

Kharkiv As a University City: The Evolution of Symbolic Space¹

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Abstract: The emergence and evolution of the symbolic space of Kharkiv, one of the largest university centres in Ukraine, represent changes in the urban cultural landscape and the urban narrative of memory. Here, the transformations of sign-space (ritual practices and symbolism) in Kharkiv's institutions of higher education are traced from the first half of the nineteenth century to the present time. The genesis of sign-space in the city's institutes of higher education is an example of the transfer of western European university ideas to eastern European terrain, and their further adaptation there. The functioning of sign-space is studied in the fifteen largest institutions of higher learning in Kharkiv today.

University symbols and rituals define a system of views of the modern university, its functions, and its ideals. Building a university sign-space is also interpreted as a competition for the symbolic environment of the city in which it exists. In this way, institutions of higher education seek not only to be represented in the urban milieu, but also to promote the consolidation of a certain part of the surrounding urban community. Kharkiv's symbolic space as a university city is tightly knit but heterogeneous, representing a complex system and comprising a wide variety of visual and verbal elements. The current forms of visual (self)representation of Kharkiv's universities are a synthesis of local and borrowed academic traditions. The "commercialization" and "service function" of the modern university clash with the "old" ideals of Enlightenment, a conflict reflected in the symbolic and ritual forms perceived by the university community.

Keywords: university city, symbolic space, sign-space, symbols, ritual practices, collective memory, sites of memory, Kharkiv.

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INTRODUCTION

The presence of a university affects the status of a city and determines the directions and dynamics of the city's development. At the same time, every university is subject to external influences and adapts to the specific conditions of the city in which it resides (cf. Addie et al.; Balducci and Fedeli; Benneworth and Hospers; Bonfantini; Bender; Maurer, "*Barometry*"). The German scholar Trude Maurer called the university "an urban invention" and observed that "the university (at least [the] European [university]) needed the city for its survival and could only exist in it" ("Universitet" 8).² European history shows that the university was and remains an integral part of and a factor in the development of urban culture, and of the city in general (see de Ridder-Symoens; Rüegg). Beginning with the emergence of the first universities, city and university were closely intertwined. Eventually, such interdependence was reflected in the symbolic landscape of the city, of which the sign-space of universities became a part.

The history of Ukrainian universities can be seen as a history of the transfer of and adaptation to western European ideas and traditions (Andreev and Posokhov). The specifics of modern university culture in Ukraine—the development of which was given impetus by the restoration of Lviv University (1784) by Emperor Joseph II and the founding of Imperial Kharkiv University (1804) by Emperor Alexander I—were determined by the context of the universities' existence, their histories, and local and national developments. Since their inception, universities have sought to symbolically mark their premises and their academic domains and to protect these entities from outside threats. The main features of the corporative culture of universities are reflected in their eclectic symbolic space.

The sign-space of Ukraine's universities has received little scholarly attention, and university symbols are at best seen as anniversary and celebration paraphernalia. Research interest in the visual manifestations of university culture and the symbolic space of Ukraine's institutions of higher education began to grow only in the 2000s (Rachkov, *Symvol ta emblem*). This new generation of studies not only recorded (identified and systematized) various forms of university symbolism, but also analyzed the problems of using symbolic means to self-represent university communities. Researchers primarily focused on the symbolic spheres of the oldest schools that had a long university tradition. Unfortunately, the symbolic spheres of the majority of newer educational institutions in the country remain almost unexplored. Given the existing historiographical situation, we attempt a comparative analysis of the symbolic space of today's institutions of higher

² Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are our own.

education, focusing on the fifteen largest universities in Kharkiv.³ This study determines the symbolic “presence” of institutions of higher education and their sign-space in the symbolic space of Kharkiv. It identifies the interplay of dynamic systems such as university culture and urban culture in this multi-functional and multinational city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the study methodology, we draw on approaches developed within the framework of visual and cultural studies such as Jean Baudrillard’s theory of symbolic exchange, the theory of cultural transfer (Espagne and Werner), and Roland Barthes’s concept of symbolic meanings (*The Semiotic Challenge* and *Mythologies*). We consider the symbolic space of institutions of higher learning to be part of the urban space on the basis of a semiotic approach, focusing on semantic and pragmatic aspects. We understand that the urban space is interconnected and heterogeneous. It is a complex system that consists of many mental, visual, and verbal elements.

The semiotic procedure for analyzing the symbolic space of institutions of higher education as part of the urban space includes several steps. The first step involves the identification of symbolic elements in the city’s sign-space that are associated with universities (symbols and emblems, as well as the relevant loci, things, actions, texts). These components of the symbolic milieu are recorded in the context of their existence and used within specific situations during which the actualization of certain values takes place. In the next step, we outline the ways in which representatives of university communities interpret the elements of the university sign-space, bearing in mind that the meanings of symbols and rituals are often polysemantic and collective, while interpretations of sign-space are not always expressed verbally, and may not be perceived consciously. Special attention is paid to the analysis of typical etiquette situations; for example, official ceremonies,

³ The present names of these institutions are: National University of Technology “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”; National University of Pharmaceutics; O. M. Beketov Kharkiv National University of Urban Economy; V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University; Iaroslav the Wise National Law University; Semen Kuznets’ Kharkiv National University of Economics; Ukrainian State University of Rail Transport; Kharkiv National Automobile and Road University; Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs; Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics; Kharkiv National Medical University; M. Ie. Zhukovs’kyi National Aerospace University “Kharkiv Aviation Institute”; H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University; Petro Vasylenko Kharkiv National Technical University of Agriculture; Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture.

during which interpretations of the university sign-space assume a standardized appearance. Interpretations may vary, may be random, and are subject to diverse situational factors (for example, violations of the established ceremonial scenarios may be caused by external circumstances such as the weather or the presence of an important guest). The interpretation step represents a transition from the level of signs (semantics) to the level of behaviour (pragmatics). Thus, the study involves a procedure for decoding the sign-space of universities as part of the symbolic space of the city; that is, the sign-space must be decoded from its symbolic form to its behavioural consequences. This procedure allows us to describe the symbolic space of the city's centres of higher learning, and to analyze their influence on urban culture and vice versa (cf. Shchepanskaia; Rachkov, *Symvoly ta emblemy*).

