The Festive Landscape of a Large Soviet City: Urban Festivities in Kharkiv, 1960s to 1980s

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The festive landscape of a large Soviet city: urban festivities in Kharkiv, 1960s to 1980s[1]

Świąteczny krajobraz dużego radzieckiego miasta. Miejskie uroczystości w Charkowie w latach 1960-1980

Abstract

The article examines the ways in which the culture of urban festivity in Kharkiv during the 1960s–1980s contributed to the completion of the fashioning of Kharkiv's heterogeneous image as the city of industry, culture and science, the first capital of Soviet Ukraine, a "crossroads of cultures", the embodiment of the Ukrainian-Russian borderland. Urban festivity was part of the Soviet ideology and reflected the Soviet social order. The culture of urban festivity fully subjected the "standardization of form", losing its independent significance. At the same time, the Soviet urban festivity culture was one of the symbolic mediators connecting city residents with the urban environment. The role of urban symbolic and ritual practices consisted in the accumulation, reproduction and transmission of the festive landscape of Kharkiv as a Soviet city. Official festivities formed the basis for the matrix of urban memory throughout the 1960s–1980s.
Key words: Kharkiv, Soviet Union, urban festivity, symbolic practices, ritual practices

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje sposoby, w jakie kultura miejskiego świętowania w Charkowie w latach 1960-1980 przyczyniła się do wykształtowania się heterogenicznego wizerunku Charkowa jako miasta przemysłu, kultury i nauki, pierwszej stolicy radzieckiej Ukrainy, „skrzyżowania kultur", ucieleśnienia ukraińsko-rosyjskiego pogranicza. Miejskie święta były częścią radzieckiej ideologii i odzwierciedlały radziecki porządek społeczny. Całkowicie poddane „standaryzacji formy" straciły swoje niezależne znaczenie. Jednocześnie radziecka kultura miejskiego święta była jednym z symbolicznych mediatorów łączących

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mieszkańców miasta z miejskim środowiskiem. Rola miejskich praktyk symbolicznych i rytualnych polegała na akumulacji, reprodukcji i transmisji świątecznego krajobrazu Charkowa jako miasta radzieckiego. Oficjalne uroczystości stanowiły podstawę matrycy pamięci miejskiej w latach 1960-1980.
Słowa kluczowe: Charków, ZSRR, miejskie świętowanie, praktyki symboliczne, praktyki obrzędowe

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Introduction: "To be the sun over our city"[2]

A Soviet urban festivity as a system of cultural practices and values reflected the Soviet social order, in particular the relationship between the individual and the state in a broad sense, as well as between the individual and the city in a narrower sense. Urban festivity was a component of the Soviet ideology, and therefore was defined and sanctioned in its entirety by the Party and state apparatus. Participation in Soviet celebrations served as an expression of the citizens' political and civic loyalty. During various Soviet celebrations, standardized and devoid of individualism, a Soviet individual identified him- or herself with the state, the city, his or her coworkers, and so forth. In this way, a distinctive type of Soviet civic identity, specific worldview and values were formed. That is why the Soviet authorities paid great attention to various celebrations and spent considerable resources on their preparation.

The specified characteristics of urban celebrations played a crucial role in shaping the distinctive festive landscape of socialist cities. As is well known, the term "festive landscape" (the terms "holiday landscape" and "festival landscape" are also used synonymously) is increasingly prevalent in research dedicated to festive culture and practices. However, it lacks theoretical scrutiny to date. Primarily, it pertains to the festive landscape of the city as a constituent of the cultural landscape (for instance, Mariusz Czepczyński emphasises that the components of the cultural landscapes of socialist cities comprised various myths of the socialist ideological system connected with rites; in turn, he notes that "[s]ocialist rites required objects of celebrations and particular spaces of celebrations" (Czepczyński 2008: 64)). Moreover, there is often an emphasis on the festive landscape as a compilation of spatially defined entities, namely the physical space with specific boundaries, or backdrop against which celebrations unfold. Researchers underscore that celebrations can both be a product of a particular landscape and create / articulate diverse landscapes (Shirley 2017: 660). It should be noted that the perception of the festive landscape solely as physical space is insufficiently comprehensive. Evidently, an important component of the festive landscape encompasses

[2] The phrase is taken from the headline of an article in the newspaper "Evening Kharkiv", which is dedicated to the first City Day of Kharkiv (Anonymous 1987a: 1).

