. Their analysis thus enables tracing how Sevastopol's urban space became the arena where imperial, Soviet, and later ideas of heroism, authority, and identity interacted.

GENERATIVE AI USE DISCLOSURE

The author declares that generative artificial intelligence (GAI) was used in research and manuscript preparation. As per the GAIDeT taxonomy (2025)²⁰, the following tasks were delegated to GAI tools under full human supervision: evaluation of the research's academic novelty and identification of research gaps; proofreading and editing of the Ukrainian version; translation from Russian into Ukrainian; reformatting of materials; and support for the publication process.

The following GAI tools were used: ChatGPT 5.2, Google NotebookLM, and Claude 4.5. Responsibility for the final manuscript lies entirely with the author. GAI tools are not listed as authors and do not bear responsibility for the outcomes. Declaration submitted by: Oleh Zubchenok.

The use of AI is justified and productive due to multiple reasons.

First, the corpus of Sevastopol guidebooks spans over a century of the genre's development and contains numerous recurrent, transformed, and mutually overlapping motifs. A manual comparative analysis of such an array of texts can identify key narratives. However, it would offer limited ability to expose small rhetorical shifts, subtle lexical patterns, and incrementally-shaping long-term trends, which traditional interpretive tools tend to overlook.

Second, the use of AI enabled an in-depth text comparison across the periods (imperial, interwar, and Soviet) and identified constant and variable elements of the narrative, e.g., recurrent metaphors, persistent images, evolution of visual motifs, and semantic emphases. This approach reveals structural patterns that are invisible to a traditional qualitative analysis.

Third, the use of AI serves as an instrument for collecting and organizing data in situations of incomplete or fragmented source material, i.e., not all guidebooks have survived to this day in their original form, and many exist only in digital form or in fragments. AI helps build a semantic map of available texts, without straying from the authentic material, while still reconstructing a broader picture of the genre's evolution.

TRANSFORMATION OF SEVASTOPOL'S REPRESENTATION IN GUIDEBOOKS

Sevastopol occupies a unique place in the history of Eastern Europe's military and urban development. It is a strategic military fleet base and an example of a military city, a space designed around military functions. Founded in 1783 after the Russian Empire annexed Crimea, Sevastopol has been the Black Sea's headquarters and a first-class fortress since its inception. Spatial planning, social structure, and symbolic representation

20. Я. Сичікова, Н. Цибуляк, Ж. А. Тейшейра да Сілва, & С. Назаровець, GAIDeT (Generative AI Delegation Taxonomy): таксономія делегування завдань генеративному штучному інтелекту в наукових дослідженнях і публікаційній діяльності, в *Accountability in Research* (2025), у друці, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2025.25443316>.

all emerged here under the influence of military rationalities, making the city a classic example of military urbanism, where the logic of war and defense shapes architecture, governance, identity, and even everyday life²¹.

The history of Sevastopol is the history of a city where the army and navy were the architects of its economy, social structure, and cultural profile, as well as its defenders. At the end of the 18th century, the military accounted for over 95% of Sevastopol's population—the authors define this phenomenon as “the military-oriented population structure.” This demographic model created a social space with total militarization, in which civilian roles existed solely to service the military infrastructure²².

From its first days, the city was planned as a naval base and fortress, with bulwarks, bastions, batteries, fortified promontory positions, docks, warehouses, and barracks serving not only as military buildings but also as the foundational elements of the city plan. Here, the architectural logic was guided by the bay's topography, which served as a natural harbor and a security barrier.

The analysis of Sevastopol guidebooks reveals that while the city's image changed throughout more than 100 years, it remained structurally unchanged in its military memorial logic. The year 1857 marked the emergence of the first known guidebook, created immediately after the Crimean War, which first codified the ruins as a memory. Meanwhile, by 1969, the Soviet canon of “hero city” took its final shape. After that, the narrative did not develop, but rather was reproduced in its standardized form.

Therefore, the time frame of 1857–1969 constitutes a complete historical cycle, within which guidebooks served different, yet structurally connected functions, ranging from sanctifying ruins and individual pilgrimage to the ideological routing of memory during the Soviet era.

Garmash P. Ye. in his work *Sevastopol: A Sketch Guidebook* (1969)²³:

- Documented the finished memorial landscape of the city after its reconstruction in the 1950s and 1960s
- Established the “hero city” tourist route in its canonical form
- Illustrated the composition of principal commemoration spaces, creating a model that remained largely unchanged until the USSR's collapse

After 1969, the military memorial image transitions into the reproduction phase. Especially telling is how the imperial narrative was transferred from the Czarist to the Soviet context. The ideological continuity amounted to the preservation of heroism, glory, sacrifice, and defense narratives, which, although reinvented, remained the backbone

21. S. Graham, “When Life Itself is War: On the Urbanization of Military and Security Doctrine,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36, no 1 (February 23, 2011): 136–155, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2011.01026.x>.

22. А. Баранов, Е. Гармашова, Т. Лопатина и Д. Пунга, «Региональные особенности, закономерности и опыт хозяйственной жизни города Севастополя во второй половине XIX – начале XX века», *Гуманитарные науки. Вестник Финансового университета* 14, № 5 (2025): 134–162, <https://doi.org/10.26794/2226-7867-2024-14-5-134-162>.

23. Гармаш, Севастополь.

of urban representations. Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnqvist-Pleva remarked²⁴ that Soviet memory policy rarely denounced imperial heritage. Rather, it selectively reconceptualized and integrated imperial narratives into its new ideological value system. In the case of Sevastopol, the imperial pride in its navy, defense, and military discipline was not destroyed but incorporated into the Soviet myth of “people’s heroism” and “all-union brotherhood,” which declares the “victorious people” the key subject of history, instead of the monarch or army as an institution.