THE UNIVERSITY AS A SUPERPLACE

The city of Kharkiv has long been known as the “student capital of Ukraine.” Today, more than 150,000 students from all over the world study here. Education became a powerful factor in the development of the city as early as the eighteenth century, with the establishment of Kharkiv Collegium in 1726 (Posokhova 303). A new impetus for the development of Kharkiv was given by the founding of Imperial Kharkiv University in 1804 (Kravchenko et al., *Kharkivs'kyi universytet*). Thanks to Imperial Kharkiv University, the norms of European culture began to spread more actively in Kharkiv. The university not only claimed the role of “carrier of high culture,” but also de facto became the intermediary in translating the patterns of this culture into the urban milieu. Numerous cultural innovations that arose and became entrenched in the city were initiated at the university (Kravchenko, *Khar'kov / Kharkiv*).

It is hard to agree with scholars who consider the university environment of “traditional” Kharkiv to be a threat to the city's socio-economic (primarily commercial) development (see Masliichuk). On the contrary, Imperial Kharkiv University was quickly recognized as “their own” by the local community and assumed a dominant position in Kharkiv's cultural landscape (Andreev and Posokhov; Posokhov, *Universitet i gorod*). Later, Kharkiv Veterinary Institute (1873) and Kharkiv Institute of Technology (1885) significantly strengthened the city's position as an academic centre (Bagalei and Miller).

Figure 1. Ceremonial unveiling of the monument to V. N. Karazin, University Garden, 1907. Courtesy of the M. F. Sumtsov Kharkiv Historical Museum.



Imperial Kharkiv University acquired an exceptional geographic location in the central part of the city. At the outset, the school was granted the provincial governor's residence as its first building, around which a campus gradually emerged during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the school's main building, University Street—one of the city's first streets—boasted the university library and the university's Church of St. Anthony. University Street runs from Bursats'kyi Descent to the River Kharkiv. It received its current name after the founding of the university, and its original name is unknown. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Soviet authorities made several attempts to rename it to "Free Academy Street" or "Chervonokomivs'ka Street" (probably a combination of the words "red commissars" or "red commanders"). In the postwar period (1945) the street's historic name was restored. Other urban toponyms bearing the name of the school are University Square (opposite the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God, called Cathedral Square until the middle of the twentieth century) and University Lane (between today's Constitution Square and University Street) (Dmitrieva 325).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the university's complex of historic buildings on the eponymous street had already received a

vernacular character, which led to the formation of a new historic neighbourhood in the central part of the city, known as “University Hill.” Scholars have pointed out that the establishment of the university in the central part of Kharkiv was an important step in the development not only of the historic centre, but also of the entire city (Leibfreid and Poliakova 21). Until the early twentieth century, Imperial Kharkiv University owned a considerable amount of land within the city limits. According to an 1887 list of Kharkiv homeowners, “university land” occupied the territory of the present-day Taras Shevchenko City Garden and Freedom Square—at that time still on the outskirts of the city (Dmitrieva 415).

The 1920s and early 1930s became an era of radical structural and functional transformations in the system of classical universities in Soviet Ukraine. Ukraine was the only republic of the USSR where universities *de jure* ceased to exist for more than a decade (Parfinenko; Riabchenko). Without going into detail on the causes and consequences of the “liquidation”/“reorganization” of universities, we note that this process caused irreparable damage to the university tradition and eventually led to the partial destruction of the basic principles of university corporative culture in Ukraine. Despite this, Kharkiv continued to be a powerful educational and scientific centre. For example, after Imperial Kharkiv University had been liquidated, a number of institutions of higher education were set up during the 1920s and 1930s that eventually gave rise to modern-day universities (such as Yaroslav the Wise National Law University and Kharkiv National Medical University). In addition, 23 new schools of higher learning were created in Kharkiv in 1930-31, the vast majority of which exist to this day (for examples, Ukrainian State University of Rail Transport, Kharkiv National Automobile and Road University, Semen Kuznets' Kharkiv National University of Economics). A number of higher education establishments were formed on the basis of Kharkiv Institute of Technology, reorganized in 1930—such as M. Ie. Zhukovs'kyi National Aerospace University, also known as Kharkiv Aviation Institute, and Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture (Iarmysh et al. 257). Overall, as of 1940-41 there were 33 state institutions of higher education in Kharkiv—and, of course, not a single private one (Chmykhalo and Mamontov 221).

University education in Ukraine was revived in the early 1930s. Kharkiv State University (renamed A. M. Gor'kii Kharkiv State University in 1936) reopened in 1933 and until the 1990s remained the only educational institution with university status in the city. From the mid-1930s forward, the history of Kharkiv University began to be remembered and its anniversaries and other significant dates began to be celebrated (see Posokhov, “Iubilei” 144-46). However, compared with the pre-revolutionary era, the university’s position and views on its history had changed significantly (Posokhov, “Iubilei” 144). During the 1930s and afterward, the

university continued to be the subject of a large-scale historical experiment conducted by the Soviet regime, not only in the field of higher education, but also in the broader sense of attempting to shape a new “Soviet” type of person (see Andreev, “Krasnyi student”).

