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Special Edition*

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School of
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ХУДОЖНИЙ
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EDITORIAL

This editorial summarizes a full decade of our journal's existence, so there is no shortage of numbers here.

Over these ten years, we have published 18 issues of *City: History, Culture, Society* (MICS), including this one. Three of them made it to print: "Holocaust and the City," "After Socialist Modernism," and the current one—a special edition with the topic "Museums in Cities."

Overall, we have published 247 articles. The most popular text historically is 2017's "Urban Anthropology" by Giuliana B. Prato and Italo Pardo (2017). Kindly translated by Tina Polek, the text marked the beginning of our friendship and was the inaugural case of our publishing the translations of articles that, for whatever reason, previously remained outside the Ukrainian scientific field.

Among the leaders in terms of views are also "Cities, Fortresses, Garrisons. Fortification and Defense Strategies in the Cossack Hetmanate in the 'Military Revolution' Period" by Oleksii Sokyrko (2018); "Post-socialist Transformation of Izmail Public Space of Odessa Region: Problems and Perspectives" by Oleksij Ilyin (2023); "From a Crossroads City to a Victim City: Lviv in Yuriy Vynnychuk's Novel *Tango of Death*" by Ivan Monolatii (2020); "Concerning the Bone Carving in Ancient Vyshgorod" by Maryna Sergeeva (2020); and "Some Question About the Cuisine of Galician Aristocrats. Menu's of the Lubomirski Princely Family (1907–1912)" by Ihor Lylo (2019). A great occasion to reflect on the popularity of gastronomic studies, the promising outlook for reviews of Ukrainian bestsellers, and the undying interest in Cossacks.

Over these ten years, we have twice renewed our editorial board and have twice prepared paperwork for our Category B application in the domain of History & Archeology to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. It is worth noting that although our journal was conceived as an interdisciplinary publication, its focus has primarily been on Urban History, not Urban Studies, as the legislative framework of Ukrainian science does not include Urban Studies as a subject area, and interdisciplinarity (e.g., in education programs) is yet to overcome the bureaucratic thorns.

Still, some substantial changes have already happened. Urban Studies education programs sprouted, new research centers emerged, new stars grew up, and new networks formed. The time moves on, and so does our journal (still the only one in the field of Urban Studies in Ukraine). In 2026, we reboot our team, style, and partnerships, and develop new interdisciplinary approaches and editorial principles. However, our values, e-mail, and mission remain unchanged, as does our gratitude.

Two out of the three people who founded our journal and nurtured it over the years are now defending our country's sovereignty in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Were it not for their decisions in 2016, 2022, and 2025, these words would have

never been written. Ihor and Volodymyr, we cannot thank you enough. Two members of our editorial board have also joined the Ukrainian Defense Forces. Myroslav and Denys, you have our endless respect.

We thank all the donors who supported us over the first years of our journal's existence and believed in our initiative. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to all the partners who shared their resources, expertise, contacts, and texts. We hope this journey has been as exciting and inspiring for you as it has been for us.

This special edition of MICS is all about museums. It was born with the support of Böckler-Mare-Balticum-Stiftung and provides a space for reflection on how the Ukrainian museum sector developed during the years of independence, how it held up from 2014 to 2022, and how its challenges turned into opportunities (or not). The articles in other categories span a wide range of themes and chronology, shedding light on the lesser-known parts of our recent editorial portfolio. The print issue was made possible by the KSE.

We invite you to give it a read and share your feedback on our Facebook page, by e-mail, or in the PMs of our Managing Editor, Tetiana Vodotyka.

*Tetiana Vodotyka, Ihor Postolnyk,
Volodymyr Shevchenko*

FOREWORD

Nowadays, urban studies increasingly expand their focus beyond the analysis of urban form and infrastructure, zooming in on the intricate historical, cultural, and symbolic aspects of urban spaces. Traditionally viewed as a collection of architectural objects, cities are now examined as environments of memory, ideological projections, and social practices. In this edition of our journal, we explore international and Ukrainian experiences of conceptualizing cities within this broader understanding of urban studies.

It focuses on how cities respond to crises, such as wars or socio-political shifts, as its articles showcase how urban structures that offer shelter, oversight, and representation of authority become spaces of solidarity and alternative forms of coexistence.

We highlight the experiences of researchers, creators, and institutional workers who preserve and rethink heritage as well as build resilient institutions in times of war. How does a full-scale invasion change our view of heritage? What new problems arise? How can we address them?

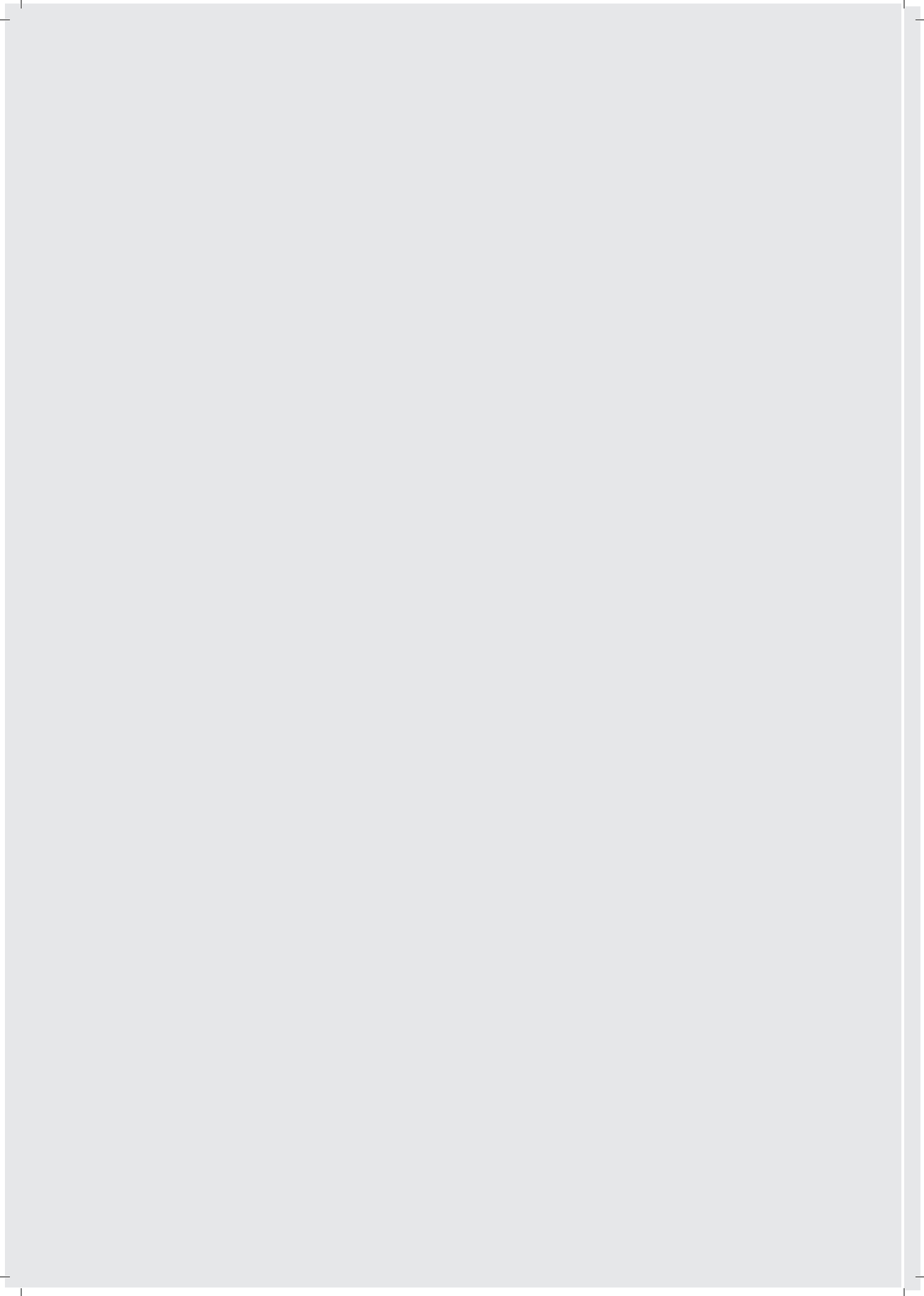
The issue's main thematic block focuses on museums and public cultural institutions within urban settings. Olena Mykhailovska and Olena Skoruk analyze how the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum has built its art collection over almost 40 years of its history. Founded amid Perestroika, the museum gradually outgrew its role as a mere repository of art. Since 2022, for example, it has become an emergency assistance hub for museums in frontline areas and the territories under Russian occupation.

Oksana Dovgoplova's article presents museums as both memory preservation institutions and decolonization platforms, where, e.g., ingrained stereotypes about Odesa are undermined. Her analysis of the city during Russia's full-scale invasion reveals how museum practices become instrumental in documenting experiences, collective memory, and symbolic resistance, and how the urban space itself becomes a field of interpretations and experiences.

Yevhenia Moliar's piece on Kyiv's VDNH continues the discussion of heritage and utopian projects, tracing the transition of a utopian design into an object of historical conceptualization. Through analyzing art interventions within the VDNH space, she raises important questions about how society reconciles with past visions of progress.

Wrapping up the block is Andrii Palash's research on the history and evolution of DCCC, the Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture. Its focus is on how grassroots initiatives help foster and support communities in a frontline city, organize exhibition projects crucial to Ukraine's current situation, and address environmental concerns and urban identity issues.

Oksana Barshynova



MUSEUMS IN URBAN SPACE

SOURCES OF THE FORMATION OF KRAM'S COLLECTION: 39 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN TURBULENCE

Olena Mykhailovska, Olena Skoruk

A MUSEUM FRAME OF ODESA LIFE DURING THE FULL-SCALE INVASION

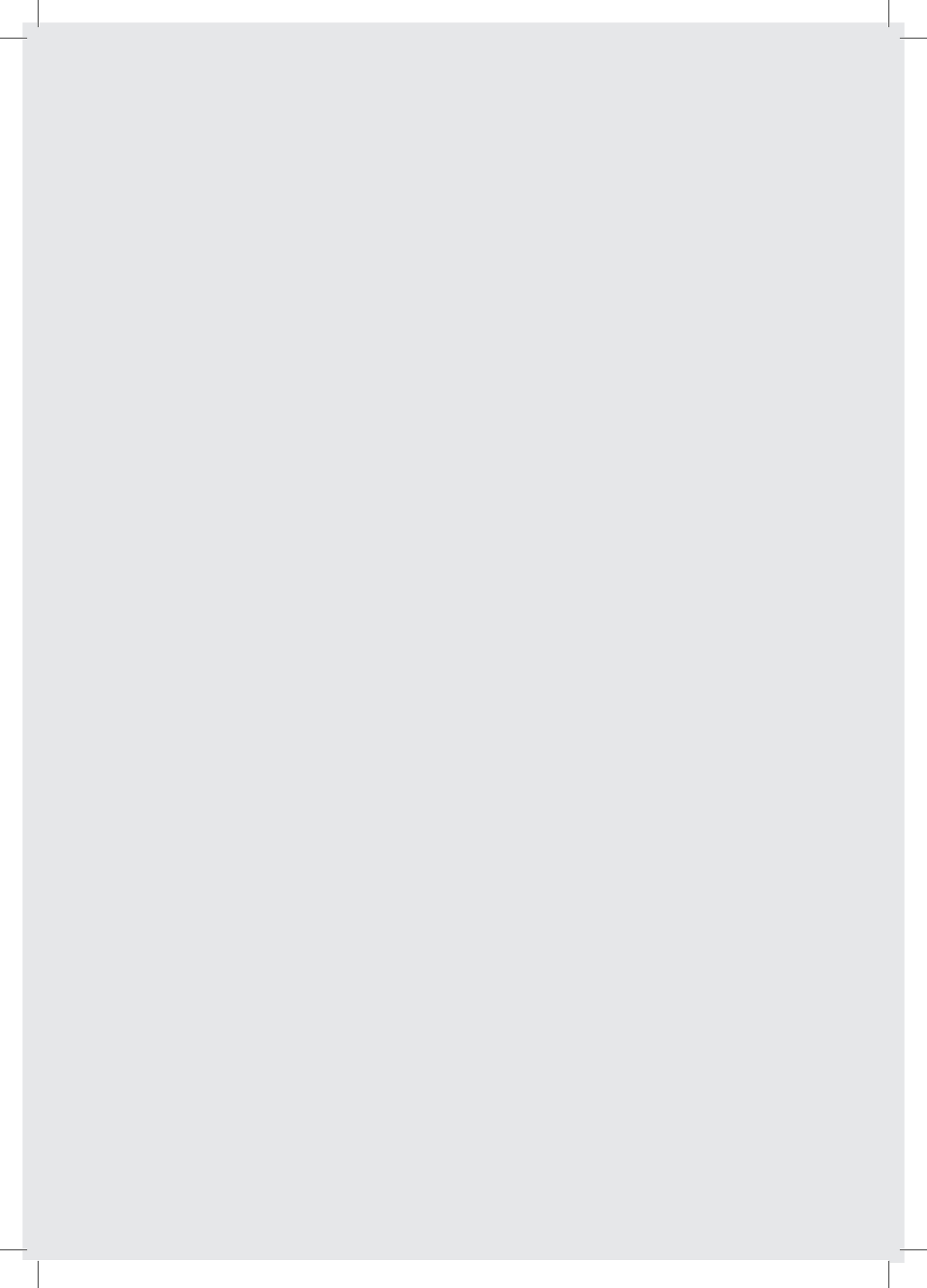
Oksana Dovgopolova

FROM PROJECTIONS OF THE FUTURE TO UNDERSTANDING THE PAST: VDNH AS A LEGACY OF UTOPIA

Yevheniia Moliar

DCCC (CONTEMPORARY CULTURE CENTER IN DNIPRO): HISTORY, EVOLUTION, AND ACTIVITIES

Andrii Palash



**SOURCES OF THE FORMATION
OF KRAM'S COLLECTION:
39 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
IN TURBULENCE**

Olena Mykhailovska, Olena Skoruk

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The article examines the history of the formation and development of the collection in Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum (KRAM) over the 39 years of its existence amid continuous socio-political and cultural turbulence. The study traces the transformation of the museum from a Soviet-type art institution to the first state museum of contemporary Ukrainian art in independent Ukraine. Special attention is paid to the shift in collection-building concepts, the decisive role of museum professionals in shaping the acquisition strategy, and the main sources of collection growth, including state purchases, inter-museum exchanges, exhibition projects, art residencies, symposia, and donations from artists and private collectors. The article highlights the significance of KRAM as a representative platform for the study and museification of Ukrainian art processes of the 20th and 21st centuries. It also analyzes the institutional modernization of the museum in the 2010s–2020s, focusing on digitalization, curatorial and educational practices, and the museum's operation during the full-scale war as a socio-rehabilitative and cultural hub. The research demonstrates that a consistent strategic vision, openness to change, and a clear focus on contemporary Ukrainian art have ensured the museum's institutional sustainability and professional authority.

Keywords: Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum, contemporary Ukrainian art, museum collection, collection building, museum strategy, regional museums, institutional transformation, exhibition practice.

The institutions that collect, study, and introduce Ukrainian contemporary art to the masses are few and far between in Ukraine. Among the state museums, the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum (KRAM) is the first and, so far, the only institution of this kind. Sadly, it has yet to officially add the “of Ukrainian Contemporary Art” part to its name due to the current socio-political commotion. However, it houses a unique collection of 20th- and 21st-century Ukrainian art, continually expanding and refining it over the years, thereby supporting its credibility in our country’s art realm.

Over the years of its existence, museum professionals at KRAM organized exhibitions, festivals, events, symposia, art residences, and scheduled purchases, assembling an art collection that has already become an objectively integral part of the history of the 20th- and 21st-century Ukrainian art. Moreover, it is one of the most coherent and most representative museum collections in Ukraine (7000+ artworks by approximately 1200 artists).

Our art museum’s mission is to collect art and related information, preserving and securing it within museum vaults and exhibition spaces, studying, digitizing (85% of museum items have been digitized), and displaying them, and ensuring information dissemination and outreach, as well as presenting exhibits, archives, and research accurately and in full. Its activities focus on museum stock, exhibitions, and awareness building. This article explores how a local museum with utterly modest material and professional resources in turbulent times (the 39 years of its existence have not been exactly quiet, with constant change bringing about new challenges) managed to enlarge its collection, remain active, and assert its viability and institutional sustainability.

FROM FOUNDATION TO FINDING COLLECTION FOCUS

Compared to other Ukrainian museums, the KRAM is a relatively young institution. Its history follows the path of democratic change in our country. The museum was established pursuant to the Ukrainian SSR Council of Ministers Resolution No. 2 from January 2, 1986, which demonstrated the first tendencies toward the democratization of society. However, its creation can also be attributed to the Soviet formalism and bureaucracy: each oblast capital was supposed to have an art museum. Before that, the Khmelnytskyi Oblast had only a fairly modest fine arts department at the museum of local lore.

The museum’s path to building its collection was full of difficulties and controversy, which is understandable. Initially, the collection was planned according to the academic views, popular at the time: pre-Soviet fine arts, starting with icons (which KRAM has over 50 in its collection, all painted on wooden panels or canvas by professional painters and folk artists), followed by the Soviet-era pieces. Dating back to 1986, KRAM’s first purchases aligned with this direction.

At first, the following exhibition halls were planned for the museum:

“Hall 1: Works of ancient and medieval artists of Russia and Ukraine, e.g., portraits, icons, common pictures, wooden sculptures, engravings, and early printed books

Halls 2 and 3: Czarist- and Soviet-era Ukrainian and Russian decorative applied art, e.g., decorative needlework, traditional dress, ceramics, pottery, handmade rugs, tapestries, macramé lace, wood carving, porcelain, faïence, maiolica, glass art and blown glass, decorative painting, and pysankas

Hall 4: Holograms—3D images of ancient icon painting masterpieces, archeological artistic artifacts, and jewelry from the collections of Ukraine's top museums on glass

Hall 5: Thematic works of Soviet artists that depict the heroic fight of working-class people for the Soviet rule, visual Leniniana, the Great October Socialist Revolution, the civil war in Podolia, and the CPSU's leading role

Halls 6 and 7: Oil paintings and sculptures by prominent Soviet artists of the socialism-building period, Great Patriotic War heroics, and labor achievements of Soviet people (portraits, landscapes, still life)

Hall 8: Art pieces depicting ethnic solidarity by prominent artists from the fraternal countries

Hall 9: Art pieces by Soviet graphic artists dedicated to Vladimir Lenin, the CPSU, and Soviet modern life¹.

Such was the vision for the Khmelnytskyi Art Museum in 1986. Its implementation began immediately and continued until 1990, when the museum's researchers had to rethink their vision for the collection, as the situation in Ukraine's art world changed dramatically before their eyes.

Since the museum had no inventory items or basic historical collection as of the day of its founding, its management and first staff members drew on the collections of the Directorate of Art Exhibitions of Ukraine, the Directorate of Art Exhibitions of the National Union of Artists of Ukraine, graduation work repository of the Kyiv Arts Institute (presently the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture), and the collection of the Medzhibozh Art Gallery, managed by the Khmelnytsky Regional Museum of Local Lore and already dissolved at the time².

Eventually, as new proactive individuals (e.g., Iryna Alekseieva, Natalia Baydiuk, Alla Botanova, Halyna Hirnyk, Lyudmyla Zadorozhna, Olena Mykhailovska, Lyudmyla Rozhko-Pavlenko, Olena Skoruk, and Lyudmyla Tymofeieva) joined the collective and Anatolii Melnyk was appointed the Director of KRAM, the museum's staff began systematically attending exhibitions in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Uzhhorod, and Mykolaiv, as well as creative workshops, immersing themselves in the current situation in Ukrainian art. The scientific methodological council of KRAM formulated its collection-building

1. Згідно з архівним документом «Тематична структура експозиції Хмельницького обласного художнього музею», подання директора музею Л. В. Гасюка, затверджено начальником обласного управління культури М. С. Лебедевим у травні 1986 року. Особистий архів Алли Ботанової, науковиці ХОХМ (1988–1993).

2. Н. Байдюк, «Особливості комплектування фондів Хмельницького обласного художнього музею», в *Сучасний художній музей: проблеми і перспективи: матеріали науково-практичної конференції до 20-річчя Хмельницького обласного художнього музею* (Хмельницький, 2006).

strategy independently³ rather than adhering to the handed-down instructions, as was usually the case at the time. In one interview, Anatolii Melnyk said, “Perhaps, it would be somewhat indiscreet to say that on my part, but many believe nowadays that it’s Khmelnytskyi where the first museum of contemporary Ukrainian art was established”⁴.

The museum’s collection-building activity peaked in 1986–1992, when it still received state budget funds to purchase art in fairly large quantities. From 1993 onward, the process slowed down, even stopping for several years, and gradually gathered pace from the 2010s to 2022, though not as substantially as during the first six years of purchasing activities, which shaped the golden core of the museum’s collection.

As early as 1986–1988, it became abundantly clear that assembling a consistent representative collection of the 18th- and 19th-century art, much less the ancient and medieval one, is impossible amid the shortage of such items in the art market, while those available have little artistic value or a price tag prohibitively high for the museum’s art purchase budget. Meanwhile, awareness of the ongoing transformation in Ukrainian society and artistic environment grew, eventually prompting the idea to build a collection of contemporary Ukrainian art, unique and crucial to museifying these trends. As society democratized somewhat, several informal artistic groups emerged, e.g., Pohliad (The View, Kyiv), Shliakh (The Path, Lviv), and Mamay (Odesa), starting their vigorous exhibition activities in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

During the museum’s first year of existence, the Directorate of Art Exhibitions of Ukraine and other relevant organizations donated 185 artworks to KRAM. Meanwhile, the acquisition of works by artists from Khmelnytskyi Oblast and neighboring regions started, with 109 items purchased in total. The museum’s researchers visited Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, and Lviv on multiple occasions. Also, they began going on expeditions throughout the Khmelnytskyi Oblast. This is how KRAM’s collection of icons, antiquities, and ethnographic materials began.

As curators gained experience through professional, focused work with collectors from Kyiv, Lviv, and St. Petersburg in 1987–1990, 37 artworks by such classic Ukrainian painters as Oleksandr Murashko, Volodymyr Orlovskiy, Mykola Burachek, Ivan Yizhakevych, Mykhailo Berkos, Volodymyr Kostetskyi, and others were purchased. In 1990, *Garden* by Serhii Svitoslavskyi was acquired, becoming the last addition to the collection of classic Ukrainian paintings, as the museum’s collection vision soon changed. Besides, rarities became much more expensive, and funding for their purchase started to wane.

Eventually, KRAM had to cease ethnographic expeditions, too, as Khmelnytskyi Oblast already had two museums with robust ethnographic collections and active exhibits—the Khmelnytskyi Regional Museum of Local Lore and the Kamianets-Podilskyi State Historical Museum Reserve.

3. Протокол засідання науково-методичної ради КЗК ХОХМ від квітня 1990 р. Особистий архів Алли Ботанової, науковиці ХОХМ (1988–1993).

4. І. Грабович, «Анатолій Мельник: “Ми створюємо музей майбутнього”», Є 4 (2004).

Another source of KRAM's collection growth was inter-museum exchange. In 1989, the museum of the graphic artist Heorhii Vereyskyi (then part of the Khmelnytskyi Regional Museum of Local Lore) became a department of KRAM. KRAM thus acquired 1494 inventory items, retaining the department until 2014. In 1990, the Khmelnytskyi Regional Museum of Local Lore donated another 120 Soviet-era artworks (paintings, graphic art, sculptures), and the Lviv Museum of Ukrainian Art provided 7. It was the last time donations of this kind happened⁵.

Importantly, the idea of establishing a museum of contemporary Ukrainian art originated with KRAM personnel, as the exhibition projects and the acquisition of works of Ukrainian contemporary artists from Lviv, Kyiv, and Odesa were initiated by them. The Museum's activities became the answer to issues of Ukrainian art's identity, as they were, even at the time, way ahead of the ideologically charged Soviet art, which was gradually fading from the Ukrainian cultural environment. Once Ukraine became independent in 1991, heated discussions about and opposition to this vision for KRAM's collection (primarily on the part of the regional cultural administration) subsided. With the collection's future secured, the museum has been elaborating its mission and vision ever since.

BUILDING A COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The formation of KRAM's contemporary and decorative applied art collection began in 1987, eventually gaining a conceptual foundation. It quickly became clear that building a consistent and viable collection of classic art from the ground up was impossible. Therefore, the museum could find its niche only by collecting contemporary Ukrainian art. With this in mind, its researchers started frequenting artists' studios. By the end of the 1990s, these activities became the primary source for KRAM's collection-building. In 1991, the acquisition of contemporary art became systematic, and over 200 works of Ukrainian contemporary artists were bought over the next two years. When it turned ten, KRAM was Ukraine's only state museum built on such a concept⁶.

The year after Ukraine declared independence—on August 30, 1992—the renovated and reconstructed exhibits of Ukraine's first independence-era contemporary art museum opened to the public, spanning five halls, a museum gallery, an art parlor, and an art hall, with a total display area of around 700 sq m. From its very inception, the museum has been located on Khmelnytskyi's central street in the 1903 building of the former Proskuriv branch of the South-Russian Industrial Bank, a specimen of the so-called "brick style" (an informal flavor of architectural historicism), usual for the end-19th- and early-20th-century Proskuriv (the pre-1954 historical name of Khmelnytskyi).

5. Байдюк, «Особливості комплектування фондів».

6. Л. Жемайло, «Музею — 10 років», *Моя газета+*, 4, 2002.

After the information about the opening of KRAM was published, the stories in the local press lauded the museum: “the museum is a testament to the Khmelnytskyi residents’ aspiration to enrich their cultural life. Refreshingly, within just six years—the reconstruction of the former Soviet Podolia newspaper office started in September of 1986—builders, museum staff, and artists did a tremendous job. It’s a landmark event, and we, as the prominent Khmelnytskyi artist Mykola Mazur used to say, would like to congratulate you, ourselves, our children, and our remote descendants on this occasion”⁷.

In 1990, the museum began focusing its collection-building efforts on works by Ukrainian artists, buying them from collectors and even from the artists themselves. Authoritative specialized publications began writing about KRAM, which set out to collect, study, and popularize Ukrainian contemporary art. “Of the museum’s five halls on two floors, three are dedicated to exhibitions, and the two largest ones accommodate a permanent exhibition featuring the highlights of its collection”⁸. Over the years, the permanent exhibition evolved, but its core vision remained unchanged. Later, mass media would remark that “museum workers have refined the conception of their cultural (culturological even!) institution as the one that collects, studies, and promotes contemporary Ukrainian art and then started looking high and low for this art in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Mykolaiv and other cities in Ukraine and abroad to study it, meet the artists, and estimate what KRAM can purchase and at which price. It’s a long, laborious, and often exhausting work!”⁹. The collection spans multiple generations of artists representing the Lviv artistic school of painting, graphic art, and decorative applied art (Roman Selskyi, Karlo Zvirynskyi, Margit Sielska-Reich, Danylo Dovboshynskyi, Andrii Bokotei, Iryna Levytska, Liubomyr Medvid, Zenovii Flinta, Petro Markovych, Mykola Andrushchenko, Volodymyr Rybotytskyi, Mykola Shymchiuk, Mykhailo Lishchyner, Oleksandr Korovay, Liuba Lebid-Korovay, Oleh Minko, Borys Buriak, Nina Buriak, Volodymyr Fedoruk, Alla Honcharuk, Roman Petruk, Yevhen Beznisko, Ihor Kovalevych, Yaroslava and Yaroslav Motyka, Inna Tumanova-Yershova, Uliana Yaroshevyh, Yurii Viktiuk, Halyna Zubchenko, and others), Zakarpattia artistic school (Josef Bokshai, Fedir Manaylo, Yurii Herts, Mykola and Edita Medvetskyi, Anton Kashshai, Havrylo Hliuk, Ernest Konratovych, Zoltan Šoltes, Volodymyr Mykyta, Andrii Kotska, and others), and a group of Odesa non-conformists (Volodymyr Tsiupko, Viktor Maryniuk, Lyuda Yastreb, Yevhen Rakhmanin, Valerii Basanets, Volodymyr Kabachenko, Oleksandr Stovbur, Oleh Voloshynov, Volodymyr Strelnikov, Serhii Savchenko, Svitlana Yusim, and others).

Nowadays, the museum’s collection spans around 7,200 inventory items, primarily fine arts (painting, graphic art, combine painting, collage, photography, and sculpture) and decorative applied arts: professional handmade and folk ceramics, glass and tex-

7. Л. Рожко-Павленко, «Відкрито художній музей», *Образотворче мистецтво* 1 (1993): 27–29.

8. Л. Рожко-Павленко, «Хмельницькому художньому музею — рік, а що за ним?», *Образотворче мистецтво* 1 (1994): 23, 31.

9. О. Климчук, «Такого музею Київ не має», *Час* 5 (1994): 4.



Fig. 1. The first permanent exhibition of art from KRAM's collection. Hall 4. 1992



Fig. 2. The opening of Roman Romanyshyn's (Lviv) personal exhibition of graphic art at KRAM. Hall 1. 1993.
From left to right: KRAM researchers Yuliia Zelska, Olena Mykhailovska, and Andrii Taranenko,
artist Roman Romanyshyn with his wife, and the KRAM researchers Alla Botanova and Olena Skoruk



Fig. 3. A permanent exhibition of art from KRAM's collection. The Lviv artistic school. Hall 2. 1994



Fig. 4. The opening of the exhibition of the Keramika '93 symposium results at KRAM. 1993. Left to right: Art historian Tamara Li (Kyiv), ceramist Oleksandr Milovzorov (Kyiv), KRAM curator and researcher Alla Botanova, and ceramists Yaroslava Motyka (Lviv) and Ihor Kovalevych (Lviv).



Fig. 5. The opening of *Khutir I*, a group exhibition of the National Association of Artists, at KRAM. Hall 4. 1994. Left to right: Artist Mykola Mazur, the KRAM researcher Lyudmyla Rozhko-Pavlenko, KRAM Director Anatolii Melnyk, and opening day guests



Fig. 6. The opening of the *Khutir II*, a group exhibition of the National Association of Artists, at the KRAM. Hall 4. 1996



Fig. 7. The opening of Art-Klub '96, a forum of independent creative associations, at the KRAM. In the foreground is the artist Viktor Martyniuk (Odesa). 1996



Fig. 8. Exhibition of Heorhii Vereyskyi's works at the KRAM. Hall 1. Early 2000s.

tile (needlework, weaving, decorative painting on fabric), decorative painting on paper, pysankas, metal and leather articles, and more.

The museum's collection-building activities peaked in the late 1980s—early 1990s, when it leveraged the still-existing Soviet state procurement system to purchase works by prominent Ukrainian underground and Ukrainian New Wave artists amid the post-Perestroika turmoil. In 1988, KRAM purchased the most inventory items in its 39-year history—881 exhibit items worth SUR 85,076 (USD 141,793 at the official exchange rate of USD 1 = SUR 0.6 as of November 1, 1990). The rock-bottom point—1 inventory item per year—was reached in 2005, 2009, and from 2011 to 2017. In 2022, funding for the KRAM's collection-building expenses ceased.

In addition to singling out specific personalities and works of artistic merit from the infinite variety of cultural phenomena, the museum's activities involved creating situations to catalyze processes across various fields of art and building a coherent picture of its development. To expand its collection, the KRAM held a range of major events, starting with the *Keramika '93* symposium—the first art residency in the history of independent Ukraine. Ten ceramists from Kyiv and Lviv were invited to spend a month working at the Polonne Porcelain Plant. Some of their works were exhibited and later donated to the museum's collection. Another successful foray into stimulating the artists' creative output was the 1st All-Ukrainian Exhibition of Contemporary Decorative Painting on Fabric *Prezentatsia '94*, which attracted 67 artists from Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Lutsk, Kropyvnytskyi, Donetsk, Cherkasy, Khmelnytskyi, and Chişinău. After Khmelnytskyi residents had the chance to enjoy it, the exhibition was displayed in Kyiv and a number of other locations. Ukrainian textile painting convincingly demonstrated its potential as easel art, as well as its integral place in Ukrainian contemporary fine arts and the directions in which they developed. In three years, the exhibition's second installment followed, titled *Prezentatsia '97*. Both were documented in their respective catalogs. However, they never grew into a full-on triennial of Ukrainian batik.

Among the largest events initiated by KRAM in the 1990s, *Art-Klub '96* is also worth mentioning. The museum assembled under the same roof the members of many Ukrainian independent creative groups (e.g., Lviv's Klub Ukrainskykh Myttsiv (Club of Ukrainian Artists), Shliakh (The Path), and Dzyga (The Spinning Top); Kyiv's Zhyvopysnyi Zapovidnyk (Pictorial Reserve) and Bratstvo Prepodobnolo Alipiya (the Brotherhood of Venerable Alypius); Odesa's Choven (The Boat); Ternopil's Khoruhva (The Banner); and the Sumy branch of Malevich Center). That exhibition became an intersection of many artistic positions in the creative space of the time. The idea for the next project emerged from the cooperation with the All-Ukrainian Artistic Association "Artaniya," which organized a plein air in Ochakiv in the summer of 1997. The 12 artists invited to participate (including Andrii Bludov, Mykola Zhuravel, Eduard Belskyi, and Serhii Hai) held their showcase exhibition titled *Robinsonade* (a name inspired by the atmosphere of vacation) in the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum. Also notable were two major exhibitions—*Khutir I* (1994) and *Khutir II* (1996)—which showcased the creative work of members of

the National Association of Artists, established in Kyiv in 1993. Part of the latter exhibition was a scientific conference on the problems of Ukrainian contemporary art.

Over the following decade, KRAM collective focused on “probing” the Ukrainian creative space on an ongoing basis and documenting the dynamics of artistic life, with special attention to neighboring regions. The initiative culminated in a long-term exhibition project, titled *The Neighbors*, held over the 5 years from 2008 to 2012, each year zooming in on the art of a different region, adjacent to Khmelnytskyi Oblast. Over those years, creative works of the most prominent artists of Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, and Volyn oblasts were exhibited in the museum’s halls. Its 2000–2010 exhibition policy was not limited to regional representation, though. KRAM invited other iconic artists, including the sculptor Vasyl Korchovyi, painter Petro Lebedynets, and graphic artist Serhii Yakutovych, a laureate of the Shevchenko National Prize.

TIME FOR RENEWAL

Ongoing rapid changes brought about challenges that prompted a rethinking of the museum’s image as a socio-cultural institution that does not focus solely on preserving the cultural heritage artifacts. After overcoming issues related to institutional stagnation and economic depression, KRAM established itself as a museum center and a modern cultural platform, undergoing agile modernization initiated after the renewal of its top management (Olha Dolinska became its new Director) and staff in 2017. Carried out in 2020 with the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, the project *A Rebranding Campaign for the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum: Time for Renewal* updated the museum’s visual identity and helped formulate its current mission and vision after a series of brainstorming and training sessions for all museum personnel, from technical staff to top management¹⁰.

As the first Ukrainian contemporary art museum in the history of independent Ukraine, with the works of prominent 20th- and 21st-century artists at the core of its collection, the KRAM has a responsibility to the professional community and locals to continue pursuing its current strategy. Also, it explores, develops, and introduces new operational techniques and tools in such directions as financial diversification (boosting economic effectiveness, partnerships, fundraising, marketing, and more), digitalization (digitizing the museum’s collection, online presence, SMM, and more), curatorial and educational initiatives (conceptual exhibition projects focused on particular themes and/or problems, participatory practices, cross-cultural and social events, and more), and communications and information dissemination (networking, modern promotion and advertising techniques, and more).

10. «Про музей», Хмельницький обласний художній музей, дата звернення 8 травня 2025, <https://xoxm.art/about-us/>.



Fig. 9. The opening of the educational exhibition project *Art Intersection. Open Workshop. Yehorov. Roitburd. Husiev.* at KRAM. 2019. From left to right: artist Ihor Husiev (Odesa), artist and Director of the Odesa National Fine Art Museum Oleksandr Roitburd, the KRAM Director Olha Dolinska, and the KRAM curator and researcher Olena Mykhailovska



Fig. 10. The opening of Oleksandr Dubovyk's personal exhibition *Labyrinth of Meanings* at KRAM. 2018. The museum's Director, Olha Dolinska, with artist Oleksandr Dubovyk (Kyiv)

KRAM's collection-building and exhibition activity has started gathering pace, with the strategy for the latter transitioning from the geographical, chronological, or purely stylistic approaches to problem- and theme-focused ones.

The museum's present-day exhibition projects not only introduce their viewers to the best specimens of fine arts, foster appreciation of art, and broaden horizons, but also respond to the challenges of the time through creative approaches and modern exhibition techniques and instruments. Take, for example, the exhibition *Aqua Fortis. Graphic Art of Lviv and Kharkiv from the 1960s to the 1990s* (2019). Drawing on the art from the KRAM's collection, it convincingly demonstrated that, despite differences in the graphic art traditions of Lviv and Kharkiv, the artistic schools of these cities have much in common. The dialogue exhibition *Thirst for Painting. Women. / From the Life of a Woman. Men.* (2020–2021) addressed another present-day pressing issue—gender equality. It engaged the genders in an imaginary cross-cultural dialogue, providing an opportunity to understand the inner worlds and psychologies of female artists and their social standing in the 20th and early 21st centuries.