symbolic (a combination of tangible and intangible components) and valuable (cultural memory of urban communities, the identity of city dwellers, their value orientations, etc.) aspects. Therefore, the urban festive landscape exhibits a heterogeneous nature and serves as one of the types of symbolic intermediaries that connect urban residents and the urban environment. The role of components of the festive landscape lies in the accumulation, reproduction and transmission of cultural meanings of the city, which formulate a visual matrix of urban memory. Consequently, the transformation of the festive landscape often ensues from the simultaneous action of both exogenous and endogenous factors. For example, according to researchers, global phenomena such as "mass and consumer culture, mass and especially digital media, and tourism and heritage industry", as well as local traditions, can significantly influence the festive landscape (Slavec Gradisnik 2015: 45-46).

We aim to expand the meaning of the concept of the "festive landscape" by demonstrating that it encompasses a collection of interconnected spaces, both physical and symbolic. Additionally, the festive practices, associated narratives, collective memory, identity and other elements are crucial for understanding the festive landscape. Every festive landscape has a unique local specificity. To investigate the main components of the typical festive landscape of a socialist city and their interconnections, we will consider the evolution of symbolic and ritual practices in one large Soviet city, Kharkiv, from the 1960s to 1980s.

In general, urban celebrations during the late Soviet period were characterized by a variety of features. Firstly, the functions and content of Soviet symbolic and ritual practices certainly underwent significant changes over the period of the 1960s to 1980s. One major trend was what Alexei Yurchak termed a "performative shift", wherein within the framework of ideological discourse, the form of rituals and symbols increasingly diverged from the literal stated meaning (Yurchak 2006). It may be presumed that only some proportion of the participants and spectators of festive events were aware of their purpose and role. For many people, it was more important that the main Soviet holidays were non-working days. This can be explained in part by the orientation of the ideological discourse towards increasing "standardization and citationality" (Yurchak 2006: 37), as a result of which Soviet citizens came to perceive urban cultural and symbolic space and its components unthinkingly and mechanistically.

Secondly, during the period under investigation, there was an observed gradual increase in the local specificity of urban celebrations. As a result, in the second half of the 1980s, new local traditions emerged in many large cities of the USSR, for instance the City Day, which almost immediately became one of the most important urban celebrations. At the same time, a degree of competition between various festive forms and different levels of Soviet traditions should not be overlooked. This phenomenon became especially prominent in the late Soviet era, when countrywide holidays were steadily losing their popularity and the support of a large part of the population; an

illustrative example for Kharkiv is the holding of two May Day rallies at once – the official and the alternative one – in Dzerzhinsky Square in 1991 (Mykhailov 1991: 1; Nezhel'ska 1991: 1). In general, non-capital urban centers offer striking examples of both centralized "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983) and the construction of local urban festivity in the late Soviet period.

Our exploration of these issues is based on several groups of sources. We rely primarily on archival documents (the Archives Department of the Kharkiv City Council), Kharkiv's local newspapers of the 1960s–1980s, in particular "Vechirnii Kharkiv" ("Evening Kharkiv"), as well as tourist guidebooks published during this period. We also use a variety of visual materials: photos and videos of celebrations, as well as postcards of Kharkiv. The sources used were created in the 1960s–1980s, primarily reflecting the dominant state ideology of the late Soviet era. A literal reading of these sources may lead to incorrect interpretations of Soviet culture. These sources provide insight into the average Soviet experience of "ordinary Soviet person". However, they also allow for identifying general features of the urban festive landscape and the overall transformations of Kharkiv's local festive culture during the late Soviet period.

Several important features of the historiography of Soviet symbolic and ritual practices are worth pointing out. First, the vast majority of studies deal with the Soviet traditions of the 1920s to 1950s, while later traditions are seen as more or less unchanged and thus not meriting separate consideration. Second, much of the research focuses on the traditions of the Soviet "red calendar" – mass state holidays and their symbolic attributes. Third, scholars pay special attention to the symbolic and ritual practices of Soviet capitals. Non-capital urban traditions are mainly interpreted as imitations and reproductions of capital-city symbolic forms and patterns (Plaggenborg 2000; Yurchak 2006; Rol'f 2009).