Throughout the period from the mid-19th to mid-20th century, Sevastopol went through at least three key phases of symbolic reconceptualization, each one corresponding to a shift in the state’s political and social priorities:

- Ruins and memory—Sevastopol as a place of tragedy, sacrifice, and military glory after the Crimean War, where ruins served as material markers of defeat, but also of its defense’s moral grandness
- Resort and restoration—the interwar redefinition of the city as a space of healing, recreation, and “peaceful life,” which corresponded to the Soviet aspiration to normalize the traumatic space and include it in the domestic tourism economy
- Hero city—finalization of the Soviet canon in the post-war period, where the heroic defense of Sevastopol in the years of the so-called Great Patriotic War became a central myth-making element. Besides the scale of wartime destruction, the shift was due to ideological necessity to compensate for the experience of defeat at the early stage of the war through a narrative of moral victory, mass heroism, and self-sacrifice. As demonstrated by Serhii Hromenko’s research, the cult of the hero city played a key role in legitimizing the Soviet order, mobilizing the working class during post-war industrialization, and fostering an intense state loyalty model, rooted in the memory of war and victory²⁵.

These three phases of symbolic reconceptualization of the urban space will be illustrated below by analyzing the corpus of 19th- and 20th-century guidebooks to trace the shifts in narrative accents, memory routes, and semantic content of Sevastopol’s key locations depending on the predominant memory policy.

THE CITY OF RUIN AND MEMORY (1857-1870s)

The image of Sevastopol as a “sacrifice city” and “long-suffering martyr” became central to its cultural history from the first post-war descriptions onward. Published strictly as a “charitable intent toward its ruins,” with its proceeds to be donated to the residents remaining in the destroyed city, D. Afanasiev’s guidebook²⁶ laid the foundation for this narrative. The text deliberately ignored Sevastopol’s pre-siege existence, declaring its

24. N. Bernsand and B. Törnqvist-Pleva, eds., *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin’s Russia* (Brill, 2019), <http://doi.org/10.1163/9789004366671>.

25. С. Громенко, *#КримНаш. Історія російського міфу* (Київ: Хімджест, 2017).

26. Афанасьев, *Путеводитель по Севастополю*.



Fig. 1. The plan of Sevastopol Fortress (early 19th century).

Source: Atlas of Fortresses of the Russian Empire. [St. Petersburg: no publisher indicated, circa 1830; the specimen shown dates back to 1837]. Hand-drawn map. Russian State Library

heroic defense the sole reason for interest in the city. The urban landscape thus became a material archive of suffering, with its every location marked by memory of the fallen.

In works dating back to the 1870s, e.g., those by Fedor Livanov²⁷, this trend culminated in the full-blown sanctification of urban space as a “sacred place” to kneel before. The author describes once grand buildings as “stone skeletons” and “colossal, impenetrable graves” standing in “grim silence.” The guidebooks proposed elegiac routes, in which architecture, beyond its utilitarian aspect, had a memorial function. E.g., they described the ruins of the Officers’ Library or Club as sacred relics bearing the traces of sacrifice.

This approach integrated the trauma of war into the city’s topography, where destroyed bastions and mass graves became part of the imperial cult of heroism. Included with the publications, detailed maps let travelers compare the “heaps of rubble” before their eyes and concrete episodes of defense, turning a regular walk into a patriotic pilgrimage.

The Crimean War turned the city’s very fabric into a “landscape of ruin.” Its destroyed bastions, burnt-down barracks, damaged cathedrals, and cannonball-riddled walls cre-

27. Ливанов, Севастополь до Крымской войны.

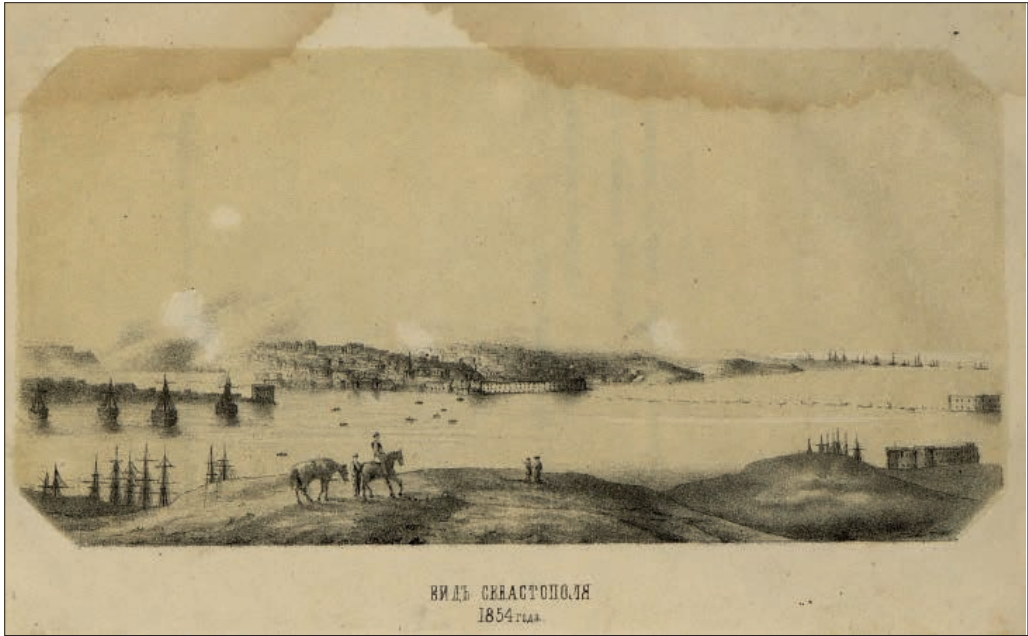


Fig. 2. Sevastopol during the Crimean War, 1854.