Fig. 11. The KRAM staff with participant certificates in the museum yard after the training session “Museum Rebranding in Action,” held with the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. 2020. Left to right: the KRAM employees Kostiantyn Zainchkovskyi, Oksana Frankiv, Marharyta Korolevska, Olha Alekseeva, Natalia Baydiuk, Yaroslava Oleksiv, Tetiana Moskovtseva, Svitlana Shemchuk, Anna Kravchuk, marketing trainer Olha Zaichenko (Kyiv), art director and marketing specialist Serhii Fashchuk (Kyiv), KRAM employees Olena Mykhailovska, Alla Botanova, Olha Nikitina, and KRAM Director Olha Dolinska

The 2019 *Inspired by Boychuk* project told the story of Boychuk's disciples, the tragic atmosphere of the 1920s and the 1930s, and contemporary artists who continue and develop the traditions of the artistic school established by Prof. Mykhailo Boychuk (1882–1937), a prominent artist, pedagogue, scholar, and founder of the National Academy of Arts.

Among the temporary exhibition projects of the latter years, the following stand out in view of their conceptual innovativeness and urgency of the issues raised: *Art Intersection: Open Workshop* (an inter-regional educational exhibition project dealing with the problems of generational interactions in Ukrainian art and an exhibition of art pieces by Yurii Yehorov, Oleksandr Roitburd, and Ihor Husiev (Odesa)), *Sunsets and ...of Blood and Earth...* (retrospective exhibition of art pieces by the Sixtiers Alla Horska and Viktor Zaretskyi from the private collections and those of the artists' families (Kyiv)), *Winged!* (a retrospective of works by Mykola and Lyudmyla Mazur from the collection of the artists' family (Khmelnyskyi), which recounted the story of local artists within their historical period), *Non/Random Pairs* (a multimedia retrospective of art pieces by Oleksandr Hnylytskyi from the collection of the artist's family curated by Lesia Zayats (Kyiv–Munich), which aimed to introduce locals to the works of a classic Ukrainian contemporary artist and continue the exploration of the end-20th-century and early-21st-century art).

As the writer and journalist Oleksandr Klymchuk (1942–2015) remarked in his 1994 publication, "... hopefully, these unique assets will be appreciated on the city and regional level. Hopefully, people will understand there is no museum like this in Kyiv or



Fig. 12. The façade of the KRAM building, 47 Proskurivska St., Khmelnytskyi. 2020



Fig. 13. Interactive night-time tour In Love with Art at KRAM. Hall 2. 2021

elsewhere in Ukraine”¹¹. In 2020, the Zruchno.Travel web portal echoed the sentiment, including KRAM, among the six private and four state cultural institutions of this kind, into its Top 10 Contemporary Art Museums in Ukraine rating: “The Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum is considered to be one of the first contemporary art museums in Ukraine. Founded in the early 1990s, it focuses specifically on highlighting the diverse directions in Ukrainian contemporary art and has many outstanding exhibits to show for it”¹².

OPERATION DURING THE FULL-SCALE WAR

When the full-scale invasion started, the museum’s staff secured the collection. Also, they quickly restructured museum activities and launched an art-based social rehabilitation platform. From March 2022 through the end of the year, the KRAM_Art_Hub platform remained open to internally displaced persons and residents of Khmelnytskyi without any days off and on a free-of-charge basis, with the museum’s all full-time personnel, as well as more than 80 volunteers, involved in its operation. This educational and rehabilitative project incorporated a wide-ranging program, including over

11. Климчук, «Такого музею Київ не має», 4.

12. «ТОП 10 музеїв сучасного мистецтва України», Zruchno.Travel, дата звернення 8 червня 2025, <https://zruchno.travel/News/New/4926?lang=ua>.



Fig. 13. A display from the *All Shades... White* exhibition from KRAM's collection. Hall 3. 2021

20 kinds of creative workshops, a library hub, training sessions with psychologists and rehabilitation specialists, art history lectures and discussions, thematic clubs (photography, literature, and ethnography), a cinema space for children and adults, amateur exhibitions, and performances by artists and creative ensembles. Artworks produced by visitors were sent to the defenders on the frontline, donated to charity auctions in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and distributed to hospitals and medical facilities. Meanwhile, administrative and operational measures were taken to sustain and develop the institutional infrastructure capacity of the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum (with some support of local authorities and—particularly since 2022—international donors).

The KRAM has ramped up its inter-museum networking, particularly the communication with colleagues from museums relocated from combat zones to relatively safe areas. The past three years saw a series of projects in collaboration with staff from 15 museums in the Donetsk region. These include *Museum Digital Community: An Education, Practice-oriented Project on the Digitization of Museum Collections*, *Digital Community of Museums. Work in Progress*, and *The Price of Freedom. An Art Residency in Contemporary Painting*, supported by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation and House of Europe. As a result of the art residency, three museums received approximately 100 works of contemporary art by 14 artists from across Ukraine, including internally displaced persons.

The museum's cooperation with private collectors has reached new heights, enabling it to launch high-profile exhibition projects that help expand its collection (e.g., with items from the collections of the families of Alla Horska and Viktor Zaretsky, Oleksandr Roitburd, Oleksandr Hnylytsky, Liudmyla and Mykola Mazur, and a symposium under the BIRUCHIY contemporary art project, among others). The museum's exhibition activities in 2022–2024 resulted in 450 works being donated to its collection. The museum not only fills the gaps in its collection for specific periods or to artists previously unrepresented there, but also artistically commemorates societal events during the full-scale war.

No matter the circumstances, the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum sticks to its mission—to collect Ukrainian contemporary art and share the 20th- and 21st-century art with professionals and broader audiences, fostering connections among individuals with diverse experiences. The phrase “Time spent in the museum is time spent with meaning” has been on the museum's façade since 2020, and the institution seeks to affirm the principle through its daily activities. Its continually expanding collection of art serves as a record of dynamic phenomena and events at both local and global levels. The KRAM creates a space for communication, mutual inspiration, research, awareness, and reflection. It ventures beyond the conventional boundaries of museum activities and art, while consistently drawing inspiration from them.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum's collection-building and exhibition activities offers an opportunity to analyze the challenges that regional Ukrainian museums have faced over the past 40 years. The relatively effective operation of the Khmelnytskyi Regional Art Museum is due to a multitude of factors. E.g., as a museum of contemporary Ukrainian art, it consistently strives to remain aligned with its declared collection concept and its strategy for developing a contemporary multicultural platform. Also, it engages with pressing societal issues, prioritizes continuous professional development, and translates its accumulated experience into tangible outcomes. In summary, the dynamism, democratism, critical thinking, communicative openness, and creativity are all characteristic features of contemporary art. Indeed, contemporary art is the KRAM's very *raison d'être*. Accordingly, the museum's working methods correspond to the substance of its collection, which—paradoxically as it might seem—is both the cause and the result of the institution's development.



Fig. 15. The first donation to KRAM's collection since the start of the full-scale war: *Judith*, a polychrome sculpture by Lyubov Yakymenko (Kharkiv). Donated by the author. 2022



Fig. 16. Activities at KRAM_Art_Hub. Hall 4. 2022



Fig. 17. The façade of KRAM building, Khmelnytskyi. KRAM_Art_Hub banner. 2022



Fig. 18. Opening of the Shkoliar family exhibition (Khmelnytskyi). Hall 4. 2023



Fig. 19. The façade of KRAM building, Khmelnytskyi.
The banner of inter-museum cooperation projects. 2023



Fig. 20. A look at Oleksandr Hnylytskyi's retrospective exhibition *Non/Random Pairs*.
Hall 4. 2024

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**A MUSEUM FRAME OF ODESA LIFE
DURING THE FULL-SCALE INVASION**

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The article reflects on how, during Russia's full-scale invasion, Odesa has been rethinking its relationship with urban heritage and redefining the city's image—an image long reproduced within an imperial frame. The text emphasizes a double context: the city has been a target of sustained Russian propaganda for decades, yet in 2014 it stopped the so-called “Russian Spring,” which makes questions of self-identification especially acute. Writing from the position of a participant in cultural processes, the author stresses that under conditions of extreme ordeals the question “Who are we?” becomes a resource for survival, while museums function as infrastructure for producing and articulating meaning. After the evacuation of collections in 2022, Odesa's museums faced a choice: suspend operations or continue without permanent displays. The article outlines institutional responses—from interventions in public space (MoOMA project *Shoulder to Shoulder*) to turning emptied galleries into platforms for processing the experience of war (the *Languages of War* series at the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum, tribute exhibitions to artists killed in the war, and Alevtina Kakhidze's solo project *Dad, I'm in Odesa!*). The author also describes local narrative formats for speaking about safeguarding heritage (the Bleschunov Museum's graphic novel), the Archaeological Museum's symbolic turn to Snake Island, the opening of the private genocide museum Territory of Memory, and cultural diplomacy through exhibitions in Kraków and Berlin that shape alternative frames for perceiving Odesa as a Ukrainian and European city. A second focus is decolonization: the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum's work with the Soviet legacy embedded in its collection; public tensions surrounding the transfer of dismantled monuments to Catherine II and Suvorov; and the UNESCO nomination file, which proposes an anti-imperial reading of Odesa's urban phenomenon (port-city development, multiculturalism, entrepreneurship, and democratic practices of coexistence). The article considers the business community initiative *Odesa Decolonization*, which seeks to shift the city's myth from a “criminal” trope to an “entrepreneurial” one. The conclusion argues that in wartime museums can remain community centers even without their collections on display, sustaining memory, resilience, and the construction of a future-oriented civic narrative.

Keywords: urban myth, museum, South of Ukraine.

Some cities have complicated heritage, and it is not immediately clear how to engage with it. Some cities are, by definition, perceived within a particular interpretative frame, regardless of whether it corresponds to reality. Some cities are shaped by powerful urban myths that may work both to their benefit and to their detriment. Odesa is just this kind of city. Located in the South of Ukraine, it is often perceived within the interpretative frame of imperial heritage, and that of a specific empire, although the borders of at least three empires reached the city at different times. It is at times striking how enduring the city's image is within Ukraine and beyond its borders, as it is often difficult to trace its origins. Therefore, it is all the more important to examine how Odesa has been transforming during the years of the Russia–Ukraine War, for it is precisely during the extremely trying periods that the question of who we are ceases to be merely a matter of curiosity or academic reflection. Instead, it becomes a matter of finding resources to resist war, a matter of survival. In this text, we offer a few reflections on the relationship between Odesa's inhabitants and their urban heritage throughout the Russia–Ukraine War. It is essential to recognize a few framing aspects, without which it is impossible to discuss these relationships meaningfully. In 2014, Odesa became a city that stopped the so-called Russian Spring in its tracks. Over the recent decades, Odesa specifically has become the target of Russian propaganda; Vladimir Putin has repeatedly mentioned it in his speeches, and no other city has been the target of such an amount of Russian propaganda of varying intensity. As the film scholar Ivan Kozlenko has calculated¹, between 2004 and 2022 alone, 17 films about Odesa were made in Russia, including 6 feature films and 11 television series. No other region of Ukraine—or Russia—has been the object of such persistent attention from the Russian television. At the same time, again, Odesa still managed to stop the “Russian Spring.” While discussing the city's internal transformative processes, we must keep in mind both facts as a framework for articulating meanings significant to the city here and now.

To understand the city's internal processes, just analyzing the developments that fit within the framework of “decolonization” will not suffice. However, these issues undoubtedly are, and should be, of high relevance to Odesa. For starters, we would like to acknowledge that this text is written from a subjective perspective: the author observes the developments from within, has a limited view of the situation, and lacks the objectivity of a detached analytical perspective on cultural transformation. At the same time, precisely in view of this subjectivity and embeddedness within ongoing processes, the text may serve as a valuable record of a situation as it unfolds. Imagining a more detached analysis of the city's development from the vantage point of a peaceful future (should such a future come to pass), this text may capture moments that will not develop into lasting trends, disappearing from collective memory, while others will become mainstream. In this sense, it is equally important to document both the moment and

1. «Одеський міський міф: наративи, структура, перспективи розвитку», *Odesa Decolonization*, 16 червня 2024, <https://www.odesadecolonization.org/post/одеський-міський-міф>.

the contexts of their formation. The focus of our analysis is the period of the Russia–Ukraine War beginning in 2022, which may be defined as the Russian Federation’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine.

ODESA’S MUSEUMS IN THE TIME OF WAR.

REFRAMING THE MEANING

In 2022, Odesa’s museums moved their collections to relatively safe locations. It was the moment of the greatest challenge and—paradoxically—the greatest opportunity. The institutions’ answers to the question, “Should we close up until the end of the war, or somehow do without our collections?” varied. The museums that had long lacked space and resources for non-core projects suddenly had vast exhibition spaces. At times, the shock of empty galleries compelled museum teams to search for new solutions.



Fig. 1. The second floor
of the Odesa National Fine
Arts Museum in 2022



Fig. 2. The Odesa National Fine Arts Museum in 2022

It was in this situation that Ukrainian museums—and specifically those in Odesa—found an answer to the question of what a museum truly is nowadays. Even unable to display their collections, they remained centers of gravity for communities, demonstrating that the primary function of the museum these days is not to exhibit treasures, but to create a space for public dialogue, the search for meaning, and—ultimately—social therapy.

In the spring of 2022, having safeguarded their collections one way or another, museum professionals posed a new question: What is next? Should museums attempt to “soothe” visitors by creating spaces detached from the war, or, conversely, provide an opportunity to engage with wartime artistic reflections? Or should they move “into the streets” and develop projects in public spaces?

In the middle of relocating to a new space at the time, the Museum of Odesa Modern Art (MoOMA) immediately went with the latter approach. Its new cultural center, slated to open in spring 2022, did not materialize for obvious reasons. During the first months of the full-scale invasion, representatives of the Muzeon experimental center, then part of MoOMA, became key actors within the cultural field. In the spring of 2022, Volodymyr Chehrynets and Valeriia Nasedkina organized the exhibition of Ukrainian war photography titled *Shoulder to Shoulder* across five locations in the city: the fence

of the State Archive of Odesa Oblast, the fence of the Odessa Sparkling Wine Company, the gazebo in the City Garden of Odesa, the space opposite the Odesa Quarantine's arcade in the Taras Shevchenko Park, and the Stroganov Bridge. A peculiar moment of social communication occurred when somebody cut one of the photographs, and the curators repaired it with a Band-Aid. Subsequently, they saw someone else had similarly "patched up" another photograph.

One of Ukraine's most compelling museum projects during the full-scale invasion period was probably born out of fear of empty spaces and a desire to reflect on the expression of Ukrainian contemporary art. Titled *Languages of War* and accommodated by the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum, the series of exhibitions by contemporary Ukrainian artists was held in 2022–2023². It was the idea of Kyrylo Lipatov, then head of ONFAM's research department, and it was implemented through the collective efforts of the museum team³. The series included exhibitions by Ihor Hora, Vasyl Dmytryk, Dmytro Yevsieiev (Fig. 3), Volodymyr Semkiv (Figs. 4, 5), Kinder Album, Albina Yaloza, Kostiantyn Zorkin (Figs. 6, 7, and 8), Stas Zhalobniuk, Yevhenii Bal, Mykola Lukin, and Danylo Movchan (Figs. 9, 10).

Individual exhibitions from the *Languages of War* series were displayed at other museums across Ukraine. Some were conceived as paired statements, e.g., the exhibitions of Stas Zhalobniuk and Kostiantyn Zorkin were positioned as responses by artists from cities with radically different experiences of war. In this article, we will not go into the artistic statements themselves or the project's successes and failures, but rather acknowledge the significance of the museum team's initiative in searching for an answer to the question: What is a museum in times of war?

ONFAM has consistently engaged with the theme of working through the wound of war, going beyond exhibitions to organizing public programs, artist talks, and similar events. Among the tribute exhibitions dedicated to creatives killed in the war, particular mention should be made of *Flowers Behind the Dumps* (Boris Eisenberg) and *Dali: I Will Take Back My Life* (Maksym Kryvtsov).

Among the projects presented at ONFAM was Alevtina Kakhidze's exhibition *Dad, I'm in Odesa!* (May 25, 2024, to February 28, 2025), which addressed decolonization and the Russia–Ukraine War, demonstrating, through the history of the artist's own family, the impact of empires on multiple generations of her kin over the past century, from the Soviet Union to the present-day Russia–Ukraine War. *Dad, I'm in Odesa!* was Alevtina Kakhidze's first solo exhibition in Odesa⁴. The project combines *All Good?*, a video piece co-authored with the artist Roman Khimei, and an installation created specifically for

2. Ю. Манукян, «Мови війни в ОФАМ: випалювальна мова травми», LB.ua, 23 квітня 2023, https://lb.ua/culture/2023/04/21/552578_movi_viyни_ofam_vipalyuvalna.html.

3. Ю. Манукян, Мови війни в ОФАМ: сакральне і профанне», LB.ua, 4 червня 2023, https://lb.ua/culture/2023/06/04/558439_movi_viyни_ofam_sakralne_i.html.

4. «Виставка Алевтини Кахідзе "Тату, Я в Одесі!"», Минуле / Майбутнє / Мистецтво, 13 травня 2024, <https://pastfutureart.org/dad-i-am-in-odesa/>.



Fig. 3. Dmytro Yevseiev, *Palimpsest (Languages of War)*, ONFAM)



Fig. 4. The opening of Volodymyr Semkiv's exhibition at ONFAM;
In the photo are Volodymyr Semkiv and Pavlo Hudimov



Fig. 5. Volodymyr Semkiv's exhibition at ONFAM



Fig. 6. Kostiantyn Zorkin (*Languages of War*, ONFAM)

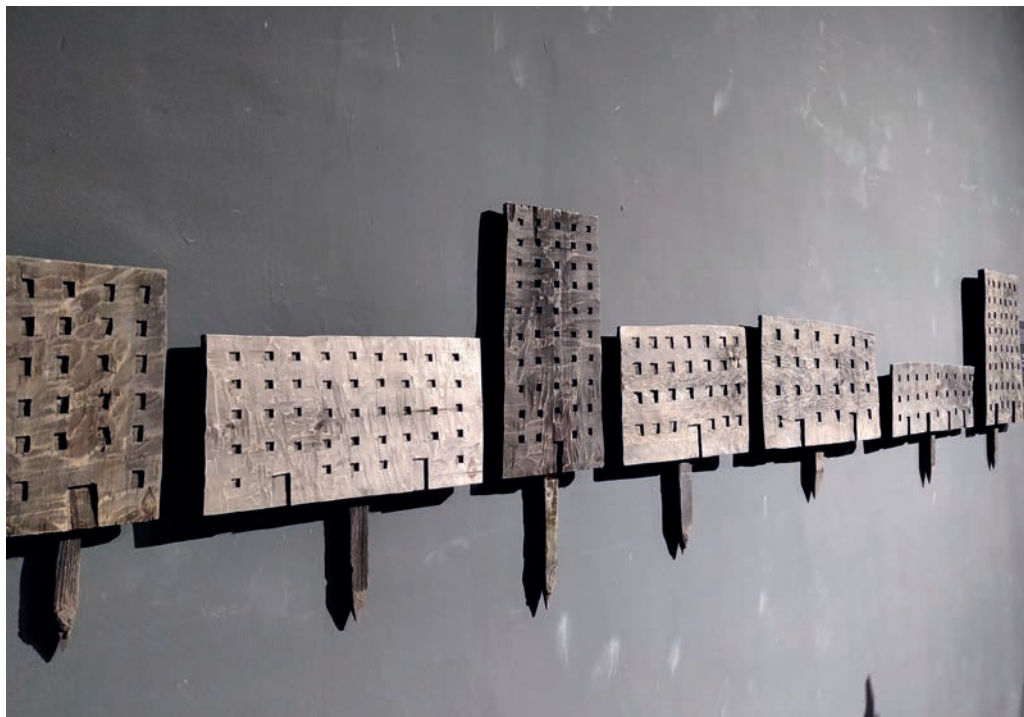


Fig. 7. Kostiantyn Zorkin's exhibition *Protective Layer* (*Languages of War*, ONFAM)



Fig. 8. Kostiantyn Zorkin (*Languages of War*, ONFAM)



Fig. 9. Danylo Movchan's exhibition
(*Languages of War*, ONFAM)



Fig. 10. Danylo Movchan (*Languages of War*, ONFAM)

the exhibition, which includes archival photographs, objects from the family collection, drawings, and herbaria. The exhibition marked the continuation of the collaborative work of artist Alevtina Kakhidze and curators Kateryna Semenyuk and Oksana Dovgoplova on the theme of decolonization. The video *All Good?* was the centerpiece of Ukraine's National Pavilion "From South to North" at the Malta Biennale 2024⁵. The project focused on the theme of working through the imperial past, a subject equally relevant to Ukraine and Malta alike, symbolically linking Malta to Odesa—a gateway city between the Ukrainian steppe and the Mediterranean. This optic presents the port city of Odesa not as the south of the Russian/Soviet empire, but as the north of the Mediterranean region. For Kateryna Semenyuk and me as curators, it was important to articulate these messages not only for a European (and, more broadly, international, since the Biennale is an international event with projects not only from Europe but also from Africa, Asia, and both Americas represented) but also for a Ukrainian, and specifically Odesa's, audience. It was important for us to emphasize the need to shift the perception of Odesa and to stop playing the imperial game when interpreting the city's history and its present.

While the ONFAM chose to present and reflect on Ukrainian wartime art, the O. V. Bleshchunov Municipal Museum of Personal Collections focused on the experience of Odesa's museum staff in the early days of Russia's full-scale invasion. In 2023, the museum presented the graphic novel *War Diary: Marisel and Panna Kota Saving Cultural Heritage* (The diary is available on the museum's YouTube channel). The protagonists of the comic book are the real-life cats, whom the museum employees have cared for over many years. In the comic, Marisel and Panna Kota pack exhibits for evacuation from February 24 to June 18, 2022: the author Olena Iliasova and illustrator Maria Apriatova found a tender yet ironic way to talk about terrible things.

Also of note is the only project opened at the Odesa Archeological Museum since 2022—the exhibition *Zmiinyi: The Island Defended by the Gods*, launched under the auspices of ONFAM⁶. The role of Snake Island has clearly transformed since 2022, so the Archeological Museum's choice to turn its attention there did not come as a surprise. The legends of Achilles Pontarches, who was allegedly buried on the island to awaken someday, suddenly took on new meaning. The Odesa Archeological Museum regulars will be familiar with the sections of the exhibition relating to the sanctuary of Achilles, which existed on Snake Island from the 1st millennium BCE, making the subject equally familiar and appealing to those closely familiar with the evacuated collection and to first-time visitors alike. Such was the Odesa Archeological Museum's response to the challenges of the war.

5. «Павільйон України "From South to North" на maltabiennale.art 2024", *Минуле / Майбутнє / Мистецтво*, 25 грудня 2025, <https://pastfutureart.org/from-south-to-north/>.

6. «Залишки храму Ахілла та античні амфори: знахідки зі Зміїного вперше презентували в Одесі», *Суспільне Одеса*, 5 серпня 2024, <https://suspilne.media/odesa/806071-zaliski-hramu-ahilla-ta-anticni-amfori-znahidki-zi-zmiinogo-vperse-prezentovali-v-odesi/>.

Remarkably, entirely new museum spaces have emerged in Odesa since 2022. One worth mentioning in particular is the Territory of Memory genocide museum, privately established by Pavlo Kozlenko, the former director of the Holocaust Museum⁷. He said he founded a new museum because it is impossible to speak about the Holocaust as a separate, isolated phenomenon nowadays. Rather, genocide must be addressed as a broader phenomenon that also encompasses the genocide committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The museum does not convey precise messages; rather, it serves as a public space for discussions, screenings, lectures, and similar events.

Once again, this text is guided primarily by the author's personal perspective and makes no claim whatsoever to providing a complete picture of how Odesa's self-interpretation through culture transformed over the first years of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Also worthy of mention are the cultural diplomacy efforts undertaken by Odesa's museums that leveraged the evacuation of their collections abroad. The exhibition *Odesa. The Long 20th Century in Art*⁸ was prepared for the International Cultural Center in Kraków (ICC) in 2024 by ONFAM and the Museum of Odesa Modern Art.

A century of Ukrainian history is explored here through the lens of a single city—and, crucially, that city is Odesa. Such a curatorial gesture acts to overcome the myths and stereotypes that present Odesa as an entity, separate from Ukraine. In particular, the exhibition highlights the intertwining of the artistic traditions of Odesa and Kraków, creating interpretive frameworks for perceiving Odesa that differ from those prevalent during the Soviet era and, to a large extent, throughout the first decades of Ukraine's independence. The exhibition established a space for serious critical reflection on the “Odesa myth” and the place of Odesa's art within both the European and broader Ukrainian traditions.

The curators of the exhibition *From Odesa to Berlin: European Painting of the 16th to 19th Century*, which opened in 2025



Fig. 11. The International Cultural Center in Kraków

7. «В Одесі відкрили музей геноцидів», Суспільне Одеса, 30 травня 2024, <https://suspilne.media/odesa/757509-v-odesi-vidkrili-muzej-genocidiv/>.
8. «Відкриття виставки “Одеса. Довге ХХ століття в мистецтві” у Міжнародному центрі культури Кракова», Генеральне консульство України в Кракові, 16 травня 2024, <https://krakow.mfa.gov.ua/news/vidkrittya-vistavki-odesa-dovge-hh-stolittya-v-mistectvi-u-mizhnarodnomu-centri-kulturi-krakova>.



Fig. 12. An exhibition about Odesa in the International Cultural Center in Kraków

exhibitions at other venues in Odesa (e.g., the Museum of Western and Eastern Art) and in the so-called Gallery of Resilience, established in one of the invincibility centers in a decidedly non-tourist part of the city. The latter is worth mentioning in particular, as it represents one of the attempts to address the lack of museum spaces outside the historic city center. Before the full-scale invasion, it was the O. V. Bleshchunov Museum of Personal Collections that had been attempting to bring museum interventions to Odesa's residential periphery. The fact that the efforts to extend museum initiatives into Odesa's dormitory districts continue even during the years of the full-scale invasion is, arguably, worthy of attention.

In the spring of 2025, however, MoOMA finally returned to the Odesa museum scene with its project *Mirages of Calypso Enchanted by the Depths: Dmytro Dulfan*, sending a symbolic message that it did not shift its focus away from Odesa's contemporary art in particular, as the museum's guest projects hosted in other venues presented contemporary Ukrainian art more broadly without explicitly focusing explicitly on that from Odesa. All museums have had to adjust to the war, and MoOMA is no exception; a number of its exhibitions from 2022 to 2024 focused precisely on Ukrainian artists' conceptualization of the conflict.

The ambitious plans to explore the art of Odesa and to engage with contemporary Ukrainian art have every chance of being realized. As already noted, even the Odesa

at the Gemäldegalerie⁹, took a different path, establishing a dialogue between the works from the Odesa Museum of Western and Eastern Art and the Gemäldegalerie's own collection, while also calling out the Russian army's crimes against Ukraine's cultural heritage.

Odesa's museums are responding to the wartime challenges in a variety of ways, both within Odesa and abroad. In 2025, the Museum of Odesa Modern Art—a museum that had been planning to move to new premises even before the full-scale invasion began—also returned to active operation. In an abrupt change of those plans, the institution had to keep searching for its own space until early 2025 for reasons beyond its control. The museum held several exhi-

9. «У Німеччині відкрилася виставка «Одеса — Берлін». Фото», Офіційний сайт міста Одеса, 27 січня 2025, <https://omr.gov.ua/ua/news/240418/>.

Archeological Museum found its own way to address the present-day challenges. Some museums have largely paused their operation. Particularly telling is the silence of the Odesa Literary Museum, from which one might have expected the most powerful critical reflection on the current state of the “Odesa literary myth.” E.g., looking at the impressive projects of the Kharkiv Literary Museum—from research and exhibition projects on Ukrainian literature of the 1920s to the *Slovo* art residency in Kharkiv¹⁰—such silence feels, at the very least, disappointing.

DECOLONIZATION. THE ODESA FOCUS

The full-scale invasion not only “freed up” museum spaces for Ukrainian contemporary art but also provided the backdrop for the long-since-initiated efforts to rethink museum displays.

ONFAM, in particular, has been working on decolonizing its collection for several years. However, why decolonize the museum in the first place? The story of the Odesa Art Museum’s 1924 split into two institutions—the National Art Museum, focusing on “domestic” art, and the Museum of Western and Eastern Art—calls for reflection and analysis. The collection of the Odesa National Art Museum (the museum for “domestic”—i.e., Russian—art) was ideological from its very inception. The mere names of its halls, visible in photographs from the museum’s archive, already reveal the narrative communicated to its visitors. The museum’s history itself can serve as a foundation for working through and representing Soviet instruments of ideological education, demonstrating how self-evident the irrelevance of claims such as “art is beyond politics” is. The museum offers enormous potential for rethinking its Soviet past in particular, which would be natural to do in collaboration with the Odesa Museum of Western and Eastern Art—a municipal institution with an extensive enough collection that includes genuine masterpieces.

ONFAM’s first step in this direction was thoroughly working through its Soviet-era collection and developing the concept for its permanent exhibition *From the ‘20s to the ‘20s*, which opened in 2021. In addition to introducing visitors to the museum’s collection, the exhibition opened up contexts that could address broader questions about the era. The second step in this direction could be a presentation on the history of building the collection, including an analysis of the sources of acquisition during the early Soviet period and the institution’s aforementioned 1924 split. For now, however, it is at the goal-setting stage. Opened at ONFAM in 2024, the permanent exhibition on the museum’s history frames these questions with considerable caution¹¹.

10. «Резиденція “Слово”», Харківський ЛітМузей, дата звернення 20 грудня 2025, <https://litme.com.ua/uk/slovo>.

11. «Музейна історія. Про виставку», Одеський національний художній музей, 10 серпня 2024, <https://www.ofam.ua/exhibitions/muzeyna-istoriya-3>.



Fig. 13. The monument to Catherine II in ONFAM's courtyard

ONFAM feels the decolonization issues more acutely than the rest of Odesa's cultural institutions, because of the particular nature of its collection, which radically “lost its innocence” after Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and in light of the 2022 Odesa City Council resolution¹² to relocate the dismantled monuments to Catherine II and Suvorov to the museum grounds.

Neither of them is historically significant, as both were created in the 21st century as approximate copies. Of value, however, are the four statues of the empress's lovers, which are original works by sculptor Boris Edwards (1860–1924).

As a reminder, the monument was built in 1900 and dismantled immediately after the Soviets came to power in Odesa. In 2007, a copy of the monument to the empress, accompanied by the original figures of her lovers, was installed as the “Monument to the Founders of Odesa.” The monument was controversial from the outset, but the majority of Odesa residents never considered it problematic. In 2022, however, attitudes toward the monument shifted dramatically. Two petitions calling for the monument's

12. «Нормативні акти. № 1044-VIII від 30.11.2022», Офіційний сайт міста Одеса, 30 листопада 2022, <https://omr.gov.ua/ua/acts/council/196279/>.

dismantlement were registered back to back, each getting the required number of signatures for being submitted for consideration to the President of Ukraine: Petition No. 22/141740-ен, “Replace the monument to Catherine II in Odesa with a monument to American actor Billy Herrington”¹³ (submitted on May 20, 2022, by O. Yu. Matveiev), and Petition No. 22/145072-ен, “Demolish the monument to Catherine II in Odesa”¹⁴ (submitted on June 28, 2022, by S. I. Tsehelnik).

The statues of Catherine II and Suvorov were moved to the museum grounds in December 2022, and the institution faced the problem of formulating its stance regarding these new objects. The museum has yet to voice its position, which is understandable given its limited resources and the level of tension surrounding decolonization in Odesa. However, it will not be able to keep silent for much longer.

THE UNESCO NOMINATION FILE CASE

Throughout 2022, the preparation of a nomination file was underway to inscribe the historic center of Odesa on the UNESCO’s List of World Heritage in Danger¹⁵. The work towards Odesa’s inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List had begun as early as 2001, as evidenced by the Resolution no. 878 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from July 26, 2001¹⁶. The 2009 saw the drafting of a preliminary description of the historic center of Odesa for the UNESCO World Heritage List application. In 2018–2019, the Ukrainian national committee of ICOMOS received the materials. However, no major effort to prepare a high-quality application that met all requirements was made until 2022. Leading the working group was M. Viknyansky, an Odesa-based entrepreneur—he assembled a team of authors and enlisted Italy’s LINKS Foundation for technical support during the preparation process.

In January 2023, UNESCO approved the inclusion. Having analyzed the nomination file’s text, we are ready to recognize it as a very serious step toward decolonizing Odesa’s history. It argues for the anti-imperial nature of the urban phenomenon of Odesa, analyzes Odesa’s radical distinctiveness from other cities of the Russian Empire, and demonstrates that the phenomenal pace of the city’s development as a seaport was due not to imperial calculations, but to the readiness of the local multicultural community to create the conditions for the city’s growth.

13. «В Одесі замінити пам’ятник Катерині II на пам’ятник американському актору Біллі Геррінгтону», Електронні петиції — Офіційне інтернет-представництво Президента України, 20 травня 2022, <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/141740>.

14. «Знести пам’ятник Катерині II в Одесі», Електронні петиції — Офіційне інтернет-представництво Президента України, 28 червня 2022, <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/145072>.

15. “The Historic Centre of Odesa”, UNESCO World Heritage Convention, accessed December 24, 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1703/documents/>.

16. «Про затвердження Списку історичних населених місць України, Офіційний вебпортал парламенту України, дата звернення 20 вересня 2025, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/878-2001-%D0%BF#Text>.

The authors demonstrated that the uniqueness of the historic center of Odesa as a port city lay in the fact that a new urban space, designed as a coherent urban ensemble, was built in parallel with the construction of the seaport at the end of the 18th century. Port construction triggered a boom in Odesa's development, and the city quickly became a maritime trade center of regional and even global significance.

Also highlighted in the file is the uniqueness of the multicultural urban community that formed in Odesa over the course of the 19th century. This urban phenomenon has existed *continually* from the moment the port-city complex was established and to this day, with all its elements retaining their functionality and integrity. The city's historic center still retains the regular grid plan envisioned by François de Wollant and has high cultural value for this reason alone. It is not so much the overall authenticity of the space that is at work here as the *continuity* of the urban phenomenon. That is why this particular fragment of the city of Odesa, within this specific historical period, can claim the UNESCO World Heritage status.

The part of Odesa recognized as UNESCO cultural heritage is the one shaped by the port's activity. Although maritime trade had always been part of the Northern Black Sea region population's life, the conditions for the kind of maritime trade that met the needs of the new era appeared only in the early 19th century.

In the Northern Black Sea region, maritime traffic traditionally went through river mouths. The Odesa port was built in defiance of the geographic logic and thanks to the "human will and the spirit of free enterprise"¹⁷. The port's construction was funded not because it had been "planned" or because such was the will of the ruler (quite the contrary). It happened thanks to the persistence of the local urban community. (I will not digress into urban legends here, only noting that overcoming the emperor's resistance is embedded in the foundational Odesa myth; the file, on the other hand, deals in facts.) Within just 20 years of the port's completion, Odesa had overtaken other cities with a geography favoring maritime trade (e.g., Ochakiv, Mykolaiv, and Kherson) in terms of development. Within a few years, Hajibey, already known as Odesa, became one of the principal maritime trade hubs in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

The authors emphasize the uniqueness of the urban phenomenon that took shape here at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. As noted in the file, it is precisely for this reason that Odesa was able to overcome the challenges of the late 19th century (crop failures, the imperial authorities' repressive policies, and intensifying competition on the part of the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, and Australia in the grain markets) and maintain its position in grain exports. Remarkably, it is precisely this function of Odesa that becomes central today, as the months-long blockade of Odesa's port as a result of the full-scale Russian invasion suddenly demonstrated how vital its operation is to the world at large.

17. Ukraine, Odesa City Council, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy Of Ukraine, *Nomination dossier for inscription on the World Heritage List*, Nomination file, adopted November, 4 2022, 87, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1703/documents/>.

Also emphasized in the file is the fact that Odesa's multiculturalism is not merely about the linguistic and religious enclaves present in the city. It is about creating the kind of social relations that afford any enterprising person—regardless of their background, religion, language, or anything else—the possibility of influencing the city's life, being visible, and having rights. Odesa offered opportunities for professional fulfillment and education for representatives of various nationalities, unfathomable elsewhere in the Russian Empire. The file describes mechanisms of urban coexistence in Odesa and highlights unique cases. E.g., it was in Odesa that Charles Ephrussi, a Jew, became a member of the English Club¹⁸.

The nomination file also describes the distinctive character of Odesa's urban landscape that arose from the specific nature of its social relations. For instance, the city has no administrative center—no seat of power, no principal administrative building, no city hall. One of Odesa's first institutions was a theater, which became its symbolic center. Crucially, it was accessible to representatives of multiple social groups. There were no separate sections or designated places for members of various cultures or religions. The nomination file authors emphasize that it was the theater that set in motion the general democratic ethos of Odesa's life.