During the Soviet era, urban festivities found extensive coverage in openly propagandistic works of Soviet authors. The main purpose of such works was to explain the specifics of the Soviet culture of celebration. They can be viewed as a kind of manuals offering examples of symbolic forms allowed by the authorities, from music and songs to clothes and elements of everyday ritual (Rudnev 1974; Tul'tseva 1985; Volovyk et al. 1986).

In this paper, we rely on research strategies developed in urban anthropology, primarily associated with the study of cultural landscapes of socialist cities (Czepczyński 2008), as well as their symbolic and ritual practices (Yurchak 2006; Rol'f 2009). Based on the semiotic approach, we will attempt to decode urban symbolic and ritual practices as part of the cultural and festive landscapes of the socialist city. We work our way through the observation of individual symbolic forms (loci, actions, texts, symbolism) towards tracing the interpretations of symbolic and ritual practices as a forms of intertextual representation of the Soviet city. Additionally, we will consider the influence of Soviet urban festivity culture on the genesis of urban local specificity

in the late Soviet period. We focus on identifying the components of the urban festive landscape and decoding their significance to uncover the connection between the city space and the representational properties of Soviet symbolic and ritual practices. We operate under the assumption that the festive landscape of the Soviet city ultimately played a decisive role in affirming local distinctiveness and influencing the identity of the residents, injecting specific content and values into the urban population's lifeworld.

Additionally, we employ a semiotic approach to analyze visual sources (photos and videos). Using the semiotic concept of "representation", we concentrate on visual textual representations of narratives characteristic of the ideology during the late Soviet period. The theoretical foundation for this is provided by Roland Barthes' "Mythologies" (Barthes 1972). As is known, Barthes defined myth as a second-order semiological system and a metalanguage, characterized by a dynamic interplay between meaning and form. We decode visual sources from the late Soviet era, moving from capturing the semiotic forms represented in them to seeking their appropriate interpretation.

City image: "Kharkiv, where is your face?"[3]

Founded in the mid-17th century, Kharkiv transformed in the 19th century into one of the largest industrial, commercial, financial and educational centers in the Russian Empire. The city was a true "crossroads of cultures", in great part because of its frontier origin – first and foremost, the Ukrainian-Russian borderland as a zone of both separation and contact, in which competing and even mutually exclusive discourses and identities met and interacted) (Kravchenko 2010; Kravchenko 2023) – that became one of the determining factors in the construction of Kharkiv's "grand style".

The search for the "face" of Soviet Kharkiv in journalism and public discourse was prompted by the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tychyna's rhetorical question, "Kharkiv, Kharkiv, where is your face?" (1923). Indeed, the symbolic image of Soviet Kharkiv was rather mixed, fragmentary, and rife with contradictory impulses. For example, the existence of quite different, if not contradictory, versions of urban identity in Soviet Kharkiv was elaborated on by the linguist and literary critic Yury Shevelyov in his essay "The Fourth Kharkiv" (1948). Shevelyov identified several "faces" of the city. In his view, the "first Kharkiv" was the patriarchal Cossack settlement of the 17th and 18th century, and the "second Kharkiv" – a provincial city of the Russian Empire of the 19th to early 20th century. The "third Kharkiv" could be defined as the capital of Soviet Ukraine and Ukrainian modernism in the 1920s. It ceased to exist as a result of Stalin's reign of terror. The "fourth Kharkiv" was the post-war Soviet city – a provincial center that remembered practically nothing of the cultural achievements of the 1920s. According to Shevelyov, the eventual appearance of a "fifth Kharkiv" would be a logical outcome

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3 This phrase is a line from the poem "Kharkiv" by the Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tychyna (Tychyna 1977: 87-88).

of the city's evolution – this would be a Ukrainian city that would recapture its role as a cultural capital and a hub of the Ukrainian national idea (Shevel'ov 1978: 204-220).

Soviet propaganda, in turn, portrayed Kharkiv as a typical Soviet urban center almost entirely devoid of Ukrainian national identity. This becomes especially apparent when scrutinizing city guides and postcards from the 1960s to the 1980s. The only Ukrainian motifs encountered there are images of several monuments honoring Ukrainian writers and poets (Mykola Hohol, Taras Shevchenko and Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky), which were sanctioned by Soviet propaganda.