Source: *A Guide to Sevastopol, Its Bastions, and Environs, Published to Do Good by Its Ruins*. Mykolaiv: Black Sea Hydrographic Depot's Printing House, 1857

ated a material archive of suffering, where each fragment of the space bears the traces of sacrifice.

As Greta Uehling demonstrated²⁸, traumatic memory shapes collective identity in places where the war becomes a cultural code. In Sevastopol, this code is a reminder of vulnerability and moral resilience. Guidebooks of this period, specifically those by Dmitry Afanasiev and Fedor Livanov, served as instruments of imperial ideology, guiding the traveler's eye exclusively toward military glory. Afanasiev openly states that the city offered travelers nothing throughout the 70 years of its pre-siege existence, and that its heroic defense was the sole source of interest there. Those texts pay little attention to the pre-war life and economy, painting the city as a space of loss, in which the ruins of the Officers' Library or Club become sacred objects.

Descriptions of this kind combine the geographical precision with the rhetoric of religious pilgrimage: Sevastopol is declared a "sacred place" and "long-suffering martyr" to be kneeled before. The routes that pass by the bastions and the beds of honor of admirals Nakhimov, Kornilov, and Istomin structure a landscape of grief, where defeat becomes a spiritual victory. Visual materials, e.g., the detailed maps and engravings of the building's "stone skeletons" included with the guidebooks, helped travelers navigate the "material archive of suffering."

28. G. Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Nora, "Between Memory and History."

This period established the semantic matrix of the city as a place of sacrifice, where the ruins, resembling “colossal, impenetrable graves” were not subject to quick utilitarian reconstruction, becoming markers of national resilience²⁹. Therefore, Sevastopol emerged as an “architecture of memory”³⁰, with each shell crater or destroyed façade integrated into topography that defined the paradigm of the city’s identity as a “the Russian Troy” for decades to come.

The late-19th-century imperial guidebooks share a recognizable set of visual motifs that establish Sevastopol as an urban space, charged with the memory of war. Three images were predominant:

1. Ruined bastions—the detailed descriptions of wall fragments, trenches, and bulwarks presented not as signs of decline but as material evidence of heroic defense. The authors deliberately draw attention to “the city’s wounds,” presenting ruination as an element of the exalted landscape. Ruins became “an open archive” that talks to travelers through the remnants of hostilities.

2. Bay panoramas—topographic overviews defined the Northern, Southern, and Quarantine bays as the places in which history was made. Guidebooks used them to create an emotional perspective. From the bastion’s vantage point, the reader had to perceive the beauty of the landscape and the tragic memory of the siege simultaneously. A panorama thus becomes a means of connecting the natural grandness with the military narrative.

3. Burial mounds and memorial heights—the hills and mounds, in which the city’s defenders were buried, were presented as sacred places. They are described in the vein of “tourist pilgrimage,” as the author guides the reader through the route, in which every elevation is a place for “remembrance and moral edification.”

After 1856, the city attracted travelers, retired officers, artists, and journalists with the opportunity to observe its ruins, which gave rise to a tradition of dual optics—documental (facts of destruction) and sentimental (empathizing with loss)—as a foundation for enduring perception of Sevastopol as a city of memory. Guidebooks canonize the city’s space, defining “sacred places,” routes, and perceptions as a spatial ritual.

Sevastopol is thus represented as a moral fortress, where destruction becomes moral victory, rather than just a city in ruins. It is from this image of the sacrifice city that the myth of the hero city would later arise.

RESORT AND RESTORATION (1900s-1910s)

At the end of the 19th century—and even more so in the early 20th century—Sevastopol guidebooks underwent a substantial transformation, transitioning from the mostly memorial texts about the war and the city’s defense to hybrid tourist narratives com-

29. Nora, “Between Memory and History”.

30. Assaman, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*.



Fig. 3. The destruction of Sevastopol's urban space as a result of the Crimean War (1855–1856)
Source: Sevastopol in 1855–1856. Photogravures from a rare photo album. Moscow, 1893

binning military memory with the descriptions of healthy climate, seaside bathhouses, and cultural entertainment. That period gave rise to a new kind of self-presentation, “Sevastopol resort,” that coexisted with the traditional images of the hero city and the city of memory.

In the early-20th-century guidebooks (*A Historical Guide to Sevastopol*³¹ and *An Illustrated Practical Guide to Sevastopol and Its Environs*³²), a second layer of representation takes shape along with the military memorial narrative—an image of resort and the restoration of Sevastopol, related to a broader transformation of Crimea into one of the Russian Empire’s main recreational regions. After the construction of the Black Sea Railway and the active development of coastal areas, the region’s positioning shifted to “the empire’s southern climatic resort,” attracting numerous tourists to Yalta, Alupka, Gurzuf, and other coastal settlements. In this context, guidebooks portray Sevastopol as a place of battle glory but also as an access point to the “Crimean tourist belt.”

Their tonality shifts, reflecting the influence of this trend. The descriptions of bays and panoramas become more picturesque rather than morally charged, and the routes

31. Протопопов и Соваж, *Исторический путеводитель*.

32. Москвич, *Иллюстрированный практический путеводитель*.

include coastal walks and sea tours. This representation focuses on the city as a combination of port, military capital, and southern attraction, a hybrid image characteristic of the imperial discourse of “exploring the South.”