The political and cultural transformations in the Soviet era changed the status and social role of university culture. As a result, Kharkiv turned from a university city into a “centre of higher education.” The role of the university among the city’s higher educational institutions remained uncertain. Although the university continued to claim cultural leadership in the regional educational sphere, it was significantly limited in its forms of self-representation and visual communication. As the centres of higher education in Kharkiv were completely subordinate to the state, their sign-space reflected “the turn of the ideological discourse toward increasing standardization and repeatability” (Yurchak 91). The Soviet “authoritative discourse” comprised visual, practical, and spatial components, but language was the most important part—the authoritative language of speeches, documents, appeals, slogans, plans, reports, and newspaper editorials (Yurchak 92). The Soviet authoritative discourse present in the cultural practices and narratives of the capital cities was “reproduced” in a provincial way in cities across the USSR. The system of Soviet rituals included calendar and labour rituals, military parades, life cycle ceremonials, and mass political celebrations. The British scholar Christel Lane groups these practices under the concept of “political religion,” which represented a unified system of values mandatory for all, embracing and penetrating deeply into all areas of a Soviet person’s life. One of the central places in this complex belongs to Soviet ritual symbolism (Glebkin). The university culture of the Soviet era fully experienced the “standardization of form” inherent in the Soviet rituals, which in the end contributed to this subculture’s loss of independent significance.

Changes in the symbolic space of Imperial Kharkiv University began as early as 1917. For obvious reasons, the word “imperial” ceased to apply to the university at that point; it was knocked down not only from the pediment of the building, but even from the monument to the founder of the university, V. N. Karazin. University Street was renamed “Free Academy Street.” In 1945 the street got its old name back, but in the postwar period A. M. Gor’kii Kharkiv State University, reopened in 1933, was transferred to another building, and its original home was given to another educational institution. Thus, the old university terrain (primarily on University Street) lost its significance as the centre of the university life. In our view, it was the blurring of the boundaries of the symbolic space of higher education and the fracturing of memory in Kharkiv’s academic communities that became one of the main challenges for the city’s institutions of higher education in the late twentieth century.

The number of state institutions of higher education in Kharkiv during the 1950s to the 1980s fluctuated between 20 and 25 (Chmykhalo and Mamontov 221). From the mid-twentieth century on, several Ukrainian cities could claim the status of “university centres.” First and foremost, these were the largest cities of the republic—Kyiv, Dnipro (formerly, Dnipropetrovsk), Odesa, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Lviv (Osaulenko). As of 1991, the clear leaders in the number of civilian institutions of higher education were Kharkiv (22) and Kyiv (18). Odesa, Lviv, and Dnipro boasted somewhat fewer centres of higher education (14, 11, and 9, respectively). The number of higher educational establishments in Donetsk (5) and Zaporizhzhia (4) was much smaller (Arsen'ev). In fact, every administrative centre in Ukraine had several institutions of higher education. Their specializations were diverse and to a certain extent depended on the structure of the host community's economy. Universities were found in only a few cities.

The Soviet system of higher education was characterized by a hierarchy of educational institutions, which had a well-defined prestige aspect. The stature of higher educational institutions was largely determined by the specialties and professions that were fashionable at the time. In the Soviet era, the fashion was state propaganda that “glorified” the labour of workers and peasants, as well as teachers, doctors, engineers, and the military. A “guidebook” to professional prestige during the Soviet period could be found in Soviet films, which evolved to reflect the shifting socio-political and socio-economic priorities of the Soviet regime (see Zorkaia). The universities were considered the most prestigious higher educational institutions; specialized institutes (polytechnic, medical, economic, law, pedagogical) occupied the rung below. This can be confirmed by the fact that in the era of Ukrainian independence each regional capital got “its own” university.

In the Soviet period, badges (and in some cases uniforms) symbolized a differentiation of higher educational institutions according to prestige. For example, in 1961 the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of the USSR approved the standard design of badges for the graduates of institutions of higher education (Prikaz Ministerstva). The introduction of such badges, as well as an attempt to reintroduce uniforms for the students in the faculties of geology and geography during the second half of the twentieth century, exemplified a revival of some elements of pre-Soviet academic symbolism. In concept and style, the badges worn by graduates of Soviet higher educational institutions resembled those adopted by Russia's imperial universities in 1899. However, beginning in the second half of the 1980s, the practice of giving badges to graduates became increasingly sporadic (primarily because of the dwindling and irregular production of badges). The conferring of badges ceased entirely in the early

1990s (Rachkov, *Symvol y ta emblem y* 62, 71). But the wearing of these badges stopped being a mass practice even earlier.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Kharkiv faced new socio-economic and socio-cultural challenges (Ruble). Having lost its industrial potential, the city continued to claim the position of “student capital” of Ukraine—as stated, for instance, on the city council’s official website (“Kharkiv—students’ka stolytsia”). With Ukraine’s independence in 1991, a new period began in the history of the country’s universities. The development of market relations and the commercialization of education became conditions for structural change and the realization of numerous image-making projects. In the regional educational milieu, a full-blown struggle for leadership unfolded among institutions of higher learning. Ukrainian state institutes and academies sought to expand their disciplinary structure by adding new elements (primarily specializations in the humanities) and to bolster their claims to “universality” in various ways. Statements that until then seemed immutable truths became subjects of controversy—such as the date of the creation of this or that institution of higher education, the names of its “founding fathers,” the history of its growth and development, the correspondence of certain existing norms to the university tradition. For instance, by the beginning of the twentieth century Kharkiv had three institutions of higher education (the university, a veterinary institute, and an institute of technology). Today there are forty-one state and private schools of higher education (accreditation levels III-IV) in the city. The claimed dates of their founding often reach back into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the struggle for student recruitment and perks from the government, the “deepening” of history has become commonplace. The “university roots” of some of these institutions, which were formed as a result of the transformation of the university education system in Ukraine in the 1920s and the 1930s, serve as a formal pretext for historical manipulation and the mythologizing of their past, mostly for the purposes of advertising.