Unlike the proponents of the version that Odesa was founded “in the middle of wasteland,” the authors clearly demonstrate their awareness of historical contexts. The file's text mentions de Wollant's plan under the title *The Plan of the City of Hajibey with a Military Harbor and a Pier for Merchant Vessels*. It is precisely these contexts that allow for describing the boom in the city's development that transformed it into a port city of global significance with its own unique culture.

Importantly, the authors of the file emphasize that the very idea of a trading city oriented towards the European worldview becomes, within the Russian Empire, effectively anti-imperial.

The architectural codes shaped the face of a city that was ostentatiously alien to the Russian Empire, which naturally correlated with the absence of an explicit seat of power, as well as with its multiculturalism, democratic character, and orientation towards commerce and enterprise. Odesa also proves to be anti-imperial in another political context. The image of a frivolous multinational city with questionable tastes allowed it to develop its own means of pushing back against Soviet power. Odesa's distinctive humor traditions are analyzed in the file as a clear anti-Soviet gesture.

The optic chosen in the file upends the understanding of Odesa as a city founded by the empire, dependent on it, and, allegedly, yearning to return into its fold. It is our response to our enemy's proclamations.

18. Nomination dossier for inscription on the World Heritage List, 114.

THE ODESA BUSINESS CLUB'S ODESA DECOLONIZATION PROJECT

In 2023–2024, fairly unexpectedly—but totally reasonably, in reality—the Odesa Business Club joined the efforts to reconceptualize Odesa's imperial past. As Odesa has a strong history of enterprise and trade, it is entirely conceivable that the business community itself would take on responsibility for the city's both economic and cultural well-being. As the nomination file for the inscription of the historic center of Odesa on the UNESCO World Heritage List was drafted, another issue drew public attention. Odesa had to be seen as a city of entrepreneurs to offset its widespread perception as the city of bandits and petty crooks (which was popular not only in the post-Soviet space with its nostalgia for Benya Krik, but also in the Western academic world—e.g., see Jarrod Tanny's book *City of Rogues and Schnorrers: Russia's Jews and the Myth of Old Odessa*). The emergence of the Odesa Business Club as a player in the city's cultural sphere was therefore to be expected, to a certain degree.

We believe that could very well be the result of a considerably earlier effort of ONFAM director Oleksandr Roitburd (1961–2021), who established the Marazli Club, a community of museum patrons. As a reminder, the ONFAM building was donated to the city by Grigoriy Marazli (1831–1907), a local philanthropist and public figure, whose family had built its capital from grain trade. Marazli served as Mayor of Odesa for 17 years, actively developing the city's infrastructure and culture throughout his tenure. His name was easily and naturally put back on Odesa's symbolic map as soon as the form of social engagement associated with his name returned to lived reality. By all means, one could tell stories of the glorious past. However, they remain nothing more than a formal phrase from a guided tour unless there is something in the present that supports that element of the myth. Marazli's name thus eventually returned to the cultural sphere, bolstering the new patron community's activities. Meanwhile, that of Odesa engineer Tymchenko (he invented the motion picture camera before the Lumière brothers) remains merely a "curiosity of the past."

In creating the Marazli Club, Roitburd proceeded from a simple idea. If a business owner gains reputational benefits from supporting the arts, both the city as a whole and each participant stand to gain. The museum created a special ecosystem for the Marazli Club, including thematic gatherings, museum breakfasts, exclusive tours of museum exhibitions, meetings with artists, and similar events. It is a particular type of social communication that emphasises the reputational benefits of supporting the museum. Notably, the Marazli Club events have never overlapped with the museum's public activities. That is, serving the needs of the patron community does not interfere with the museum's operation as a cultural institution for the general public: club members come to visit either before or after its working hours. The Marazli Club is not a "money bag" that provides additional entertainment in return for financial support to the museum. Its active members help design museum programs and make other important decisions, e.g., on restoration projects and the acquisition of new items for ONFAM's collection, in

close cooperation with the museum's team. Sadly, the war halted the museum's sustainable development program in collaboration with Odesa's business community, which has understandably shifted its support to the defense effort, even though the museum's survival has yet to be assured.

Naturally, the participation of Odesa's business community in the development of the city's museum landscape is not limited to the Marazli Club's activities. The aforementioned private Museum of Odesa Modern Art was created on the initiative of and with funding from Odesa entrepreneur Vadym Morokhovskiy. The gallery of Odesa businessman Anatoliy Dymchuk was also open to the public until 2022. For many years, the name Dymchuk Gallery was associated with Kyiv. However, it also had an active exhibition space in Odesa, showcasing art primarily from Dymchuk's private collection. In other words, business is by no means a new or unexpected player in Odesa's cultural field, including its museums.

As might be expected, several Odesa Business Club members were also members of the Marazli Club. So there are relatively recent practices of business participation in Odesa's cultural life to speak of, beyond the natural desire of Odesa's businesspeople to reboot their city's image from the "city of rogues and schnorrers" to the "city of entrepreneurs." Therefore, there has been nothing unexpected in the Odesa Business Club's project to establish a new image for Odesa. Ensuring visibility for real entrepreneurs rather than "picturesque bandits" is thus an understandable goal for the Club.

When the full-scale invasion began, the Odesa Business Club joined the effort to shape a vision of Odesa's history, distinct from the Russian one, highlighting the role of local enterprise in shaping Odesa as a phenomenon. The Club launched archival research into the biographies of local entrepreneurs in 2023 and received additional funding from USAID in 2024 for its *Odesa Decolonization* project¹⁹, which envisaged a research into the contemporary state of the Odesa myth, the completion of the stories of Odesa's entrepreneurs, and the creation of a media campaign to highlight Odesa as a city of entrepreneurs rather than a place of Sonia the Golden Hand's glory.

The project's initiators set out to create a new image of a city that has a future. The Business Club is convinced that reframing the Odesa myth will enhance Ukraine's resilience at the international level. Within Ukraine, it is necessary to rid the city's image of outdated stereotypes as much as possible. Within Odesa itself, the goal is to work through the city's relationship with the past and to articulate an entirely realistic image of the future that the people of Odesa are ready to defend and build.

19. "Odesa Decolonization", *Odesa Decolonization*, accessed December 14, 2025, <https://www.odesadecolonization.org/>.

This selective account of Odesa's response to the challenges brought about by the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine can hardly paint the full picture of how the city's museums work through their wartime problems. Safeguarding their collections is by no means their only concern at the moment. As such, they have to answer the question: Is a museum still a museum without its primary collection? When Oleksandr Roitburd became the Director of ONFAM, he emphasized that an art museum can become central to Odesa's search for new meanings. After Russia launched its full-scale invasion, ONFAM, like many other Ukrainian museums, tested the assumption that a museum is a space for meaning-making rather than a repository of cultural artifacts. In fact, the museums, which built their development strategy on that assumption, have remained meaningful centers of community life despite the war.

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**FROM PROJECTIONS OF THE FUTURE
TO UNDERSTANDING THE PAST:
VDNH AS A LEGACY OF UTOPIA**

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The article examines the National Expocenter of Ukraine (VDNH) in Kyiv as a space of materialized utopia and as an instrument of Soviet ideological representation. It traces the formation of the complex from its postwar design to its contemporary transformations, with particular attention to the architecture of the ensemble, its relationship to political processes in the USSR, and the role of the Exhibition as a mechanism for visualizing a desired future. It demonstrates that VDNH functioned as a symbolic space intended to sustain belief in the utopian socialist project while concealing the realities that contradicted it. Special attention is given to the post-Soviet period, the decline of the complex, its gradual revitalization after 2016, and the tensions between the commercialization of space and the need to preserve cultural heritage. The article analyzes artistic projects by contemporary Ukrainian artists realized on the territory of VDNH as forms of critical reinterpretation of Soviet heritage, practices of memory work, and decolonial approaches. It argues that these artistic interventions reveal VDNH not merely as a propagandistic architectural ensemble, but as a multilayered heritage site that requires study and preservation.

Keywords: VDNH, utopia, Soviet architecture, cultural heritage, ideology, exhibition representation, decolonization, memory, contemporary art, spatial revitalization.

UTOPIA (Greek οὐμє; οὐ — not, τοπος — place; a place that does not exist) —
a model of an imagined society as an embodiment of a societal ideal,
a worldview form of reclaiming the future¹

Utopia is an idealized model of a perfect society that has resolved all social, political, economic, and moral issues in the best way possible. Usually, a utopia is fictional, idealized, and unreachable. As reflected in official art, utopian ideas were incidental to socialist ideology. The artists depicted an ideal future world of equality and justice, where all people lived happily in harmony. The art glorified specific people whose conscientious work helped bring about the glorious future and who were supposed to inspire the masses to build socialism. The utopian landscapes often depicted new housing as well as industrial and infrastructure facilities as symbols of progress and societal development. The imagery conveyed an idealized future in which modern technology and infrastructure improved the lives of all members of society. This very visual logic of utopia as an image of an unreachable, streamlined, and technologically prosperous future was one of the cornerstones of the Soviet Union's representation in exhibition formats.

Setting up the Exhibition of Economic Achievements was an attempt to visualize a utopia. One of its practical goals was to present the results of collectivization to the rural population. The policy itself was very strict, sparking uproar and acts of defiance. Among its results was also the state-sponsored famines in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. To assuage the people, authorities had to demonstrate that all those repressive measures had not been in vain.

During the totalitarian era, the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition and later the Exhibition of Economic Achievements set even more ambitious goals to convince the population that the Party had picked the right course for the country. One obvious purpose was to impress the world with the unprecedented scale of exhibits and architectural solutions, as well as to make collective farm members and laborers work even more for the sake of the bright communist future².

The Exhibition's initial concept envisioned representing individual Soviet republics by pavilions to emphasize ethnic solidarity. Ivan Pyryev reflected the idea in his movie *They Met in Moscow*, released in November 1941.

The love story of collective farmers from the USSR's remote regions—a Russian pig tender and a herder from the Caucasus Mountains—began at VDNH, with a fairly detailed view of the spectacular Exhibition, where the representatives of various Soviet republics in folk costumes demonstrated their native lands' achievements in grand, palace-like pavilions. The movie portrayed VDNH as a magical land full of miracles, accessible even to ordinary people. It also emphasized the age of both protagonists—both

1. Т. Рогова, «Утопія», у *Філософський енциклопедичний словник*, за ред. В. Шинкарук (Київ: Абрис, 2002), 659–660.
2. О. Зиновьева, *Восьмое чудо света. ВСХВ-ВДНХ-ВВЦ* (Москва: Центрполиграф, 2014).



Fig. 1. A still from *They Met in Moscow*, Director: Ivan Pyryev, 1941



Fig. 2. *They Met in Moscow* movie poster, Director: Ivan Pyryev, 1941

very young but participating in this remarkable event by merit of their conscientious and diligent work.

The movie thus makes VDNH a visual embodiment of “ethnic solidarity” and of the late-Soviet rethinking of Korenizatsiia as a model in which different cultures could co-exist harmoniously within a single state-building project. This idealized representation, however, obscured the asymmetry of power and inequality of real historical processes, making the long-term viability of such a utopian construct doubtful.

During World War II, the Exhibition was closed³. It was used in part for military purposes, and many pavilions were destroyed. However, walking tours and cattle shows returned there as early as the first post-war years.

In 1948, the decision was made to rebuild the complex, with an ambition to restore and enhance its representative and ideological function during the post-war period. The reconstruction continued until 1954⁴. In 1963, the Exhibition’s concept was rethought. Dedicated to various branches of industry and agriculture, thematic pavilions replaced those of the Soviet republics⁵.

The transition meant a gradual departure from the Exhibition’s image as a symbol of “ethnic solidarity” to a more generalized, technocratic model of representing the state’s progress.

In summary, the idea behind holding the Exhibitions was to represent an imaginary future, which the USSR government urged all population groups to build. The Exhibition represented a materialized utopia, a space where equality and freedom were declared, in stark contrast to the realities of the 1930s—the most repressive period in Soviet history, when Joseph Stalin ruled the country. In this context, the Exhibition had to sustain the population’s faith in the possibility of fulfilling the future promised by the Party, creating an illusion of a harmonious, careless world amid the grim social reality. It became a space that symbolically affirmed that the state was on the right track.

ORIGINS AND PECULIAR FEATURES OF THE ARCHITECTURE ENSEMBLE OF KYIV’S VDNH

The idea to build a VDNH complex in Kyiv surfaced immediately after World War II. The city lay in ruins after the war, and one of the goals was to create an image that would restore people’s faith in the future. In 1949, the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a decree establishing a Republican Agricultural Exhibition in Kyiv.

After an architectural competition, a group of architects from the Dnipromisto Institute and the Academy of Architecture of the Ukrainian SSR started designing the

3. Совет народных комиссариатов УССР, «О закрытии Всесоюзной сельскохозяйственной выставки», постановление № 5975 (26 июня 1941), *Законодательные акты СССР* (1941).

4. В. Ступин, «Об архитектуре Всесоюзной сельскохозяйственной выставки», *Архитектура СССР* 9 (1954): 1–17.

5. Совет министров УССР, «О перестройке работы ВДНХ СССР», постановление № 452 (18 апреля 1963), *Собрание постановлений Правительства СССР* 7 (1963), ст. 61.

complex in 1952. Leading the group was Ihor Mezentsev, an architect and theorist who directly shaped the design's conceptual and artistic aspects. Also on his team were Viktor Yelizarov, Volodymyr Novikov, Borys Zhezherin, Yakiv Kovbasa, Musiy Katernoha, Heorhii Kyslyi, Volodymyr Kutsevych, and others. The original design of Kyiv's VDNH envisioned nine pavilions, all eventually built from 1952 to 1958. Those constituted the architectural core of the complex. Eventually, the Exhibition's territory was expanded, but its central part's architectural ensemble remained unchanged. Overall, 33 buildings were erected on VDNH's territory during the Soviet era: In the 1960s, new specialized pavilions were constructed specifically for metallurgical, oil, and gas industries; the 1970s saw the construction of the facilities that expanded exhibition capacity and were related to agriculture, science, and technology; in the 1980s, most buildings that survived to this day were completed, including upgrades to some exhibits⁶.

At the design stage, the architects combined elements of classical architecture (Ancient Greek, Babylonian, Egyptian, etc.) and Ukrainian decorative motifs. Lining the façades was the white stone from Inkerman. Glazed ceramics were used in ledge elements and in genre and ornamental compositions. During her interview with Ukrainian Radio, art historian Kira Petrachek pointed out that it was a comprehensive project:



Fig. 3. A festive rally at the Exhibition opening.
Photo from the Expocenter of Ukraine archive, 1958

6. С. Широчин, Архітектурна думка та продуктивний достаток: історія київської ВДНГ, Bird in Flight, 5 лютого 2022, <https://birdinflight.com/architectura-uk/20220205-arhitektura-kievskoj-vdnh.html>.

Everything was elaborated—from grand pavilions and their art direction to minute landscaping details, like street lights, drinking fountains, and litter bins⁷.

It took about seven years to plan and build the core complex, with many changes introduced along the way due to deep ideological transformations in the USSR, e.g., the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, the resolution on elimination of excesses in design and construction of 1955, and the official de-Stalinization of 1956. The Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On Elimination of Excesses in Design and Construction” kicked off a sweeping construction reform and radically changed the Soviet architectural canon⁸. Initiated by Nikita Khrushchev with the active involvement of architect Boris Gradov, one of the key ideologists of the functional approach in Soviet architecture. Its primary purpose was to cut construction costs and to ensure rapid post-war restoration and the mass construction of housing to accommodate the rapidly growing urban population in the RSFSR. The Resolution sharply criticized the Stalinist style, emphasizing the wastefulness of its decorative towers, reliefs, and palace-like architecture of railway stations and sanatoriums. The document stipulating the revision of all construction budgets and transition to standard designs became an important stage in the sweeping de-Stalinization in the USSR.

In these circumstances, the authors of the exhibition complex design had to adapt the initial ideological conceptions to new political realities on an ongoing basis. In his 1952 article, Ihor Mezentsev indicated a monument to Joseph Stalin was to become the central element of the main square, with the ideological and artistic messages revolving around Stalin being an inspiration and organizer of the fight for worldwide peace and construction of communism in the USSR⁹. Stalin’s death and ensuing de-Stalinization rendered such a concept unacceptable, so a large fountain was built instead as the compositional core of the Exhibition’s main square. The Architecture & Construction pavilion was designed in 1956–1957, after the Resolution on eliminating architectural excess was passed. As an industry-focused facility, it was supposed to showcase the new principles of Soviet construction. While its façade maintained classical architecture features, it was devoid of decorative elements, reflecting the transition to a more reserved architectural language¹⁰.

Despite these restrictions, the team (which included Borys Zhezherin, Vitaliy Orekhov, Ivan Kyslyi, Musii Katernoga, Ihor Mezentsev, Anatolii Stanislavskyi, and Dmytro Batalov) managed to keep the overall solemn character of the central square’s environment. The ensemble is full of colonnades, reliefs, openwork towers, and sculptures.

7. Н. Соколенко, «Національний Комплекс “Експоцентр України” (ВДНГ): минуле, сучасне і майбутнє, що чекає на чекає на важливу рекреаційну зону столиці», інтерв’ю з Кірою Петрачек, *Українське радіо*, програма «Сьогодні. Вдень», 3 жовтня 2023, <https://ukr.radio/schedule/play-archive.html?periodItemID=3593622>.

8. Центральный комитет КПСС и Совет министров УССР, «Об устранении излишеств в проектировании и строительстве», постановление № 1871 (4 ноября 1955).

9. І. Мезенцев, «Проект республіканської сільськогосподарської виставки в Києві», *Вісник Академії архітектури УРСР* 3 (1952): 10.

10. І. Однопозов, *Колишня виставка: фоторозповідь* (Київ, 2014).

It opens in three directions, reaching the pinnacle of its architectural expressiveness. Eight industry pavilions stand around the square's perimeter along with the main one, which, combined with the entrance space's colonnade, forms the axis of symmetry for the entire complex¹¹.

On the right of the Main Pavilion are agricultural industry pavilions, with the Grain Crops Pavilion—the complex's second-most important architectural dominant—at the front. On top of its high spire stands a figure of the Kolkhoz Woman, which came to be associated with the Exhibition. Across from it stands the Machine & Instrument Engineering Pavilion, part of the industrial and technological ensemble alongside the Metallurgy and Electrification pavilions.

After 1960, most modernist pavilions were constructed in this very part of VDNH. They represented the USSR's new architecture – minimalist rectangular spaces built from glass, metal, and concrete. The Mining Industry Pavilion comprised a small surface building and an underground part that imitated a mine. The Seafood Pavilion's façade design was reminiscent of a ship's stern, and the Light Industry Pavilion, elevated above the ground, seemed to float in zero gravity.

The function of some pavilions shifted over time. Specifically, the showcase area of the Machine Engineering Pavilion gradually became a separate pavilion for cross-industry exhibitions. Besides, extensive infrastructure was set up on the Exhibition's territory, including cafés, restaurants, and recreation areas, all aligned with the complex's overarching concept. Pavilion styles overall reflected key trends in Soviet architecture of the latter half of the 20th century.

VDNH'S DECLINE AND REVITALIZATION

After the collapse of the USSR, VDNH lost its primary ideological function as the state model changed. The first attempt at institutionally redefining the complex's operation in the independent Ukraine was the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from September 14, 1991, No. 207 (207-91-п) "On approval of the Resolution on the Republican exhibition and exposition center under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine," which defined the Center's primary goals: Establishing direct research, production, and cultural ties between the Ukrainian enterprises and foreign partners; Actively promoting exports; Disseminating information about new achievements in the national economy; Demonstrating the ways to solve the current economical, research & technology, and social problems and fulfilling state programs¹².

In the 1990s, however, this statutory transition entailed no automatic infrastructure modernization. Rather, the complex existed inertially, maintaining its status as an

11. Мезенцев, «Проект республіканської сільськогосподарської виставки в Києві».

12. Кабінет Міністрів України, «Про затвердження Положення про Республіканський центр виставок і ярмарків при Кабінеті Міністрів України», постанова № 207 (207-91-п) (14 вересня 1991), Законодавство України, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/en-ro/207-91-%D0%BF#Text>.

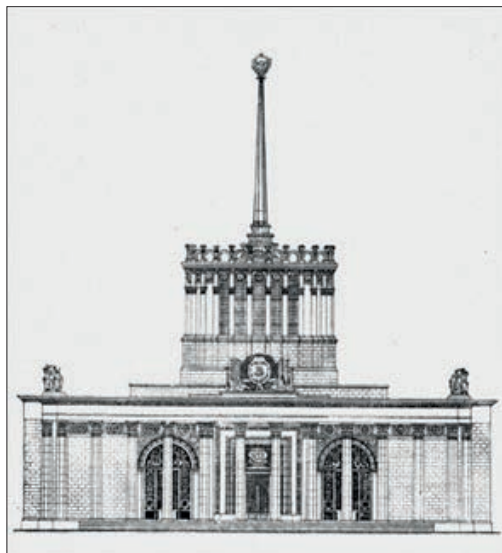


Fig. 4. The approved design of the Main Pavilion. Sketch: 1952; Photo: 1959. Architects: B. Zhezherin, H. Kyslyi; Engineer: A. Mozhovi. Archive material courtesy of VDNH administration.



Fig. 5. VDNH's Main Pavilion (Pavilion No. 1). Photo by Alex Bykov.



Fig. 6. Pavilion No. 10: Grain Crops. Architects: Viktor Yelizarov, Ihor Lanko.
Photo courtesy of VDNH administration



Fig. 7. Pavilion No. 10:
Grain Crops. Architects:
Viktor Yelizarov, Ihor Lanko.
Photo by Alex Bykov.



Fig. 8. Pavilion No. 3: Metallurgy. Architects: Mykhailo Hrechyna, Olena Mikhnevych, Mykola Hubov. Photo by Yevheniia Moliar



Fig. 9. Pavilion No. 7: Machine & Instrument Engineering. Architects: Ihor Mezentssev, Viktor Savchenko, Mykola Hubov. Photo by Yevheniia Moliar



Fig. 10. The sculpture group from Pavilion No. 7 façade.
Archive material courtesy of VDNH administration



Fig. 11. Pavilion No. 13: Mining Industry.
Photo courtesy of VDNH administration

exhibition platform, albeit without steady funding or a clear long-term development strategy. It is during these years—from 1991 to 1999—that the Soviet exhibition format began to wear off. VDNH remained operational, but new market practices increasingly became a challenge. Moreover, maintaining its huge territory and pavilions was a source of mounting problems.

In 1999, the Ukrainian government adopted a resolution establishing the National Expocenter of Ukraine on the premises of the former Center¹³. The new status expanded the scope of its activities. In addition to holding exhibitions, its declared function became to help fulfill the state policy in the fields of scientific and engineering information, culture, and education; to further exhibition activities and culture studies programs; to introduce international exhibition practices; to support exports; as well as to preserve and reinforce facilities of the complex as a site of nationwide importance¹⁴.

In 2000, the State Directorate of Affairs was established as the agency responsible for managing public and social services for the President of Ukraine. Eventually, it was put in charge of the Expocenter, too¹⁵. In 2004, Leonid Kuchma signed a decree on the development of the complex and its transformation into a European-class platform through the reconstruction and modernization of its infrastructure. Despite those proclamations, however, erratic management policy and irregular territory use still plagued VDNH.

A case in point is the initiative to establish the VDNH museum. In 2010, a museum was opened in one of the garden rotundas (initially, the Seeds Pavilion) on the initiative of Ihor Odnopozov. Among the exhibits were archive photos, maps, and advertising materials of various years, but the endeavor was short-lived due to a lack of support¹⁶. A crucial factor in the later revival of the complex was the opening of the Vystavkovyi Tsentr metro station in 2011, which made the location much more accessible and boosted VDNH's integration into the city's infrastructure.

Despite all that, the complex remained only partially operational for much of the post-Soviet period. Because of insufficient funds and poor energy efficiency of the heating system, the pavilions could operate properly only during the warm season. Until 2016, many pavilions and amenities were in a critical state and required major overhauls. Meanwhile, Kyiv already had modern exhibition venues that hosted major events, so VDNH was gradually losing relevance as the key specialized exhibition center. Ever fewer Kyiv residents visited the place because of problems with basic infrastructure

13. Кабінет Міністрів України, «Про утворення Національного комплексу “Експоцентр України”», постанова № 1801 (30 вересня 1999), *Законодавство України*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1801-99-%D0%BF#Text>.

14. Кабінет Міністрів України, «Про затвердження Положення про Національний комплекс “Експоцентр України”», Постанова № 1993 (28 жовтня 1999), *Законодавство України*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1993-99-%D0%BF#Text>.

15. Державне управління справами, «Про Державне управління справами», офіційний сайт Державного управління справами, дата звернення 13 травня 2025, <https://www.dus.gov.ua/content/про-державне-управління-справами>.

16. «На ВДНХ открится музей в ротонде» *Vgorode Kyiv*, дата звернення 13 травня 2025, <https://kiev.vgorode.ua/news/sobytyia/263327-v-kyeve-otkrylsia-muzei-vdnkh>.

(restaurants, toilets, security), while scholars of Soviet architecture and admirers of neglected space aesthetics began frequenting it.

From 2016 onward, VDNH gradually transitioned to a new operating model, which involved a more active use of its territory as a public space. This process was accompanied by a substantially higher attendance and event activity, which are often cited as signs of the complex's revival. In 2021 alone, it saw 5.5 million visitors (~250,000 in 2014), and over 3,000 events took place on its territory (36 in 2015)¹⁷. However, these quantitative indicators reflect only the intensity of use of the space. In contrast, the long-term strategy for working with historical and architectural heritage remains to be addressed.

In 2017, Yevhen Mushkin, an entertainment and public event manager, became the head of VDNH, marking a pivot toward making the complex more event-oriented and its communication more open¹⁸. The same year, the idea of establishing a Soviet heritage museum at VDNH was floated, a curatorial group was assembled under the leadership of Volodymyr Kadyhrob, the museum concept was elaborated and funding secured. Sadly, the project never panned out. The concept—specifically the idea of a decommunized sculpture park—reflected the logic of that time. VDNH was no longer considered merely a venue; it became a bearer of complicated Soviet heritage that required conceptualization, not just exploitation.

In 2021, VDNH's architectural complex was recognized as a national landmark¹⁹. The same year, the management initiated the VDNH Inspires program, which involved the presentation of Vystavka, a collective art project curated by the author of this article. The project brought together Ukrainian contemporary artists to conceptualize the cultural and historical value of the complex and reflect on the difficulty of preserving heritage. Also in 2021, the Pavilion of Culture was established at VDNH's Pavilion No. 13²⁰. The new curatorial institution worked at the confluence of contemporary visual arts, new music, and architecture. Therefore, one may consider 2021 an important stage in public recognition of VDNH's value and legitimizing it as a cultural heritage site, despite its Soviet origins and ideological baggage.

However, in early 2022, VDNH management demolished one of the modernist pavilions (Pavilion No. 19), setting off a wave of criticism and multiple protest rallies in February 2022. Priorities changed radically after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The long-term rethinking and museum/curatorial strategizing were put on the back burner, while security and protecting people became front-and-center concerns. VDNH's underground facilities were urgently converted to bomb shelters.

17. «Про ВДНГ», ВДНГ (Національний комплекс «Експоцентр України»), дата звернення 13 січня 2026, <https://vdng.ua/about>.

18. С. Пивоваров, «Новим гендиректором ВДНГ призначено Євгена Мушкіна зі StarLight Entertainment», *Hromadske*, 26 липня 2017, <https://hromadske.ua/posts/novym-hendyrektorem-vdnh-pryznachen-yevhena-mushkina-zi-starlight-entertainment>.

19. Кабінет Міністрів України, «Про зміну категорії пам'яток культурної спадщини», *постанова №. 1180 (10 листопада 2021)*, *Законодавство України*, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/go/1180-2021-%D0%BF>.

20. «На ВДНГ з'явиться "Павільйон культури"», *LB.ua*, 4 серпня 2021, https://lb.ua/culture/2021/08/04/490969_vdng_zhavitsya_pavilyon_kulturi.html.

RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF VDNH BY CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Vystavka, a 2021 art project, was an attempt to conceptualize VDNH in its historical entirety, from its creation and ideological heyday to its decline and current transformations. About 20 Ukrainian artists participated, working with the complex's heritage and using various media and optics.

In contrast to the official development strategies, the artistic practices did not offer any out-of-the-box solutions. Rather, they highlighted the space's internal contradictions, e.g., between utopia and reality, between the representation of wealth and the experience of scarcity, and between sacralization and ruination. Importantly, most of those works were conceived not as illustrations of the past but as a means of discussing it from the standpoint of our time, with its trauma, fractures, and paradoxes of decommunization.

In this specific context, VDNH becomes more than an architectural ensemble or successfully revitalized park; it is a complicated cultural text that requires ongoing reconceptualization. Artistic interventions demonstrate that decolonization of Soviet heritage cannot come down to dismantling or replacing symbols. It requires working with memory, contradictions, and the layered nature of the past, which cannot be canceled or returned in its "pure" form.

RECANONIZATION (ZHANNA KADYROVA)

Zhanna Kadyrova is a contemporary Ukrainian artist whose practice focuses on the study and preservation of cultural heritage, particularly that of the Soviet era.

Zhanna Kadyrova started her Recanonization project at VDNH in 2019. According to her, she got the idea after a trip to Italy, during which she noticed the resemblance of some pavilions' architecture to that of baroque churches as she walked around the complex. The Animal Husbandry Pavilion is the most prominent in this regard.

The pavilion was built in 1952 (Architects: Musii Katernoga, Yakiv Kovbasa, Mykhailo Honchar), with decorative design done by sculptor Ivan Makohon and artist Oksana Hrudzynska. Makohon created reliefs of shepherd, calf-tender, pig-tender, and poultry-tender at the entrance space, as well as the orders on the façade and medallions with the depictions of cattle, to which the pavilion was dedicated (pigs, sheep, and cows). Oksana Hrudzynska developed the ornamental motifs and maiolica decor.

It is this combination of solemnity and decorativeness that gave Kadyrova the idea to highlight the common elements of religious and totalitarian visual languages. In 2017, the artist illegally installed temporary halos on the reliefs. In 2020, she carried out a new version of the project, this time in collaboration with Denys Ruban and VDNH's administration. They put brass halos over the heads of collective farmers and animals, turning the Soviet reliefs into something akin to icons.

The gesture expressively revealed the closeness of the religious and totalitarian art in that they appeal to faith, sacralize imagery, and indisputable acceptance of ideology.

STRATIGRAPHY (KSENIA HNYLYTSKA)

Ksenia Hnylytska is a Kyiv-based artist known primarily as a painter but also working with video and sculpture. Entitled *Stratigraphy*, her project explores the ruins and myths of the urban environment. Since 2017, it has benefited from the involvement of activists and non-governmental organizations working to preserve architectural heritage and develop new models for interaction between the government, the public, and private initiatives.

For this project, she created two watercolor paintings of VDNH's Pavilion No. 10 and Greenhouse. Both works date back to 2016, when the complex's territory was in decline, with no revival in sight for the foreseeable future. The artist thus documented VDNH at the moment of a historical pause between the old ideology disintegrating and a new meaning taking shape.

LIKE THE BIBLE (KATERYNA LISOVENKO)

In her project *Like the Bible*, artist Kateryna Lisovenko reflects on contemporary society as being mythological, drawing on the theories of Karl Popper, one of the founders of neoliberalism and a critic of socialist and collectivist models. The artist interprets his book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*²¹, as a mythological story, like an *Iliad* or an *Odyssey* of the present-day capitalist world.

She exhibited her paintings inspired by the book at VDNH's main pavilion, a building that symbolizes the pinnacle of a socialist country's centrally planned economy. This context establishes a tense dialogue between different ideological models.

As she reflects on this project, Lisovenko turns to the ideas of Theodore W. Adorno: "Adorno wrote that modern society, as well as its ideologemes and science, has not completely moved away from the myth. With science and ideology being so self-absorbed, cognition and, possibly, political projects become tautological. Many words are often repeated and serve as a basis for numerous decisions, actions, and conclusions, although it is not always clear what lies behind them or what they actually mean. I decided to view Karl Popper's book as a Bible, which was fairly easy, because it contains multiple references to the Kingdom of Heaven. Besides, I always dreamed of painting Mary Magdalene and Salome, but never had a chance to," she said in a private conversation on May 20, 2021.

DEFICIT AND SHOWCASE (DANIIL NEMYROVSKY)

Daniil Nemyrovsky is an artist from Mariupol who works primarily with graphics. In his work *Deficit and Showcase*, he turns to VDNH's Pavilion No. 19, built in 1978 as per Boris Zhezherin's design. Stylistically, the pavilion is a specimen of late modernist archi-

21. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 5th ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966)

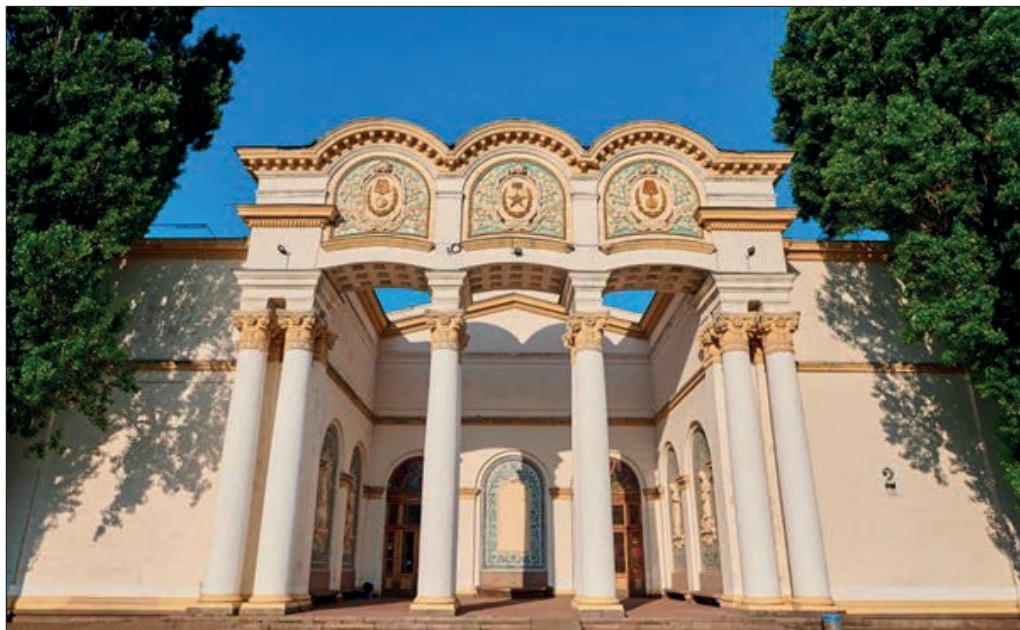


Fig. 12. The main façade of the Animal Husbandry Pavilion. Photo by Alex Bykov

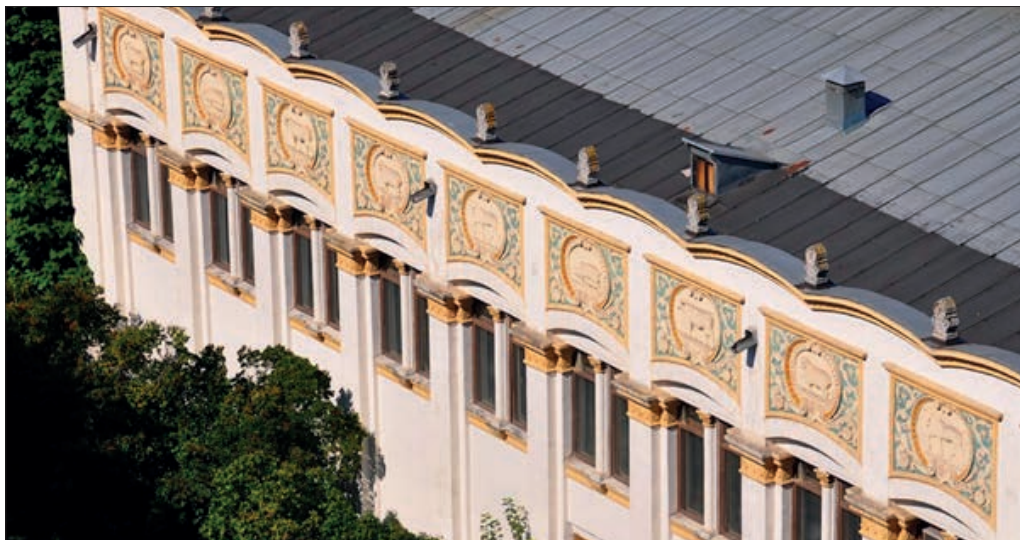


Fig. 13. The side façade of the Animal Husbandry Pavilion with the medallions with depictions of cattle. Photo by Alex Bykov



Figs. 14–15. Recanonization, a project by Zhanna Kadyrova. Installation, 2017–2020.
Image courtesy of the artist



Figs. 16–17. Recanonization, a project by Zhanna Kadyrova. Installation, 2017–2020. Image courtesy of the artist



texture, and it is radically different from the rest of the buildings in the central square.