Enabling the transition to the tourist discourse in the early 20th century was a sweeping infrastructure modernization that turned Sevastopol from “a grave city” to “a gorgeous European city.” The sources—specifically Grigory Moskvich’s guidebook—recorded multiple key transformations:³³

- Technological breakthrough. The advent of granite cobblestone roads, public water supply, and electric lights, combined with the development of electric trams (Krugovaya, Vokzalnaya, and Artileriyskaya lines), radically changed Sevastopol’s urban space.
- Accessibility by transport. As a terminal on the railway line connecting to St. Petersburg, Moscow, and the rest of Russia, Sevastopol became a busy transit hub. Besides, regular steam cutter and steamboat traffic between Sevastopol, Odesa, Yalta, and the ports of the Caucasus integrated the city into the empire-wide tourist routes.
- Health and recreational attractiveness. The city gained prominence as a “healthy climatic destination” with “a mild climate and fabulous sea bathing” as a result of the efforts of the Society for Fighting Tuberculosis, the opening of clinics, and the development of nearby health resorts, e.g., the Omega estate, which offered seaside air and grape therapy.
- Cultural showcase. With its high-profile public, yacht club, theater, and restaurants overlooking the berths, Sevastopol Seafront Boulevard became the center of social life. A particular point of pride was the city’s Biological Station, with its aquarium, which was up there with the best European ones in Berlin or Naples in terms of diversity of its display.

In guidebooks, an image of Sevastopol as a “sanctuary resort” takes shape during this period. Unlike purely commercial Odesa or recreational Yalta, Sevastopol remains “almost exclusively a military port,” where recreation is intertwined with the topography of heroism. Military sites, e.g., the Museum of Defense, Rubaud’s Panorama, rebuilt bastions, and the Brotherhood Cemetery, are presented as “historical holy places” and a mandatory part of each tourist’s patriotic pilgrimage. Complementing the comfort of high-end hotels were the views of battleships in the harbor, creating a unique hybrid space.

As noted by Baranov et al.³⁴, early-20th-century guidebooks reconciled the heroic past with the civil present: the routes began at bastions and memorials and ended at the seafront, bathhouses, restaurants, or Seafront Boulevard concerts. This combination of commemoration and recreation established a universal experience scenario. The

33. Москвич, *Иллюстрированный практический путеводитель*.

34. Баранов, Гармашова, Лопатина и Пунга, «Региональные особенности», 134–162.



Fig. 4. Sevastopol as a Piece of Port Infrastructure: A Plan from the V. Yu. Rummel's Atlas.
Source: Rummel, V. Yu. Materials for Description of Russian Commercial Ports and the History of Their Construction. Issue XXVII. St. Petersburg, 1899

authors deliberately created a tourist synesthesia, with the tang of sea air, the wash of waves, and views of ships framing the narrative of heroic feat and transforming it into a pleasant emotional experience.

The sources develop the resort discourse mainly in two directions:

- **Health.** Sevastopol is positioned as a “healthy climatic destination” with a “mild climate.” Guidebooks highlight the Society for Fighting Tuberculosis’s efforts to establish public sanatoriums where patients could receive treatment. Another emphasis is put on the healing properties of the seaside air and “fabulous sea bathing,” especially in the area of St. George Monastery and Omega estate.
- **Landscape esthetics.** The authors praise “the enchanting blue sea,” seen from anywhere in the city, and “marvelous seascapes.” They also tout the Biological Station’s aquarium as a particular source of aesthetic enjoyment, with its diverse displays and beauty comparable to Europe’s top aquariums in Berlin and Naples.

The commercialization of memory began. Monuments and bastions became part of an established touristic product—the guidebooks included detailed rates for cabs to Malakhov Kurgan and the Brotherhood Cemetery, as well as steam cutter schedules. Memory was integrated into the city’s economy through advertisements for goods and