Furthermore, due to the efforts of official propaganda, the image of Kharkiv emerged mainly as a city of industry, "labor glory", and the like. For instance, a 1971 issue of the magazine "Ukraine", dedicated to Kharkiv, begins with an encomium to it as "a city of heroic revolutionary and labor traditions, the cradle of Soviet power in Ukraine, a key industrial, scientific and cultural center of the republic" (Anonymous 1971: 1). It should be noted that this is a typical description for most large Soviet cities, fully corresponding to the Soviet totalitarian discourse, which was characterized, among others, by sloganeering and propagandistic triumphalism.

It is important to remember that in the years 1919-1934 Kharkiv was the capital of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic. Nevertheless, the true status and social and cultural role of the city remained uncertain throughout the first half of the twentieth century, even as Kharkiv was emerging as one of the largest centers of industry, culture and science in the USSR. In the second half of the twentieth century, the city was home to several hundred industrial enterprises and more than twenty institutions of higher education. Its population benefitted from large-scale infrastructural projects. In particular, in 1975 the first stations of the Kharkiv metro were put into operation – the second in Ukraine after Kyiv. The 1970s witnessed the start of construction on the massive Saltivka housing development, one of the largest in Ukraine (Kudelko, Tarasova 2010).

The spatial dimension of Soviet urban holidays

Alexei Yurchak has observed that the Soviet "authoritative discourse" included the visual, practical, spatial and other components (Yurchak 2006: 36-37). State and Party bodies paid special attention to sites and venues for celebrations – primarily city squares and avenues, as well as halls and rooms in people's clubs, palaces and houses of culture and ceremonies, and houses of mourning, the architectural design of which had to meet "the needs of socialist ritual". From the 1930s on, the main spatial object of Kharkiv and the city's main venue for ceremonies and festivities was Dzerzhinsky Square (now Freedom Square) – one of the largest city squares in Eastern Europe. It was home to the two principal architectural symbols of Soviet Kharkiv: the House of State Industry (Derzhprom), which had the distinction of being the first high-rise building in Ukraine (Chekhunov 2018), and the 20-meter-tall Lenin monument. The

latter was unveiled in November 1963. It secured for the architectural complex of the square the role of the heart and fulcrum of the city and made the square Kharkiv's main landmark. The square served as the main ceremonial space on such occasions as the Day of International Labor Solidarity (1 May), October Revolution Day (7 November), anniversaries of Lenin's birth and the creation of the Soviet Union, etc. Popular mass festivities (for instance, on New Year's Eve) and sporting events were held there as well.

Fig. 1. Kharkiv, Dzerzhinsky Square, Young Pioneer ceremonial guard and parade in honor of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Young Pioneers. 1972, M. F. Sumtsov Kharkiv Historical Museum

Fig. 2. Kharkiv, Dzerzhinsky Square, 1st May Day demonstration. 1977, M. F. Sumtsov Kharkiv Historical Museum

During the 1960s to 1980s, the historical mythology of the "Great Patriotic War" outstripped that of "Great October". Kharkiv did not receive the honorary title of Hero City like other large Ukrainian cities. The significant failures of the Red Army near it got in the way – Kharkiv fell under German control several times. For a long time, the city's chief holiday, Liberation Day, was focused exclusively on the subject of the War. The commemorative nature of Kharkiv's Liberation Day turned the event into a kind of "ritual of thanksgiving" (somewhere in-between mourning and the honoring of heroes). It was one of the most important dates for the city's residents, second only to mass Soviet public holidays. The principal urban memory space associated with it was the Glory Memorial, unveiled in Woodland Park (Lisopark) in 1977. The central figure of the complex was a 12-meter-tall sculpture of a woman. Prior to the opening of the Memorial, the chief site for honoring the memory of the fallen in the "Great Patriotic War" was the mass grave in Woodland Park, marked with the sculptures of a woman and a soldier. It was to that place that people came to commemorate the War's dead on Kharkiv's Liberation Day (23 August), Victory Day (9 May), anniversaries of the liberation of Ukraine (28 October), the start of the War (22 June) and other occasions. The commemoration scenario included several obligatory elements: the laying of wreaths at the Memorial by representatives of the Party organizations and industrial enterprises of the city and region, as well as invited delegations; the performance of the anthem of the Soviet Union; a military salute; an honor guard made up of servicemen from the Kharkiv garrison and cadets from the city's military schools; and last but not least, a veterans' reunion.