Today, there is a competitive struggle among higher educational centres for the symbolic space of the city. First and foremost, this struggle involves the use of various “visual means” (Posokhov, “O pamiaty” 124-25). Of particular significance are the main buildings of higher educational institutions, the image and depictions of which perform an important representative function. The main buildings of the overwhelming majority of Kharkiv’s establishments of higher education are located in the central part of the city; thus, they to a large extent shape the city’s “face.” In particular, the modern main and northern buildings of Kharkiv University constitute part of the architectural ensemble of Freedom Square, one of the symbols of Kharkiv. In recent years, monuments and statues, as well as

school gardens and parks, placed near institutions of higher education, have also acquired considerable symbolic significance.

In the context of fierce competition and permanent pressure from public and private institutions, schools of higher learning resort to the symbolic marking of their space. For this purpose, they actively use monuments and green zones, memorial plaques dedicated to prominent scholars and important events associated with the school, and corporative symbols and inscriptions. The name of the school of higher learning is a noticeable symbolic element, which is usually placed near the entrance to the main building. In the case of Kharkiv University, just the word "University" is used, reflecting a strategy of self-representation. By branding the establishment "University," Kharkiv University endeavours to claim the symbolic right to be the only "true" (that is, "classical") university among the many centres of higher education in the city. In this way, it tries to defend its historic right to leadership in the regional educational space and to protect itself in the face of growing competition in the post-secondary education sector (Rachkov, *Symvol y ta emblemy* 112-13).

With the help of symbolic forms (emblems, university awards, academic attire and regalia, flags, standards, insignia, and monuments) and rituals (such as official ceremonies and commemorative practices), Kharkiv's institutions of higher education strive to solve a range of image issues. First, universities are keen to highlight their achievements and emphasize their priorities. Second, each institution tries to appear up-to-date and dynamic. Third, each establishment seeks to represent itself as a regionally important cultural, scientific, and educational centre in the urban milieu, and to promote the consolidation of a certain part of the urban community around itself.

UNIVERSITY SYMBOLS IN THE URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

It has been shown that the image of a city is formed by the overlaying of many individual images (Lynch 50). But we should also take into account the general socio-political and socio-cultural transformations that lead to the development of the general cultural code of a city.

Like most of the universities in Soviet Russia, Imperial Kharkiv University was created in the wake of a long period of criticism of the old "pre-classical" model of the university. The Russian empire's universities only partly relied on the symbolic models of western European medieval universities, as the majority of the latter's symbolic forms were perceived as archaic and alien (Posokhov, "Universitetskaia iubileinaia kul'tura" 180; Vishlenkova et al., *Terra Universitatis*; Andreev and Posokhov). As the Imperial Kharkiv University was subordinated to the central imperial

government and was part of its state apparatus, its sign-space presupposed the use of individual elements of state symbolism, primarily the state coat of arms of the Russian Empire, the central figure of which was the double-headed eagle (a symbol of power and Russian autocracy) (Maurer, "Universitet" 5). In particular, the double-headed eagle was depicted on the great and small university seals, the seals of the university library, and the badges of graduates of Russia's imperial universities (Rachkov, *Symvolny ta emblemny* 52).

The sign-space of Soviet-era Ukrainian universities had virtually no connection with the traditions of the previous imperial period. In the evolution of sign-space in Soviet educational institutions, two stages can be distinguished—before and after the mid-1950s. The first stage was marked by the almost complete absence of proper university symbols and emblems and showed a predominance of state symbols. In the post-World War II years, there were isolated attempts to revive some pre-Soviet elements of university symbolism (such as graduation lapel pins or student uniforms for faculties of geology and geography); however, such elements had a different meaning in the new context. In the mid-1950s, a new era in the evolution of the sign-space of Ukraine's universities began. Along with Soviet state symbols, ideologically neutral images (mostly international symbols associated with learning and education) were increasingly used as emblems of educational institutions. Universities' academic units, primarily faculties and departments, began to acquire their own repertoire of symbolic forms during the 1960s to the 1980s. Accoutrements of student construction brigades (such as khaki-coloured jackets with badges, stripes, chevrons) took a special place in the university milieu of the 1960s to the 1980s (Rachkov, "Statusnye otlichia" 197-98).

In the Soviet era in particular, official and unofficial symbolic forms emerged in the sign-space of higher educational institutions and became part of the urban symbolic space. "Student culture palaces," established at higher educational institutions, were places where official and unofficial symbolic forms harmoniously co-existed for a long time. In Kharkiv, the first and probably the most famous student palace was founded at Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute and opened in 1963. The Palace of Students was allocated to the administrative building of the Eparchial School, located in the territory of the student town "*Hihant*" ("The Giant"); however, it was destroyed during World War II. It is symbolic that the institute's students directly participated in the construction of the palace, which took five years. Immediately after its opening, it began to claim the status of the city's cultural centre, since its audience capacity was much larger than that of the largest traditional academic and concert halls of other higher educational institutions ("Palatsu Studentiv KhPI"). The Palace of Students housed

various student initiatives and entertainments (dance, vocal arts, theatre, film, music) that often went beyond the limits of the official discourse.

The idea of the Palace of Students in Kharkiv was clearly borrowed from a similar establishment at Dnipro State University, which was the first inter-school Palace of Student Culture in Ukraine (1952). It occupied the building of the former palace of Prince Potemkin in the Taras Shevchenko Central Park of Culture and Recreation, which was one of the main landmarks and symbols of the city (“Istoriia Palatsu Studentiv”). During the 1960s to the 1980s, the palace was the centre of the cultural life of the city’s youth. Hosting cultural events popular among young people (literary seminars and concerts), the palace became a locus of the emergence of new cultural forms and ideas. For example, it provided a basis for the creation of a jazz club and a disco club, popular among the city’s public (Zhuk 36-38, 73-74, 226-27). It should be noted that, during the post-Soviet period, “student culture palaces” did not cease to exist; moreover, new palaces were founded (in particular, in Kharkiv in 2004 the “Palace of Students of Iaroslav the Wise National Law University” was founded).