Initially, the pavilion served as a showcase of fast-moving consumer goods (i.e., household items) to highlight the accessibility of goods to USSR citizens. However, in the reality of the 1980s, when the economic crisis, product shortage, and shadow economy were very much a thing, those goods remained mostly unreachable.

During the post-Soviet commercialization of VDNH, Pavilion No. 19 hosted the Kurazh Bazar initiative, which marketed as “vintage items” the very things that had once been showcased there as symbols of Soviet well-being. By highlighting this paradox, Nemyrovsky exposes the phoniness of the Soviet showcase of illusory well-being and demonstrates how historical context can deepen the understanding of a space.



Fig. 18. VDNH's Greenhouse. Stratigraphy series.
A watercolor by Ksenia Hnylytska, 2016. Image courtesy of the artist

COLORCODES (KATERYNA BUCHATSKA)

In her artistic practices, Kateryna Buchatska often draws attention to less noticeable, yet crucial aspects of preserving cultural heritage. Her 2021 Colorcodes project focuses on the problem of exploiting historical architecture and the loss of its authenticity.

According to the artist herself, the color palettes she used in this work align with the visual language of filmmaking, e.g., the movies of Stanley Kubrick and Wes Anderson, both directors known for their attention to composition and color. By adopting this analogy, she imbues the project with an ironic undertone that, according to her intention, is supposed to become an “effective irony,” capable of eliciting a critical attitude toward the surface-level “refreshment” of historical buildings, a common practice in Ukraine.

The management's orientation on events and public appeal may result in the architectural ensemble losing its historical accuracy and visual coherence.

The impetus for this work came from observing the paint jobs on the pillars of the central pavilions' façades, which were redone before each major event. Color matching left much to be desired, so each paint job took the buildings farther and farther away



Fig. 19. VDNH's Pavilion No. 10. Stratigraphy series. A watercolor by Ksenia Hnylytska, 2016.
Image courtesy of the artist

from their original look. Therefore, Colorcodes documents the complex's current state and the gradual erasure of its material authenticity.

The practical idea behind this project is to demonstrate that preserving VDNH's architectural heritage calls for a more responsible approach.

CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary artists' work in VDNH's space provides an opportunity to reconceptualize its initial function as a materialized utopia. The exhibition complex was conceived as a visualization of the future to mask the tragedies and contradictions of real life with the ideological myth. In this sense, VDNH becomes not only an architectural ensemble but a Soviet propaganda tool.

Soviet utopia functioned through a system of recurring symbols and ritualized images that induced uncritical acceptance of ideological directives. The artistic practices represented in the projects revealed parallels between totalitarian and religious art, emphasizing that faith was the key mechanism of Soviet ideology, and VDNH was a space of discipline.



Figs. 20–21. Exhibit of Pavilion No. 19 (Fast-moving Consumer Goods)
Archive material courtesy of VDNH

The works in question are not so much illustrative as analytical. With them, we can reconstruct historical context and explain the mechanics that make VDNH's system of imagery, narratives, and material forms special. This approach enables a critical and impartial look at the past that requires no omissions or restrictions, nor romanticizing or reideologizing history, while working to mend the historical fractures.

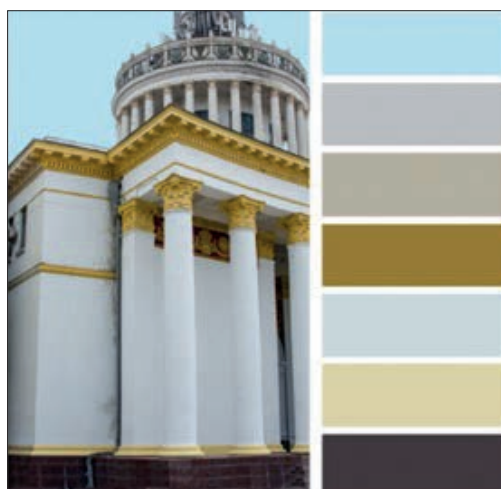
Another important thing is that these projects include a critical commentary on the official decommunization practices. They draw attention to the risks of reproducing the logic of violent breakup with the past through dismantling, banning, and symbolic “erasure” of history that echoes Soviet methods of fighting religious heritage. From this angle, decommunization, beyond being a political procedure, becomes a complex cultural



process that requires reflection, care, and responsibility. Meanwhile, these art pieces convincingly demonstrate that VDNH's propagandist nature does not invalidate its architectural, artistic, and historical value. Recognizing this inherent contradiction offers us an opportunity to view the complex as a significant cultural heritage site that preserves the memory of a traumatic but defining historical period.

The creation of VDNH was, by its nature, utopian like any large-scale project of radical social reinterpretation. In a similar vein, the idea of decolonization is utopian, as it often amounts to finding “pure” authenticity or returning to an imagined source. Still, there is no way to restore or cancel the past in its entirety, and the same is true of constructing an ideal future.

Any futuristic project, whether the formation of a new community or the reinterpretation of problematic heritage, inherently has a utopian dimension. However, if returning to the past or creating an ideal world is unreachable, the very process of searching becomes critically important, as it generates new meanings and new forms of responsibility for shared history through colliding narratives, conflicts, and juxtapositions.



Figs. 22–23. Colorcodes, a collage by Kateryna Buchatska (2021). Image courtesy of the artist

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**DCCC (CONTEMPORARY
CULTURE CENTER IN DNIPRO):
HISTORY, EVOLUTION,
AND ACTIVITIES**

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The article traces the emergence and development of DCCC (Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture) as a civic-driven institution that combines the presentation of contemporary artistic practices with sustained engagement with local contexts and urban communities. It outlines how an initiative shaped in the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity—centered on the audiovisual and new media festival *Konstruktsiia* (since 2015)—evolved from a primarily “virtual” presence into multiple attempts to secure a permanent venue, culminating in a prototype: the temporary public space *Сцена:Stage* (2017). The project’s international recognition (Special Mention at the European Prize for Urban Public Space 2018 and nomination for the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture—Mies van der Rohe Award) is discussed as a turning point that helped enable negotiations for a long-term home. The text describes the launch of DCCC in the former provincial *zemstvo* building on *Krutohirnyi Uzviz*, the ongoing restoration process, and the residency-based institutional model bringing together *Kultura Medialna* NGO, *Artsvit* Gallery, and *Alliance Française*. Particular attention is paid to institutional transformations during Russia’s full-scale invasion: from suspension of activities to the establishment of a social hub (2022), and later the gradual return to programming (2023–2024) through the initiative “DCCC: We Are Open,” expanded international partnerships, and new infrastructures such as a 51-seat cinema, an Experimental Studio, and a concept shop as a critical design project. The article also maps DCCC’s core program lines—exhibitions, education, residencies, and film programs—as tools for supporting cultural life under wartime conditions.

Keywords: DCCC, contemporary culture center, Dnipro, cultural institution, new media, urban public space, *Konstruktsiia* festival, *Сцена:Stage*, heritage restoration, artist residencies, film programs, social hub, full-scale war, international collaboration, local communities.

ABOUT THE DCCC

The idea of establishing a cultural center as a venue for representing contemporary culture and interactions between locals appeared in 2015. Following the Revolution of Dignity, Kultura Medialna NGO, a co-founder of the DCCC, launched the festival of contemporary audiovisual arts and new media, Construction, to initiate changes in Dnipro's cultural environment. The project drew on the physical and ideal image of Dnipro to offer a new perspective on its specific traits and direct attention to the shared space, responsibility, and future. The Construction festival has grown into an annual event, held in the city's various venues, including the DCCC.

The first festivals made it abundantly clear that Dnipro lacks a shared space that presents current trends in global culture and art, while also engaging with the local context. The search began for a physical location to accommodate the future Center for Contemporary Culture in Dnipro. Meanwhile, the institution existed solely in the virtual realm, as a Facebook page. Negotiations with the city/regional authorities and private owners of various spaces in Dnipro lasted about 2 years. Over those two years, five concepts and designs were drafted for cultural centers in a variety of locations, which, however, did not materialize for various reasons, the primary one being the project's being non-profit.

As an experiment, in 2017, Kultura Medialna decided to set up Сцена:Stage (referred to below as simply the Stage), a temporary public space for the fourth installment of its Construction festival, with the involvement of a team of architects and locals. It was located in the place of an old amphitheater in a neglected corner of the Taras Shevchenko Park. The Stage was a temporary wooden structure that accommodated screenings, lectures, workshops, exhibitions, concerts, and other events. It came about through locals' efforts: anybody could join in and help build it, and the money came through crowdfunding. The project was, in fact, a prototype of the cultural center, built to understand exactly what kind of space the city required. A mere year later, the structure's dismantling followed. The development of the DCCC's design began in earnest, with Kultura Medialna's team enlisting the help of the Artsvit Gallery, Alliance Française, and České centrum Kyiv.

The Stage project became renowned well beyond Dnipro. It won the Special Mention award as one of Europe's best public spaces at the European Prize for Urban Public Space in Barcelona in June 2018 and was nominated for the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture—Mies van der Rohe Award.

In light of the Stage's success, an agreement was reached with the former governorate zemstvo building's owner, the Jewish Education Center, to establish a cultural center there. Located on Krutohirnyi Uzviz, it is actually a complex of three buildings: the Old, the New, and the Secretarial building. Initially a late-19th-century residence, it was bought out to accommodate a governorate zemstvo office. In 1917, the building became a headquarters for the troop staff. It stood abandoned since the late 1990s,

and in 2019, the owner invested in restoring and renovating the premises. To preserve the landmark, a team of architects, historians, and cultural professionals developed a comprehensive approach to highlight the building's historical periods and adapt it to current requirements. At the moment, the DCCC houses multiple resident organizations: Kultura Medialna NGO, Artsvit Gallery, and Alliance Française Dnipro.

Since 2019, renovations in the building have limited the DCCC's operations. Before Russia's full-scale invasion, it hosted exhibitions, festivals, educational programs, art residencies, and various art and urbanism projects.

When Russia invaded, the DCCC temporarily ceased its activities. Since March 2022, however, it has housed a social hub for locals and internally displaced persons. It held screenings organized in cooperation with the Dovzhenko Center, charity musical performances, sessions of a Ukrainian-language speaking club, discussions with Ukrainian experts, art activities for children and adults, and workshops on recording a culture-focused podcast under wartime conditions.

In 2023, the DCCC began gradually resuming its institutional operation. The following year, it launched DCCC: We Are Open, a program focused on studying local contexts and reviving cultural practices in the region. The name referenced the signs that appeared on the windows and façades of shops, pharmacies, coffee shops, and other establishments during the war. It combined multiple formats, such as screenings, lectures, residencies, podcasts, fellowship programs, art activities for children, and exhibitions. Through these events, the DCCC aimed to support local communities and cultural practitioners who continued to work during the war, while also broadening the discourse on local cultural heritage and phenomena that have shaped Ukrainian identity to a large extent, though remain unarticulated or forgotten.

The institution's international cooperation also gathered pace. Since 2022, it has held several projects and events abroad (e.g., in Germany, Czechia, and Austria), as well as presented the works of foreign artists in Dnipro, establishing new connections and building a space of understanding and solidarity amid the continuing Russian aggression.

During the full-scale war, the DCCC launched its own cinema with 51 seats—a space for independent cinema in Dnipro, focused on showcasing indie and experimental films. Also, it set up its Experimental Studio to hold events focused on experimental practices and working with young artists. Furthermore, it has opened a shop. Aptly named Shaky Tables, it doubles as an art project of Studio 12345678910, a group of creatives working in the field of critical design. The collective decided to base the shop's interior design on grassroots architecture, e.g., pop-up markets, which abound on the street curbs of Dnipro. The DCCC's shop offers a range of paraphernalia related to contemporary art, urbanism, design, culture, and the city itself. Despite all the challenges, the DCCC remains active in Dnipro as a center of gravity for local communities, helps nurture the city's cultural landscape, and offers opportunities for local creatives to interact with one another and present their practices.

DCCC PROJECTS

EXHIBITIONS

Everything for Everybody

October 23, 2025, to February 7, 2026

The exhibition raises questions about how archives come into being, who has access to them and who controls them, what role archives play during wartime, and how archives can serve as unique testimonies of places that disappeared or were destroyed. It grew out of reflections on two collections, brought together under a project of the British Council: the photographs of Franki Raffles at the University of St. Andrews and the photographic archive of Mykola Bilokon, currently in the care of the Pokrovsk Historical Museum.

It also intertwines archival photos of Mykola Bilokon and Franki Raffles with the works of contemporary artists who engage with themes of family history, migration, the fragility of archives, and the search for imagery to contain the trauma. Here, the artists work with a variety of mediums to create a space between the personal and collective commemoration.

A part of the research project *The Worker Portrait in the Twentieth Century: Archives and Artistic Reflection*, the exhibition was created in collaboration with the Pokrovsk National Museum, Pokrovsk Cultural Code + NGO, Center for Urban History of East Central Europe, Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture, and University of St. Andrews and is supported by the British Council's program Support for Cultural Activity in Ukraine with UK Involvement. It was also included in the Kyiv Biennale 2025.

Participants: Katya Buchatska, Sophia Gera and Kamila Yanar, Lia Dostlieva, Ola Yeremieieva, Olesia Kashyvska, Yana Kononova, Tetiana Kostiuhenko, Elias Parvulesco, Adrian Pepe, Clemens Poole, Anhelina Rozhkov, Selma Selman, Tako Taal, and Valeriia Fedorenko

Curatorial Group: Victoria Donovan, Kateryna Rusetska, and Natasha Chychasova

Consultants: Jessica Gerschultz, Tetiana Kostiuhenko, Anhelina Rozhkova, Catherine Spencer, Alastair Scott

Captions for the works of Mykola Bilokon and Franki Raffles by Iryna Sklokina and Victoria Donovan

Exhibition Architecture: Oleksandr Burlaka

Supported by the Department of Culture, Tourism and Cultural Heritage Preservation of the Pokrovsk City Council in Donetsk Oblast; the Pokrovsk Historical Museum; Pokrovsk Cultural Code + NGO; Center for Urban History of East Central Europe; Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture; University of St Andrews; The New Democracy Fund, Danish Cultural Institute, and Sigrid Rausing Trust.

Let the long. Road. Lead. To. Stairs in. The Heavens

February–April 2023 (PLATO, Ostrava), January–September 2023 (DCCC, Dnipro)

Let the long. Road. Lead. To. Stairs in. The Heavens presents the works of 11 Ukrainian artists and art collectives connected to contemporary ideas about Ukraine's fate. It is an attempt to bring together different experiences and consider which phenomena and processes define us today: not only the colonial trauma of the past and the full-scale war, but also broader temporalities—in particular, a decolonial future defined by the flexibility, resilience, creativity, and perseverance of people. In this exhibition, fate is a sign of the future without a specific date. However, it indicates a path that must necessarily unfold, as it began at some point in the past and continues still.

The exhibition is the result of institutional cooperation between the Center for Contemporary Culture in Dnipro and PLATO. It was displayed at the PLATO City Gallery of Contemporary Art in Ostrava, Czechia, in February–April 2023 and at the DCCC in June–September 2023.

Participants: Beauty Studio, Bohdan Bunchak, Taras Hembik + Vlad(a), Ksenia Hnylytska, Diana + Zamina Khalilova, Larion Lozovyi, Daria Lukianenko, Sashko Protiah, Anna Sapon, Zhenia Stepanenko, Viktoria Tymonova. Texts by Frosiko.

Curators: Milena Khomchenko, Yuliia Kryvykh, Clemens Poole.

RESIDENCIES

The residency for young artists in Dnipro

July 20–August 6, 2023; September 19–October 6, 2024

The DCCC's residencies for young artists brought together artists, photographers, performers, and other cultural figures in the early stages of their creative journeys. The primary objective was to support emerging artists and share experiences and advice crucial to launching their creative careers. Accomplished artists, curators, and cultural experts conducted sessions on such topics as applying for residencies, navigating institutional collaborations, organizing personal projects, establishing a professional artistic identity, and many others.

Over almost three weeks, participants attended lectures, workshops, and discussions with prominent cultural figures. Besides, they learned more about Dnipro and how to engage with local contexts. As a capstone project, the participants collaboratively produced exhibitions and zines featuring diverse artistic expressions.

Kultura Medialna organized the program in partnership with the Artsvit Gallery, with the support of the New Democracy Fund and the Danish Cultural Institute.

Imaginary City

November 2021, May 2024

Held in Dnipro in November 2021, this networking residence aimed to reinforce collaborations between local experts and professionals from other regions. The 10-day program offered participants the opportunity to work with the historical, cultural, and social contexts of Dnipro, inviting local communities to join the dialogue, developing ideas for their future projects together with local institutions, undertaking interventions in the city, and putting theoretical approaches into practice. The residents' cultural projects were to be presented publicly and implemented in Dnipro in 2022–2023, but the full-scale war intervened.

The year 2024 saw the residency's second installment, which invited local cultural figures to delve into Dnipro's contexts and reflect on the region's historical role, significant phenomena, and forgotten names. The participants engaged in lectures, conversations with historians and artists, discussions, tours, and workshops. At the program's conclusion, they presented their own projects about Dnipro at the final pop-up exhibition, which combined multiple formats: visual art (painting, photography, animation), audiovisual and text-based visual art, installations, and cultural and architectural studies. The residents' projects focused on themes such as memory, myth, grassroots initiatives, historical complexes, modern city symbols, ways of perceiving urban space, media synthesis, and the interplay of different art forms.

Sound Working Group

November 2024

It was a residency for musicians, sound artists, and researchers aimed at exploring changes in Ukrainians' attitudes toward sound during the war. The project brought together sound artists and researchers who worked throughout November 2024 under the guidance of curator and artist Clemens Poole. During the residency, participants discussed how the war reshaped their sensitivity to and perception of sounds, how to record ambient sounds, and how to integrate field recordings into their creative work.

It also included open events where anyone could engage with sound. The project culminated in a final event featuring sound installations, performances, an audio walk, and sound performances. In their projects, the residency participants explored the silence and sonic asceticism, the therapeutic role of music, dreams and urban spaces, lost sounds and the fluidity of memory, ambient noise, and personal auditory experiences.

SCREENINGS

Front-line Geographies

This series of events at the DCCC was an attempt at conceptualizing the themes of new community and emotional maturity in times of war. The program revolves around three

cross-cutting themes, each of which gained new significance after February 24, 2022. The first one was the new geographical thinking and visual images of the Ukrainian cities, the most affected by hostilities, evacuation, and destruction during Russia's full-scale invasion.

The second was post- and decolonial narratives that sharply form in Ukrainian society. Finally, the third was phenomenology of fear and its genre dimensions on the screen. The program's special events offered a fresh look at contemporary Ukrainian cinema.

The program was launched as part of the social hub that worked at the DCCC throughout 2022.

Curators: Oleksandr Teliuk and Aliona Penzii

Partners: Dovzhenko Center

Future Life

Future Life was a series of screenings at the Dnipro Center for Contemporary Culture dedicated to Ukraine's future. The program lasted throughout 2023.

With our audience and project guests, we reflected on what life after victory could be like. The program's structure led viewers to examine potential issues through the lens of films, consider the possible avenues for resolving them, and contemplate positive models of the future.

Curators: Oleksandr Teliuk and Aliona Penzii

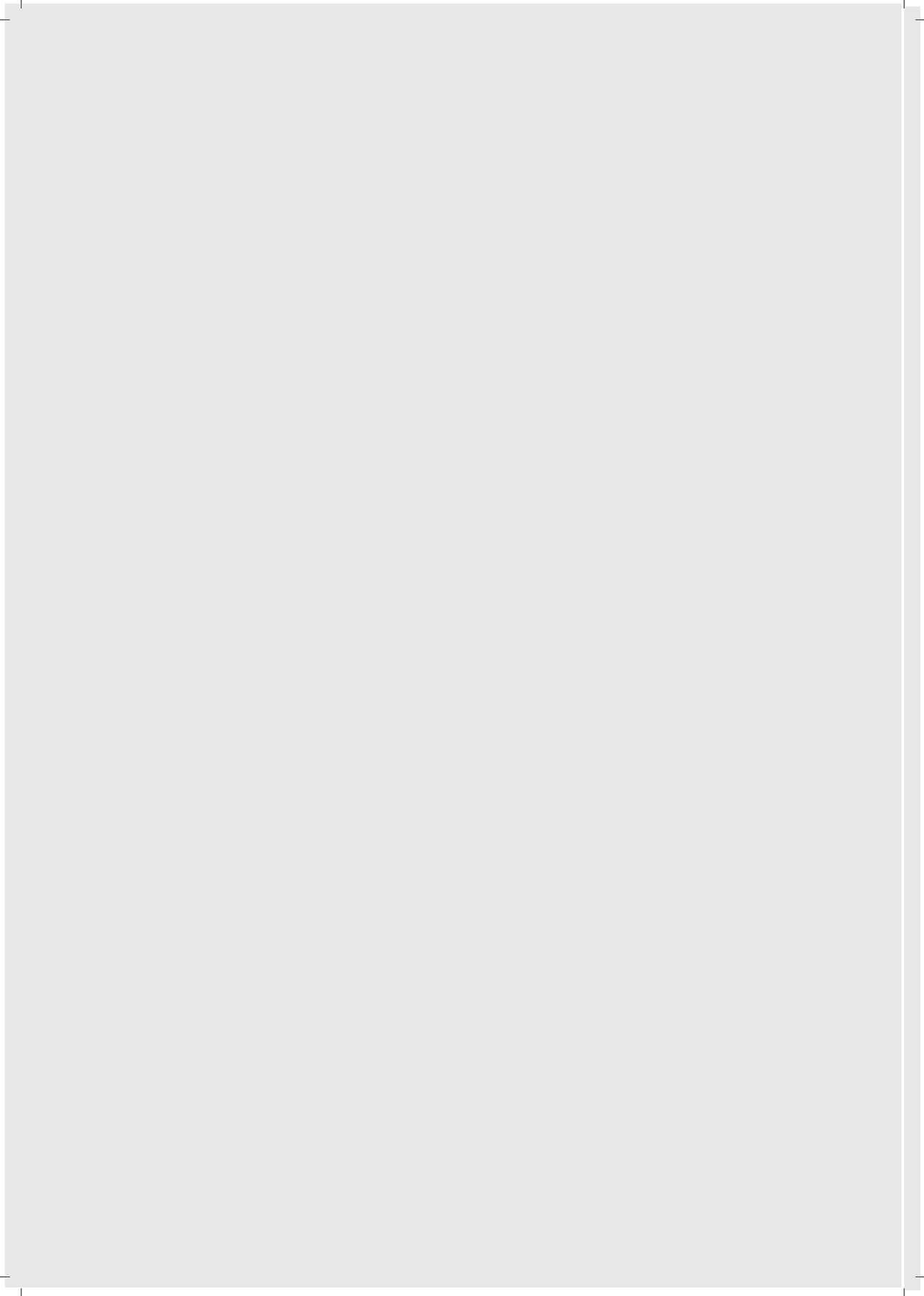
Partners: Dovzhenko Center

I Don't Like Nature the Way It Is

I Don't Like Nature the Way It Is was a series of screenings arranged by the DCCC in cooperation with the Dovzhenko Center. This season was dedicated to the issues of energy, environment, and anthropogenic effects on Ukraine's natural environment in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Without a haughty anthropocentric attitude and didactic environmental generalizations, the program seeks to create a space for reflection on the lessons of the past and the role of memory in finding delicate ways of "decolonizing nature."

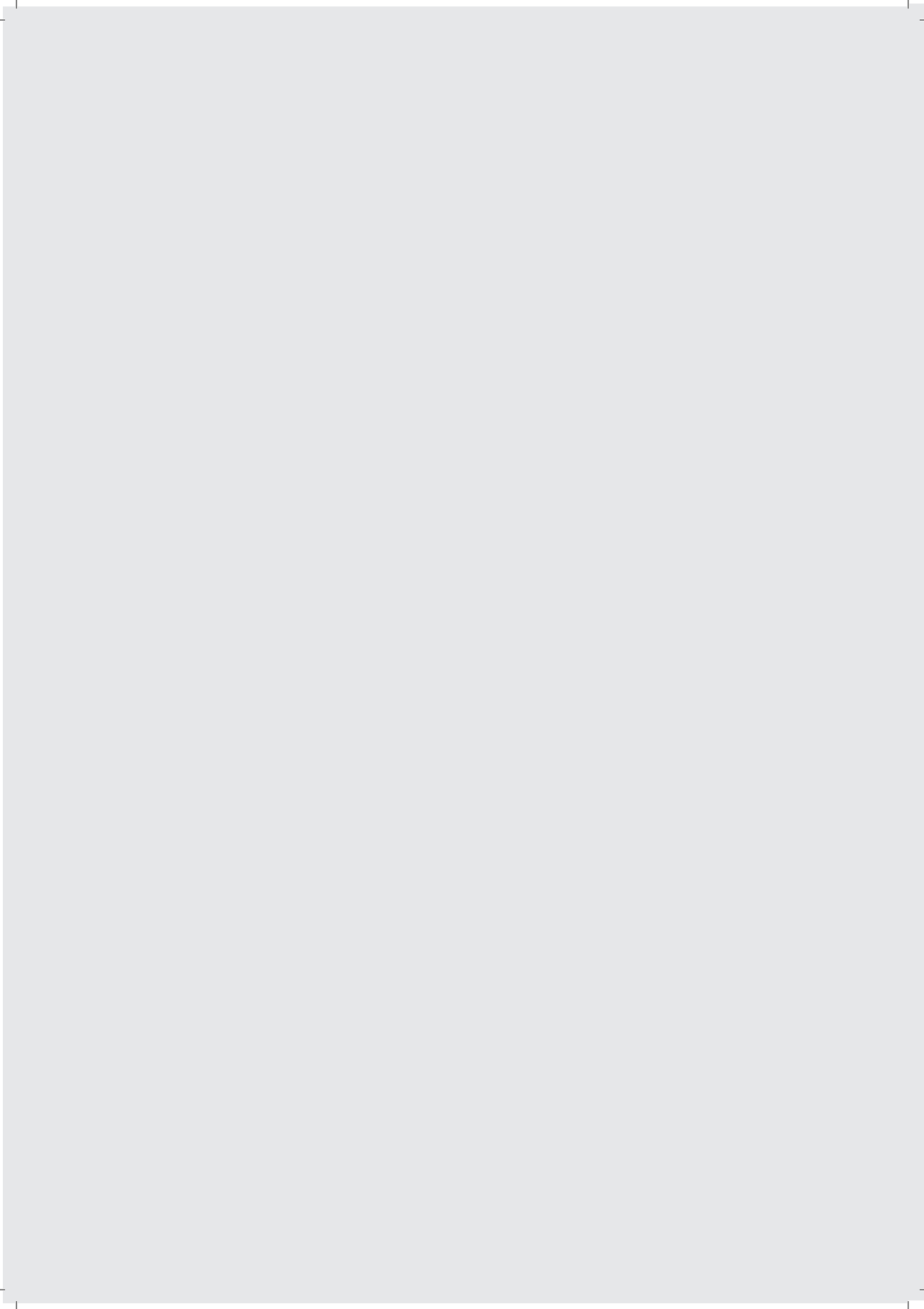
Curators: Oleksandr Teliuk and Aliona Penzii



EARLY MODERN CITY

**SOME POSSIBILITIES AND DATA FOR COMPARING
THE EARLY MODERN LVIV AND VILNUS
HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY AND URBANONYMY**

Maryana Dolynska, Orysia Vira



**SOME POSSIBILITIES AND DATA FOR
COMPARING
THE EARLY MODERN LVIV AND VILNUS
HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY AND
URBANONYMY**

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This article presents a comparative analysis of the spatial development and naming practices of two leading cities in East-Central Europe during the early modern period—Lviv and Vilnius. Both cities were founded in the 13th–14th centuries and share a number of structural and historical features. Their origins are tied to princely legends; early settlements formed around castles on elevated terrain; and the development of urban centers occurred following the arrival of German settlers who introduced legal systems based on Magdeburg and Chełmno law. At the same time, the spatial planning and administrative organization of these cities diverged significantly, revealing broader patterns in the evolution of medieval and early modern cities in the region.

The authors draw on archaeological findings, legal and fiscal sources, and historical maps to trace how these cities developed from a “castle-suburb” model into more complex structures that included jurydykas, suburbs, and urban villages. Special attention is given to naming practices—particularly of streets and city gates—as markers of memory, spatial organization, and legal authority. Referring to Ferdinand Opll’s typology of city gate names, the article reveals symbolic differences between the two urban landscapes: in Vilnius, gate names typically pointed to nearby settlements, while in Lviv, they referred to distant cities.

The article also explores how various ethnic and religious communities—Germans, Jews, Armenians, Ruthenians, Tatars, and others—shaped both the structure of the city and its naming conventions. Through examples such as Jewish Street (*platea Judeorum*), Ruthenian Street (*platea ruthenicali*), and Dominican Street (*ulica ku Dominicanom/Dominikonų gatvė*), the authors show how toponyms reflected community presence.

The spatial vocabulary of both cities is analyzed in the broader context of the “spatial turn” in urban history, particularly through the lens of Edward Soja’s ideas. In conclusion, the article shows that comparative urban studies help to understand better how city space was interpreted and organized. At the same time, it opens possibilities for interdisciplinary dialogue between researchers of Lviv and Vilnius. Such dialogue can support mutual borrowing of approaches and methods: for example, in Lviv, studies on historical topography and urban names are more developed, while Lviv-based researchers could also learn from the archaeological practices used in Vilnius for studying the urban space.

Keywords: comparative studies, early modern period, urbanonyms, Lviv, Vilnius.

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Comparing two objects, one of which the author explores while the other remains almost a “terra incognita”, due to a language barrier, is both challenging and interesting. Several studies have recently focused on the historical topography and naming of Lviv. As scholars working primarily with Lviv sources, we are especially interested in seeing how questions that emerged from our work might resonate in the context of Vilnius. Therefore, the article focuses on some points that appear shared in the urban development of both cities. This includes the settlements of medieval Catholic communities, which later played an important role in shaping the cities under urban law, and the use of intra-city names. The authors hope that this publication will raise several questions from Lviv historians to Vilnius historians.

The study of comparative urban development offers an interesting way to look at how cities have changed over time. By comparing the histories of different urban centers, researchers gain valuable insights into what influences their growth and change. This article looks at the comparative analysis of two historically important cities: Vilnius and Lviv. We hope to find common patterns and unique paths in urban development of this two cities by examining their topography, cultural landscapes, and toponymy. Exploring these aspects not only deepens our understanding of each city’s past but also adds to the wider discussion about urban history.

This article does not aim to provide a final or systematic comparison of Lviv and Vilnius. Instead, it offers several examples and questions that may help in understanding how such a comparison could be developed further. The idea to place these two cities side by side comes from a broader interest in spatial studies and historical urban studies. These fields suggest that space and names are not just technical details; they also carry cultural meanings. Our approach is exploratory. We examine moments where the two histories seem to connect, such as castle-suburb models or similar naming patterns. We also highlight cases where the comparison becomes difficult or unclear. In this way, we hope to inspire further reflection and dialogue among historians studying these cities and their urban landscapes.

Vilnius and Lviv share similar founding myths, documented by Alessandro Guagnini dei Rizzon (1534–1614) and Marcin Gruneweg (1562–?). According to these accounts, Lviv foundation site features Prince Lev hunting a dragon (Gruneweg) or a lion (Guagnini) in the middle of the 13th century¹. Meanwhile, where Vilnius was to be built, the Grand Duke was also hunting and had a dream about a wolf, after which a pagan priest advised him to establish a city and a castle atop the hill overlooking the Vilnia River².

1. О. Гваньїні, *Хроніка європейської Сарматії* (Київ: Видавничий дім «Києво-Могилянська академія»: 2007), 314–315; Я. Ісаєвич, «Альтана посеред раю»: Львів у 1582–1602 рр.», в *Львів. Історичні нариси* (Львів, 1996), 29–44.

2. K. Nastopka, “Two approaches to the myth of city foundations: Syntagmatic and paradigmatic,” *Sign Systems Studies* 30 (2) (2002): 504. <https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2002.30.2.09>.



Fig. 1. Painting of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas, unknown artist, 1709



Fig. 2. Portrait of Prince Lev Danylovych, Luka Dolynskyi (1745–1824), the end of the XVIII century

In reality, both cities were founded around the 13th–14th centuries and each had two castles, one on a high hill still known as “mountain” to this day: Gediminas’ in Vilnius and High Castle in Lviv. In both cases, there was a settlement beneath the castle, inhabited by people. We know that in the case of Lviv, it was the so-called Podil—an area without fortifications. Guagnini, however, says that Vilnius was founded as a “walled city with a long and wide radius, extending with suburbs for several miles”³. Could the mention of suburbs have been imagined by this 16th-century author based on his understanding of contemporary city designs? Archaeological findings show that Podil was indeed a place on the southwest side of Gediminas’ hill, where were settlement inhabited by Catholics existed early 14th century⁴.

Both myths and physical remnants (Gediminas’ tower and the remains of the High Castle) suggest a detailed comparative study of the period of cities near castles, the fort, which in Ukraine is known as the period of princes.

3. Гваньїні, *Хроніка європейської Сарматії*, 315.

4. I. Karpiūnaitė, “The role of the ‘German town’ in Vilnius in the second half of the 14th century,” *Ukraina Lithuanica* 4 (2017): 126, 130.

In terms of space, the time right after the castle-suburb era is when a regular city operated under some modified version of German law. We can study how such a city grew in two ways: infrastructural or administrative. Special archaeological research in Vilnius⁵ has uncovered two settlements of so-called Catholics migrants: one from the early 14th century and another from when they gained city rights after 1387. The latter was located within a part of the medieval walled city. In Lviv, around 1270, during Prince Lev's reign, a German community was invited, led by a mayor named Bertold. The prince granted him allodial land, a farmstead, and a mill situated between Podil and the village of Prince (or royal) Zniesienie. After a re-founding by Casimir III in 1356, this community became the foundation of the city center.

Both cities experienced a transitional period, where, under the castle-suburb conditions, a German community formed, initially under the castle and later in the city center. Ukrainian historians know little about Mayor Bertold Stecher and the community that came with him at Prince Lev's invitation. There are no details on the reasons for their settlement, their backgrounds, or the professions of the settlers, nor whether clergy were among them. Historical records from the 14th to 16th centuries suggest they were wealthy, as their descendants became patriciansmerchants and landowners in the suburbs⁶. More information has been gathered about the location and history of their leading mayor's properties. Three elements noted in Prince Lev's decree and Casimir III's privilege—*molendinum*, *villa*, *allodium* (a mill, a house in the countryside, an allotment)—form the core of the original layout of Lviv by the end of the 13th century⁷. This core was right next to the so-called "Virgin Mary's field," which was always described separately in documents until the 17th century and was owned by the Church of Our Lady of the Snows, the oldest Catholic church in Lviv (outside the city walls). The church, built by German settlers before 1340, was traditionally linked to Constance, the wife of Prince Lev. The field ran along the northern edge of the suburb, and the church was founded at its southern end.

As far as we understand, knowledge about the Catholic settlement and so-called "German town" is mostly based on archaeological research and the knowledge of the invitation of the Franciscan assembly⁸ to Vilnius and Gediminas' promise to grant city rights similar to Riga, namely Chelmnō. Irma Kaplūnaite concludes that archaeological research demonstrates material traces of the Livonian (Teutonic) Order in the settlement from the first half of the 14th century near the castle. A small Catholic community inhabited part of the settlement, mostly consisting of Franciscan monks. Their func-

5. I. Kaplūnaite, "The role of the 'German town,'" 125–145.

6. М. Долинська, «Нерухомість німецької родини Штегерів в пізньосередньовічному Львові: традиції та інтердисциплінарний погляд», в *Феномен мультикультурності в історії України і Польщі. Матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції* (Харків, 2016), 61–66.

7. М. Долинська, «Початки просторової локації Львова в останній третині XIII століття», *Місто: історія, культура, суспільство. Е-журнал урбаністичних студій* 6 (2019): 43.

8. Kaplūnaite, "The role of the 'German town,'" 126.

tions included spiritual care as well as administrative tasks for the grand duke. The rest were craftsmen (builders) and merchants.

In Vilnius, Germans began to settle in the area Smėlynė, a bit farther from the castle, which would become part of the city center, in the mid-14th century. Kaplunaite cites four reasons leading to the relocation of the German community: the original settlement's insufficient size, new castle fortifications in that area, and political and confessional changes. The condition for the Germans to move to the new settlement within the future Old Town was the newly established road network, with one significant landmark being St. Nicholas Church, built before the baptism in 1387, along with a nearby Franciscan monastery. In that same year, they received Magdeburg city rights.