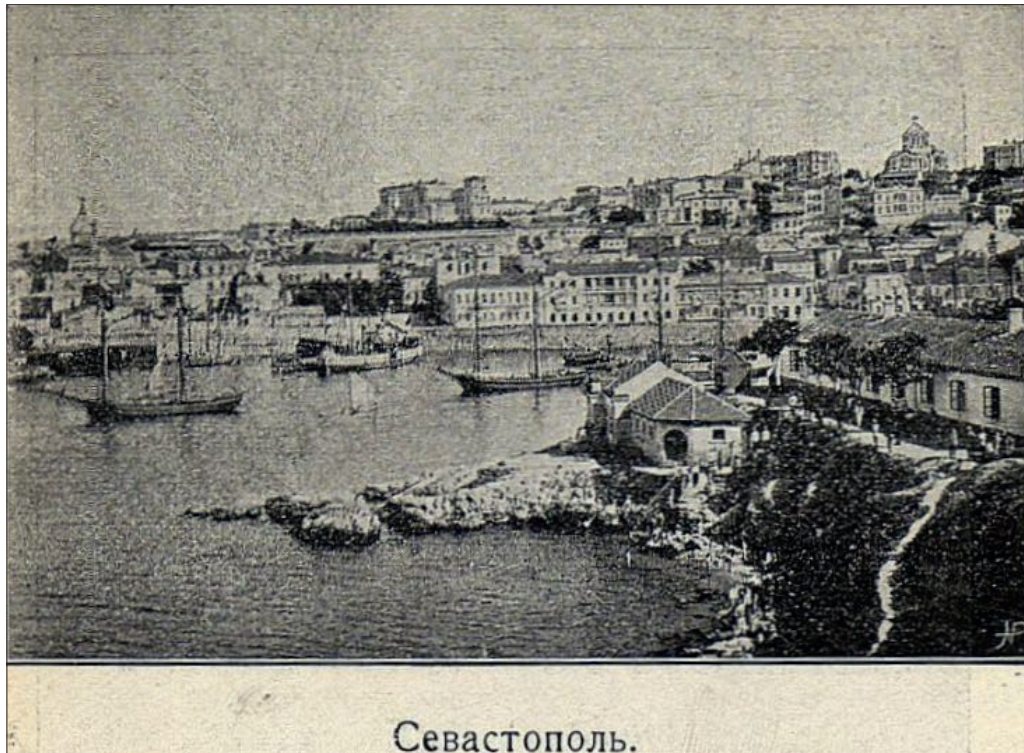


Fig. 5. Sevastopol's urban space in the early 20th century (as seen in the guidebook).

Source: *A Guide to Sevastopol and Its Environs. Compiled at the Behest of Sevastopol Tour Bureau.* Sevastopol: Obrazovanie Company Printing House, 1909

insurance services, which accompanied the historical descriptions.

Despite this “resort layer,” the military aspect remains intact, resulting in the double encoding of the space. Along with the descriptions of comfortable hotels, guidebooks never fail to remind their readers of the city’s “shining chapters of history” and the heroic 11-month-long defense. Even a walk along the restored alleys of the Historical Boulevard is presented as “highly enjoyable,” even though it is located immediately above the former bastion line. Recreation and memory are never in conflict in the early-20th-century Sevastopol. Rather, they create a unique topography in which history becomes a noble backdrop for modern life.

During this period, Sevastopol is reminiscent of an old bastion converted into a luxurious terrace of a seaside café. Its foundations still hold the memory of ferocious battles. However, they are already covered with the white tablecloths of present-day comfort, inviting travelers to enjoy the view while staying mindful of the price of this beauty.

A crucial part of this juxtaposition was the literary prestige of Leo Tolstoy, a participant in the city’s 1854–1855 defense and author of the *Sevastopol Sketches*. For early-20th-century readers, Tolstoy was one of the principal voices establishing the ethical framework for perceiving the city and the war. Therefore, guidebooks feature his

quotes, e.g., morally charged descriptions of Malakhov Kurgan, “the truth of war” at charging yards or scenes of the chaos of battle. Sitting alongside advice on the best walks, sea baths, and beneficial climate, these quotes create a potent rhetorical contrast that combines everyday leisure with the experience of historical trauma.

Guidebooks present the architecture of Sevastopol during this period as a testament to the city’s revival after apparently “overcoming the ruin” and entering the phase of peaceful growth. New buildings, reconstructed seafronts, boulevards, and public spaces are described as signs of modernization, highlighting the city’s “rise after trying times.”

However, the authors downplay this victory as contingent and partial. The texts always hint at the “former glory,” e.g., the references to battlegrounds, invisible outlines of bastions, old garrison lines, or former fortifications, symbolically “concealed” under the new urban promenade spaces. A distinctive duality of narrative takes shape: Sevastopol emerges as, on the one hand, a modernizing “living city” with boulevards, harbors, and sea panoramas, which claims the status of resort hub; and, on the other hand, as a “monument city,” where each modern building coexists with the shadow of past battles and keeps “talking” in the language of historical memory.

Visual motifs in the guidebooks serve as symbolic documentation of urban space, conveying heroic, memorial, and military imagery as a normal collective perception of the city. Three groups of them are especially telling:

- Harbors and bay panoramas as “a window into modernity”: they are represented as a space of motion, trade, and leisure, while retaining the symbolic status of the past battles’ main arena. The panoramic view allows for combining modernity and memory within a single visual frame.
- New boulevards and city promenades are portrayed as material proofs of revival—a sort of “civilizational strips,” laid over the former ruins. Meanwhile, many descriptions emphasized that beneath them lie “the sprawling old defense lines,” returning the reader to the city’s historical layer.
- Seaside views became a “calm after the storm” motif, where the sea symbolizes the peaceful present, which, however, overlaps with the memory of the siege and war-time tragedies.

The guidebooks of the late 19th and early 20th centuries actively employ the motifs of accessibility and travel in their promotional discourse. During this period, with transportation and infrastructure modernization, Sevastopol is increasingly often presented as a well-organized civilian center of movement and leisure, in addition to its role as a military port. As part of this process, its symbolic space is institutionalized, with former fortifications turning into memorial parks, military monuments becoming tourist landmarks, and new boulevards, hotels, and seafronts with “heroic” names shaping the aesthetic of a peaceful landscape integrated with the memory of the city’s defense.

THE HERO CITY CANON (1960s-1970s)

During the Soviet era, ideological representation of Sevastopol entered a new stage, with its symbolic role of a “hero city” and “epitome of bravery and resilience” becoming central. Sources portray the 1941–1942 defense of Sevastopol as a pinnacle of a century-long tradition, turning the city into a veritable “school of patriotism.”

Petr Garmash’s guidebook³⁵ shows the deliberate transformation of imperial narratives: the glory of bygone admirals (Ushakov, Nakhimov, Kornilov) is now inextricably intertwined with the feats of Soviet heroes (Filchenkov, Onilova, and Chikarenko) as a single “classless” annalistic narrative. Leo Tolstoy’s quotes about the “first epic” served as an ethical bridge, instilling a sense of pride in contemporaries for stepping onto the “sacred ground of Sevastopol,” whose glory was multiplied by the descendants of the defenders who fought in the so-called Great Patriotic War.