It can be argued that during the Soviet era the sign-space of institutions of higher education lost its distinct branding and corporate character. Instead, there was a pervasive standardization of symbolic forms across academia, which led to a deterioration of the symbolic sphere of centres of higher learning.

Figure 2. Student construction brigades on parade, Kharkiv, 1972. Courtesy of the Museum of History of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University.



Figure 3. "First Bell" celebration at the A. M. Gor'kii Kharkiv State University, 1970s. Courtesy of the Museum of History of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University.



Today, the transformation of the sign-space of higher education in Ukraine is defined primarily by an ongoing crisis with regard to the university as a social institution and the emergence of a postmodern (mass) university. According to Bill Readings, the current crisis is directly related to the severing of the university's alliance with the nation state, the blurring of the broad public role of the university as a social institution, and the transformation of the university's institutional functions. Today's state of crisis in Ukraine's universities is impossible to define without taking into account such factors as commercialization and "massification." In Ukraine these trends have caused a struggle for leadership in the regional educational space among centres of higher education. The "classical" origin of individual universities and their symbolic perks and preferences have become a matter of principle. The category "classical university" has assumed symbolic capital that affirms the "authenticity" of the school and guarantees its high academic standing. For example, several years ago the officials of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University chose this motto for their school: "KARAZIN UNIVERSITY: CLASSICS AHEAD OF TIME." At the same time, the image-building efforts of specialized and professional institutes, which received the status of "national" universities during the

1990s and the 2000s, contributed to the gradual erosion of the significance of the category of “classical university.”

An attractive visual image is a necessity for a Ukrainian university caught up in the commercialization of university education. In an intensely competitive environment, universities pursue a focused and systematic branding policy, in which symbols and symbolic practices play a special role (Rachkov, *Symvoly ta emblemy*). It is no surprise that the diversity and eclecticism of the sign-space of higher education is a hallmark of university corporate culture in Ukraine. In most Ukrainian universities, the symbolic space is constructed by synthesizing domestic and western European symbolic forms. Examples of the influence of the European university tradition include the use by universities of ceremonial academic attire (cap and gown) and standards and the adoption of rectorial regalia (mace and rectorial livery collar). Although some members of the university community are skeptical about symbolic borrowings, the majority acknowledge a need for “the deepening of the university tradition,” which is commonly seen as involving an even greater expansion of the range of such borrowings (*Interv"iu vykladachiv; Interv"iu vypusknkyiv*).

Today, a special place in the sign-space of higher education is held by corporate university symbolism. The growing number and diversification of the forms of university symbolism, noticeable since the mid-1990s, can be considered part of the “branding wars” in the field of higher education. Not surprisingly, under these conditions the formation and evolution of university corporate symbolism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was marked by contradictions. For the most part, new university symbols and emblems appeared spontaneously and sporadically—hence, there was a frequent absence of official approval and a lack of stability in their meanings. At the same time, some entirely controlled and conscious developments were taking place in the field of university symbols. During the 1990s and the 2000s, official school emblems were adopted by most institutions of higher education in Kharkiv, along with other symbolic paraphernalia, such as university anthems and flags and faculty standards (Rachkov, “Vizual'na skladova”).

The symbols and emblems of institutional academic units (faculties, departments, libraries, museums) in the mid-1990s were visually similar to corresponding images from the Soviet period. On the other hand, symbols created in the late 1990s to the early 2010s were generally designed with an eye to certain systemic connections and corporate styles. At this time, a tradition of using a university flag and faculty standards emerged in some of the city’s centres of higher education (Rachkov, *Symvoly ta emblemy* 101-24). These standards visually resembled the academic insignia of medieval European universities and, together with academic attire, represented an attempt to follow established western European symbolic patterns.

Figure 4. “Parade of Universities,” Kharkiv, 2011. Courtesy of the Museum of History of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University.



Despite the fact that many institutions of higher education today adopt typical symbols and emblems, we cannot speak of true unification. The inventory of university symbols and the practice of their public use have distinctive features at each university. Nevertheless, a special place among the corporate symbols belongs to status markers such as university honours and awards, rectorial regalia, and ceremonial academic dress. For example, in preparation for the 200th anniversary of Kharkiv University, the idea emerged to create a coherent system of school honours and awards. Today, this system includes the badges of Distinguished Professor and Honorary Doctor, the V. N. Karazin Medal, the best graduating student medal, and the alumnus badge (Rachkov, *Symvoly ta emblemy* 118-19). Many other institutions of higher education in Kharkiv also provide such academic distinctions and honorifics (for example, the Golden Badge of the Semen Kuznets' awarded by Kharkiv National University of Economics; the H. S. Skovoroda Medal awarded by H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University; the Badge (medal) of the Laureate of the Iaroslav the Wise Prize awarded by Iaroslav the Wise National Law University).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, symbolic forms and the origins of university rituals lost academic significance for most members of the university community. Such symbols are perceived today in terms of publicity and advertising, and their creation is deemed to represent

a conscious and consistent branding policy (*Interv"iu vykladachiv; Interv"iu vypusknykiv*). Taking this into account, higher education leadership is searching for new symbolic forms (primarily based on western European symbolic models), despite the lack of any tradition of their use. An illustrative example is the idea of adopting a rectorial livery collar at V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, which was discussed in the course of preparations for the celebration of the school's 200th anniversary. This project was part of a wider effort to develop a set of university badges, medals, and other distinctions during the 2010s (*Proekty nahrudnykh znakov*). In the end, however, the idea came to naught—probably because a rectorial livery collar would not fit the tradition of that particular university.