Among the customary sites for honoring the memory of the fallen (especially those killed in the several battles for Kharkiv) were the 12-meter-tall Monument to the Soldier-Liberator, unveiled in 1981 on the symbolically named 23rd August Street, and the Monument to the Kharkiv Divisions, built in 1973 on Kharkiv Divisions Street. It

is significant that commemorating the victims of the Second World War often became a component of various unrelated celebrations and observances. For example, in 1988 the city celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the introduction of Christianity in Rus'. Representatives of the Orthodox Church took part in a procession through the city, during which flowers were laid at the Glory Memorial Complex in Woodland Park (Sysoiev 1988: 4).

According to Malte Rolf, a notable characteristic of the Soviet festive culture during the period under study was a noticeable expansion of unofficial festive culture; celebrations increasingly moved into the parallel sphere of the private life of Soviet citizens (Rol'f 2009: 343). Officially sanctioned holiday dates turned into occasions for close, intimate gatherings. Soviet propaganda heavily promoted sober lifestyle and the eradication of alcohol from the culture of celebration. However, feasting, during which alcohol was the main catalyst of the festive mood, was a key component of the standard unofficial celebration scenario (Rol'f 2009: 345-346). Private gatherings at the table were usually not opposed to state celebrations, but constituted their logical component. In fact, public holidays served as formal occasions that legitimized private celebrations among colleagues, neighbors and kin. But eventually, forced and obligatory ritual practices (for example, 1 May and 7 November demonstrations and processions) came to interfere with particularistic celebration practices. As a result, mass Soviet holidays gradually ceased to serve as demonstrations of support for the literal meaning of party slogans and decisions and morphed into street festivals (Yurchak 2006: 121-122).

Fig. 3. Kharkiv, Woodland Park, Victory Day of 9th May celebration at the Glory Memorial Complex. 1979, M. F. Sumtsov Kharkiv Historical Museum

In Soviet times, the 16.5-meter-tall monument to Taras Shevchenko and the surrounding area of Shevchenko Garden played a special role in the symbolic space of Kharkiv. The monument was constructed in 1935 near Dzerzhinsky Square. During the Soviet era, it became one of the monumental symbols of Kharkiv (Niemchenok, Sarana 1967: 48-53; Andreeva, Oleinik 1972: 28-29; Leibfreid et al. 1985: 51-52). In the second half of the 1980s, the area of Shevchenko Garden around the monument was a customary location for celebrating dates from the life of the Kobzar ("Bard", a popular moniker for Shevchenko) and for other cultural and mass events on national Ukrainian themes. It should be noted that at the end of the 1980s, festive events increasingly included national motifs (primarily traditional Ukrainian costumes, dances, songs, etc.). Emphasis began to be placed on the specifics of local identity. The openness of Soviet celebration culture towards ethnic and national festive traditions led to the borrowing of folk practices and their inclusion in the officially sanctioned holiday canon (Rol'f 2009: 349-350). One example is the All-Union Shevchenko Art and Literary Festival "In a Free, New Family", held in Kharkiv on May 12–15, 1988, and attended by many prominent Ukrainian writers and poets (Ivan Drach and Borys Oliinyk, among others). The most spectacular festivities again were to be found near the monument to the Kobzar – performances by folk dance and vocal ensembles, circus and stage artists, bandurists, and a symphony orchestra (Anonymous 1988: 1; Kirsanov 1988: 1; Sovietov 1988: 1).

Fig. 4. Kharkiv, city view postcard "Taras Shevchenko monument". 1976, V. G. Korolenko Kharkiv State Scientific Library

The coherence of Soviet urban holidays

The system of Soviet ritual practices included life-cycle rituals, initiation into social or political groups, mass political celebrations, as well as labor, calendar and military-patriotic rituals. Christel Lane brings such ritual practices together under the umbrella of the concept of "political religion" – a unified system of obligatory and binding values penetrating deep into all aspects of a Soviet citizen's life (Lane 1981). The organization of Soviet mass celebrations in Kharkiv bears out this proposition. Overall, throughout the 1960s to 1980s the iconography of municipal festivals remained unchanged. For example, columns of demonstrators marching past tribunes manned by Party and state leaders were a persistent fundamental structural element of the Soviet festive choreography during mass celebrations (Rol'f 2009: 343). Since the 1960s, researchers note an increasingly pronounced trend towards some degree of standardization of social and political rituals in the USSR, as well as their simplified perception by the public that participated in mass events (Yurchak 2006: 37, 58-59). Soviet holidays became a "mundane affair" and turned into mandatory rituals, the original meaning of which was being gradually lost (Rol'f 2009: 347). All this was a consequence of the systemic crisis of the late Soviet era.