In contrast to the 19th-century elegiac descriptions of ruins, the Soviet guidebook emphasizes its revival as a “feat of labor,” with the city emerging as “a legendary phoenix” that rose from the ashes to become a grand monument to the Soviet people. The trauma of destruction is replaced with an image of “the white-stone Sevastopol” with perfectly clean streets resembling a battleship’s deck. The city’s toponymics—from the Heroes of Sevastopol Street to Malakhov Kurgan—encode memory within the urban space, making even “scurrying sightseers” calm down and focus.

This guidebook serves as a patriotic education manual, turning the city into an open-air ideology museum through panoramas, dioramas, and monuments. Besides serving life, the architecture here represents heroic history, where each hill bore witness to indomitable courage.

The guidebooks of the 1960s and 1970s shape the final canon of the “hero city,” in which the memory of defense becomes a core of the state identity. In this publication, toponymics—the Heroes of Sevastopol Street, Nakhimov Square, Victory Avenue—encode memory into the very fabric of the city, with memorial ensembles, monuments, and museums creating a new form of symbolic military urbanism, where architecture does not defend, but represents the city’s heroic history.

The Soviet period thus consolidates the “heroic canon,” the image of a city that lives in the shadow of war, while deriving its own identity from it. Guidebooks of the time become ritual memorial texts, painting Sevastopol as a city that epitomizes victory and valor. Besides describing the city, the mid-20th-century Soviet guidebooks constructed the official narrative of victory, combining military history, collective memory, and an educational function. Recurrent vocabulary, e.g., “resilience,” “greatness,” and “unfathomable act of courage,” makes the text part of the state identity ritual. Tourism in Sevastopol officially becomes a memorial pilgrimage, with each visitor required to see, know, and remember.

35. Гармаш, Севастополь.



Памятник адмиралу П. С. Нахимову.



Графская пристань.



Проспект Нахимова.



Площадь Революции.

Figs. 6–7. Sevastopol within the Soviet guidebook narrative of the late 20th century
Source: Garmash P. Ye. *Sevastopol: A Sketch Guidebook*. Kyiv: Politizdat of Ukraine, 1969

This period's key attribute is the institutionalization of memory through the creation of museums, panoramas, and memorials dedicated to the city's defenses (of 1854–1855 and 1941–1944). In addition to preserving history, these sites embody ideology, becoming the spaces of public education. E.g., the Siege of Sevastopol Panorama (restored in the 1950s) and the Storm of Mount Sapun Diorama (1959) served as elements of a visual sermon. Besides learning the facts, the visitor was supposed to feel the emotional experience of their people's greatness.

The Soviet regime inherits the imperial model of heroism, only changing its subject: people and party replace the Czar, and the defense of the socialist Motherland replaces that of the empire. The formula remains unchanged: sacrifice—resilience—revival.

It is this structural invariability that ensures the extraordinary continuity of the myth of Sevastopol, overcoming ideological divides. As Julie Fedor demonstrates³⁶, Sevastopol is represented as “heroic stability” and a place where the war ends in victory, not in trauma, unlike Leningrad or Stalingrad, where the tragic tone prevails.

This image corresponds to the Soviet concept of “victory memory”³⁷, which uses the past to affirm political succession.

The visual language of Soviet guidebooks, especially in the case of Petr Garmash’s work, is replete with symbols of state power and military discipline. Rather than just a settlement, Sevastopol becomes a “white-stone hero city” and “museum city” filled with “especial solemnity.” Its identity is visualized through the “groomed streets” and “astonishing cleanliness,” reminiscent of a battleship’s clean deck, where the blue of mariners’ collars blends with the bays’ colors. Here, tourism becomes reminiscent of an ideological ritual, turning visitors into participants of state memory.

Visual motifs structure the Soviet canon of the city as follows:

1. Sevastopol siege panorama. It is not only “the outstanding specimen of battle painting,” but also a “mechanism for immersion” in history. The guidebook emphasizes the collective act of saving the canvas in 1942, when cadets and locals literally snatched its pieces from the fire, which imbues a sense of patriotic service in visiting the museum. The immersive experience is supported by Henri Barbusse’s quote, which calls the painting “second to none.”

2. Malakhov Kurgan as “Sevastopol residents’ holy place.” The route from the Heroes of Sevastopol Street leads to the mound’s top, where the Eternal Flame has burned since 1958. A panoramic view opens from the mound, visually uniting the past (the Siege Panorama Museum Building) and the present (modern ships in the blue sea and a colossal monument to Lenin). Here, the ritual reaches its peak when young mariners pledge their allegiance to the Motherland.

3. Monuments as symbolic nodes. The network of monuments (to Nakhimov, to Sunk-en Ships, and to Members of the Komsomol) forms a framework through which a visitor perceives the city. Nakhimov Square memorial bearing the names of 54 Heroes of the Soviet Union occupies a special place, encoding the space with the language of the state decoration. The Monument to Members of Komsomol (1963), with its message to the 1990s youth embedded within it, creates a continuity of memory across generations.

4. Performative memory and rituals. The celebrations of May 9th and Navy Days turn the urban landscape of Sevastopol into a stage. Especially symbolic is the ritual of casting wreaths into the sea. Since there are no graves at sea, this act transforms the water surface into a memorial field. The guidebook quotes the letters of schoolchildren, for whom Sevastopol was “the school of patriotism” and who felt “born anew” after visiting Mount Sapun and bastions.