Considering that the symbolic inventory of institutions of higher education and their academic units during the 1990s and the 2010s was developed sporadically and unsystematically, today, university leadership often calls for the systematization and modernization of university corporate symbolism. The main goal is to create a coherent visual image of universities as modern and dynamic structures. Today, the standardization of corporate university symbolism usually takes place as part of the creation of school brand guidelines. The emergence of such brand guidelines reflects the desire of universities to be recognized in the post-secondary market, which makes it necessary to adhere to a consistent branding style and established symbols and emblems.

Despite the weakening of state support for Ukraine's universities, they remain state educational institutions. Accordingly, during university ceremonies, the emblem (and the flag) of the university is often placed next to the Small State Emblem of Ukraine and the State Flag of Ukraine, and the student anthem "Gaudeamus" and/or the university anthem is/are performed before or after the State Anthem of Ukraine. The use of state symbols in the cultural space of universities has a long history, but as a consistent tradition it took shape only in the nineteenth century, at the "classical" stage in the development of the university; later, it acquired special significance in Soviet times. The strengthening of the state regulation of universities directly contributed to this. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, symbolic manifestations of the state status of universities were to be found on numerous seals, medals, and badges. Compared with the Soviet period, when the use of Soviet state symbolism, or its elements, was ubiquitous as part of the university symbolic arsenal, today, elements of Ukrainian national symbolism play a secondary role from a semantic point of view. At the same time, regional and urban (that is, municipal) symbols have gained more importance in the symbolic space of the university. This trend is helped by the deepening socio-economic connections between universities and the city, which are reflected in university emblems. Universities strive to emphasize their historical

significance in the development of the city and the region; by symbolically fusing with the larger community, they legitimize their image-building and economic intentions (Rachkov, *Symvol ta emblemy* 138-39).

SITES OF THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNITIES

University symbolism is closely linked to official school ceremonies and mnemonic sites, most of which assume emblematic significance. University sites of collective memory as a symbolic category and part of the urban space are characterized by a permanent dynamic. They represent certain “narratives” that nourish and shape the text of university communal memory (Vishlenkova et al., “Istoriia universiteta” 292). Important mnemonic sites associated with institutions of higher education are: topographical sites (museums and university libraries); sites marked by monuments; symbolic sites (university main buildings and other iconic architectural landmarks, memorial plaques, and everything associated with individual ritual practices).

A special significance among university mnemonic sites belongs to history museums. They are loci where the memory of university communities is constructed and concentrated. In Kharkiv, the first institutional history museums attached to schools of higher learning were created in the 1960s and the 1970s. In the early 1990s, most of these museums were in dire financial straits. In addition, the memory constructed by these museums in the Soviet era did not meet the new vision of history in general and the new goals and aspirations of university communities in particular. During the 1990s and 2000s, the expositions of many of these museums were brought up to date. Often this process was associated with preparations for university jubilees—for example, the renovation of the permanent exhibition of the Museum of History of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University took place in the early 2000s as part of the preparations for the school’s 200th anniversary. In Kharkiv, the number of institutions of higher education that have museums of their own history is high compared to other university cities in Ukraine. Today in Kharkiv there are more than 20 such museums—among them the Museum Complex of O. M. Beketov Kharkiv National University of Urban Economy (2001; the school’s history museum was founded in 1967), the Museum of History of Kharkiv National Automobile and Road University (1967), the Museum of History of Kharkiv National Medical University (1968), the Museum of History of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (1972), the Museum of History of National University of Technology “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute” (1972), the Museum of History of Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture (1982), the Museum of History of Kharkiv National University

of Radioelectronics (1983), the Museum of M. Ie. Zhukovs'kyi National Aerospace University "Kharkiv Aviation Institute" (1992), the Museum of History of H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University (1996), the Museum of Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs (2009), the Museum of History of Ukrainian Pharmaceutics at National University of Pharmaceutics (2010), and others (see "Muzei VNZ").

An important place in the collections and exhibits of these museums and in the symbolic space of universities belongs to school founders or prominent individuals associated with particular institutions as faculty members or students (scholars and public figures, poets and writers). These historical figures have become classic university "sites of memory," and their imposing statues in squares, gardens, and parks near universities are places for the laying of flowers and the meetings of many generations of students. Their portraits, busts, and monuments adorn halls, auditoriums, and conference rooms of universities. As mnemonic sites they fill and organize the university memory and contribute to the development of university self-representation strategies through the schools' associations with famous personalities.

For the most part, university "sites of memory" received spatial fixation in the form of monuments and plaques during the 1990s to the 2010s. Such acts of the politics of memory aim at the establishment of new basic tropes of positive memory in university communities. Thus in 1999, a monument to Iaroslav the Wise was installed near Iaroslav the Wise National Law University. In 2004, near the new academic complex of National University of Pharmaceutics', the sculptural group "Pharmaceutics through the Centuries" was opened, one component of which was the figure of a medieval chemist clad in a university gown. The central section of the group is devoted to the ancient Greek goddess Panacea. The sculpture "The Future of Pharmaceutics" completes the composition: a young man with a torch and a young woman holding a Master's degree, both wearing Master's ceremonial gowns. In 2012, a monument to the prominent Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda was opened near the main building of H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. The monument marked the 290th anniversary of the birth of the Ukrainian philosopher and poet. It became the second statue of Skovoroda in Kharkiv. Two monuments honour the memory of the architect O. M. Beketov (in front of O. M. Beketov Kharkiv National University of Urban Economy and Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture).

Figure 5. Monument to Oleksii Beketov erected in 2007 near Kharkiv National University of Construction and Architecture. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



Figure 6. Monument to Oleksii Beketov erected in 2016 near the O. M. Beketov Kharkiv National University of Urban Economy. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



Two other monuments honour the memory of the economist S. A. Kuznets' (in front of Semen Kuznets' Kharkiv National University of Economics and V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University). This is clear evidence of the ongoing competition for the symbolic space of the city. In 2018, a sculptural composition celebrating "The Past, Present, and Future of Medicine and Medical Education" was installed near the main building of Kharkiv National Medical University. One element of it is a nineteenth-century medical student. The composition includes the figures of modern medical students, men and women, representing different nations and races: a Ukrainian, an African, a Hindu, and an Arab.