After Casimir III conquered the Principality of Galicia-Volhynia, the area became fully settled, and later turned into the city center or the city within the walls over the following centuries. There are no documented facts proving the relocation of Bertold Stecher's community descendants from the original settlement. However, records from the end of 14th to the 15th century Lviv city books⁹ and the records in the 16th-century tax book show that the owners of houses on the Market square and major suburban estates were German families¹⁰.

At first glance, there seems to be a strong similarity in the growth of German settlements in both Lviv and Vilnius, posing a chance for comparison. Still, a researcher focusing on Lviv has many questions about the spatial layout of Vilnius old town. It appears there is no clear distinction between the city center and the suburbs. Why didn't the German community members, essential for city foundations under Magdeburg law, establish a formal plan for the city center? One assumption is they adapted to the existing layout of streets and roads, similar to what occurred with Armenian Street in Lviv. Alternatively, one might consider the shift from Chełmno law to Magdeburg law in 1387.

Therefore, from a different angle, a researcher in Vilnius may wonder how many settlers arrived with Mayor Bertold Stecher and where they lived since we only know about the mayor's estate.

The main difference between Vilnius and Lviv lies in how the spaces are organized. The development of suburban areas is equally noteworthy. Some historians argue that Lviv layout serves as a model for cities established under German law. The systematic layout of the city center reveals parcel dimensions and their subsequent sales. The 1368 privilege mentions walls around the city center, indicating it was laid out in the first half of the 14th century. Through four land donations (1356, 1368, 1415, 1444)¹¹, the city received 100 Frankish *laneus* (2,500 hectares) of land and unmeasured areas, as suggested by mapping studies indicating a similar land area. Two suburbs and seven urban villages arose from this territory, along with four more villages indirectly belonging to

9. *Pomniki dziejowe Lwowa z archiwum miasta* (1892, 1896, 1905, 1921), wydał Dr. Aleksander Czołowski et al., Tom I–IV (Lwów); *Raetska knyha Lvova* (1460–1506), upor. M. Kapral, B. Petryshak (Lviv, 2020).

10. Долинська, «Нерухомість німецької родини Штегерів», 56.

11. *Ibid.*, 40, 54.

Lviv's ownership. Urban villages are a unique feature of Lviv, and it is not excluded that their designation as villages was simply a misunderstanding in translating what Prince Lev granted to Mayor Stecher.

For Vilnius, Alessandro Guagnini highlighted the presence of stone buildings and castles in his chronicles along with a large stone bridge covered with shingles. The city was fortified in 1503–1522, and the mention of ruined castle walls dates back to the 14th century. It appears that the whole large area, densely populated with stone buildings, which would often be difficult to label as a city center in other places, was called such by the chronicler. This area was not annexed to the city all at once; various settlements gradually joined the city. There is reference to the royal village of Lavioris a few miles from Vilnius, but the author does not mention any administrative relationship between the settlements¹². Some studies refer to Lukishkes as an open field, which became a suburb by the end of the 15th century¹³. Once the fortifications were completed (1503–1522), this suburb was enclosed within the fortifications, forming the unique infrastructure of the medieval city¹⁴. One interpretation suggests the city developed according to the original concept – castle-suburb – where the suburb was represented by the entire fortified territory, as younger German settlements integrated with older ones at key crossroads, with markets and town halls appearing in new areas¹⁵. The main route of this territory—Pilies Street or Castle Street—started at the castle in the north and extended southward to the town hall, dividing the city into different confessional zones¹⁶.

This approach to urban development appears in the extensive studies by Antanas Čaplinskas¹⁷ and Józef Maroszek¹⁸, who examined the toponyms, especially street names, in Vilnius. The street names of Lviv from the 14th to 18th centuries are gathered in the “Interactive Cartography of Lviv” database¹⁹.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand Opll researched the topographic names of city gates in the Middle Ages and identified two categories. The first category included names connected to locations near the city gates, showing directions to the nearest towns or settlements. The second category involved names that indicated directions to places much farther from the city²⁰.

12. Гваньїні, *Хроніка європейської Сарматії*, 531.

13. V. Jogėla, V. Pugačiauskas, & E. Meilus, *Lukiškės: nuo priemiesčio iki centro (XV a. – XX a. pradžia)* (Vilnius: Diemedis, 2008), 291.

14. O. Valionienė, *Viduramžių Vilnius. Erdvės evoliucija (XIII a. vidurys – XVI a. pirmas ketvirtis)* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2019), 299.

15. *Ibid.*, 54–61.

16. I. Kaplūnaitė, “Between Greeks and Latins: Pilies Street in Medieval Vilnius”, *Athens Journal of History* 8 (3) (2022): 191–214. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajhis.8-3-2>.

17. A. R. Čaplinskas, *Vilniaus Gatvės: Istorija Vardynas Žemėlapiai = Vilnius Streets: History Street Names Maps* (Charibdė, 2000).

18. J. Maroszek, “Ulice Wilna w XIV–XVIII wieku,” *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* 47 (1–2) (1999): 163–186.

19. O. Vira (comp.), *Interactive Map of Lviv*, Ukrainian Catholic University, accessed July 19, 2025, <https://map.humaniora.ucu.edu.ua/en/>.

20. F. Opll, “Topographische Benennungen in der mittelalterlichen Stadt als Spiegel von Raumvorstellungen,” in *Cities and their spaces. Concepts and their use in Europe* (Köln–Weimar–Wien, 2014), 50–51.

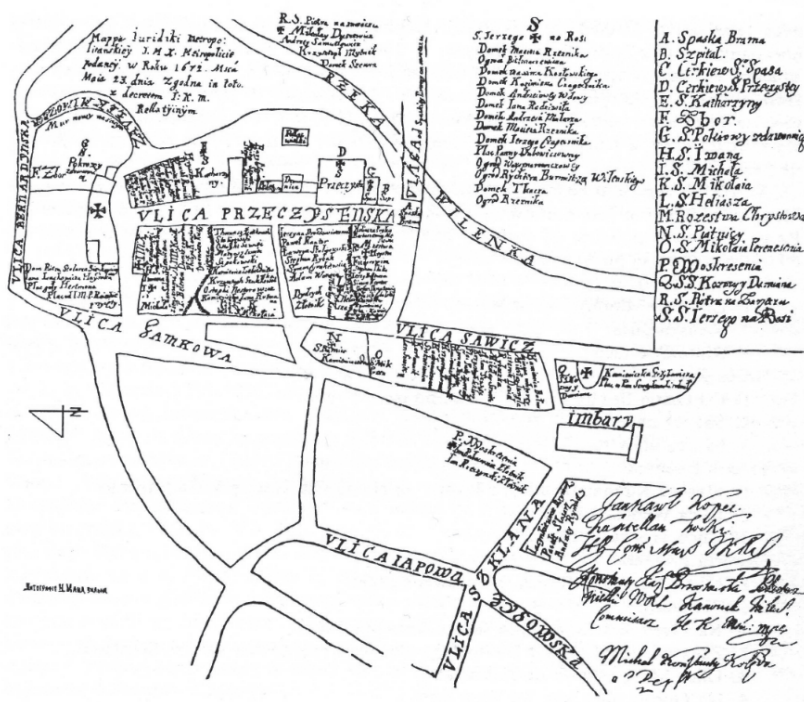


Fig. 3. The plan of the jurydyka of the Uniate metropolitans in Vilnius, 1672. Published in J. Maroszek, "Ulice Wilna w XIV-XVIII wieku", Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej 47 (1-2) (1999): 163-186, 170

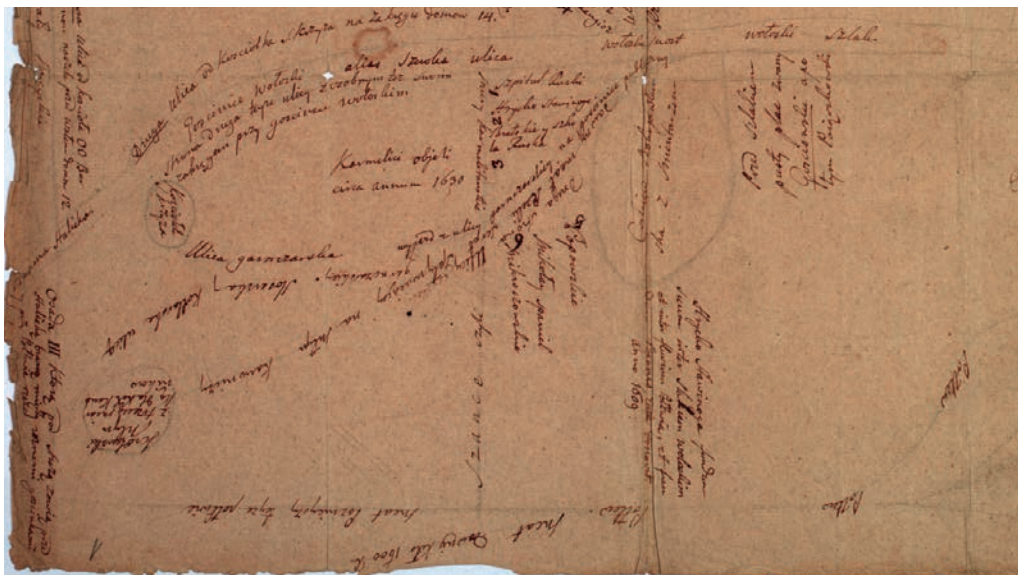


Fig. 4. Handwritten schematic plan of a part of Halych suburb, the end of the 17th century. Central State Historical Archive in Lviv, f. 742, op. 1, spr. 1073

Interestingly, the topographic names of gates in Vilnius belong to the first category. They signify routes to nearby settlements, such as Rudninki Gate, Trakai Gate, and Vilija (Vilnius) Gate (*Rūdninkų vartai*, *Trakų vartai*, *Vilijos (Vilniaus) vartai*)²¹. In contrast, city gates of Lviv were named after distant cities, such as Krakiv Gate (*porta Cracouiensis*) and Halych Gate (*porta Haliciensis*). Thus, they fall into Ferdinand Opll's second category.

Regarding street names, researcher Leszek Bednarczuk²² also points out the names of alleys in Vilnius. In Lviv, documents did not record any alley names for a long period.

Overall, according to Leszek Bednarczuk and Józef Maroszek, the first mentions of street names in Vilnius are from the 16th and 17th centuries. The “golden age of Vilnius” between the 16th and early 17th centuries arose from free economic growth that was not disturbed by military actions²³.

In contrast, the earliest records of street names in Lviv go back to 1382. Comparing street names across such different timeframes may lack objectivity due to the long gap between mentions in Vilnius and Lviv. Still, this comparison helps reveal historical similarities between street names in both cities.

As noted above, the spatial planning of the two cities was quite different. Lviv began to form in the late Middle Ages when it became a major center in the Principality of Galicia-Volhynia. After regaining Magdeburg rights in 1356, Lviv underwent significant spatial changes. It became a typical city governed by German law, featuring a central grid-like structure surrounded by defensive walls, two suburbs, and urban villages.

In Vilnius, there was little regulation of spatial planning. The layout of the city lacked defined squares. Streets followed paths from pre-urbanization times. Other streets, serving as intersections of main roads, emerged as needed without predetermined designs. As a result, they were often randomly or abruptly ended, driven by local conditions²⁴.

Nevertheless, similar names persisted, indicating a shared cultural aspect in the naming among European cities²⁵, as noted by researcher Kwiryna Handke.

Both cities featured a Market Square (*Rynok circulus*), which served as an important trading hub for residents and merchants. Close to the market in Lviv were slaughter stalls (*Laniorum Maccella*) where meat and fish were processed. *Jatkų gatvė*, where butchers also operated, dates back to 1636 in Vilnius²⁶.

Ethnic names often rank among the oldest in medieval and early modern cities. Vilnius, being a polyethnic city, had a wide range of such names. For instance, Jews began settling in Vilnius en masse in the 16th and 17th centuries²⁷, although records point to

21. Maroszek, “Ulice Wilna w XIV–XVIII wieku,” 165–166.

22. L. Bednarczuk, “Nazwy Wilna i jego mieszkańców w dokumentach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego (WKL),” *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Linguistica* V (2010): 9.

23. J. Waldoch, “Vilnius under magdeburg law,” *Proceedings of History Faculty of Lviv University* 17 (2016): 45.

24. Maroszek, “Ulice Wilna w XIV–XVIII wieku,” 163.

25. K. Handke, “Nazewnictwo miejskie — świadek epoki i cenny zabytek,” *Ochrona Zabytków* 3–4 (2004): 125.

26. Bednarczuk, “Nazwy Wilna i jego mieszkańców,” 9.

27. U. Pawluczuk, “Wilno w okresie Soboru 1514 roku,” *Latopisy Akademii Supraskiej* 5 (2014): 89.

Žydu gatvė as dating back to 1633²⁸. In Lviv, as Myron Kapral indicates, the Jewish community developed soon after the foundation of the city in the 13th century. The first mention of Jews in Lviv is found in a privilege from 1356, granting them the right to establish their own judicial system under the guidance of the city's alderman²⁹. This enabled Jews to establish their rights and judicial system, build synagogues, schools, and other institutions to meet the needs of their community. The first mention of Jewish Street (*platea Judeorum*) in Lviv city center is from 1383, and there was also a community in the Krakiv suburb with another Jewish street.

It is also important to discuss the Ruthenian part of Vilnius, which declared the presence of this confessional group in Vilnius. The Ruthenians in Lviv occupied a smaller area—only one urban quarter with a street named “*platea ruthenicali*,” first recorded in 1471.

Around the 14th and 15th centuries, Grand Duke Vytautas settled several thousand Tatars and several hundred Karaites near Vilnius in Trakai³⁰. They settled by the Tatar Gate (Totorių vartai) and had their own Tatar Street (Totorių gatvė). In Lviv, there was a Tatar Gate (*porta Tatariensis*) and street, but only until 1436³¹, when the name changed to “Krakivska.” Historian Olexandr Osipian suggests that during the 13th and 14th centuries, the “Tatars” likely were military settlers, possibly descendants of the Polovtsi (Cumans, Kipchaks), who entered service with Prince Danylo during the Mongol invasion and settled in his lands³². Over time, they assimilated with residents of Lviv, leading to the disappearance of the name. The exact reasons for changing the name to Krakivska are unclear.

The Dominican Order arrived in Lviv as early as the late 14th century. There was a church of the Holy Body and a street of the same name in the city. However, over time, the street transformed, and starting in 1623, it was referred to as “*ulica ku Domini-canom*.” The name Dominikonų gatvė in Vilnius appears from the late 18th century.

Both cities featured Castle Streets leading to their castles—Pilies gatvė and “*platea Castrensis*.” However, the name was rarely used in Lviv documents.

Many European cities had a Broad Street, including Lviv and Vilnius, with this name not always reflecting the actual width of the streets. References to such a street in Lviv emerged in the mid-15th century. Notably, Lviv had at least three distinct wide streets—two in the Halych suburb and one in the Krakiv suburb—but different records listed the street in two separate locations.

The origin of the names Dog Gate and Street (Subačiaus vartai and gatvė) in Vilnius and “*platea canina*” (Psi Rynek) in Lviv is challenging to determine. Maria Lowmianska

28. Bednarczuk, *Nazwy Wilna i jego mieszkańców*, 11.

29. М. Капраль, *Національні громади Львова XVI–XVIII ст. (соціально-правові взаємини)* (Львів, 2003), 82–83.

30. Pawluczuk, “Wilno w okresie Soboru 1514 roku,” 89.

31. K. Badecki, “Zaginione księgi średniowiecznego rekonstrukcyjne,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 41 (1927): 533.

32. О. Осіп'ян, «Етнічна та конфесійна ідентичності у формуванні міських “націй” Львова в другій половині XIV — першій половині XV ст. (“вірмени”, “татари”))», *Наукові записки УКУ 7: Історія* 2 (2015): 108–109.

believed that the executioner and his helpers, who removed stray dogs from the streets, lived right at the gate³³. Such an interpretation is rather a derivation of “folk” etymology, on which one should not always rely entirely. As for Lviv’s Dog Market, there are also no entirely credible theories about the origin of such a name.

Despite their different urban evolutions, both cities shared some similarities in naming certain streets and neighborhoods. Notably, some names appeared in both Vilnius and Lviv.

Comparing the histories of the two cities uncovers aspects of one city that researchers have explored based on existing sources but may be absent or unexamined in the other. This prompts the search for suitable sources and related questions. In examining the spatial development of Vilnius and Lviv, issues surrounding Vilnius territorial growth and social matters arise.

The comparison of spatial organization in Lviv after the four donations involved systematically organizing the area within the city walls and a designated space for auxiliary activities, developing gradually over time, starting within the walls. In Vilnius, the city governed by German law absorbed the castle, and later, other settlements became suburbs. Plans for the suburbs were very different.

In Vilnius, the Catholic clergy aimed to provide spiritual care for incoming Catholics, while in Lviv, this role fell to the wife of Prince Lev and her court. No sources have confirmed the presence of Franciscans in Lviv until the 13th century, although literary tradition acknowledges that they were there.

This brief review encourages a closer look at why these two cities, nearly contemporary and founded under similar circumstances, have such different layouts. Additionally, it is worth examining other factors, such as urban nomenclature and spatial location concerning “jurydyka.”

All these questions lead to the study of the essence of urban space—exploring the relationships and interactions between names and the areas described by those names. This aligns with Edward William Soja’s³⁴ spatial turn and the principle that there are real objects, and their names are the result of the imagination of the inhabitants about these objects³⁵.

Comparative studies of urban development histories offer unique insights into various historical and spatial aspects. They motivate further research into how cities evolved and interacted with their environments over time. A comparative approach makes it possible to identify the unique features of each city and establish general trends in their development. The study of these aspects leads to the generalization of the principles of the ontology of urban space and the study of various aspects of the relationship between names and territories.

33. Maroszek, “Ulice Wilna w XIV–XVIII wieku,” 166.

34. H. Manikowska, “Główne nurty badań nad przestrzenią miasta średniowiecznego,” *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej* 2 (2015): 189–199.

35. М. Долинська, «До питання методики класифікації урбанонімів як історичного джерела», *Вісник Харківського національного університету імені В. Н. Каразіна. Серія «Історія України. Українознавство: історичні та філософські науки»*, 27.

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MODERNIZATION IN CITIES: EMPIRE AND SOVIET CONTEXTS

THE HISTORY OF MATCH PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT IN VOLYN. RIVNE MATCH FACTORY

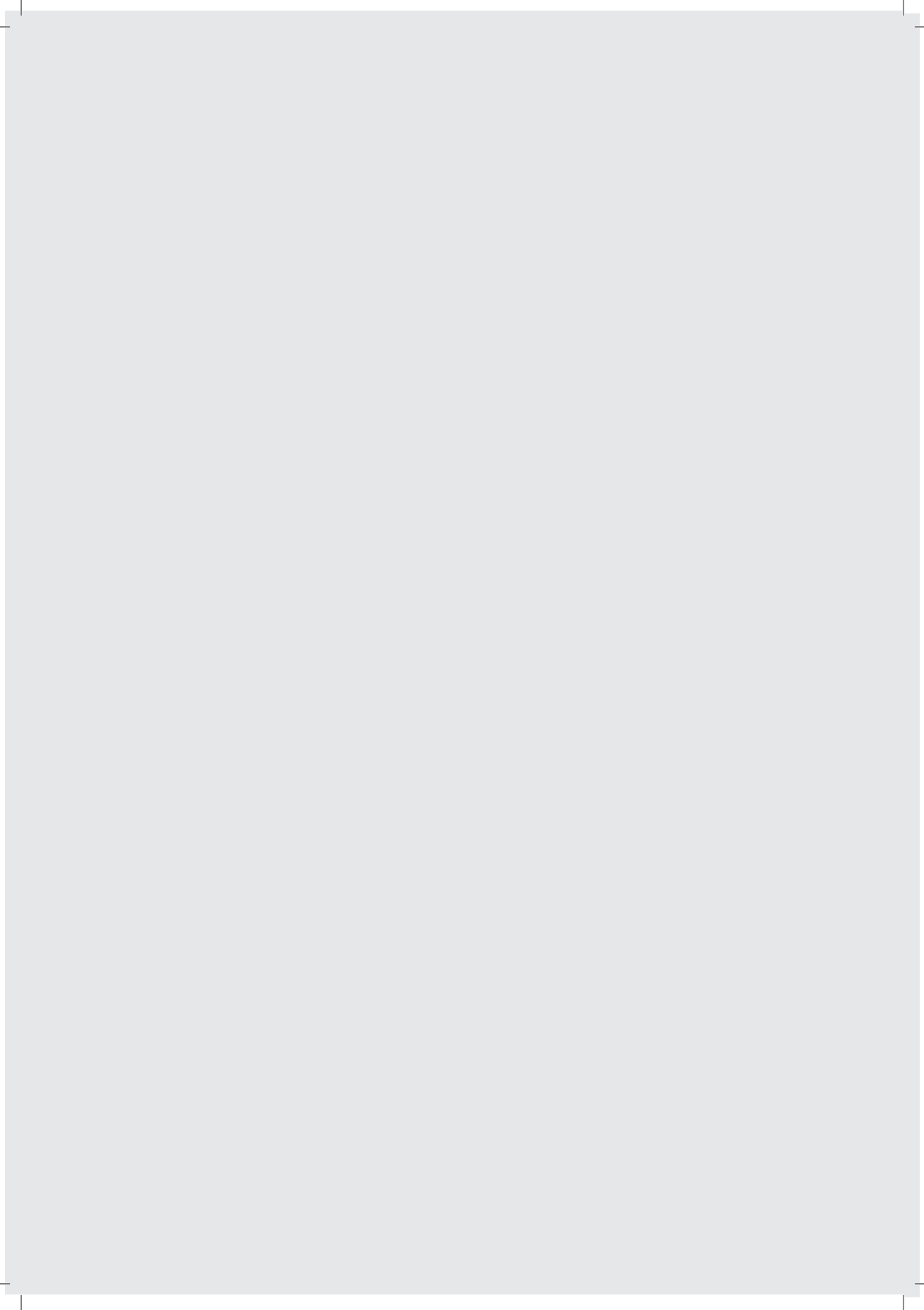
Tetiana Samsoniuk, Dmytro Maslov

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

Oleg Zubchenok

HEURISTIC POTENTIAL OF GENERAL POPULATION CENSUSES IN HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY

*Tetiana Vodotyka,
Serhii Vodotyka*



**THE HISTORY OF MATCH PRODUCTION
DEVELOPMENT IN VOLYN.
RIVNE MATCH FACTORY**

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This article presents a comprehensive study of the historical development of match production in the Volyn region, with a particular focus on the Rivne Match Factory. The research traces the evolution of the industry from artisanal to industrial-scale production, highlighting key technological innovations, including the introduction of safety (non-phosphorus) matches. The technological process is examined in detail, encompassing all stages from wood preparation to the application of the ignition compound and packaging of the final product.

Special attention is given to the socio-economic impact of the factory on the local community, particularly the creation of employment opportunities for women and children in Rivne in the early 20th century. Based on archival sources, cartographic materials, and unique photographs taken during Semen An-sky's 1912 ethnographic expedition, the study reconstructs the likely location of the factory and its operational characteristics.

The article analyzes the reasons for the factory's closure in 1922, including economic instability, the establishment of the Polish state match monopoly, and discriminatory policies against Jewish entrepreneurs. A separate section is devoted to the attempt

to revive match production in the Rivne region in 1998, which led to the establishment of a modern factory in the town of Berezne. This study underscores the significance of the match industry as a driver of regional economic and social development and contributes to the preservation of historical memory regarding lesser-known aspects of local industrial heritage.

Keywords: match production, Volyn, Rivne Match Factory, safety matches, socio-economic impact, historical reconstruction.

INTRODUCTION

The production of matches is inextricably linked to the use of white phosphorus—a toxic, unstable, and flammable substance—for making fire. What really revolutionized it, however, was the invention of the so-called safety matches by the Swedish professor Gustav Erik Pasch in 1840. Johan Edvard Lundström, his compatriot, improved on Pasch's idea and patented the matches that contained no white phosphorus. Instead, the non-toxic and non-flammable amorphous (red) phosphorus was added to the striking surface compound. Later, he joined forces with his brother, entrepreneur and industrialist Carl Frans Lundström, to open a safety matches factory in Jönköping, Sweden, between 1844 and 1845¹.

However, it was not only a matter of the technology's evolution. Since 1868, as production costs decreased, the simple manufacturing technique became accessible to workshops and small cooperatives². Small factories thus began popping up across Europe, and artisanal production of safety matches gained substantial momentum as a result of the technology's simplicity and low initial costs.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the Russian Empire, which ruled Volhynia at the time, the rise in domestic red phosphorus production in 1871 led to the growth of the match industry. In addition to covering domestic demand, the ramp-up in domestic production enabled the empire to start exporting red phosphorus in 1885, the output of which reached almost 50 tonnes in 1892³.

The accessibility of raw materials was another growth driver in the match industry. Match factories were often built near woodlands, which was especially beneficial to forest owners, as it provided an opportunity to dispose of unclaimed low-quality timber littering forests and hindering the growth of new plants. In combination with relatively low initial investments, these factors made match production extremely lucrative in a suitable environment.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RIVNE MATCH FACTORY

The first match factory in Volhynia was established in Pulyny, a city near Zhytomyr, in 1883 by the urban commoner Yankel Morgulis⁴. The factory manufactured both phos-

1. "The Lundström Brothers — The safety match," Tekniska museet, accessed November 5, 2025, <https://www.tekniskamuseet.se/en/learn-more/swedish-inventors/lundstrom-brothers-safety-match>.
2. "How Common Were Safety Matches in the 1850s–60s?" Historum: History Forums, accessed November 15, 2025, <https://historum.com/t/how-common-were-safety-matches-in-1850s-60s.171570/>.
3. И. Клопад, *Спичечное производство в современном его развитии* (Москва: Типо-Литография И. Е. Ермакова, 1896), 4.
4. Учасники проєктів Вікімедія, «Пулини — Вікіпедія», Вікіпедія, 20 січня 2005, <https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulyny>.

phorus-containing and safety matches, producing 9000 rubles' worth of them annually. For unknown reasons, however, the factory that employed 35 people⁵ ceased operation by 1895.

In 1895, Moses Goldberg founded a match works in the town of Tunyky, now part of Kremenets, Ternopil Oblast. In 1896, its annual output reached 116,000 safety matches⁶. Almost simultaneously with Goldberg, urban commoner Aaron Margulis launched match production in Kostopil. Over the course of 1896, his works produced 635,000 safety matches⁷. Until 1897, it employed 50 workers and used a steam machine⁸. However, the factory ceased operations by 1899 for unknown reasons. Presumably, its equipment was dismantled and moved to Rivne. After the Kostopil works' closure in 1899, the Kremenets factory remained the only match producer in Volhynia up until 1905⁹.

In 1906 (or 1902, according to other sources¹⁰), urban commoner Aaron Margulis and merchant Itzka Zup founded their match factory in Bila, a suburb of Rivne¹¹. From 1909 onward, the factory became known as "Volyn." It had 70 workers, who made up to 1 million matches per year. The factory flourished, doubling its output within just one year¹². In 1911, it already had 80 workers¹³. In 1913, the enterprise was renamed Trading House of the Descendants of Margulis and Zup. When World War I broke out in 1914, its production decreased somewhat, and the workforce shrank to 70 people.

As for the factory's concrete location, it is known to have been standing in the area of the present-day Bila Street, near the railway station. By analyzing available sources, e.g., maps and location plans, we pinpointed its most likely location (Figs. 1, 2).

Analysis of the *Sketches of Traversing Triangulation Points and Control Survey Points in the City of Rivne* revealed, in the description of control survey point No. 203, a mention of Building No. 7, owned by Margulis (Fig. 3), one of the match factory's two co-owners, which gives reasons to assume the site was the Rivne Match Factory's location. An additional analysis of a city plan of Rivne dating back to the 1930s enabled us to pinpoint the location of the above-mentioned Margulis building (Fig. 4).

5. П. Орлов и С. Будагов, *Указатель фабрик и заводов Европейской России: Материалы для фабрично-заводской статистики*, составлено по официальным сведениям Департамента Торговли и Мануфактур, изд. 3-е., исправленное и значительно дополненное (Санкт-Петербург: Типография В. Киришбаума, 1894).

6. *Фабрично-заводская промышленность России. Перечень фабрик и заводов*, т. 63, VI (Санкт-Петербург: Типография И. А. Ефрона, 1897), 37.

7. А. Блау, ред., *Торгово-промышленная Россия: Справ. кн. для купцов и фабрикантов* (Санкт-Петербург: Типография А. С. Суворина, 1899), 7.

8. *Ibid.*, 17.

9. Орлов и Будагов, *Указатель фабрик и заводов*, 5; А. Погожев, ред., *Адресная книга фабрично-заводской и ремесленной промышленности всей России*, изд. 2-е (Санкт-Петербург: С. С. Кальмансон, 1907), 23.

10. *Фабрики и заводы всей России: Сведения о 31, 523 фабриках и заводах* (Киев: Кн-во т-ва Л. М. Фиш, 1913), 19.

11. Л. Езиоранский, *Фабрично-заводские предприятия Российской империи* (Санкт-Петербург: Издание Торгового Дома А. Срока и К°, Т-во «Справочник», Типография Н. П. Зандмана под фирмой В. Безобразов и К°, 1909), 5.

12. *Список фабрик и заводов России 1910 г.: по официальным данным фабричного, податного и горного надзора*, составлено редакцией «Торгово-промышленной газеты» и «Вестника финансов», 2-е изд., (Москва [и другие]: издано Торговым домом Л. и Э. Метуль и К°, [1910]), 37.

13. *Фабрики и заводы всей России*, 421.



Fig. 1. A 1884 map fragment, with the Rivne Match Factory's location marked on it



Fig. 2. A 1916 map fragment, with the Rivne Match Factory location marked on it

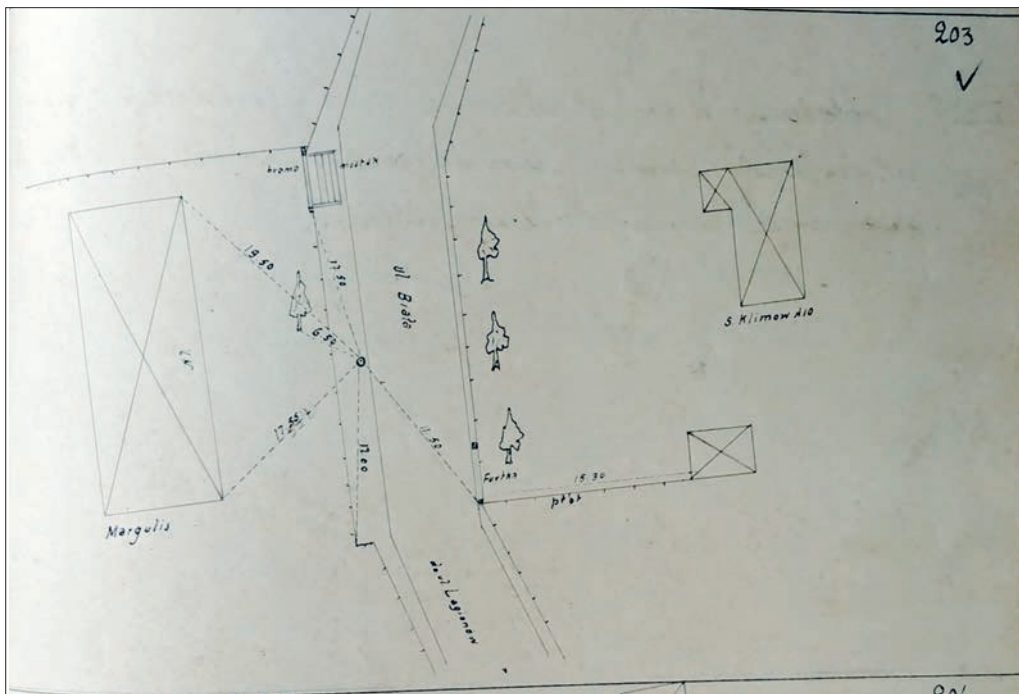


Fig. 3. The layout sketch for the control survey point No. 203, located on Bila Street, as seen in the Sketches of Traversing Triangulation Points and Control Survey Points in the City of Rivne



Fig. 4. A fragment of the Rivne city plan dating back to the 1930s, with the Rivne Match Factory location marked on it

PROCESS

The matches—and safety matches especially—were usually made from aspen, with other options including linden, poplar, willow, and, sometimes, pine and spruce. Importantly, brittleness/brashness of the wood, as well as any twisted grain or knots, could negatively affect the quality of the finished product.

To make splints—this is what matchsticks are called¹⁴—naturally dried wood was used, which was greatly prized. The logs, about 1 meter long, were split into four, debarked, and mounted on a bench. Then the wood was cut with a specialized tool resembling a carpenter's plane into long sticks of varying thicknesses. After each pass, the wood was leveled with a carpenter's plane to remove surface irregularities. The process continued step by step, layer by layer, until the wood was completely used up.

There were two main techniques for making splints. For longitudinal shaving, an earlier method, specialized machines were used (Fig. 5). A piece of wood was mounted at the frame's edge and then cut with a tool having multiple sharpened tubes, which, in a linear motion, cut the wood into splints. The tool was driven by a connecting rod and an eccentric, attached to the shaft, on which pulleys and a flywheel were mounted. These machines had a double-sided design, with a tool mounted on each side of the driving shaft. Some models were equipped with an air blower for removing debris or broken splints.

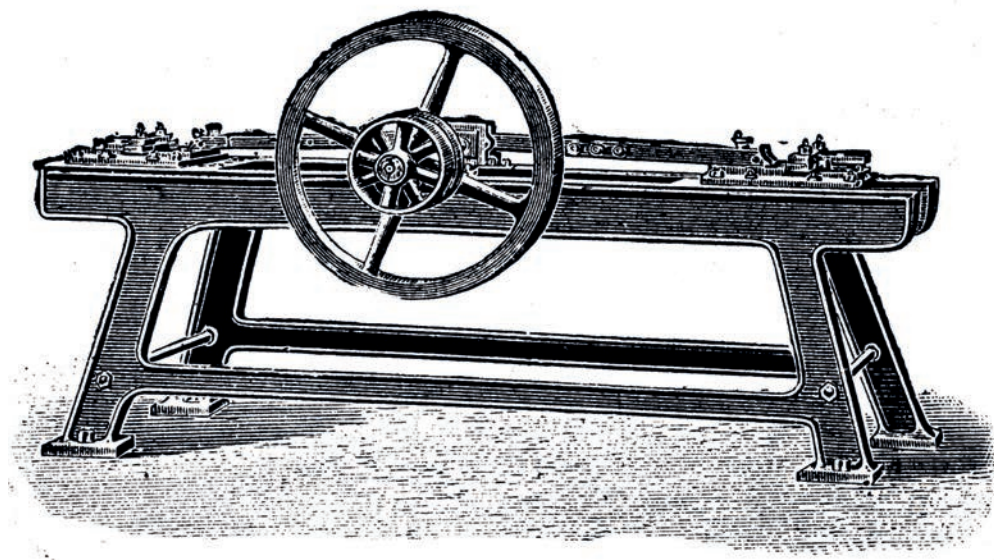


Fig. 5. A splint-making machine as seen in the *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary*

14. Н. Осипов, «Спички», в *Энциклопедический словарь*, под ред. Ф. Брокгауза и И. Эфрона (Санкт-Петербург: Семеновская Типолитография И. А. Эфрона, 1895), 31, 265–280.

Then bundles of about 650 splints were formed and stored in a dry place to preserve their quality. At the next stage, the splints were cut into 45–50 mm pieces, corresponding to the length of a match. For that, a dedicated shearing machine was used (Fig. 6). A bundle of splints was placed in gutter **A** and then moved forward until it reached the stopper plate **P**, which was lowered before the gutter with a pedal. Then the bundle was cut to length with shears **B**, driven by the lever **m**. The plate **P** could be shifted to adjust the distance to the shears **B** and precisely regulate the length of matches.

This excessively wasteful production process was used primarily in the early days of the match industry, before the introduction of more efficient methods.

As match factories ramped up production, they updated the splint-cutting process, improving efficiency by reducing waste and optimizing the use of raw materials.