According to Malte Rolf, during the 1960s to 1980s Soviet holidays remained an important medium that served the needs of the regime in public presentations, and new festive occasions created by the Soviet authorities filled the gaps in the cultural space of the USSR (Rol'f 2009: 342- 343). An illustrative example are "labor holidays". Soviet propaganda defined the following types of them: calendar holidays of labor professions (Metallurgist's Day, Chemical Worker's Day, etc.), holidays specific to individual collectives and enterprises (particularly enterprise anniversaries), and "personal" labor-related rites and ceremonies (honoring labor dynasties, awarding titles such as "honorary metallurgist", etc.) (Tul'tseva 1985: 72).

Kharkiv's industrial enterprises often held rallies to mark festive occasions, such as round production numbers (the making the two-millionth TV set, 200,000th tractor, and the like) or state awards, or to show support for and legitimize decisions of the Soviet government, primarily rallies in support of Soviet foreign policy (Anonymous 1969: 1). Such events took place not only on enterprise premises, but also in the public space of the city, for instance, rallies in Dzerzhinsky Square near the Lenin monument, where workers would recite labor reports-cum-oaths (Zaiachkivs'kyi 1970: 3). Another widespread type of rallies marked collective labor achievements of the city's residents, such as, for instance, the launch of another public transit line (Cherevchenko 1970: 1; Anonymous 1970: 1).

Considering that in Soviet times Kharkiv bore the title of a "hub of higher education", symbolic and ritual practices of institutions of higher education (for instance, student initiation ceremonies, universiades, parades of student construction brigades) often became city-wide events. Overall, during the late Soviet period the

symbolic and ritual practices of institutions of higher education were well integrated into the culture of Soviet urban festivity (Posokhov, Rachkov 2020: 129-167; Rachkov 2020: 477-493).

A variety of higher education-related events gained the status of city-wide celebrations. For example, in April 1969 Kharkiv hosted a universiade on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth and brought to the city student youth from all the union republics of the USSR. In addition to the solemn procession of students in national costumes through the central part of the city, an opening ceremony was held in the assembly hall of A. M. Gorky Kharkiv State University. It featured reports by university delegations (not only in Russian, but also in Armenian and Turkmen) declaring readiness to successfully complete the program of the event. A young man and woman dressed in Ukrainian traditional costumes brought out the flags of the union republics and a giant loaf of bread on an embroidered towel, a traditional symbol of welcome. The festivities culminated in the lighting of the flame of the universiade (the torch was lit from the Eternal Flame of the Monument to the Fighters of the October Revolution). A concert under the name "Ukraine Sings for You" rounded out the proceedings (Ivanova 1969: 1-2). Such all-Union universiades were held in Kharkiv several times. For instance, the 50th anniversary of the USSR in April 1972 became the occasion for a universiade bringing together student youth from 25 universities of the USSR. The opening ceremony included a rally in Dzerzhinsky Square near the Lenin monument. The iconography was typical for the Soviet era: students in national costumes, the ceremonial raising of the flags of the union republics and the flag of the universiade, the lighting of the symbolic torch of the universiade, a ritual honoring the memory of the fallen in the Second World War, ceremonial reports from participating universities, a concert, and more (Brydun 1972: 1). As parts of the event, the city hosted gymnastics tournaments, a student research conference, an amateur art festival, and concerts at Kharkiv's industrial enterprises and schools. The closing ceremony took place on the day of the 102nd anniversary of Lenin's birth at the Ukraine Film and Concert Hall, the largest in the city. The participants in the universiade joined the city-wide celebrations, including the laying of flowers at the Lenin monument in Dzerzhinsky Square. In addition, the students took part in the planting of a Friendship Alley in the Kharkiv University Botanical Garden (Anonymous 1972: 1).