Figure 7. Sculptural composition "The Past, Present, and Future of Medicine and Medical Education" erected in 2018 near Kharkiv National Medical University. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



Figure 8. Monument to Semen (Simon) Kuznets' erected in 2015 near the Semen Kuznets' Kharkiv National University of Economics. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



Figure 9. Monuments erected in 2016 to Nobel Prize laureates—Semen (Simon) Kuznets' among them—near the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



In this “memory race,” the politics of memory of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University appears perhaps the most consistent, but at the same time the most varied. In 1999, a monument was erected near its main building honouring the volunteers of the so-called “student battalion” who perished in World War II. In 2004, as part of the celebration of the university’s 200th anniversary, the statue of its founder, V. N. Karazin, was once again moved. It now stands in front of the school’s main building. In the early 1930s it was removed and a monument to Taras Shevchenko was put up in its place. According to public recollection, the monument to V. N. Karazin was intended to be melted down, but the restoration of the university and an intervention by someone of importance led to the monument being installed near the historic building of the university in 1934 (Posokhov, “O pamiati” 123). In 1958, it was moved to the new building of the university in Dzerzhinskii Square (now Freedom Square) but placed by the side of the building (Posokhov, “O pamiati” 123). In 2004, the V. N. Karazin monument was moved to the square in front of the school’s main entrance.

In 2010, to commemorate the 206th anniversary of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, statues of two eminent scholars—historian D.

I. Bahalii and mathematician A. M. Liapunov—were unveiled near its northern building. In April 2016, monuments were finally opened to the three Nobel Prize winners whose lives and works are associated with Kharkiv State University's biologist I. I. Mechnykov, economist S. A. Kuznets', and physicist L. D. Landau. The most recent addition to this arsenal of commemoration is the monument to the historian, writer, and poet P. P. Hulak-Artemovs'kyi (*Symvol y ta emblem y* 133).

Other monuments, memorials, and plaques that are helping to construct a positive image of Kharkiv as a university city include: the monument to student “*shara*” (“free stuff, luck” in student slang), erected on the campus of M. Ie. Zhukovs'kyi National Aerospace University “Kharkiv Aviation Institute” in 1995; the monument “Flame of Knowledge” at Kharkiv Humanities Institute “Ukrainian People’s Academy” (2001); a “Monument to the First Teacher” at H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University (2002); and the “Student” monument (unofficially known as “the monument to the IT guy”) at Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics (2010). University communities mostly perceive these artifacts as “their own.” Thus, these monuments are not only part of the cultural and symbolic space of the city, they are first and foremost part of the symbolic space of higher educational institutions. Their primary functions are to mark the university space and to represent university communities to the urban public.

Figure 10. Monument erected in 2010 to the “IT guy” near Kharkiv National University of Radioelectronics. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



Figure 11. Monument to Iaroslav the Wise erected in 1999 near Iaroslav the Wise National Law University. Photograph by Yevhen Rachkov.



The Kharkiv city council is involved in constructing the image of the city as an academic centre with a long university tradition. Scholars generally note the high symbolic presence of institutions of higher education in the urban space of Kharkiv (see Ivashchenko; Posokhov; Rachkov; Ieremieiev). This is confirmed by preliminary results of the research project “University Memory Sites,” obtained by the staff of the Museum of History at V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (Posokhov, “O pamiaty” 127-29). The purpose of the project was to explore the (self)representation of the university on the basis of an analysis of memorial plaques across the city. The authors of the project attempted to determine which memorial plaques in Kharkiv could be considered university-related, and why. A relational database was built, which included ninety plaques that are associated with the university. The analysis of the database showed an increase in the attention of academic organizations, the public, and the local authorities to the installation of memorial plaques starting in 2004. Apparently, this was due to the “jubilee boom” of 2004-05: the celebration of the 350th anniversary of the founding of Kharkiv, the 200th anniversary of the founding of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, and anniversaries of other schools of higher education in the city that emerged out of Kharkiv State University and that had also celebrated a 200th anniversary.

Most of the memorial plaques are devoted to the university’s former students and professors, primarily to twentieth-century physicists, medics,

public figures, and historians, and the plaques are mostly recent (Ieremieiev). The memorial plaques were all grouped as university “memory sites,” despite a lack of direct references to the university in their verbal and visual texts. The authors of the project stress the plurality of interpretations of memorial plaques and the right to the symbolic “appropriation” of them on the part of members of various urban communities (Ieremieiev 26-28). This apparent indeterminate quality actually signifies the essential multivariate and multi-dimensional nature of symbolic space. In practice, this means that the same “sites of memory” can be objects of symbolic appropriation by multiple urban groups and communities. Such “possessive” treatments of the urban symbolic space give rise to semantic zones of intersection and channels of dialogue, resulting in a plurality of interpretations of the objects. From this point of view, the relationship between a mnemonic site (for example, a memorial plaque) and a particular university community depends less on specific content (such as inscriptions and images on the plaque) than on the university community’s desire to “appropriate” this “site of memory.” The outcome also depends on the resolve and coherence of the particular university community, and its ability to publicize its aspirations and claims.

The perception of the symbolic space of higher educational institutions by the urban community not directly related to them is a difficult issue that requires special sociological study. Indirectly, such interpretations can be traced via the analysis of city guidebooks—for example, three guidebooks published in 1915, 1982, and 2004 (see *Khar'kov: putevoditel'*; Andreeva and Oleinik; Pozdniakova). The existence of Kharkiv University and other higher educational institutions is represented in the guidebooks as a significant advantage to the city. In particular, thanks to the presence in Kharkiv of a university and a large number of various specialized institutions, the city is characterized as a “significant cultural centre,” (*Khar'kov: putevoditel'* 8); its scientific potential is stressed (Andreeva and Oleinik 3-4) and the historical and cultural influence of Kharkiv University “on the development and appearance of the city” is noted (Pozdniakova 8).