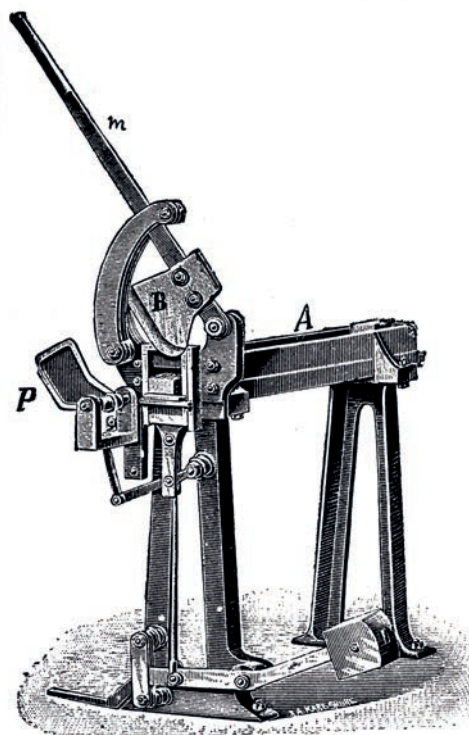
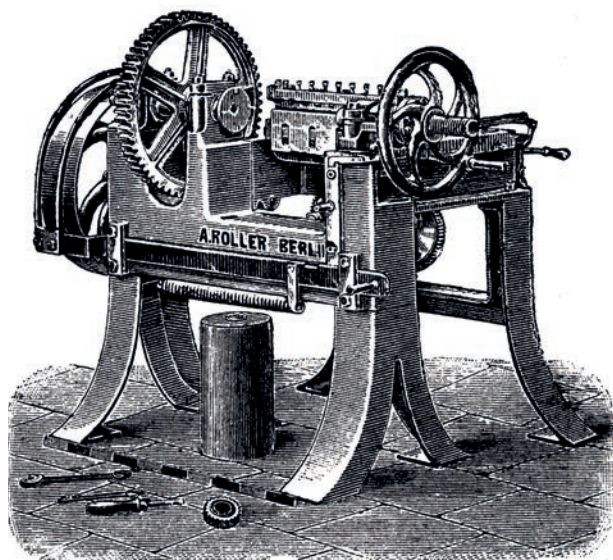


Fig. 6. Machine for cutting splints to length as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary



First, timber was cut into logs about 40 cm in length, which were steamed in the vessels with boiling water to soften the wood. The logs were then mounted on a specialized machine (Fig. 7) that spun them lengthwise in front of a wide blade that gradually sheared the veneer into a continuous, thin strip. Feed speed could be adjusted to achieve the required ve-

Fig. 7. Veneer machine (40 cm) as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

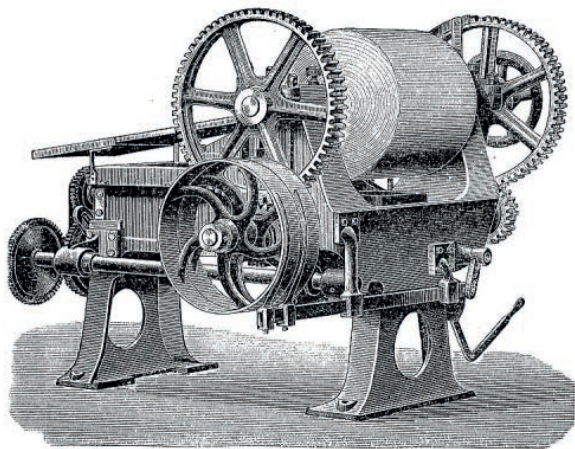


Fig. 8. Veneer machine (60 cm) as seen in the *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary*

neer thickness. Positioned behind the horizontal knife were the so-called splitters—multiple vertical knives that cut veneer into strips as narrow as the match.

That technique was more efficient than the previous ones, as it substantially reduced waste and enabled production of higher-quality matches.

At the time, there were also more powerful machines that could handle 60-cm and longer logs (Fig. 8). They boosted labor productivity, bringing daily output to 10 million matches¹⁵.

Finally, the veneer strips were fed into the cutting machine (Fig. 9), where a vertically moving knife cut them. The strips were placed in the machine's gutter in two stacks of 50–60, and pressed down by corrugated rollers or straps at the top and bottom. Every time the knife was lowered, the strip bunch automatically moved forward by the thickness of a match, allowing for precise cutting of splints.

The resulting splints were placed in the 1×0.7 m open-top wooden boxes, which had bottoms made from ~2 mm-thick wire screen mesh for proper airflow. The splints were arranged so that air could freely circulate between them, allowing each to dry properly. The drying period lasted 3 to 6 hours, depending on conditions and the technology used.

Drying was necessary to reduce the moisture content of freshly cut splints from 50–55% to a level acceptable for use in match production. Smaller works dried their splints naturally in open air or in well-ventilated rooms. In mass production, heated air was used to preserve the form and shape of the future matches.

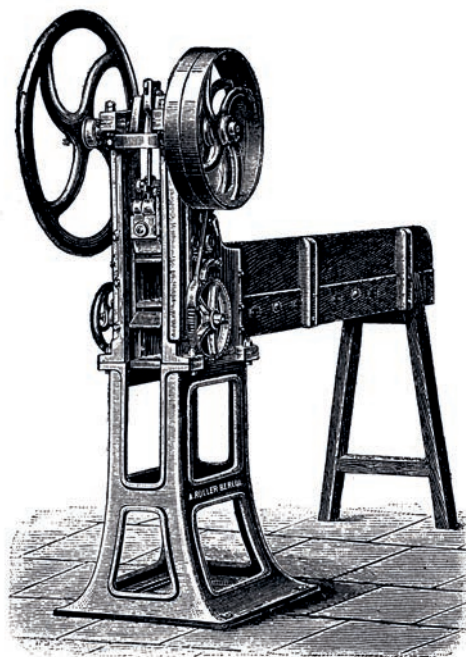


Fig. 9. Strip cutter as seen in the *Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary*

15. Осипов, «Спички».

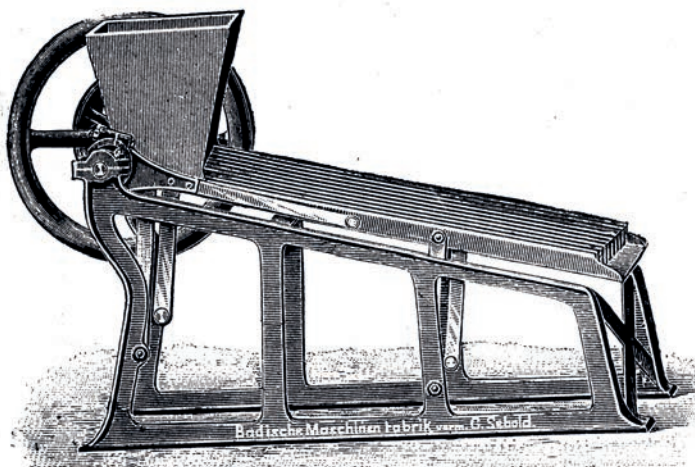


Fig. 10. A splint-cleaning machine as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

The dried splints were then put into the cleaning machine (Fig. 10) to remove debris. Debris fell through the holes in the platform, while the intact splints eventually made their way to the other end of the machine. Hole sizing helped reliably separate debris from the high-quality material for the next manufacturing stage.

Before applying the igniting compound, the splints were aligned and arranged in parallel rows. For that, they were placed in a machine similar to the cleaning machine (Fig. 11).

A box divided into compartments was put on the platform, constantly shaken by an eccentric drive. Lengthwise, every compartment corresponded to the length of a match. As the box was shaken, the splints fell into the compartments between the dividers, and debris fell out through the bottom holes.

At the final stage, before the application of the igniting compound, the splints were inserted into dipping frames. At their simplest, these frames consisted of a wooden board **a** (20 mm thick, 30 mm wide) with two vertical iron bars **b**. Installed onto them

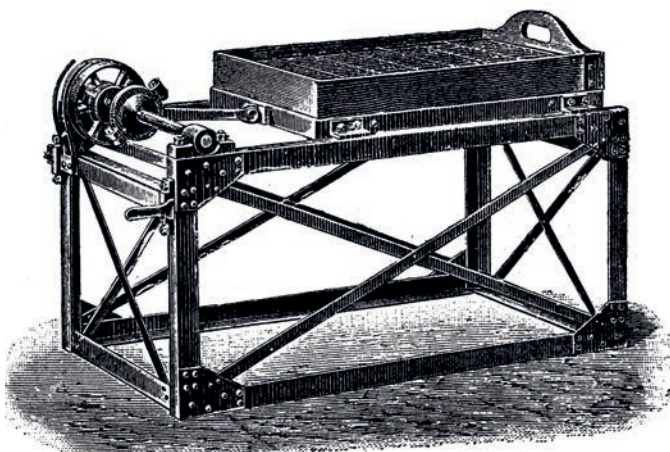


Fig. 11. A splint-aligning machine as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

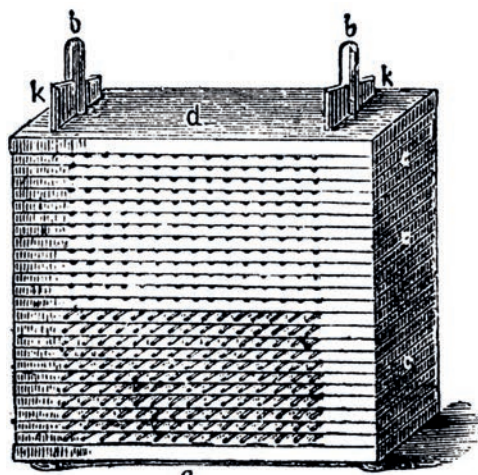


Fig. 12. Dipping frames as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

with wedges **k**. Before the final locking, the frame was adjusted by tapping it flat against a level surface, so that all the splints protruded equally. As a rule, each frame held from 2200 to 2500 future matches. For larger production volumes, the frames were filled not manually but with specialized machines (Fig. 13, 14). Those machines could be driven manually or by a transmission. Over a 10-hour workday, a machine like that could fill about 600 frames.

Applying the igniting compound was the key part of match production. For that, a preheating plate (Fig. 15) was used, which was the most widespread piece of equipment at the time. First, a hot gas from the burning fuel heated a large iron pan with fine quartz sand to preheat the splints before applying the compound.

After that, the gas heated the dipping pan (Fig. 16), filled with the molten igniting compound. The dipping pan had two parts, a flat and a depressed one. The former was larger than the frame and served for dipping splints into the igniting compound. The latter, in fact, served as a reservoir to keep the level of the compound constant in the former.

were other boards **d** of the same width but somewhat thinner (about 10 mm thick) (Fig. 12).

Each of these boards had a row of parallel impressions, running perpendicular to its length. Spaced 2–3 mm apart, they were just deep enough for about a third of the splint thickness to protrude above it. As the frames were filled manually, workers holding splints ran their hands along the board **d** in a practiced move, placing a splint in every impression. After that, the board was slipped over the bars **b**, and then more were put on top, gradually building the frame.

To secure all splints, the assembled frame was covered with a thick board **d** and locked

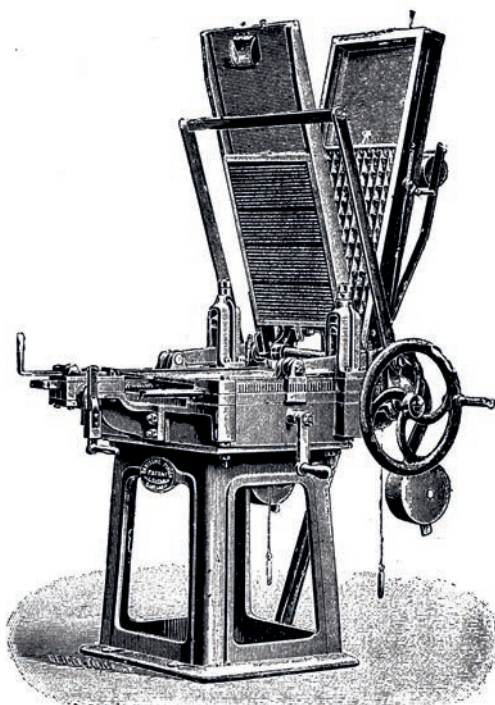


Fig. 13. A frame-filling machine as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

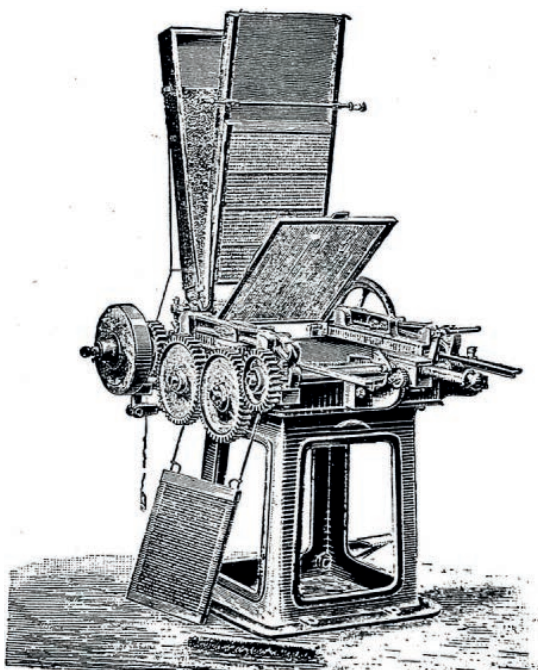


Fig. 14. A frame-filling machine as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

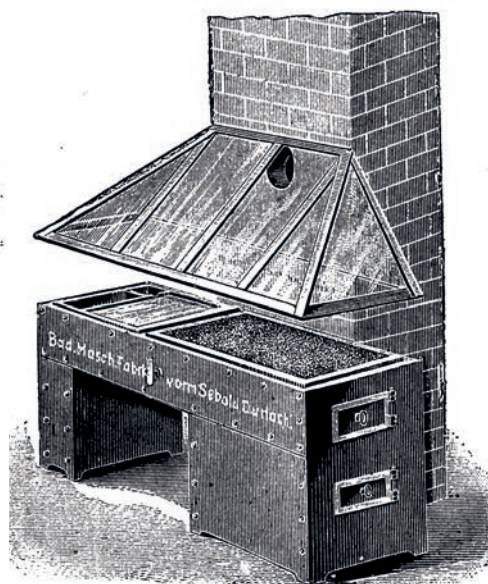


Fig. 15. A preheating stove as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

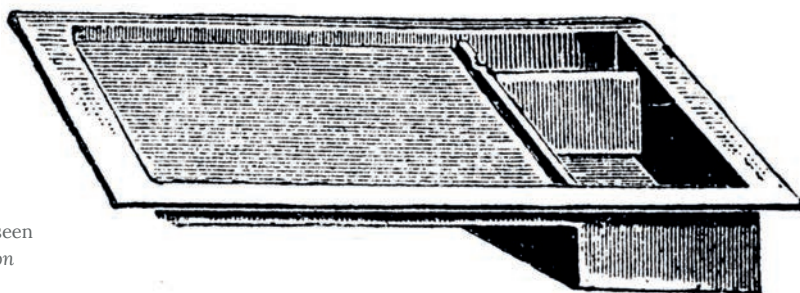


Fig. 16. A dipping pan as seen in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary

After the dipping, the frames were moved to the drying chambers. Drying was a crucial part of the process, requiring strict adherence to safety measures. During match drying, noxious fumes formed, and a large quantity of products in heated premises posed a serious fire hazard. For these reasons, drying chambers were set up in domed stone buildings, which enhanced fire safety. Heating devices were installed to heat the air to 25–30 °C evenly. To avoid inadvertent ignition, the chamber floor was covered with a 3–4-cm layer of sand, which could be used to extinguish any spontaneous ignition.

Another important part of the production process was the manufacturing of wooden matchboxes. The veneer for boxes was made on the same machine as for the splints, but the knife was adjusted for a thinner cut. Then it was cut into parts for the box interior and exterior. The boxes were covered with paper, and a compound containing red phosphorus was applied to the exterior sides to form striking surfaces. Then the boxes were filled with matches, wrapped up, and packaged.

At smaller factories, it was done manually, often by women. Larger enterprises relied on machinery for automated bundling, which substantially increased production speed. Usually, matches were packed in paper packs of 10, and 100 packs were shipped in wooden boxes for sale.

PRODUCTION AT THE RIVNE MATCH FACTORY

In 1909, S. An-sky (real name—Shloym Rappoport) initiated a major ethnographic expedition to the Pale of Settlement. First, he approached the leadership of the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society, founded in St. Petersburg in 1908, with the proposal. By 1912, S. An-sky received approval in principle to proceed with the expedition, with Baron Vladimir Gintsburg, son of the famous Jewish philanthropist Horace Gintsburg, donating 10,000 rubles.

The ethnographic expedition began on July 1, 1912. It included the writer and ethnographer S. An-sky, musicologist and composer Joel Engel, and photographer and artist Solomon Yudovin. On the first trip, they traveled across Volhynia, starting in Ruzhin and finishing in Lutsk. It was then that seven photos of the Rivne Match Factory were taken¹⁶. Some of the unique photos by Solomon Yudovin reveal valuable information about the organization and specifics of the production process¹⁷.

Timber was delivered to the factory as a raw material for match production. It was cut into logs in the factory yard and then hauled into the shop for further processing, as shown in the photograph (Fig. 17).

16. Учасники проєктів Вікімедія. «Ан-ський Семен Васильович», Вікіпедія, 10 травня 2005, https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ан-ський_Семен_Якимович.

17. «Евреи на фотографиях экспедиции Ан-ского», My shtetl, дата звернення 12 вересня 2025, https://myshtetl.org/articles/jews_volyn.html.



Fig. 17. The Rivne Match Factory grounds. Photo by Solomon Yudovin

The logs were probably cut into 40-cm lengths by hand or with circular saws across the grain. After that, they were steamed, and then, probably, were taken to the veneer machine, similar to the one shown in the Fig. 7. The veneer then went to the strip cutting machine, like the one shown in the Fig. 9. A running machine of that kind is seen in the photograph (Fig. 18). Gathered into a large box, the splints went to drying and debris removal.

Before dipping, splints were put into dipping frames. The Rivne Match Factory had specialized machinery for that (Figs. 19, 20).

The filled frames were dipped into the igniting compound in the dipping pan (Fig. 21). The frames were then dried in the drying chamber, after which the finished matches were removed (Fig. 22).

Meanwhile, the internal and external parts of the match box were made (Fig. 23). The wrappers used as box packaging at the Rivne Match Factory over the years are shown below (Figs. 24, 25)



Fig. 18. A strip-cutting machine at the Rivne Match Factory. Photo by Solomon Yudovin



Fig. 19. A frame-filling machine at the Rivne Match Factory. Photo by Solomon Yudovin



Fig. 20. A frame-filling machine at the Museum of the Bohemian Forest



Fig. 21. A dipping pan at the Rivne Match Factory. Photo by Solomon Yudovin



Fig. 22. Dipping frames at the Rivne Match Factory. Photos by Solomon Yudovin



Fig. 23. Production of matchbox blanks at the Rivne Match Factory

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT

By 1912, the Rivne Match Factory employed an average of 80 workers. Since most production operations were not physically straining, women and children accounted for a substantial part of the workforce. Literature of the time described the realities of match production as follows: "... at the factory that makes matches from pre-made splints, almost nine out of ten of workers can be children, women, elderly, cripples and infirm, which one may hire for a modes wage even in the summer season..."¹⁸ Corroborating this is the 1912 photo by Solomon Yudovin (Fig. 26), in which there are 51 workers, including 11 men, as well as 40 women and children.

Such a simple production in a small city like Rivne, which had a population of ~27,000 in 1912, definitely had a positive impact. It provided workplaces for women and children, becoming another source of income for family budgets.

THE FACTORY'S CLOSURE

In 1922, the Rivne Match Factory ceased production and closed. The official reasons for that are unknown, but it was probably due to economic and ethnic factors.

18. Клопад, *Спичечное производство*.

Volhynia became part of the Polish Republic after the signing of the Treaty of Riga in 1921. The financial state of the Polish economy at the time could have a substantial impact on the factory's operations, as inflation there reached 3600% in 1923. To stabilize the situation, Poland, one of the world's largest producers of matches, imposed a state monopoly on match manufacturing—one of the eight economic monopolies at the time—to regulate match output and sales, as well as to secure revenue for the state.

Established in 1925, the monopoly encompassed all match factories in the country¹⁹. The Polish government immediately sold it to Ivar Kreuger, a Swedish-American financier, for 20 years in exchange for a 6-million “match loan.” Having gained control over the market, Kreuger hiked match prices to recoup his expenses as quickly as possible, and eventually resold the right to the monopoly to the Kreuger Concern²⁰. The monopoly drove small match producers out of the market, forcing them to close up or transition to other kinds of production. Besides, after Poland regained independence in 1918, economic pressure on its Jew population increased, which could affect their entrepreneurial activity, too²¹. Jewish entrepreneurs had difficulty obtaining licenses, accessing loans, and overall were discriminated against, which created adverse business conditions²². Jewish industrial elites in Drohobych and Boryslav also fell victim to this kind of persecution²³.



Fig. 26. Workers at the Rivne Match Factory

19. A. Willma, “Zapałki. Jak znika jeden z najważniejszych wynalazków ludzkości,” *Gazeta Pomorska*, February 10, 2025, <https://pomorska.pl/zapalki-jak-znika-jeden-z-najwazniejszych-wynalazkow-ludzkosci/ar/c1p2-27205513>.

20. M. Urban, “Historia Polski z perspektywy pudełka zapałek,” *Marka*, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://marka.edu.pl/2023/06/28/historia-polski-z-perspektywy-pudełka-zapałek/>; М. Водзінські, «Як розповідати про єврейську історію у Польщі? Від єврейських колекцій до Музею історії польських євреїв», *Lvivcenter*, 13 липня 2017, <https://www.lvivcenter.org/discussions/how-to-tell-story/>.

21. Учасники проєктів Вікімедіа, «Історія євреїв у Польщі», Вікіпедія, дата звернення 10 травня 2025, https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Історія_євреїв_у_Польщі.

22. В. Москалець, «Єврейські індустріальні еліти Дрогобича та Борислава», *Lvivcenter*, 28 травня 2021, <https://www.lvivcenter.org/urban-seminar/jewish-industrial-elites/>.

23. Москалець, «Єврейські індустріальні еліти».

LEGACY AND MEMORY

At the regional level, there is hardly any information about the Volyn factory that operated in Rivne in 1909–1922. Its precise location is unknown, and no toponym connected with the facility has survived to this date.

However, the history of match production in the Rivne Oblast gained an unexpected continuation in the late 1990s. After the USSR collapsed, there was a pervasive need for this kind of goods. Therefore, a decision was made in 1998 to establish the Rivne Match Factory at the Berezne facility, formerly affiliated with Soviet enterprise Gazotron²⁴.

Modern factory equipment was purchased from Swedish Match, a major Swedish producer, for DEM 17 million, allocated by the Ukrainian government²⁵. Swedish Match is one of the world's leading producers of matches. The new Rivne factory made high-quality safety matches and successfully competed with Belarusian and Russian producers. Raw materials came primarily from Ukrainian enterprises: aspen was supplied by Rivnelis, cardboard—by the Obukhiv Cardboard and Paper Mill, paraffin wax—by the Drohobych Oil Refinery²⁶.

In 2011, the factory was declared bankrupt amid financial problems, unable to pay for leased equipment. However, as early as November 2007, the impounded equipment was already leased to the Ukrainian Match Factory. This private enterprise now handles all aspects of the production and sale of matches. Meanwhile, its state-owned partner supplies raw materials, transportation services, and packaging. Around 90% of the state-owned company's staff transitioned to the private firm.

CONCLUSION

The production of matches in Volhynia began at the end of the 19th century, driven by technological advances and the availability of raw materials. The first match factories were founded by local entrepreneurs, which boosted the region's economic growth. Match production included multiple stages, from wood preparation to the application of the igniting compound. Match works relied on a range of equipment and tools to ensure efficient manufacturing. Also, they created workplaces for locals, including women and children, which had a positive impact on the region's economy and provided an additional source of income for families. The closure of the factories was due to economic factors and national policy at the time, including the state monopoly on match manufacturing and discrimination against Jewish entrepreneurs. The 1990s saw a revival of match production in the Rivne Oblast. However, the new factory went bankrupt in 2011 due to financial problems.

24. Учасники проектів Вікімедіа. «Українська сірникова фабрика», Вікіпедія, дата звернення 10 травня 2025, https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Українська_сірникова_фабрика.

25. «Історія Рівненської сірникової фабрики... у коробках (+фото)», Чарівне, 17 вересня 2013, <https://charivne.info/news/-istoriya-rivnensko-sirnikovo-fabriki-u-korobkakh-foto>.

26. «Історія Рівненської сірникової фабрики... у коробках (+фото)», Чарівне, 17 вересня 2013, <https://charivne.info/news/-istoriya-rivnensko-sirnikovo-fabriki-u-korobkakh-foto>.

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**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.

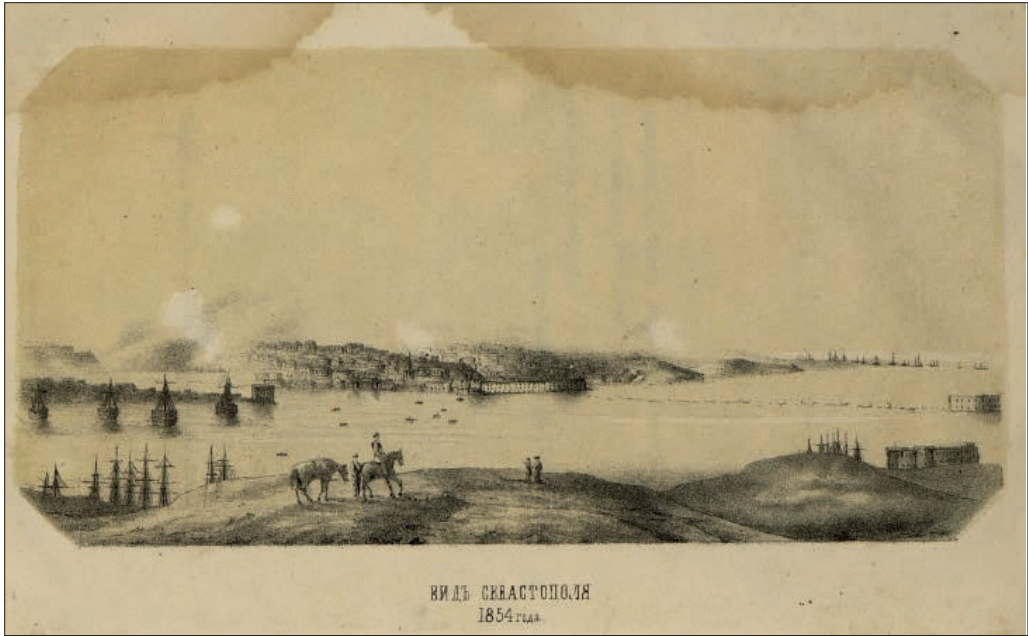


Fig. 2. Sevastopol during the Crimean War, 1854.

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

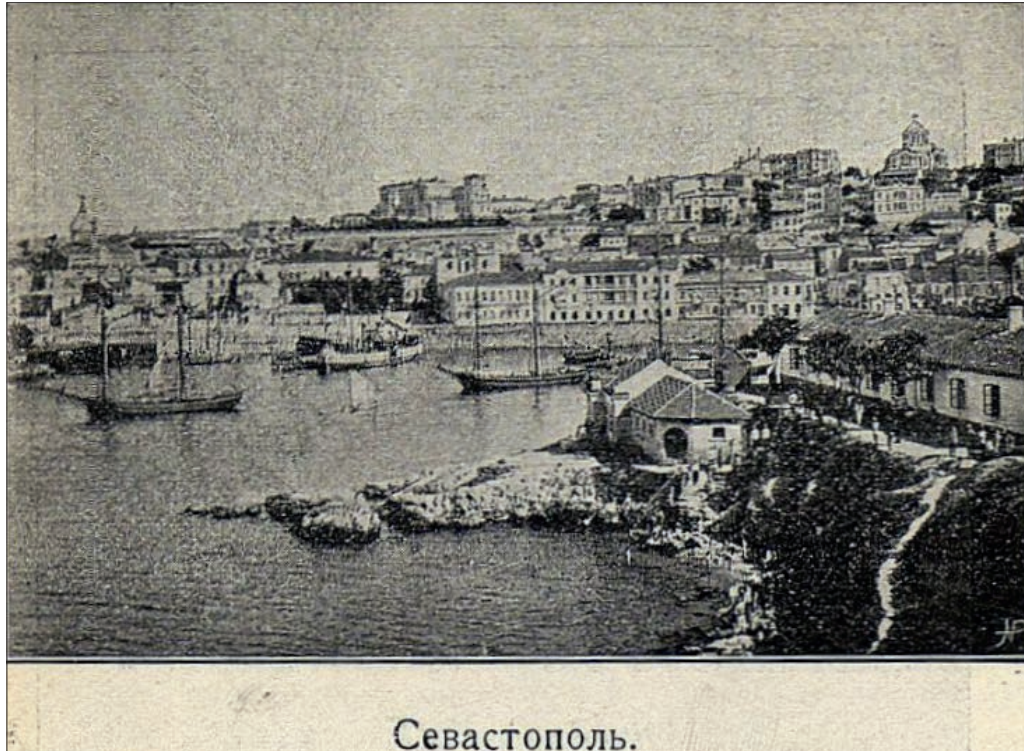


Fig. 5. Sevastopol's urban space in the early 20th century (as seen in the guidebook).

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. Сибиряков, «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. *bid.*; 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.

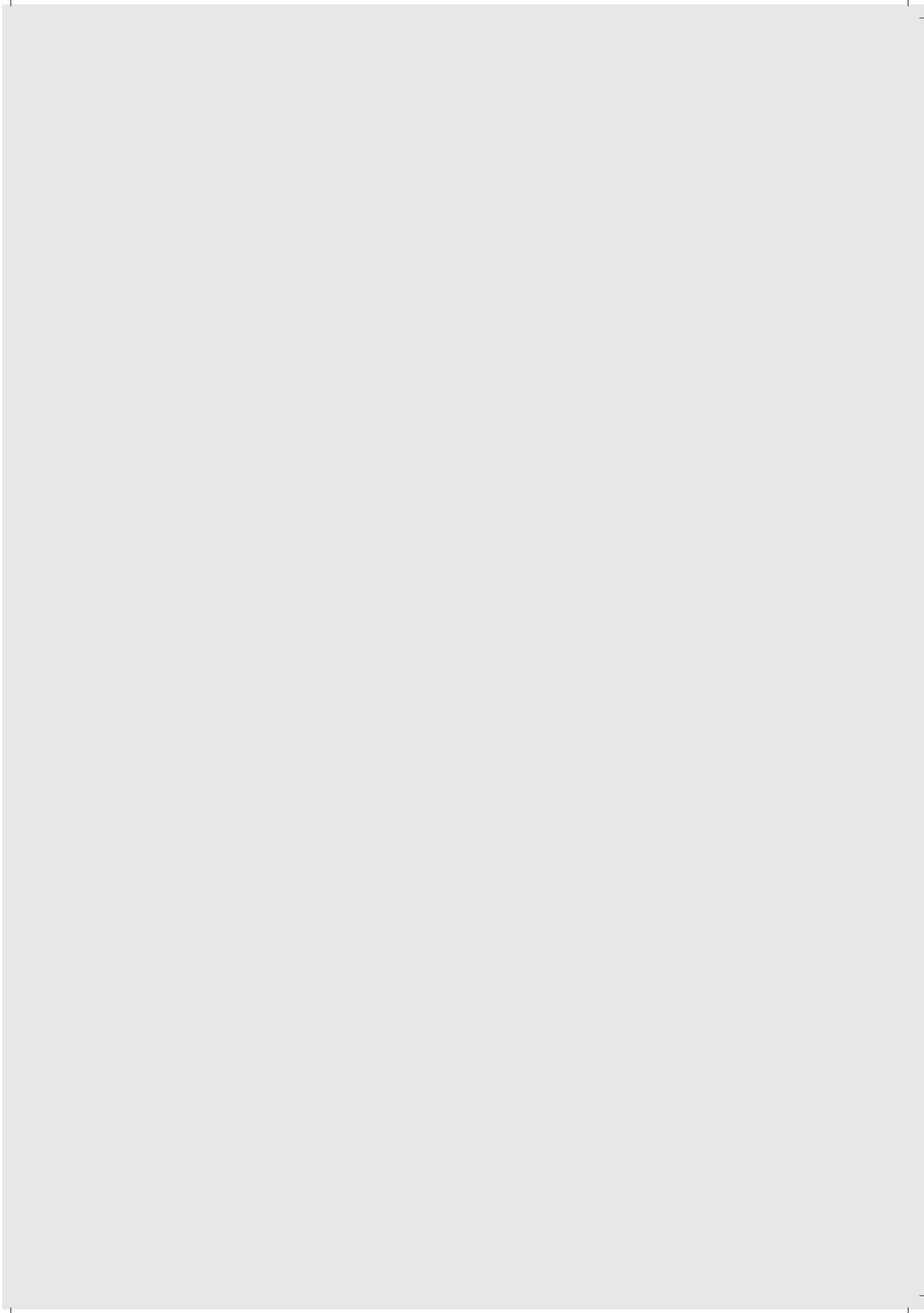
Third, the analysis enables documenting the image of Sevastopol's high symbolic stability, which retained its key military memory coordinates across historical contexts. The texts of various periods systematically reproduce the same topoi of heroism—battlements, panoramas, cemeteries, harbors, and monuments 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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**HEURISTIC POTENTIAL
OF GENERAL POPULATION CENSUSES
IN HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHY**

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The article analyzes the heuristic potential of general population censuses as a key source for historical demography, using All-Imperial Population Census of the Russian Empire in 1897 as a case study. It examines the role of censuses in the formation of demography as a scientific discipline and their importance for state governance from the early modern period to the 20th century. Particular attention is paid to the census program, methodology, publication of results, and the structure of its statistical tables.

The study explores the informative value of the 1897 census for investigating population size, social structure, urbanization, migration patterns, levels of education, linguistic and confessional composition, occupational structure, and socio-economic transformations in Dnieper Ukraine at the end of the nineteenth century. Special emphasis is placed on methodological challenges in using census materials, including difficulties in reconstructing ethnic composition due to the absence of ethnic self-identification in the census program, the specific recording of native language and religion, and changes in administrative and territorial boundaries.

The article concludes that despite the ideological limitations of the census program, the 1897 census remains one of the most reliable and informative sources for the study of historical demography, socio-economic history, and modernization processes. Its heuristic potential has not yet been exhausted and can be further expanded through critical analysis, recalculation of data, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: historical demography, population censuses, 1897 census, Russian Empire, Dnieper Ukraine, urbanization, migration, social structure, ethnolinguistic composition, modernization.

The general population censuses have traditionally been the primary source for population history research, and rightfully so. In fact, according to Auguste Comte, they laid an objective, source-based foundation for demography as a science. The attempts to replace them with a sham gobbledygook of various disparate databases have never panned out. General censuses in particular create that credible foundation that the government's policy requires in all areas of society's life, from defense to the sizing and structuring of social expenditures.

Population censuses were conducted as early as in Ancient Rome. Specifically, the Roman Republic used adult male censuses to track its potential military strength. During the modern period, they became indispensable and effective tools for governance. For instance, Canada conducted its first official nationwide census in 1871. Since the mid-20th century, censuses have been quinquennial and, in addition to improved schedules and methods, have been supplemented by municipal censuses.

According to the United States Constitution (Article 1, Section 2), the population is enumerated at least once every ten years, with the country's first federal census dating back to 1790¹. Notably, the USA has a dedicated federal agency responsible for running demographic censuses—the United States Census Bureau.

In the Old World—primarily Western Europe—censuses have a long history: Belgium held its first in 1846 and established a National Registry in 1968 as a database of information about its every citizen. Denmark's history of demographic censuses began in 1769; Finland's—in 1749; France's—in 1801; Germany's—in 1719; Iceland's—in 1703; and Sweden's—in 1749.

Despite acknowledging the need to track the country's mobilization potential, the imperial authorities in the Ukrainian territories under the Russian Empire rule did not recognize the pressing need for a general census until after lengthy discussions at the end of the 19th century. Furthermore, they ignored the new social processes, brought about by industrial modernization, i.e., the formation of socio-economic classes of entrepreneurs and wage workers, stratification of rural and urban population, the artificial nature of traditional statuses, Russians' complete loss of prevalence in the ethnic and national composition of population, the predominance of non-Russian ethnicities, etc.

On January 28 (February 9 O.S.), 1897, the Russian Empire conducted its first and only general population census. It was an event of principal importance in the history of Ukrainian demography and urban studies.

Meanwhile, Census data is underused and often misused in the literature on historical demography and urban history. The huge information potential of census materials thus mostly remains just that—a potential. This study aims to analyze the heuristic potential of 1897 General Population Census data and provide a critical overview of traditional and newly developed methods for leveraging it in historical demography.

1. Constitution of the United States, transcript, National Archives, accessed December 22, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

The Census was a survey of the entire population by trained census takers in winter, when migration was minimal. Overall, it was an event of great state significance that involved thorough preparations, preliminary and benchmark surveys, detailed processing and publication of results, the involvement of demography scholars, and a sizeable budget providing for rewards and incentives. These aspects, as well as some others, are worth the attention of Ukrainian state bodies.

Let us start by reviewing the published census results. Throughout 1897–1905, about 200 high-quality publications were released in the First General Population Census of the Russian Empire series, which includes thematic, summary², and regional volumes (89 volumes and 119 books on governorates and major cities). For domestic researchers, it is worth turning to summary volumes and the books dedicated to Ukrainian cities and governorates, e.g., Volhynia, Taurida, Ekaterinoslav, Podolia, Poltava, Kharkov, Chernigov, and Bessarabia governorates and the city of Odesa³. All these publications are available on the internet from the digital vaults of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and the website of the Institute of History of Ukraine, which makes them easily accessible.