Fig. 5. Kharkiv, Soviet Ukraine Square, rally celebrating the opening of the 16th All-Union Summer Spartakiad of Students of Vocational and Technical Schools. 1981, M. F. Sumtsov Kharkiv Historical Museum

Throughout the 1960s to 1980s, Soviet propaganda paid special attention to local celebrations – street and district fetes and the like. Such festive occasions lay within the purview of local party organizations and took on a pronounced ideological hue. The program usually featured a propagandistic lecture, an amateur concert, a meeting with veterans of war and labor, mass games, and so forth. At the same time, events of this type stressed the local features of one particular corner of the city, as well as the city in general., The festive affair held under the slogan "We Are Kharkovites!" in one of the new residential housing developments in September 1978 can be cited as one of many examples (Brovko 1978: 3).

(Pre)holiday fairs, where food, clothes, furniture, household appliances and other goods could be bought, were traditional for Soviet urban festivity culture, in particular in Kharkiv. Given persistent shortages of consumer goods, fairs were very popular with urban residents. Serhy Yekelchyk suggests that they served as a kind of "bribe" given to the people by the authorities, used, among others, to improve the public mood (Yekelchyk 2018: 69-70). Such fairs demonstrated the state's symbolic care for the people and were cited by propaganda as evidence of the rise in living standards.

Constructing cultural memory: Soviet city anniversaries

The 1960s–1980s were a time of the search for new forms of symbolic representation, well exemplified by Soviet anniversary culture. Anniversaries served as a means of constructing historical memory as early as the beginning of the 20th century, but in the USSR this phenomenon became an important element of the ideological reality only

in the second half of the 20th century. During this period, anniversary-related social activity came from above rather than from below, shaped by the regime; anniversaries became a channel for the propaganda of state and Party ideology and policies. However, today it is widely held that this was not the only role played by Soviet anniversaries. They were also called upon to help overcome the growing socio-political tensions and crisis developments in the Soviet system. Not all anniversaries of Soviet cities were celebrated on a large scale. In any case, in the minds of the city folk anniversaries were extremely festive events. They provided not only for the greatest concentration of symbolic forms, but also for the construction and establishment of such symbolic forms as lasting festive traditions (a canon).

The anniversary as a form of cultural memory formed a mythologically reworked image of the past and at the same time performed the function of representing the contents and transmitting the values of the city's cultural memory. In particular, a Soviet city anniversary could serve as a means of "inventing" the date of the city's founding, often "lengthening" its history. For example, it was during the period under study that at least three dates of Kharkiv's founding (1654, 1655 and 1656) came to be established in the public space of the city. Each of them found reflection in anniversary publications (Mikhailik 1958) or urban landscape. In general, Kharkiv's anniversary traditions during this period were limited to a few celebrations at the local level. Thus, the 300th anniversary of the city was celebrated in 1956, while ceremonial events were held in September 1955; the 325th anniversary was celebrated in June 1981, and the 335th – in September 1991.

The "invention" of urban traditions in the late Soviet era: the City Day

During the second half of the 1980s, the festive landscape diversified considerably. A salient instance of the invention of a new urban tradition for Kharkiv was the establishment of a new holiday – the City Day. The fashion for celebrating such holidays spread in the USSR in the second half of the 1980s.

The first City Day was celebrated in Kharkiv on 20 September 1987. The date was not ideologically motivated. Until the mid-1990s, the City Day would be celebrated annually on the fourth Sunday of September, and afterwards – on August 23 (Kharkiv's Liberation Day). The City Day became a truly popular phenomenon. Ideological aspects, like honoring working-class struggle or the memory of the fallen in the "Great Patriotic War", were pushed to the sidelines.

The main idea behind the City Day was to turn the entire Kharkiv into "one concert venue" (Soldatenko 1988: 1). The iconography of the first City Day marked the formation of a new symbolic language, essential components of which were national (primarily Ukrainian) and local symbols, such as the city's "coats of arms" from different eras (Saratov 2008). The main feature of the holiday was its integrative function. The celebration scenario featured various social, professional, ethnic, subcultural and

age groups of the city's residents. Examples include a carnival show, performances by folk art ensembles, a parade of parents with newborn city residents, and a procession of veterans.

The scenario for the celebration of a City Day included various symbolic forms: an opening ceremony with speeches; performances by Ukrainian folk children's art collectives; the honoring of Lenin with a song and the laying of flowers at his monument in Dzerzhinsky Square; a fête for Young Pioneers and schoolchildren at the Gorky Central Park of Culture and Recreation; a festival of poetry, music and humor in Victory Square; a festival of fine arts and concert of folk music in Shevchenko Garden; a festival of ballet and ballroom dance near the Kharkiv Theater of Opera and Ballet; a song festival "Revolution I Praise" in Soviet Ukraine Square; a theatrical performance with brass bands in Proletarian Square; and a fireworks display (Anonymous 1987b: 4).