36. Fedor et al., *War and Memory*.

37. Assaman, *Cultural Memory*.

The guidebooks present Sevastopol as a model of an ideal socialist city, built on three levels:

1. Heroic past as proof of the Soviet people's moral superiority
2. Revival as a symbol of labor enthusiasm
3. Modernity as a show of the socialist project's power

This threefold image creates a cyclical logic of Soviet history: the city is destroyed, suffers, and is revived, and proves its greatness through this recurring cycle. In this narrative, heroism is not an event, but a structural feature of the city's existence.

Therefore, changes in political paradigms altered the collective image of Sevastopol, integrating imperial motifs into Soviet heroic discourse. In turn, an enduring cultural archetype of a naval city emerged, combining military discipline, urban aesthetics, and the mythology of heroism—and this archetype continues to define Sevastopol's symbolic place in Ukrainian and European historical discourse.

SYMBOLISM OF THE SO-CALLED GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR IN THE IMAGE OF SEVASTOPOL

In the 1940s to 1960s, especially after being awarded the Gold Star and Order of Lenin in May 1965, the city was definitively established as a central element of the Soviet symbolic geography. Its image is encoded not only as that of a military site, but as “a symbol of valor, resilience, and astounding bravery of our people” that honorably withstood the most grueling “test of courage.” In the guidebooks of this period, e.g., Petr Garmash's sketch, Sevastopol is presented as “sacred ground,” where every visitor feels a powerful rush of patriotic pride. The city becomes a veritable “school of patriotism,” the visiting of which (especially Mount Sapun and Malakhov Kurgan) made people feel as if “born anew” and led them to a deeper consciousness of their duty to the people.

In the Soviet narrative of the 1960s, the 250-day-long defense of Sevastopol in 1941–1942 is interpreted as the sacral culmination of the city's history, in which there was no rear, and the frontline was everywhere. The guidebook emphasizes that this period was a great test of inner strength, which the city passed thanks to the Communist Party's unfailing attention and the help of all Soviet people. The “labor feat” of the city's revival constitutes a separate symbolic layer: Like the “legendary phoenix” that rose from the ruins and ashes, Sevastopol became a grand monument to the Soviet people, who built a new, even more beautiful city, over just ten years. Sevastopol's modern face—its “groomed streets and astonishing cleanliness,” which make it look like a battleship deck—serves as a visual confirmation of its victory over the chaos of war and of the ultimate sanctification of its urban space as a “museum city,” full of particular solemnity.

A characteristic feature of Soviet guidebooks was to reinterpret imperial heritage selectively, rather than outright denouncing it. As Sybiriakov remarks³⁸, the images of

38. И. Сибирияков, «Образ Севастополя для советских туристов: советские справочники-путеводители об особенностях туристических маршрутов в Севастополе», *Вестник ЮУрГУ. Серия: Социально-гуманитарные науки* 16, № 4 (2016): 58–63, <https://doi.org/10.14529/ssh160408>.

admirals, bastions, and the first defense of Sevastopol never disappeared from the narrative. Rather, they lost their personified, monarchic meaning and blended into the collectivist “heroic people” myth. This model of memory was rooted in uninterrupted continuity: the imperial naval glory was transformed into the “Soviet people’s glory,” and the city emerged as a timeless space of military valor, cleansed of political contradictions. As a result, Sevastopol became an ideologically organized landscape within Soviet tourist discourse, where history served primarily to legitimize the current political order.

Petr Garmash’s guidebook builds the image of Sevastopol through three key ideological strategies that transform military history into the state myth:

- Epic heroization. The defense of 1941–1942 is interpreted as “the second epic of Sevastopol” that lasted 250 days. It is presented as an ongoing feat, in which there was no rear, and “the frontline was everywhere.” Garmash emphasizes that despite everyday bombings, the city “lived on, worked, and fought,” with underground special integrated plants manufacturing weapons, and damaged materiel returning to the ranks by locals’ efforts. Even after organized resistance ceased in July 1942, the city “did not submit to the enemy,” as members of the underground continued fighting.
- Collective personification. The guide includes a long list of names, from the admirals Nakhimov and Kornilov to Soviet-era heroes Filchenkov and Onilova, and notes that it is the land of “hundreds of thousands brave sons and daughters of our Motherland.” Heroism is described as a mass phenomenon, rooted not in “blind fanaticism” but in the “passionate filial devotion to the Motherland” and “faithfulness to the great ideas of communism.” The city itself gains human features, e.g., a “naval soul” that manifests in its “groomed streets,” and the city “breathing” its outstanding history.
- Moral inversion of defeat. The military failures of 1855 and 1942 transformed into higher moral victories. Garmash quotes the order of 1855, which states that all that the enemy got were the “burning ruins,” while the defenders protected their “dignity of defense.” The tragedy of 1942 is presented as a strategic victory, with the iron resolve of Sevastopol’s residents “thwarting the plans of German command,” and forcing the enemy to pay for every inch of the land with time and enormous losses.

The texts systematically build a symbolic geography of heroism: Mount Sapun, Malakhov Kurgan, bays and monuments (e.g., the Monument to Sunken Ships) become nodes in the network of memory, where “every street bore witness to feats of heroism.” Sevastopol is thus declared the “museum city,” full of special solemnity.

The Soviet narrative masterfully integrates the memory of the Crimean War, establishing a direct connection between the two defenses (of 1854–1855 and of 1941–1942). The guidebook constantly compares the deeds of “forefathers and descendants,” creating an image of the eternal city of glory that “falls to be revived” and becomes even more beautiful. Sevastopol, in this context, is a city whose name, in Ancient Greek, means “the great and the worthy of adoration.”

Fedor emphasized³⁹ that the myth of Sevastopol became not merely a form of memory; it emerged as a form of political education, equating empathizing with the past to patriotic duty. The city came to reflect the Soviet morale, an image of a citizen who is resilient, modest, and devoted to their collective.