Each volume includes a preface, a short overview of the main statistical data for the governorate, and two summary tables presenting the population data, distributed by uyezd and city, sex, birthplace, station, faith, native language, literacy, and population density. For example, let us look at the volume with Taurida Governorate data⁴.

Following the preface are 25 tables, mostly combined by multiple attributes, with territorial distribution by uyezd and city, as well as by urban and rural population. There are tables with the data on the present and resident population data, population distribution by household (household member count, presence of third persons and hired workers), population composition by age and sex, as well as by the sex and literacy combination, distribution by the age and marital status, and combination of residents by station (hereditary titles, personal nobility and non-nobility officials, and others). Each social station group is divided into categories: Born in the uyezd of residence, born in the governorate of residence, and born in other governorates and countries.

Table VII contains rather detailed information on the distribution of “non-local” (born outside of their governorate of residence) residents by birth place—a cross-tabulation of place of residence (uyezd/city) and place of birth within the Empire (97 administrative divisions—governorates and regions) or abroad (32 units—mostly countries, with multiple historical regions indicated within Germany; Asia, Africa, and Central American countries are also indicated)⁵.

2. *Общий свод по империи результатов данных первой всеобщей переписи населения, произведенной 28 января 1897 г., в 2-х томах* (Санкт-Петербург: МВД, 1905); *Численность и состав рабочих в России на основании Всеобщей переписи населения Российской империи 1897 г., том 1–2* (Санкт-Петербург: МВД, 1906).

3. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г., т. 41, Таврическая губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904); *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г., т. 47, кн. 1, Город Одесса* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904).

4. *Ibid.*, 1–3.

5. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г., т. 41, 44–55.*

Population distribution by estate is provided with a usual combination: in terms of territory—by governorate/city/rural area, and then similarly by uyezd. The social estate composition includes families with breakdown by husbands and wives of hereditary nobles, personal nobles, and non-nobility officials, Christian clergy, distinguished citizens (hereditary and personal), merchantry, urban commoners, peasantry, Cossacks, allogeneous people, Finland-born people without indication of their estate (an example of double-counting and a source of calculation-related problems for inattentive users), foreign subjects, and persons outside these estates. The last field is problematic because such indicators are a common sign of a social estate crisis, even though this field covers such minorities as foreign colonists⁶.

Table IX is fairly informative, providing population composition by literacy and education (higher, secondary vocational, and general secondary education), social estate, age, and sex, with all the data organized by governorate, uyezd, city, and village. It goes without saying that it includes unique factual material about the actual level of education by age, sex (which gender studies scholars will find interesting), place of residence (cities of various categories and villages), estate, and more, which provides an opportunity to demonstrate the social orientation of education in the Russian Empire.

Table X shows marital status by estate, including the specifics of birth rates in various estates. As usual for censuses, the data is broken down by administrative division.

Popular among the researchers since Perestroika are the data from Tables XII–XVI with the confession data (provided with the usual administrative division breakdown): Orthodox Christians and Edinoverie followers, Old Ritualists, Armenian Gregorians, Armenian Catholics, Catholics, Lutherans, Protestant confessions, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Anglicans, other Christian confessions, Karaites, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and other non-Christian confessions. Table XIII shows the breakdown by language, with the sex of respondents indicated. Tellingly, the Groups & Languages column includes in the Russians category the speakers of “Great Russian,” “Little Russian,” and “Belarusian”⁷. It echoes the Putinist sentiment that Ukrainians are part of the Russian people (even if somewhat spoiled by Banderites) rather than a separate ethnicity. This census also distinguishes Poles and speakers of Slavic (Czechs, Croatians, Bulgarians), Baltic (Lithuanians, Samogitians, Latvians), Romance (Moldovans, French, Italians) languages, Germans and speakers of other Germanic languages (Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, English), Greeks, Albanians, Armenians, Persians, Ossetians, Romani, Jews, Kartvelians (Georgians), Caucasus mountain peoples, Finno-Ugrians (Finns, Estonians, Cheremis, Votians, Mordvins, Hungarians), speakers of Turkic/Tatar languages (Tatars, Chuvash, Turks, Kirghiz), and speakers of Arabic and “Syro-Chaldean” (presently encompassing dialects of Aramaic)⁸.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 94.

8. Ibid., 94–97.

Table XIV offers a combination of three attributes: territorial, as usual in the censuses; confessional according to the criteria indicated above, with literacy indicated in addition to sex for each confession; and native language.

All the language groups mentioned above are classified by administrative division and confession, which means one can find out the number of Russophones by confession in Dneprovsky Uyezd, as well as in Berdiansk, Orikhiv, Oleshky, etc⁹. Importantly, many researchers, journalists, and bloggers reference this table. In most cases, however, they process data incorrectly, as we will discuss below.

Table XV provides population breakdown by native language, literacy, and age groups¹⁰. The respective differences illustrate not just the intrinsic savagery of Russians in matters of education, but also the Empire's actual policy regarding the study (or lack thereof) of the languages of non-Russian peoples, including Ukrainians. The effect of education on estate, mobility, and, finally, the formation of the Ukrainian nation drew the attention of multiple Ukrainian scholars, including Bohdan Kravchenko, the author of the treatise *Social Change and National Consciousness in 20th-century Ukraine*¹¹. The Ukrainian indigenous people's education survey documented an equally terrible situation: The Census distinguished only Karaites and Crimean Tatars, mixing Krymchaks with Jews, and "forgetting" the Cis-Azov Greeks altogether¹².

Table XVI contains specific data on the marital status of various age groups, which may serve as a source for research on the history of marriage, particularly marriage age. In combination with the breakdown by native language, it provides insight into the evolution of marriage traditions across various ethnic groups.

Tables XVII–XIX contain the data about persons with physical impairments (defects of health, speech, appearance), organized by age, native language, and estate¹³. This information is obviously a valuable source for researchers of the history of medicine, health status, dietary peculiarities, ecological situation, socio-psychological state of society, and more. We have never encountered a work by professional historians of medicine that used the data from the 1897 Census, even though general healthcare history works feature some cases of aptly analyzing them¹⁴.

The data on occupational groups (by income source or activity) in tables XX–XXIII have an extraordinary heuristic potential for studying socio-economic history, economic history, and the history of the population's social profile. For instance, Table XX: Governorate-level Population Enumeration by Occupational Groups and Age distinguishes 64 occupations, which were supposed to encompass the widest possible

9. Ibid., 98–125.

10. Ibid., 126–165.

11. Б. Кравченко, *Соціальні зміни і національна свідомість в Україні XX ст.*, пер. В. Івашко і В. Корнієнко (Київ: Основи, 1997).

12. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 41, 126–164.

13. Ibid., 169–183.

14. І. Робак, *Організація охорони здоров'я в Харкові за імперської доби (початок XVIII ст. — 1916 р.)* (Харків: ХДМУ, 2007), 97–98, 263–278.

array of income sources for the Census. Overall, it succeeded, as our estimates show that of 424,547 people surveyed, only 2,217 (0.522%) did not indicate one of the proposed occupations as their own (case in point—the Taurida Governorate)¹⁵.

As to the documented occupations, none of the domestic censuses known to us offers such a detailed list: Administration, Judicial & Police, Military (USSR kept this number secret since the end of the 1920s), Clergy (with breakdown into Orthodox, Other Christians, and Non-Christians), Education, Science & Arts, Healthcare, Convicts (another figure that the USSR did not disclose), and more. Some groups are fairly unusual for today, e.g., Income from Capital & Immovable Property and Parents' & Relatives' Money, which oddly includes the individuals unemployable by age, rentiers, and landlords.

Agricultural Workers are divided into Farmers, Cattle Breeders, and Beekeepers (sic!), even though in reality peasants had to mix these activities, so the division is only theoretical. According to leading scholars of nomadism, even traditional nomads worked the land¹⁶. Equally odd is the separate Fishing & Hunting category, since hunting ceased to be the primary source of subsistence in Ukraine a few hundred years before the Census. That said, one could earn the main part of their income from hunting in the backwoods of Polesia, e.g., by selling the pelts of beavers, foxes, martens, and other fur animals. Meanwhile, agriculture was a complex family affair: children tended to geese, pigs, and calves (as Ostap Vyshnia wrote in his humoresque *How We Used to Study*), women were responsible for the vegetable garden and more, and the hypothetical hunter husband also devoted most of his time to working in his household anyway.

Therefore, farming was the main source of subsistence, while hunting primarily earned money. Budget surveys, a more reliable source, corroborated this picture¹⁷. It was a typical situation for semi-subsistence and subsistence farming households. At the same time, fishing and livestock provided livelihoods for specialized commodity businesses. Obviously, these nuances had to be factored in while perusing the Census materials.

Mining (Group 22: Ore Extraction & Mines) and metallurgy are also distinguished as separate industries. Rather detailed is the analysis of manufacturing industry—fields 24–33: processing of certain products of agriculture (livestock produce, fiber crops, tobacco), woodworking, metalworking, distillation, and food & beverage industry (indicated as “Processing of Plant and Animal Foodstuffs”). Also distinguished were the printing, manufacturing of tools, equipment, and clocks (with toy manufacturing somehow included, too), jewelry, light industry, construction, and the “Manufacture of Carriages (Animal-drawn Vehicles) and Wood Vessels”¹⁸.

15. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 41, 184–185.

16. А. Хазанов, *Кочевники и внешний мир* (Алматы: Дайк-Прес, 2002), 61–93.

17. В. Калініченко, *Селянське господарство України в період непу: історико-економічне дослідження* (Харків: Основа, 1997), 250–267.

18. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 41, 184.

Odd but characteristic for the Empire of that time are the occupation groups in the transportation industry: “Waterborne Transportation,” railways, “Carrier’s Trade” (remember the draymen of Odesa and coach drivers in cities?), and other land vehicles. Fittingly for the social era, “Post, Telegraph & Telephone” is a separate group.

The Census devoted much attention to Finance and Trade, which accounted for 25% of all groups (16 out of 64). Specifically, it distinguished banking establishments, intermediate trade, and 11 types of trade: general; cattle; grain; other agricultural produce; construction materials and fuel; household utensils; metals; machinery and weaponry; clothes, leather, and fur; luxury and devotional articles; peddling and retail delivery trade (apparently, the predecessors of today’s online trade and takeaway), and more¹⁹.

Table XXI: Population Breakdown by Occupational Groups and Uyezds/Cities contains crucial information²⁰. Above all, it is the history of economics scholars who can rely on this data to get an idea of economic specialization and the historical traditions of economic activity. Of interest to historical demography specialists will be two population groups provided for every territorial division: governorate, uyezd, all cities, governorate capital, and major cities. These are individuals with independent employment (source of income) and their family members. They reveal the quantitative composition of the families across various occupational (socio-occupational) groups, as well as the number of farming units and businesses by industry.

Sensitive data about the real socio-economic status of Ukrainians, Russians, and other ethnic groups in the Empire, are contained in the information-heavy Table XII: Population Breakdown by Occupational Groups and Ethnicity Based on Native Language²¹. In the territorial aspect, it shows the usual breakdown (governorate, rural areas, governorate cities, uyezds, and separate cities) with 64 occupation groups mentioned above. Horizontally, it distinguishes multiple ethno-linguistic (we will go into this in greater detail later) groups, with Great Russians, Little Russians, and Belarusians collectively classified as “Russians.”

It also distinguishes Poles, Czechs, Serbians and Bulgarians, Lithuanians and Latvians, Moldovans, French, Italians, Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, Dutch, English, Greeks, Armenians, Romani, and—separately—the rest of Indo-Europeans, Jews, Kartvelians (Georgians), Mingrelians, Lazi, Svane, Georgian Jews by language, and Caucasus mountain peoples. Among the Finnic peoples, it distinguishes Estonians, Hungarians, and others; the Turkish/Tatar (obviously Turkic) peoples are divided into three groups: Tatars, Turks (apparently Ottomans), and the rest of Turkic language speakers.

Let us focus on two circumstances. First, the All-Imperial Census conflated Crimean Tatars (Qirimlilar) with other Tatars, e.g., Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberian, and others, who are considered separate ethnic groups. The Putinist Russia takes after the Romanov-era

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, 186–191.

21. *Ibid.*, 192–261.

Russian Empire in that it insists on Crimean Tatars and Kazan Tatars being the same people, native to their autonomous area in the Volga region and therefore bearing no relation to their ethnic motherland—Crimea. Crimea, according to Putin’s logic, is thus just another region or, specifically, a military base of Russia. Everything else, including the interests of Crimea’s indigenous people, is of secondary importance. Second, every ethno-linguistic group is divided into “independent” earners and “family members,” which allows us to single out and analyze the specifics of each ethnic group’s socio-economic structure and the dynamics of traditional and modern family features.

The 1897 Census materials can strike today’s researchers as unusual. As such, the data obtained is a product of the census’s goal and schedule. Conducted by the imperial government as part of the official “conservative policy,” the Census had an ideological goal of affirming the strength of the monarchy’s social foundation and the importance of estate structure, as well as keeping track of mobilization potential, urbanization processes, population size, rural-to-urban and inter-governorate migration, language and religious situation, and more. That said, the Census was not intended to reveal the onset of capitalism and market relations, the formation of new social classes, and the disintegration of traditional social strata.

Therefore, a census schedule of 14 questions was formulated: full name, marital status, degree of kinship to the Head of the State, sex, age, social estate/rank, faith (confession), birth place, place of registration, place of permanent residence, native language, education (literacy and place of study), occupation (source of income) for 64 groups with separately indicated primary and secondary attributes, physical disabilities (hearing, sight, insanity), military service status, and “Absence, Temporary Leave, and Temporary Stay” as of the time of the Census²². As customary for the time, the census was conducted on a per-household basis. Notably, primary census schedules (preserved to a varying degree) are available for Kyiv and Kharkiv governorates and the city of Odesa²³.

After on-the-spot verification, the data for each individual were transferred from census schedules to punch cards. Then, calculations were run on electric accounting machines, and the results were thoroughly processed to produce a summary. The Census materials are thus considered a trustworthy and perfectly valid source in historical demography.

Naturally, the Census had its shortcomings. For instance, some forms were processed incorrectly, while others lacked some required information. However, statistical data at the time (much like now) made no pretense to absolute precision, and these technical inaccuracies in no way cast doubt on the overall results. Methodological and procedural shortcomings may have had more impact on the Census.

Specifically, there was some confusion about the “registered” population (the population liable for military service), which was registered with their rural community, even

22. В. Стешенко, «Переписи населення», в *Енциклопедія історії України*, т. 8 (Київ: Наукова думка, 2011), 130–134.

23. Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.: Каталог сохранившихся переписных листов в архивах России, Украины и других стран, accessed December 22, 2025, <https://metrics.tilda.ws/perepis1897>.

though they actually lived elsewhere, because showing a high number of people subject to military duty had benefits for the community. The level of Ukrainian language literacy, as in the case of all non-Russian languages, was substantially understated because it was estimated based on the number of people who could not read Russian. The Census data suggest Russification on a staggering scale, even if the Ukrainian language literacy declined only apparently.

For example, of 59,176 residents of Kherson, our native city and then-capital of the governorate, 39,700 were indicated as “Russians” (specifically Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians combined) of whom 31.3% (12,461) indicated Russian language literacy, while among specifically Russians the level of Russian language literacy was 33.17% (9,255 out of 27,902). Ergo, the higher literacy rate was due to the inclusion of officials and the intelligentsia. In Kherson, specifically Russians demonstrated their usual disdain toward non-Russians, their language, and culture. Among the Russians literate in languages other than Russian, there were two women.

Of the city’s 11,591 Ukrainians, 27.04% (3,134) were literate in Russian, with the Census clearly documenting discrimination against Ukrainians in education. In the lands of the Zaporozhian Sich, there were 6.66% fewer literate Ukrainians than among the Russian newcomers (a difference of 1/5). Another shocking fact is that the Census documented one (sic!) person (a woman, by the way) with Ukrainian language literacy, which accounts for 0,008% of the Ukrainian-speaking urban residents. The figures speak for themselves²⁴.

The Census was conducted in winter, as it is the season of minimal population migration, and the usual time for demographic censuses. However, in the late-19th-century Russian Empire, some activities stopped in winter, including construction, river and maritime navigation, and others in which rural residents worked as seasonal laborers. Ergo, the 1897 Census understated the intensity of the peasantry’s migration and the number of wage workers.

Also, it disregarded the actual level of urbanization due to its bureaucratic approach to determining settlement status. Some industrial hubs in Donbas, the Dnieper Region, and Kryvbas were not even considered cities, e.g., Donetsk did not gain city status until 1917, even though it had a population of around 30,000 in 1897. Meanwhile, many historical cities effectively lost their status, yet their residents were counted as part of the urban population during the Census—an important aspect to take into account²⁵.

The Census also had other minor shortcomings, none of which invalidate it as a trustworthy and reliable source widely used by researchers. However, one must take several important factors into account when perusing Census materials.

First up, the main issue is population numbers. Administrative borders of the Russian Empire’s governorates are known not to coincide with Ukraine’s current borders.

24. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 47, 157.

25. Д. Чорний, *По лівий бік Дніпра: проблеми модернізації міст України (кінець XIX — початок XX ст.)* (Харків: ХНУ ім. В. Н. Каразіна, 2007), 33–38.

Therefore, mechanically adding up populations of “Ukrainian governorates” will not paint a true picture. At best, researchers exclude Crimea from their calculations for the former Taurida Governorate lands²⁶, even though it hardly makes a difference.

Clearly, the assessment of the Dnieper Ukraine’s population as of 1897 is possible only by recalculating the population within Ukraine’s current borders, as Serhii Chornyî did in his brief reference book *National Composition of Ukrainian Population in the 20th Century*²⁷ Here, we are referring to the accurate recalculation of the 1897 Census figures within the Russian Empire’s administrative borders against Ukraine’s current borders. Moreover, it did not take an effort of epic proportions—just simple calculations and adjustments. Still, the author demonstrated attention to detail, research culture, and an understanding of how sources emerge and how to leverage them to obtain population numbers.

Now, let us dive into the calculation methodology. It is common knowledge that the Russian Empire’s administrative borders in 1897 were very different from Ukraine’s present-day state borders. At the time, the territory of Ukraine included nine governorates: Volhynia, Podolia, Kiev, Poltava, Kharkov, and Ekaterinoslav governorates in full; Chernigov Governorate without the Starodub Uyezd (now part of Russian territory); and Kherson Governorate without Tiraspol Uyezd (now part of Moldova). As for the Taurida Governorate, its territory is now entirely part of Ukraine. When it comes to the 1897 Census, however, it would be more accurate to exclude Crimea from the assessment of Ukrainian demography, as the peninsula did not become part of Ukraine until 1954. Therefore, when analyzing the demographic aspects of history based on the 1897 Census materials, it would be more accurate to include only the Berdiansk, Dnieper (Oleshky), and Melitopol uyezds—the continental part of the Taurida Governorate.

However, literature tends to “forget” to include parts of the Bessarabia, Kursk, Voronezh, Orel, and Minsk governorates and the Don Host Oblast in the calculation. Of the former Bessarabia Governorate, for example, Akkerman (presently Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy), Izmail, and Khotyn uyezds are now Ukrainian territories. Akkerman and Izmail uyezds are part of Ukraine’s southern historical region of Bessarabia. The southern part of Bessarabia is now part of independent Moldova. Khotyn Uyezd of Bessarabia Governorate is a historical and geographic region (land) included in the historical and geographic region of Bukovina and currently part of the Chernivtsi Oblast of Ukraine.

Kursk Governorate’s Putivl Uyezd is located within the boundaries of the present-day Sumy Oblast, warranting its inclusion into Ukraine while conducting historical or demographic research based on the 1897 Census materials²⁸. However, the Kursk Governorate data establish another precedent. The former territory of the Putivl Uyezd is now only partially included in Ukraine, with Krupetsk Volost remaining in Russia. How-

26. В. Константінова, *Урбанізація: південноукраїнський вимір (1861–2004 роки)* (Запоріжжя: АА Тандем, 2010), 499–502.

27. С. Чорний, *Національний склад населення України в ХХ сторіччі: довідник* (Київ: ДНВП «Картографія», 2001).

28. *Ibid.*, 34–35.

ever, recalculating the 1897 Census materials accurately with due regard to Krupetsk Volost is “impossible for lack of more detailed 1897 Census data”²⁹. The same is true for a few other territories.

E.g., two parts of the Kursk Governorate’s Grayvoron Uyezd—the villages of Myropillia and Krynychne (presently Solidarne)—as well as a part of Belgorod Uyezd, are currently part of Ukraine. Of the Oryol Governorate’s 1897 territory, several villages in the Sevsk Uyezd are now in Ukraine: Fotovyzh, Baranivka, Demyanivka, Muraviynia, Tovstodubove, Mykytske, Rozhkovychi, and Sytne, to name a few. Of the former Minsk Governorate, the part of Polesia on the Ukrainian–Belarusian ethnographic border previously part of the former Rechytsa, Mozyr, and Pinsk uyezds, i.e., Liubeshiv, Morochne, Ugrinichi, Berezove, and Kukhitska Volia volosts, is now the Ukrainian territory.

The easternmost territories of Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions used to be part of the Donetsk and Taganrog uyezds of the Don Host Oblast. Stanytsia Luhanska (the name itself is very conspicuous), a town in the present-day Luhansk Oblast of Ukraine and formerly part of the Donetsk Okrug of the Don Host Oblast, came into the spotlight due to the 2014 and 2022 hostilities during the Russo–Ukrainian War. Before the Russian occupation, Stanytsia Luhanska was home to the Museum of Don Cossacks³⁰. Many Don Cossacks’ descendants also live in the second former stanitsa (an administrative division similar to present-day territorial communities) of the Don Cossacks—Novonikolayevskaya, in the Taganrog Okrug of the Don Host Oblast (presently the city of Novoazovsk in the Donetsk Oblast of Ukraine). Another example that comes to mind is the present-day village of Daryino-Yermakivkla, a former Cossack hamlet (though Cossacks still called it a village) in the Don Host’s Novocherkasskaya Stanitsa.

Of the Voronezh Governorate, the former Troitske Volost of Valuyky Uyezd (the present-day village of Troitske in the Svatovo Raion of Luhansk Oblast), which included about 60 settlements, is now Ukrainian territory. And the list of changes similar to those mentioned above goes on.

Clearly, the problem of contrasting Ukrainian and Russian state border adjustments in 1991 and the administrative divisions of 1897 deserves additional study³¹. Also, one should keep in mind that a considerable amount of Ukrainian territory became part of Russia and Belarus under Soviet rule. It bears emphasizing once more that the lack of the 1897 Census primary documents prevents the accurate recalculation of respective data within the current Ukrainian borders. Presently, the most consistent population figures for Dnieper Ukraine (then under Russian Empire rule) from the 1897 Census are available in the reference book by cartographer Serhii Chorny³², whose calculations are

29. Ibid., 37.

30. Т. Водотика і Л. Савенок, «Історія Слов’яносербії в контексті історичної регіоналістики», *Регіональна історія України* 4 (2010): 81–97.

31. Г. Єфіменко і С. Кульчицький, «Кордони державні України, принципи та історична практика їх визначень», у *Енциклопедія історії України*, т. 5 (Київ: Наукова думка, 2008), 137–142.

32. Чорний, *Національний склад*.

definitely undervalued in scientific literature. Still, all that does not invalidate the census data and attests to a part of the 1897 Census problems being resolvable.

Another nuance in using the 1897 Census materials concerns the differences in administrative structure between present-day and 19th-century Ukraine. More precisely, it is a broader issue of correspondence between the modern administrative structure and the administrative affiliation of cities, villages, and regions in 1897. What makes this issue relevant to the 1897 Census is that its statistics are used in academic circles.

In scientific works, for instance, it is eliminated through more or less accurate geographic definitions, e.g., Right-bank Ukraine (Kyiv, Volyn, and Podolia governorates), Left-bank Ukraine (Chernihiv, Poltava, and Kharkiv governorates), and the South of Ukraine (Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, and Taurida governorates). Although in such a case, only the absolute figures for Right-bank Ukraine can be considered accurate without factoring in the above-mentioned specifics of the 1897 Census as a source, this does not affect the analysis of trends and the evolution of historical progress³³.

The situation is worse in the case of regional studies and non-fiction publications, as well as works on the history of science and technology or the history of pedagogy, museum exhibits, and more. In the volumes of *The History of Cities and Villages of the Ukrainian SSR* dedicated to the history of Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and other oblasts, the use of 1897 Census data for any given oblast is purely illustrative. They are mentioned in texts about cities and raion centers, with only occasional references to the uyezds that overlap most closely with the respective oblast's borders. Sometimes, it results in amusing incidents, e.g., the present-day Kherson Oblast being conflated with imperial Kherson Uyezd (even though the uyezd's territory overlaps the present-day Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts in almost equal parts), or even the Kherson Governorate, which gives a wrong impression of the historical process.

The 1897 Census materials require numerous calculations for each figure. E.g., the ballpark estimate of the present-day Kherson Oblast's population in 1897 must include half of the population of the Kherson Governorate's Kherson Uyezd, the entire Dneprovsky Uyezd, and a third of the Taurida Governorate's Melitopol Uyezd. The Census's every figure needs recalculating, and such is the professional approach.

Still, a simple recalculation of 1897 Census data cannot help determine the population's ethnic (national and ethno-national) composition. It bears reminding that the Census's schedule did not provide for ascertaining the population's ethnic (national) self-identity, the most accurate indicator of ethnic affiliation. Indeed, this attribute is questionable, too, given there is no proven data on the atmosphere within the society (e.g., political pressure, force-major circumstances of war, and more), albeit there is no better statistically measurable indicator at the moment.

33. Я. Грицак, *Нарис історії України: формування модерної української нації* (Київ: Генеза, 1996); Ф. Турченко і Г. Турченко, *Південна Україна: модернізація, світова війна, революція (кінець XIX — 1921 р.)* (Київ: Генеза, 2003).

The Census defined only 1.5 ethnic attributes. About one and a half of at least ten. The first is language, as the Census recorded the population's "native tongue"³⁴. However, as mentioned earlier, this attribute had a very specific purpose (it encompassed only people who were not literate in Russian) and the actual number of Ukrainian speakers was thus substantially understated. Given that "Little Russians" were considered part of the "Russian people" in the Russian Empire, it is understandable. Also, everybody who could speak Russian and write in Russian was considered Russian, which echoes the foundational principle of Putin's "Pax Russica" narrative. Besides, amid sweeping Russification, the Ukrainian language could by no means be considered a universal ethnic marker: So much so, that even after 35 years of Ukrainian independence and throughout the Russo-Ukrainian War, the situation has been no different. Therefore, in relation to language as an ethnic marker in the context of the 1897 Census materials, one must keep in mind the origin and significance of the data in question, as well as the impracticality of mechanically equating the number of Ukrainian speakers with that of Ukrainians in general.

The second ethnicity attribute in the Census materials was faith. However, establishing faith as a marker of Ukrainian ethnicity under the 1897 Census is even more problematic. Usually, religion is a valid ethnic marker when it is part of friend-or-foe identification and contributes to a community's understanding of its dissimilarity (juxtaposition) to others. The classic cases of that are, e.g., Jews, Armenians, and Poles, while for Ukrainians, it is true only for the Western diaspora or if living under foreign rule, with another religion or confession being predominant. In the Russian Empire, the Russian church played a significant role in the Russification of Ukraine and its population.

Consequently, Table XII: Population Distribution by Confession from the Census materials on, e.g., Chernigov Governorate (similar tables are available for every governorate) that offer such categories as Orthodox Christians & Edinoverie Followers, Old Ritualists & Orthodox Christian Deviationists, Armenian Gregorians, Armenian Catholics, Latin Catholics, Reformed Protestants (Presbyterians), Baptists, Mennonites, Anglicans, Followers of Other Christian Denominations, Karaites, Jews, Mohammedans, and Followers of Other Non-Christian Denominations provides no means to identify Ukrainians³⁵. Still, the data give an idea about the numbers of some other ethnic groups. E.g., estimating the numbers of such ethnic and confessional groups as Karaites is rather straightforward with this kind of categorization³⁶.

Census materials include the Population Distribution by Faith & Native Language contingency table for the Chernigov Governorate³⁷. It provides the cross-tabulation

34. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 48, *Черниговская губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904), 112–115.

35. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 48, 110–111.

36. С. Водотика і Л. Савенок, «Походження кримських караїмів: аналіз існуючих концепцій і шляхи пошуку істини», *Чорноморський літопис* 3 (2011), 89–91.

37. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 48, 116–137.

of Native Language and Faith attributes by traditional administrative divisions (governorates, governorate's rural population, governorate's cities, and uyezds, with a breakdown by city). The Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox Christians thus can be singled out as the closest to Ukrainians in terms of identification. If mechanically equating Ukrainian speakers to Ukrainians, it would be more appropriate to speak of an ethno-linguistic group rather than an ethnic one. Still, in the literature, Ukrainian speakers and Ukrainians are often treated as the same for simplicity's sake. Naturally, the data from the dedicated Native Language table and cross-tabulation of Native Language and Faith differ.

Take the Poltava Governorate data, for example. The native-language sample spans 2,778,151 individuals, of whom 92.98% (2,583,133) indicated Ukrainian as their native language. Our calculations thus show that, based on the Census data, the Ukrainian ethno-linguistic community accounted for 92.98% of the population of the Poltava Governorate³⁸. The Native Language and Faith data sample spans 2,778,151 individuals. According to our calculations based on the Census data, 92.94% (2,582,182 people) combine Ukrainian language and Orthodox Christianity faith³⁹. In other words, for Poltava Governorate, the difference amounts to 0.004% or 951 individuals in absolute numbers, meaning those people indicated Ukrainian as their native language, but were not adherents of Christianity.

Now, to the situation in other Ukrainian governorates. E.g., the Native Language data for Ekaterinoslav Governorate spans 2,113,674 individuals, with Ukrainian as their native language to 68.9% (1,456,369) of them, according to our calculations based on the Census data⁴⁰. The contingency table shows 1,453,369 people as being native Ukrainian speakers of Orthodox Christian faith, or 68.18% of the 2,113,674 individuals of the 68.12% sample, according to our calculations based on the Census data⁴¹. Although the difference between the number of Ukrainians singled out based on Native Language alone and that based on the Native Language and Faith combination is seemingly non-existent, it is there and is as large as 0.72%. Obviously, while determining the share of Ukrainians by Native Language alone and by the Native Language and Faith combination, the differences by governorate depended on a range of conditions—modernization pace, urbanization level, ethnic and religious composition, specifics of historical dynamics, etc.

Therefore, it is currently impossible to determine the share of Ukrainians as an ethno-political community based on the 1897 Census results due to the numerous gaps in the primary documentation required for calculations, the existing methods, and, most importantly, the census schedule. Furthermore, it would be incorrect (or even methodologically wrong) to equate population structure by language to ethno-national

38. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 33, *Полтавская губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904), 100–103.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 13, *Екатеринославская губерния* (Санкт-Петербург: Центральный статистический комитет МВД, 1904), 74–75.

41. *Ibid.*, 76–77.

structure. Regrettably, again, this is the current situation in the literature. Here, Serhii Chornyj also strayed from the right path⁴². A refined approach combining the language and faith attributes would have improved the situation somewhat by adjusting the share of Ukrainians within 1% (on the lower side, compared to calculations based on the language data alone). However, it would have no appreciable effect on the situation. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to refer to either the ethno-linguistic or the linguo-confessional ethno-national components.

Still, the heuristic potential of the 1897 Census has not been exhausted. Specifically, there have been multiple more or less successful attempts to recalculate the data from the Census materials.

For example, Census data has been known to help determine the extent of industrial modernization. Based on the data from the Population Distribution by Estates & Birth Place table (which we covered above) and population numbers, recalculated with due regard to border changes, the degree of urbanization was established as a sign of modernization. Unsurprisingly, Kherson (where city dwellers accounted for 28.65% of the population) and Kharkov (14.74%) governorates were the most urbanized, while Volhynia (7.82%) and Podolia (7.35%) were the least so. Surprisingly, the Ukrainian part of Bessarabia was the third-most urbanized region at 13.08%. The overall revised urbanization level was 11.6%, putting Ukraine on par with the colonial-era USA. As of the end of the 19th century, the Western modernization front-runners had the following urbanization levels: 78% in the UK, 54% in Germany, and 40% in France and the USA. In Ukraine, the 40% level, which Fernand Braudel considered necessary for industrial modernization, was not reached until the 1950s⁴³.

The intensity, numbers, and composition of intra- and inter-governorate migration within the boundaries of the Dnieper Ukraine and the Russian Empire overall are analyzed in the publication *Ad Fontes: Source Capacity of the First General Census of the Russian Empire Population of 1897*⁴⁴. The Other Estates—businessmen, intelligentsia, artisans, laborers, and more—showed the highest level of mobility. This census category was most involved in modernization processes, but most were closely tied to the institutions of traditional society. Migrations thus struck at the foundations of stratification and traditional society, while modernization was still in its early stages by the end of the 19th century⁴⁵.

Comparing the 1897 Census data with the results of single-day city censuses in Ekaterinoslav (Dnipro), Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Kherson (16 in total) held in 1865–1917 provides a better understanding of the Census materials' social and historical significance. Although all summaries of these censuses are yet to be found, and

42. Чорний, *Національний склад*, 8–37.

43. Т. Водотика, «Міграційні й модернізаційні процеси в містах Наддніпрянської України за даними першого загального перепису Російської імперії 1897 р.», *Український історичний журнал* 5 (2013), 127–130.

44. С. Водотика і І. Робак, «Ad fontes: джерелознавчий потенціал першого загального перепису населення Російської імперії 1897 р.», *Східноєвропейський історичний вісник* 16 (2020): 127–139.

45. *Ibid.*, 135–136.

their schedules differed, a comparative analysis of this kind bolsters our understanding of urban history in the post-reform era. For instance, the population of Kyiv doubled from 130,600 to 261,700 between 1874 and 1897. Meanwhile, the number of “gainfully occupied”—the self-employed individuals of the time—increased five-fold from 28,900 to 146,100⁴⁶. This is convincing evidence of the progress in market relations, growth in production and services, and the decline of traditional society. Compared to the leading Western countries, the pace of industrialization was relatively lackluster, but the share of Kyiv residents employed in industrial manufacturing increased by a factor of 5.5 from 1.52% to 8.43% between 1874 and 1897⁴⁷.

Based on a comparative analysis of the 1897 General Population Census, single-day city censuses, industrial and taxation statistics, dynamics of merchant guild certificate issue, and other materials, Tetiana Vodotyka refined the share of entrepreneurs in the urban population’s social structure and justifiably disproved the Leninites’ understanding of the Russian Empire’s social structure as politicized in its form and incorrect in its substance⁴⁸.

Incorporation of the census data (historiographic heritage, population numbers, historical specifics, socio-economic specialization, availability of industrial infrastructure, modernization dynamics, etc.) and the information on reference points for the specific aspects of the urban history as a complex revealed “modernization pioneers” among Ukrainian cities—Odesa, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Ekaterinoslav (Dnipro); and second-tier cities—Zdolbuniv, Zhmerynka, Koziatyn (all three—major railway junctions), Bakhmut (industrial salt mining technology), Mariupol (new technologies for metallurgy using Donetsk coal and Kerch ore), Luhansk (ammunition and locomotive works), Mykolaiv (shipbuilding hub), Elizavetgrad (now Kropyvnytskyi; agricultural machine-building hub of the Ukrainian South), etc.⁴⁹.

The attempt at applying the recalculated 1897 Census data to the 64 occupational groups discussed above complements the assessment of Odesa as the modernization front-runner. However, this kind of statistics does not indicate the extent of modernization because the groups are formal and rather estate- and fiscal-related (e.g., Jewelry or Household Item Trading)⁵⁰. To adequately assess the pace of modernization, the sample spans 151,500 self-employed individuals, and the 64 groups were collapsed into just ten: Government, Public Activities, Finance, Industry, Construction, Transport & Communications, Fishing & Hunting, and Service Occupations.

46. Т. Водотика, «Особливості модернізаційних процесів у містах Наддніпрянщини другої половини XIX ст.: нові джерельні пошуки», *Регіональна історія України* 7 (2013), 164–167.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Т. Водотика, «Підприємці в соціальній структурі міського населення Наддніпрянської України в другій половині XIX – на початку XX ст.», *Український історичний збірник* 18 (2015), 120–126.

49. Т. Водотика, «Типологія міст Наддніпрянської України в контексті формування культури підприємництва в другій половині XIX – на початку XX ст.», *Регіональна історія України* 8 (2014), 159–167.

50. *Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г.*, т. 47, кн. 1, 132–133.