The program of the first City Day was lavish; festivities extended across most of the city and became a milestone in the life of the Kharkovites. Decentralization, with festive events taking place simultaneously in several iconic locations around the city, was indeed was one of the key features of the celebration (AVKhMR, f. R-1, op. 8, d. 355, 267-275). This trait would be preserved in future years.

One episode in particular, the celebratory "Agitation Train Tour around the Sites of Revolutionary, Combat and Labor Glory", deserves a special mention. The phenomenon of the "agitation train" – a distinctive instrument of Soviet propaganda in the past – took on a new meaning and symbolic significance on City Day. Three freight tram platforms served as floats. The first platform recreated the initial period of the city's history, the 17th and the 18th century. It featured the most characteristic attributes of the Cossack era: cannon, spears and sabers. The actors were dressed in Cossack garb, with the men wearing sirwal pants ("sharovary"), "papakhas" and long mustaches. The second platform showcased the 19th century; the actors sported tailcoats and top hats. The third platform represented the Soviet period in the history of Kharkiv and was decorated with the signs reading "Decree on Peace", "Decree on Land", and "All Power to the Soviets" (Anonymous 1987c: 1). The primary symbolic significance of the "agitation trains" lay in their representation of the continuity between the city's pre-Soviet and Soviet history.

The City Day exemplified the decentralization of Soviet urban festivity. In contrast to Soviet mass state holidays, popular participation in city celebrations was less regulated. With City Day festivities taking place across multiple locatons, residents could choose from the program those events that were more attractive and important to them (Anonymous 1987b: 4; Anonymous 1987a: 1; Anonymous 1987c: 1). The City Day festive canon illustrated the contradiction between the Soviet symbolic forms used and the pluralism of the celebration's content. The City Day not only showcased important changes in the holiday tradition, but also became a harbinger of more complex social transformations. During the festivities, the Soviet/ideological/collective competed

with the carnivalesque/ideologically neutral/private. The City Day marked a significant substitution: symbolic interaction between the residents and the city replaced that between the people and the state as the underlying theme.

Conclusions

During the 1960s to 1980s, Soviet symbolic and ritual practices determined the perception of Kharkiv by its residents and contributed to the construction of the lasting stereotypes that became part of the city's cultural memory in the subsequent decades. In particular, it was during this time that the fashioning of the heterogeneous image of Soviet Kharkiv was completed, as the city of industry, culture and science, the first capital of Soviet Ukraine, and the "crossroads of cultures". Undoubtedly, Soviet urban festivity as a system of cultural practices and values reflected the Soviet social order, was a component of the Soviet ideology. Since the 1970s, the language of Soviet rituals became as standardized and formalized as possible. At the same time, Soviet urban festivity culture was one of the symbolic mediators connecting city residents with the urban environment.

At the end of the 1980s, the festive landscape of Kharkiv underwent a diversification. Some celebratory occasions, particularly the Kharkiv City Day, evolved into authentic "street festivities", uniting diverse sectors of the city and emerging as significant occasions for the residents at the end of the Soviet era. It can be presumed that the transformation of Kharkiv's urban space into a "one concert venue" aimed to serve consolidating and representative purposes. Ultimately, the gradual diversification of the festive landscape and the decentralization of celebratory practices contributed to the dismantling of the Soviet festive canon, leading to the erosion of several aspects of Soviet traditions that ceased to be relevant and adaptable.

In the second half of the 1980s, at the level of the urban community, we witness the "search" for and the "invention" of new traditions that would be able to generate new models of meaning and forms of their representation. The Soviet festivity culture lost some of its ideological charge and reflected a growing socio-political crisis of the late Soviet era. The rejection of "old" and formation of "new" traditions in the late Soviet period did not encounter much resistance in the community. This was due primarily to the fact that the urban traditions of the late Soviet era, particularly the City Day, drew heavily on old models. They invented no new languages or instruments, nor did they enlarge the old symbolic vocabulary. Instead, established Soviet symbolic and ritual practices were adapted and rethought within the framework of new urban traditions and began to serve new goals. They continued to influence the cultural and symbolic space of Kharkiv and its urban imaginary even after Ukraine gained independence (Rachkov 2021).

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