The Soviet version of heroism was collective and impersonal: it was not the glory of a commander, but “*glory of the people*”. This kind of heroic discourse fostered a sense of belonging without individuality, enabling every Soviet citizen to feel part of great history. This narrative paints Sevastopol as an example from the past, but also as a model for the future. Its heroism is touted as exemplary behavior in the face of new circumstances, whether during the post-war reconstruction or in “fighting for peace.”

ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Our discourse analysis convincingly demonstrates that tourist guides to Sevastopol functioned not as neutral reference texts but as instruments of symbolic authority through which ideologically authorized perceptions of the city, war, and heroism were conveyed and ingrained. In this sense, they can be interpreted as a form of “soft weapon of memory,” which combines cultural, tourist, and educational functions.

According to Pierre Nora, in modern society, memory exists not within the immediate experience but in the memory spaces (*lieux de mémoire*) serving as mediators between history, politics, and collective imagination⁴⁰. Sevastopol guidebooks fulfilled that very function, creating the city’s textual topography, within which the routes, waypoints, and landmarks were structured in advance according to the predominant memory policy. It offered not only a tourist route, but a normalized way of perceiving and experiencing the city.

The imperial guidebooks of the late 19th and early 20th century combined the rhetoric of sacrifice, suffering, and moral greatness, shaping Sevastopol as a “holy ground” of the empire’s defense. Ruins, bastions, and beds of honor were represented not as markers of defeat, but as material proofs of spiritual victory and national resilience. During the Soviet era, this narrative was not discarded but reconceptualized: the guidebooks of the 1950s and the 1960s transformed the city’s image into the “hero city” canon, a symbol of victory, mass heroism, and historical righteousness of the socialist project. This way, text representations created and supported what Aleida Assmann defined as institutional memory—a stable system of cultural codes, through which the past is used to legitimize political power in the present⁴¹.

Importantly, the analysis revealed the disciplining function of guidebook texts. In addition to informing travelers, they shaped an emotional and moral frame for their behavior in the urban space, turning their journey into a ritual of patriotic contemplation.

39. Fedor et al., *War and Memory*.

40. Nora, “Between Memory and History”.

41. Assman, *Cultural Memory*.

This form of textual mediation brings the guidebooks closer to the “soft power” logic in the field of memory, where cultural and tourist practices become instruments for normalizing desired historical interpretations and loyalty models.

In a wider theoretical dimension, the case of Sevastopol enables a broader understanding of the urban narrative in post-imperial and post-Soviet contexts. As Julie Fedor remarks⁴², the heritage of war in such spaces remains a historical and political category through which the fight for identity, sovereignty, and a symbolic claim to the land happens. Sevastopol, with its multilayered history—imperial, Soviet, Ukrainian, and under occupation—demonstrates the continuity of what Aleida Assmann describes as “the memory regime,” i.e., the system in which the past is constantly reconstructed in accordance with current political needs.

Our findings also warrant considering Sevastopol as a model of “discourse city,” in which military identity is reflected in texts and actively produced by them. This research shows that military urbanism can be applied as a historical and cultural method for reading past urban texts, as well as for analyzing present-day military spaces.

Tourist guides to Sevastopol thus emerge as complex cultural artifacts that combine knowledge, emotion, and ideology. They shape persistent urban space perception codes that continue to affect political notions and spatial consciousness to this day—from 19th-century imperial myths to current discussions on heritage, memory, and deoccupation.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the corpus of Sevastopol guidebooks dating back to 1857, 1907, 1909, and 1969 allowed us to specify complex interconnections among urban space, collective memory, and ideology, demonstrating that the city’s military identity transformed rather than faded during political regime changes. Moreover, it demonstrated high adaptability, which ensured its reproduction in new ideological contexts.

First, this research reveals clear continuity between the imperial and Soviet narratives despite the radical political disruptions. Soviet ideology did not dismantle the imperial discourse of sanctification of ruins and heroization of the 1854–1855 siege, but re-encoded it as a hero city myth. However, it preserved the discourse’s symbolic matrix, the Ruin—Revival and Sacrifice—Glory duality that allowed for the interpretation of military defeat as a moral victory. This continuity is a testament to Sevastopol’s military myth serving as a suprapolitical memory structure, capable of legitimizing state authority by appealing to the history of heroism throughout various eras⁴³.

Second, guidebooks emerge as key mediators between war and peace. They transformed the traumatic experience of destruction into a controlled, normatively organized form of collective memory by integrating heroic past into the everyday practice

42. Fedor et al., *War and Memory*.

43. *ibid.*; Assaman, *Cultural Memory*.

es of civilian life through touristic, educational, and cultural discourses. In this sense, guidebooks were functionally similar to memory spaces as defined by Pierre Nora, stabilizing collective identity through physical locations and textual routes—descriptions, maps, and visual images—which disciplined the city's perception and defined the normative models of emotional interaction with its space.

Third, the analysis enables documenting the image of Sevastopol's high symbolic stability, which retained its key military memory coordinates across historical contexts. The texts of various periods systematically reproduce the same topoi of heroism—battlements, panoramas, cemeteries, harbors, and monuments that form an enduring semantic map of the city. As a result, Sevastopol becomes an “archipelago of memory” of sorts, where even new architectural and infrastructural objects are subject to the heroic landscape logic and are integrated into the existing semantic order.

Overall, this research demonstrates that tourist guidebooks were not secondary descriptive sources, but rather instruments for shaping urban identity and politics of memory. They not only documented the transformations of urban space but also directly participated in shaping its conceptualization.

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