A mere 0.38% were employed in Finance and 14.4% in Trade, which disproves the stereotypical view of Odesa as a financial and trade hub. Meanwhile, the share of industrial employees reached 22.05%. That said, the people actually working in industrial manufacturing accounted only for 28.4% of the overall industrial workforce, with the majority still being employed in pre-industrial areas: woodworking, quarries, food & beverage, and clothing & footwear, where artisanal capacities and technologies remained predominant. The situation in other economic realms was similar. The main source of sustenance for the urban population was the manufacturing industry. At the same time, trade and services were also undeniably important, as emphasized in the article *Socio-economic Profile of Odesa at the End of the 19th Century: Industrial Modernization Progress, According to the Russian Empire's First General Population Census of 1897*⁵¹. However, industrial modernization was in its infancy as of the end of the 19th century, and its progress was more of a quantitative kind and hardly corresponded to the qualitative criteria of modern society⁵².

In conclusion, the situation with the 1897 Census materials is rather controversial. On the one hand, the census schedule was defined by the imperial "conservative" ideology, intended to conceal many socio-economic issues, e.g., ethnic and social structure, collapse of the estate structure, the impact of market relations on the crisis of traditional society, and, ultimately, the extent of the Russian Empire's modernization. Therefore, it is currently impossible to recalculate the Census data according to a different schedule and with due regard to the changes in state borders and the lack of primary materials.

Still, the heuristic potential of the Census is nowhere near exhausted. A testament to that is the generally successful use of its materials to answer the urgent questions of history and historical demography. Obviously, new questions will arise as the social sciences progress, to which the 1897 Census can and must help find adequate answers.

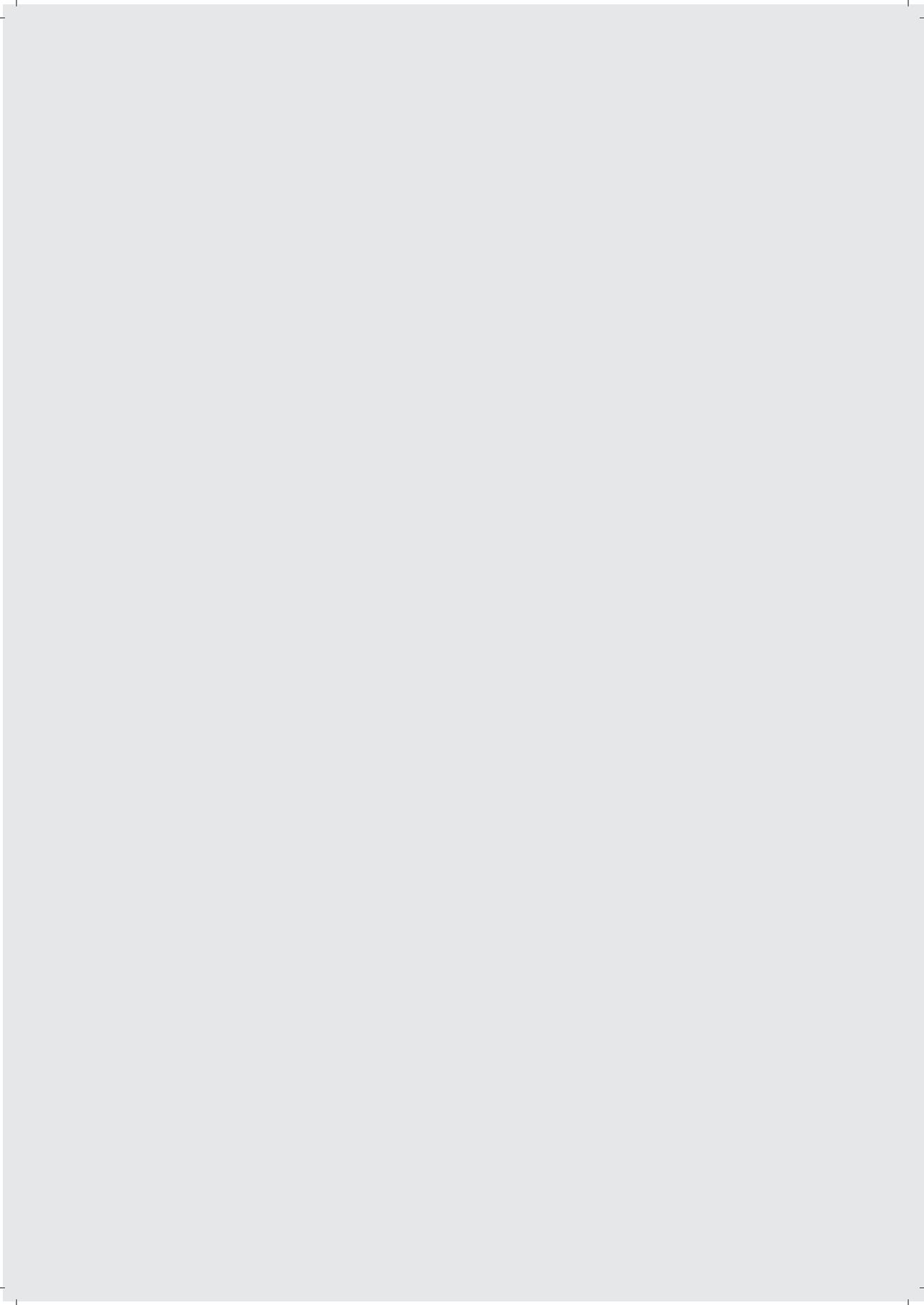
51. С. Водотика і Т. Водотика, «Соціально-економічне обличчя Одеси наприкінці XIX ст.: хода індустріальної модернізації за першим загальним переписом Російської імперії 1897 р.», в *Україна доби модернізації XIX–XX ст.: соціум, цінності, життєві практики* (Херсон: ХДУ, 2020).

52. Ibid., 29.

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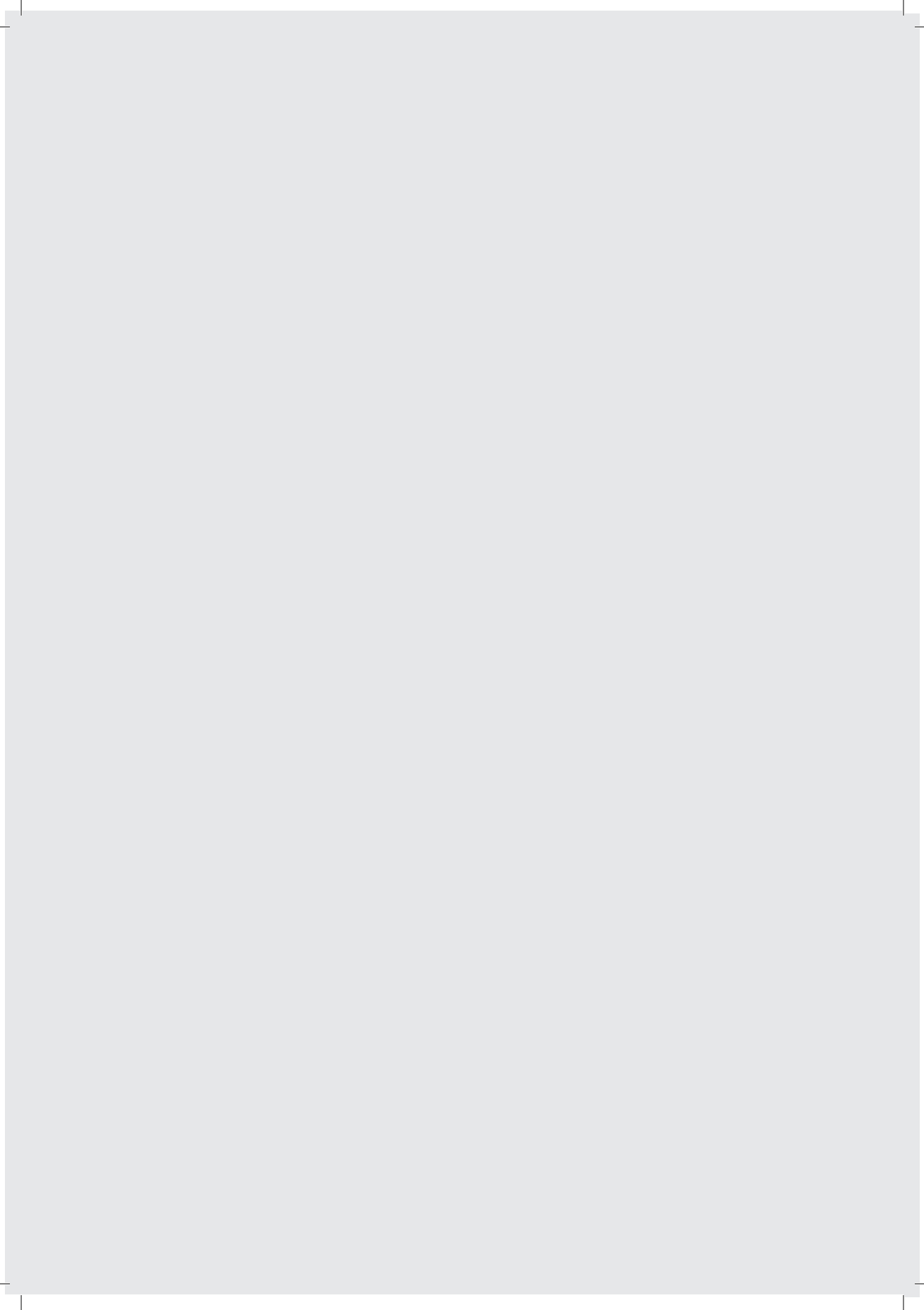
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SOCIETY AND ITS EVERYDAY LIFE

**IT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDEPENDENT UKRAINE:
AN ATTEMPT AT A SOCIO-HISTORICAL
PERIODIZATION**

Andrii Sidliarenko



**IT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN
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Based on an analysis of academic studies, analytical reports, journalistic retrospectives, and regulatory documents, the article proposes a social-historical periodization of the development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine from 1991 to the early 2020s. The research is grounded in the approach of social history, which makes it possible to consider IT entrepreneurship not only as an economic or technological activity, but as part of broader social transformations. The focus is placed not merely on quantitative indicators of industry growth, but primarily on changes in the organization of labor, professional practices, forms of interaction, and social perceptions.

Within the proposed periodization, five main stages are identified, reflecting the sequential evolution of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine. These stages encompass the transition from isolated initiatives and the first IT firms of the 1990s, which operated under conditions of institutional uncertainty and limited access to markets, to the formation in the 2010s of a structured industry with established organizational models, a developed community infrastructure, and a growing product segment.

The study traces a shift in entrepreneurial logic—from service-oriented models to the emergence of companies that create their own technological products and integrate into global value chains.

The analytical focus of the article is concentrated on several interrelated dimensions: the evolution of organizational structures of IT companies, the transformation of professional roles and labor models, the formation of an internal culture of the IT sector, as well as the development of external perceptions of IT professionals as a distinct social group. It is shown that the development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine was uneven and largely determined by a combination of global market influences and internal social factors, in particular professional self-organization and horizontal ties within the community.

The proposed social-historical periodization does not claim to be definitive; however, it provides an analytical framework for further research on the history of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine and may be used for in-depth analysis of specific stages, practices, and social transformations associated with the development of the digital economy.

Keywords: IT entrepreneurship, periodization, Ukrainian IT industry, social history, professional community, IT professionals, social perceptions, organizational structures.

INTRODUCTION

Information Technology has become one of the key factors of Ukraine's economic and social development over the first three decades after the country regained its independence. From the first IT firms of the 1990s emerging amid post-Soviet transformations and minimal institutional support to the formation in 2010 of a structured industry with established product companies, integrated into global markets, Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship has come a long way, and its journey was not exactly smooth. Although today IT companies account for a major share of foreign-currency inflow and constitute one of the most dynamic sectors of the national economy¹, scientific research tends to overlook the history of Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship.

The industry made its first steps in the early 1990s. On December 19, 1990, Ukraine was first connected to the global internet owing to the efforts of Technosoft company², and as early as 1991, one of the country's first service IT companies—Infocom—was founded as a joint venture of the Ministry of Communications and a German partner³. In cooperation with international institutions, Infocom built the first national data network, connected Ukraine to the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) system. In the middle of the 1990s, the first venture funds emerged (e.g., WNISEF in 1994) and started investing in tech companies. By the end of the decade, the first Ukrainian web portals and online media were launched⁴. It was then that the foundation was laid for the infrastructure that would grow into our national segment of the internet and enable the operation of the nascent IT business in Ukraine. Over time, private companies and professionals established the first internet providers and IT companies, now considered the pioneers of IT entrepreneurship as we know it.

In the early 2000s, the Ukrainian IT sector experienced dynamic growth, driven primarily by providing outsourcing services to international customers. In the 2010s, the industry became an export leader, and Ukrainian companies gained a global reputation for supplying high-quality engineering solutions. By 2017, IT services were occupied the third-largest share in export services after processing and pipeline transportation, and in H1 2018, they overtook the latter in terms of volume, becoming the second-largest in exports⁵. Also telling is the estimate of Maria Shevchuk, CEO of IT Ukraine Association: “Ukrainian IT services exports continue to be an import-

1. DOU, «Які країни приносять найбільше виторгу українському ІТ. Аналітика ІТ-експорту за рік», 12 лютого 2025, <https://dou.ua/lenta/articles/it-export-in-2024/>.
2. С. Чапліч, «Історія українського інтернету», ProIT, 2 січня 2025, <https://proit.ua/istoriia-ukrayinskogho-intiernietu/>.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. BRDO і IT Ukraine Association, Розвиток української ІТ-індустрії. Аналітичний звіт (Київ, квітень 2017), https://brdo.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ukrainian_IT_Industry_Report_UKR.pdf.

ant component of the economy, primarily driven by the export of computer services”⁶. According to the Methodological Notes to Ukraine’s export sector statistics, export of IT services encompasses “telecommunication, computer, and information services, including the payments for communication, radio and television broadcasting; database processing; maintenance and repair of hardware; payments for software use, without copying or distribution rights; payments for information and news agencies’ services; and subscriptions to periodic publications”⁷.

Despite the overall decrease in service exports (10.9% down in H1 2025), the share of IT services (telecommunication, computer, and information) increased from 38.5% to 43%, the share of computer services specifically from 37.5% to 42.1%⁸. Besides, there were at least 1138 IT companies in Ukraine as of 2024⁹, a sign that the industry has highly matured in terms of structure.

The IT industry thus became the largest service exporter and one of the key sources of foreign currency inflow in the economy. It now encompasses thousands of companies and hundreds of thousands of professionals: 2150+ IT companies are currently active in Ukraine, employing over 300,000 specialists¹⁰. Ukrainian engineers have gained recognition in software development, cybersecurity, AI, and related fields. Even in the face of economic challenges and ongoing war, the Ukrainian IT sector remains relatively resilient and adaptable, generating a substantial export income for the country.

In light of the industry’s booming growth and substantial contributions, studying the timeline of the Ukrainian IT sector’s development gains importance. Analyzing the early steps of the Ukrainian IT sector provides a better understanding of the success factors and the challenges it faced.

Despite the growing body of publications on economic indicators, export potential, and the specific development stages of the IT industry, Ukrainian historiography has so far seen no attempts at a cohesive socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship as a distinct social phenomenon. This article makes the first attempt to establish a socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine since 1991.

6. Digital State UA, «IT-послуги стали головним драйвером експорту України у 2025 році», 25 серпня 2025, <https://digitalstate.gov.ua/uk/news/it-outsourcing/it-posluhy-staly-holovnym-drayverom-eksportu-ukrayiny-u-2025-rotsi>.

7. National Bank of Ukraine, Balance of Payments: Methodological Notes, accessed December 5, 2025, https://bank.gov.ua/admin_uploads/article/BoP_methodological_notes.pdf.

8. National Bank of Ukraine, External Sector Statistics: Trade in Services, accessed December 5, 2025, https://bank.gov.ua/files/ES/Trade_m.pdf.

9. DOU, «Найкращі IT-роботодавці 2024», 6 січня 2025, <https://dou.ua/lenta/articles/ratings-2024-summary/>.

10. Digital State UA, “Ukraine’s IT powerhouse: innovation without limits”, accessed December 5, 2025, <https://digitalstate.gov.ua/news/it-outsourcing/ukraines-it-powerhouse-innovation-without-limits>.

STATE OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

The earliest attempts to document the history of information technology in Ukraine date back to the early 2000s. The Known and the Unknown in the History of Information Technology in Ukraine (2004) by B. Malynovskyi provides an in-depth review of computational equipment's evolution in the Soviet and early post-Soviet periods¹¹. The book covers the creation of Ukraine's first computers, the role of the Institute of Cybernetics and other scientific institutions, and the independent Ukraine's first steps in the field of IT. Malynovskyi's research scientifically conceptualized the main historical milestones—from the first ECMs to the dawn of the internet.

However, the development of IT entrepreneurship in 2000–2010 is covered much less thoroughly in scientific literature. Only recently have some studies started analyzing the current state and trends in this field. E.g., economists O. Karyi, L. Halkiv, and A. Tsapulych proposed their own periodization of the IT industry's formation, distinguishing five stages in its development¹². Their research also examines the state policy factors and mechanisms that influenced the IT market and analyzes the specifics of entrepreneurial activity in the field. Another recent publication worth attention is the 2025 article by L. Shimanovska-Dianych and R. Lakhyzha that analyzes the evolution of the IT business in Ukraine with a focus on corporate culture¹³. While showing that academic circles take increasing interest in the history of IT, this kind of research only outlines the general trends, without going into detail when it comes to the industry's historical evolution. So far, there has been a marked shortage of historical analytical works comprehensively describing the development of Ukrainian IT from 1990 to 2020.

Due to the lack of thorough scientific research, one has to rely on industry reports, media content, and specialized review projects as sources of research data. In this sense, they serve as a chronicle that documents the sector's transformations in real time.

Case in point, the analytical report Development of Ukrainian IT Industry (2018) by the IT Ukraine Association and BRDO¹⁴. In addition to export statistics and market structure, it outlines organizational changes within the field, e.g., the increasing importance of professional associations, emerging staffing practices, and the formation of mechanisms for self-regulation. The report recounts how the field transitioned in 2010 from informal structures to a formalized industry with signs of sectoral policy.

11. Б. Малиновський, *Відоме й невідоме в історії інформаційних технологій в Україні* (Київ: Інтерлінк, 2004).

12. О. Карий, Л. Гальків і А. Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України: чинники та напрями активізації», *Вісник Національного університету «Львівська політехніка». Серія «Проблеми економіки та управління»* 5, № 1 (2021): 42–55, <https://science.lpnu.ua/sites/default/files/journal-paper/2021/may/23587/210488verstka-44-57.pdf>.

13. Л. Шимановська-Діаніч і Р. Лахижа, «Розвиток ІТ-бізнесу в Україні у фокусі становлення корпоративної культури», *Сталий розвиток економіки* 5 (56) (2025): 459–467, <https://economdevelopment.in.ua/index.php/journal/article/view/1538/1487>.

14. BRDO і IT Ukraine Association, *Розвиток української ІТ-індустрії. Аналітичний звіт*.

Another great example is Liga.Tech's special project 30 Years of IT in Ukraine: How It Was (2021)¹⁵, which chronologically recounts the key milestones in the development of Ukrainian IT. Drawing on media materials, entrepreneur interviews, and archival materials, the project reveals the internal logic of transformations within the industry, e.g., the shifts in team organization models, transition from the generalist engineer to the role-based structure, and emergence of the first IT clusters and professional associations, delineating the social and cultural aspects of the development of entrepreneurial practices in IT.

Published on the ProIT portal, the History of Ukrainian Internet (2025)¹⁶ tells the story of how Ukraine's internet infrastructure took shape in the 1990s. The work documents the emergence of the first internet nodes, the infancy of commercial internet access, the registration of the .ua domain, and the development of technical protocols. The work provides a better understanding of the institutional and technological conditions under which the first IT companies emerged, ready to operate in the new digital environments.

The article's **purpose** is to propose a socio-historical periodization of Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship's development since 1991, drawing on the analysis of social transformations, organizational changes, and professional practices within the industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We propose examining IT entrepreneurship as a component of broader social transformation in Ukrainian society after 1991, rather than merely an economic phenomenon. With this approach, we can focus specifically on the forms of self-organization, professional practices, social structure, and community culture that emerged alongside the development of information technologies, alongside institutional changes, statistical indicators, and state policy.

An important element of this analysis is the development of horizontal connections within this community: the emergence of IT clusters, platforms for inter-company interactions, a culture of shared learning, and experience-sharing institutes. In this sense, the Ukrainian IT industry is more than an economic sector; it is a social ecosystem that combines labor mobility, entrepreneurship, professional solidarity, and technological innovativeness.

Particular attention should be given to how IT professionals became a publicly visible and eventually symbolically important social group. While in the 1990s the "IT guy" was primarily a barely noticeable technical specialist, in the 2010s, he became part of the public perception of the new creative class, which embodies modernity, global integration, and digital competency.

15. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років IT в Україні. Як це було, дата звернення 5 грудня 2025, https://project.liga.net/projects/it_history/.

16. Чапліч, «Історія українського інтернету».

This study relies on the approaches of social history, which emerged in the late 20th century as an alternative to traditional politico-institutional history. Therefore, our historical analysis focuses primarily on everyday practices, forms of self-organization, and the experiences of participants in social processes, rather than on formal institutions or regulatory decisions. As demonstrated in E. P. Thompson's work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1964), historical transformations happen largely through the active participation of social actors themselves, actually involved in creating new social structure, professional identities, and collective action models¹⁷.

As an extension of this logic, the social history of technology fields emerged within technology studies, with researchers zooming in on the social processes that accompany the creation, introduction, and use of technology, rather than on internal technological evolution. Significant in this context is the approach that Claude S. Fischer used in his book *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (1992), which analyzes the technological changes through the lens of social practices, organizational forms, and interaction models brought about by the development of communications¹⁸. From this perspective, one can consider technology as a part of broader social processes, rather than as independent factor of historical change.

The next iteration of socio-historical analysis of information technology can be seen in the research on professional communities, e.g., Nathan Ensmenger's *The Computer Boys Take Over* (2010)¹⁹. The book looks at the genesis of computer industry through the lens of professionalization of programmers, evolution of their social status, their fight for expert legitimacy, and formation of their specific work culture. This approach demonstrates that IT development is defined by the internal social organization in the professional environment rather than by technical innovation or market stimuli alone.

By examining organizational change, professional practices, and the transformation of social perceptions, the socio-historical approach enables tracing the internal logic of Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship's development, from sporadic engineering initiatives and informal teams to a structured industry with a pronounced community infrastructure and public social presence. Such is the foundation for the proposed periodization.

With the above in mind, this research focuses on the following analytical planes:

- Evolution of IT company organizational structures, from informal teams of the early 1990s to sophisticated multilevel corporations
- Shifts in professional roles and labor models, from the generalist "tech guys" to distributed teams with product managers, designers, QA specialists, recruiters, and other specializations

17. E. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

18. C. Fischer, *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

19. N. Ensmenger, *The Computer Boys Take Over: Computers, Programmers, and the Politics of Technical Expertise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

- Emergence of an internal culture in the IT industry as a distinct professional environment
- Formation of external perceptions of IT specialists as a social stratum, with its peculiar view of success, mobility, flexibility, and informality

Therefore, the periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine, presented in this research, is rooted primarily in changes in the industry's social organization, community structure, and perceptions of IT specialists in society, rather than in formal economic or institutional disruptions. This approach lets us focus on the industry's intrinsic logic of development.

PERIODIZATION OF THE INDUSTRY'S DEVELOPMENT

The post-1991 development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine was hardly linear; rather, it involved a range of sequential stages, each with its own logic, predominant forms of organization, and characteristic social practices. Proposed below is a periodization based on a combination of the chronological approach and the analysis of changes in the industry's social organization, the IT community's professional structure, and external perceptions of IT entrepreneurship. Instead of formal economic/institutional disruptions, it is founded primarily on the modernization of business practices in IT, labor models, and self-organization mechanisms, which allows us to trace the field's evolution from sporadic entrepreneurial initiatives to a structured industry with a mature community and institutional infrastructure.

The years 1991–1996 saw the initial stage of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine. Information technologies gradually stopped being limited to scientific research institutions, state computing centers, and enterprise technical divisions and began to take on commercial features. Ukraine's first IT firms emerged amid deep post-Soviet socio-economic transformations. Also, no specialized legal framework existed for IT businesses, and the institutional support for high-tech entrepreneurial initiatives was nonexistent.

In the early 1990s, Ukrainian IT combined Soviet scientific and technical heritage with as yet unfamiliar market practices that started taking shape after the USSR had collapsed²⁰. It is in this context that Ukraine's first IT firms emerged, founded by engineers and technical specialists, who relied on their own expertise, personal relationships, and limited international contacts while tackling their first commercial orders²¹. The professional structure of workforce at this period included many generalists. More often than not, one "IT guy" could be simultaneously a programmer, sysadmin, consultant, and manager, as companies were small. Also, the IT sector lacked a specialized la-

20. Малиновський, *Відоме й невідоме*.

21. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років IT в Україні. Як це було.

bor market for talent sourcing²². This labor model fostered a professional culture rooted in autonomy, self-education, and practical orientation on tackling concrete technical tasks.

Among such pioneering IT businesses were ELEKS (est. 1991)²³ and SoftServe (est. 1993)²⁴, which started as small engineer collectives without a clear-cut corporate hierarchy, formalized business processes, or long-term scaling strategies. Their organizational structure was extremely flexible and informal, as expected given the unstable economic environment and the limited domestic market.

In this period's public perception, IT specialists did not yet constitute a separate social stratum. They were a barely visible group of technical specialists who handle computerization, information system maintenance, and specialized engineering tasks. The first perceptions of IT as a potentially promising field for professional fulfillment and entrepreneurship did not appear until the latter part of the period, and they were anything but widespread²⁵.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine transitioned from its initial experimental forms to a more established market logic, focusing primarily on rendering services to customers abroad. It was this period that gave rise to the service and outsourcing model that would define the structure of the Ukrainian IT industry for a long while. The change was driven primarily by regular exports of software and IT services, which gradually turned select IT firms into persistent business structures.

During this period, Ukrainian IT companies began systematically integrating into international production processes within an outsourcing model, taking on jobs for international customers²⁶. This integration required those companies to change their organizational approaches, transitioning from informal engineering teams to more structured organizations with project management, finance, and customer relations.

During this period, companies specializing in software development as a service emerged and quickly grew, e.g., Ciklum²⁷ and N-iX²⁸ (both est. 2002). Their growth highlighted the gradual transition from individual or small-group entrepreneurship to scaling business models, based on long-term contracts and team scaling. Meanwhile, the domestic market for IT services remained limited, strengthening the industry's export orientation.

The professional composition of IT labor became noticeably differentiated during this period. Besides programmers, roles such as project managers, testers, support,

22. Ibid.

23. ELEKS, "ELEKS for Ukraine," accessed December 5, 2025, <https://careers.eleks.com/ua/eleks-for-ukraine/>.

24. SoftServe, «SoftServe: про компанію», дата звернення 5 грудня 2025, <https://career.softserveinc.com/uk-ua/about>.

25. Малиновський, *Відоме й невідоме*.

26. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

27. IT Ukraine Association / Ciklum, "Ciklum. Member profile," accessed December 5, 2025, <https://itukraine.org.ua/members/ciklum/>.

28. IT Ukraine Association / N-iX, "N-iX. Member profile," accessed December 5, 2025, <https://itukraine.org.ua/members/n-ix>.

and sales appeared. A rudimentary IT labor market emerged, and the English language proficiency and adherence to international quality standards became important²⁹. The model of the generalist “techie” gave way to a functional division of labor.

The IT industry’s internal culture shifted under the influence of Western managerial practices and corporate norms. Customer orientation, adherence to deadlines, contract discipline, and process transparency became crucial elements in the professional environment. However, some traits from the previous period persisted, e.g., relative autonomy of specialists and informal internal communication³⁰.

During this period, IT began to be perceived as a flourishing field of employment offering steady income and international career opportunities. However, IT specialists had not yet become a publicly visible social stratum. Their activity remained barely noticeable to society at large, and the industry itself is primarily associated with the “export of intellectual labor” rather than with domestic economic development.

The period from the end of the 2000s onward marked a new stage in the development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine, as the field began to evolve from a collection of separate companies into an institutionally formed industry with distinct mechanisms of self-organization, representation, and internal communication. The disruption was marked by the creation of the IT Ukraine Association³¹ in 2004, which attested to the need for collective representation of IT businesses’ interests and for articulating the industry as a distinct economic and social actor. Here, the Ukrainian IT industry started to become self-aware as a community with shared problems, standards, and long-term development goals. Meanwhile, the number of mid-size IT companies increased, the export model stabilized, and entrepreneurial experience was accumulated, laying the foundation for the industry’s internal institutions.

A crucial part of this process was the emergence of professional platforms and media for horizontal communication within the community. The 2005 launch of the DOU platform helped shape a public space for the IT labor market, experience sharing, and informal adjustment of professional standards. The community used it (and similar platforms) for internal communication as well as for establishing its public image that gradually expanded beyond the professional environment³².

Organizational structures kept getting increasingly complex during this period. They transitioned from purely service models to combining the service and product logic, as excellently illustrated by the product companies that emerged and developed at the time, e.g., Readdle³³ (est. 2007), MacPaw³⁴ (est. 2008), and Grammarly³⁵ (est. 2009). These

29. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

30. Шимановська-Діанич і Лахижа, «Розвиток ІТ-бізнесу в Україні».

31. IT Ukraine Association, «Асоціація IT Ukraine відзначає 19 років», 18 серпня 2023, <https://itukraine.org.ua/asotsiatsiya-it-ukraine-vidznachaye-19-rokiv/>.

32. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років IT в Україні. Як це було.

33. Readdle, “About Readdle,” accessed July 14, 2025, <https://readdle.com/about>.

34. MacPaw, “Leadership,” accessed July 14, 2025, <https://macpaw.com/leadership>.

35. Grammarly, “About Grammarly,” accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.grammarly.com/about>.

companies reflected a new trajectory in IT entrepreneurship, with their orientation on building their own products for the global market, which required a different approach to labor management, investment strategies, and corporate culture.

The professional structure of the IT labor market stabilized and became better differentiated. Besides technical roles, functions such as HR, recruiting, marketing, product management, and business development gained traction. The internal IT labor market emerged, with distinct mobility, professional growth, and competition norms³⁶. Meanwhile, corporate culture became increasingly important as an instrument for workforce retention and internal integration within companies.

The external perceptions of IT specialists drastically changed during this period. While previously IT was associated primarily with tech support or “invisible” export activity, in the late 2000s, IT specialists were seen as an embodiment of new professional standards and a high degree of mobility and integration in global processes³⁷.

In the 2010s, IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine structurally matured, as reflected in both the field’s internal organization and its social and public representation. In contrast to the previous stage, in which IT companies primarily served as export-oriented production units with limited social visibility, this period saw the formation of an integrated industry with developed professional standards, institutional infrastructure, and a distinct public voice.

Importantly, the IT industry finally established itself as one of the key economic growth drivers and foreign currency inflow sources, demonstrating relative resilience in the face of domestic crises and external shocks³⁸.

Meanwhile, IT entrepreneurship’s social organization changed. As companies scaled up, the average team size increased, management structures became increasingly complex, and functions specialized. While in the 2000s the relatively compact organizations with limited division of labor were predominant, in the 2010s, multilevel corporate models appeared, with their clearly defined roles in project management, quality control, finance, recruiting, and corporate communications³⁹.

Meanwhile, the internal culture of the IT industry was taking shape as a distinct professional environment. Professional communities, industry events, IT clusters, and educational initiatives that fostered the flow of knowledge and formation of a common identity all played a crucial role in this process⁴⁰.

While over the previous decades IT was primarily associated with “tech” or export activity, in the 2010s the IT profession was increasingly perceived as a symbol of successful integration into a global economy and upward mobility. Journalistic retrospec-

36. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

37. Ibid.

38. BRDO і IT Ukraine Association, Розвиток української ІТ-індустрії. Аналітичний звіт.

39. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

40. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років ІТ в Україні. Як це було».

tives and industry reviews noted that IT specialists began to be seen as a representatives of the new urban middle class, oriented toward international standards of labor and consumption⁴¹. Although this image was not yet consistent and did not encompass the entire community, that was the period when IT professionals began to be perceived as a distinct social stratum, publicly recognizable and symbolically significant.

The launch of state digital services at the end of the 2010s and the later adoption of the Diia.City's special legal framework in 2021 marked the transition to a new model of interaction between the IT industry and the state, in which IT entrepreneurship became increasingly seen as a strategic resource for national development⁴².

The Russian Federation's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine drastically changed the social, economic, and institutional environment in Ukrainian society, including the IT entrepreneurship. As in other industries, the war disrupted established models of labor organization, international cooperation, and entrepreneurial activity, giving rise to new forms of adaptation, mobility, and interaction among the state, businesses, and society.

Despite the challenges posed by the crisis, the IT industry has remained relatively stable during this period. On the one hand, professionals and companies have been re-locating en masse, internal organizational processes are transforming, remote work is becoming increasingly crucial, and some businesses are reorienting toward supporting defense and volunteer initiatives. On the other hand, IT entrepreneurship maintains its global market integration and continues to fulfill export contracts, so the industry remains an essential source of foreign currency even during the war.

Meanwhile, the social history of wartime IT entrepreneurship has yet to be fully reconstructed. Many processes are ongoing, and access to detailed statistical data, internal corporate decisions, and everyday practices is limited due to security concerns or are incomplete time-wise. Therefore, this stage is worth further research, especially once the war is over and opportunities arise for a more in-depth analysis of the long-term social, professional, and institutional consequences of wartime transformations in IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine.

The summary periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine is provided in Table 1.

41. Ibid.

42. Верховна Рада України, Закон України «Про стимулювання розвитку цифрової економіки в Україні», Закон України від 15.07.2021 № 1667-IX, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1667-20>.

Table 1.

Socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine from 1991 to the early 2020s (summarized by the author)

Summary period name	Period, years	Key events	Primary traits
The dawn of IT entrepreneurship and emergence of first IT firms	1991–1996	1991—ELEKS is founded 1991—Infocom is founded 1992—the .ua ccTLD is delegated 1993—SoftServe is founded 1994—first venture investments in the technology sector	- Small, flexible IT firms without a formalized hierarchy - Generalist IT professionals, combining technical and managerial functions - Informal teams - IT professionals are not perceived as a distinct social stratum
Service and outsourcing IT entrepreneurship model formation	1996–2004	1996—Ukrainian IT companies begin their first regular export activity 1998–2003—computer services grow as a distinct article of exports 2002—Ciklum is founded 2002—N-iX is founded	- Export-oriented service and outsourcing companies emerge - Project managers and testers appear as distinct functions, and the division of work within teams begins - Early stages of customer orientation's broad adoption - IT is perceived as a promising but less visible social sector
Institutionalization of the IT industry, formation of the IT community	2004–2010	2004—IT Ukraine Association is created 2005—DOU platform is launched 2007—Readdle is founded 2008—MacPaw is founded 2009—Grammarly is founded	- The industry institutionalizes, first associations and product companies emerge - Roles stabilize and expand, non-technical roles appear - Corporate cultures and professional standards take shape - The image of IT specialists as a distinct social group emerges

Product segment growth, IT community's public visibility	2010–2022	2012—regional IT clusters form 2015–2016—IT clusters become active in Lviv, Kharkiv, and Kyiv 2017—IT services become the third-largest exported services in Ukraine 2019—Ukrainian government launches the Diia digital platform 2021—Diia.City legal framework is adopted	- Companies scale up, introduce multilevel management, and formalize processes - Specialized positions (e.g., PM, QA, HR, designer) gain traction, and career tracks develop - Corporate practices are combined with informality and flexibility, and industry identity takes shape - The image of IT as a prestigious and globally integrated profession is established - IT community gains public visibility
IT entrepreneurship's wartime transformation	2022–...	2022—Russia launches its full-scale invasion of Ukraine	- IT professionals and companies relocate en masse, internal processes and management models are reorganized in the face of wartime challenges - Remote work further gains importance as a basic mode of IT businesses' operation - IT companies and professionals become increasingly involved in defense and volunteer initiatives as part of corporate and professional culture.

CONCLUSION

This article attempts to provide a socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine, based primarily on changes in the industry's social organization, professional practices, and perceptions of IT professionals as a social group.

The proposed periods reflect a gradual transition from isolated IT firms and informal engineering initiatives of the 1990s to a fully-fledged industry with a developed community infrastructure, public visibility, and institutional interaction with the state in the 2010s.

Special attention is given to external and internal perceptions of IT professionals. The IT community evolved from a nearly invisible group of tech specialists in the 1990s into a publicly recognizable social stratum, associated with mobility, global integration, and new professional standards.

The wartime period, which began in 2022, is outlined as a distinct stage that significantly alters the conditions of IT entrepreneurship while raising new research questions. Given the ongoing nature of the processes and the limited availability of data, the IT industry's wartime social history needs further conceptualization after the war, when a more comprehensive array of sources becomes available.

The periodization proposed here is anything but final. Still, it provides an analytical framework for further research into the history of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine. It may be used as a basis for in-depth studies of specific periods, regional specifics, corporate practices, or the economy's social dimensions, as well as comparative studies in a broader international context.

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