“NEW” AND “OLD” UNIVERSITY TRADITIONS

The university is commonly thought of today as a simultaneously “real” and “imagined” community. It periodically confirms its existence through the performance of appropriate rituals that create a sense of unity among the members of the university community and draw boundaries between them and the so-called “others” (i.e., those who are not part of this community) (Vishlenkova et al., *Terra Universitatis* 429). The structural components of university rituals in diverse semiotic forms, expressed in such sign systems

as emblems, actions, speeches, and music. They are appropriately organized and have a predetermined character. University rituals greatly change the semioticity level of university space, giving weight to certain sign systems or increasing the degree of their expressiveness (in particular, by accentuating attention).

One of the earliest such university rituals was the solemn inauguration that took place during the opening of Imperial Kharkiv University in 1805 (Andreev and Posokhov 554). In the nineteenth century, some elements of the “ceremonial rite” established by such inaugurations continued to be reproduced without significant change in the form of the annual celebration of University Day (557-58). Today, virtually every institution of higher education in Kharkiv annually celebrates the day of its founding and/or opening.

University Day is considered to be first and foremost a corporate holiday, an “act of unity” based on the adherence to certain values. The transformation of University Day into more of an informally corporate event (the day of one’s alma mater) in Europe can be traced to the nineteenth century (Posokhov, “Universitetskaia iubileinaia kul'tura” 178). Interestingly, in the universities of the Russian Empire during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such occasions combined official ceremonies, public celebrations, and private parties. However, gradually, as in Europe, the universities began to give greater importance to the informal component (Posokhov, “Universitetskaia iubileinaia kul'tura”). In the Soviet era, this tradition declined. Its revival would take place in a more standardized and formalized fashion. Today, the celebration of the university anniversary is not yet free of the symbolic and ritual practices of previous periods, although it is considered an important event by only some members of the university community (*Interv'iu vypusknkyiv*).

University Day as a product of symbolization and a manifestation of university culture affects the collective memory of the university community. The program on University Day in most cases includes many common (typical) events, such as an official meeting of the university’s Academic Council, book and museum exhibitions, launches of new publications concerning the history of the institution, conferences, and a concert (*Prohrama pidhotovky*). In this context, we mention the observance at some centres of higher learning of the Day of Student Self-Government, when students assume the symbolic right to run the school (“Den' students'koho samovriaduvannia”). Clearly, this divides the university into two parts: faculty and students. A special event nowadays is the annual Alumni Day, when former students get involved in the celebrations. That is, today, University Day does not fully fulfil the function of uniting members of different generations of the university community.

A mandatory element of University Day and most other university celebrations, is ceremonial speeches delivered by school officials, faculty, and invited guests, a tradition that began as early as the Middle Ages (Lipatnikova). The content of the speeches in university halls is usually typical. The speakers note the national significance of universities as loci or regional centres of education, science, and culture; they dwell on the university ideals, and assert a progressive narrative of university history. They emphasize the need to uphold the traditional ideals of the university community and to attach a special cultural value to a university education. These ceremonial performances usually reflect on the nature of the university community's relations with central and local governments. After emphasizing the importance of university education, the speakers place the fate of the educational institution firmly on the government's shoulders.

The celebration of jubilees is one of the most effective forms of self-representation in Ukrainian universities today. As a form of cultural memory enshrined in the cultural tradition, jubilees play an important role in the life of universities. They fashion an image of the past and a prophesy of the future. In the university tradition the "jubilee years" are perceived as important symbolic events, but they are also a useful pretext for obtaining government support in terms of honours and awards for university employees and students. The jubilee culture at Ukrainian universities involves various forms of symbolic representation. Particular attention during jubilee preparations is traditionally paid to the writing of works on the university's history. Medals, coins, badges and lapel pins, postage stamps, and envelopes with university symbols are other forms of symbolic representations created especially for jubilee celebrations. Also important for university communities are jubilees of structural academic units, and anniversaries of school founders or prominent personalities associated with the educational institution (Rachkov, *Symvol y ta emblemy* 139-45).

The celebration in 2004 of the 350th anniversary of the founding of Kharkiv, the 200th anniversary of the founding of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, and the anniversaries of several other schools of higher learning in the city became occasions for the revision and further development by these university communities of the records regarding their histories. For example, V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University reconsidered its date of birth. Traditionally, the university celebrated its birthday on January 17 (29), and 1805 was given as the year of the school's founding in almost all encyclopedias and reference works. However, Kharkiv University is mentioned for the first time in a legal document as early as the *Predvaritel'nye pravila narodnogo obrazovaniia* (*Preliminary Rules of Popular Education*), dated January 24, 1803. The Establishment Charter and Statute of the Imperial Kharkiv University were signed on November 5 (17), 1804 (Posokhov, "Iubilei" 146). After a brief discussion that did not go

beyond a small circle of participants (from the University administration), it was decided to accept the year 1804 as the date of the university's founding. During preparations for the events marking the 200th anniversary of the university, a proposal to "plac[e] November 17, 2004, on UNESCO's list of memorial dates" was considered by the University administration (*Prohrama pidhotovky*). The year 1804 became part of the university's symbolic arsenal, finding a place, for instance, on the school's coat of arms. Still, the traditional celebration on January 17 (29) of the university's Opening Day has survived. For instance, both dates were cited in the directive "Pro stvorennia Zahal'nouniversytets'koho orhanizatsiinoho komitetu z pidhotovky do sviatkuvannia 200-richchia Kharkivs'koho natsional'noho universytetu imeni V. N. Karazina" ("On the Establishment of a University-wide Organizing Committee for the Preparation for the 200th Anniversary of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University") (Nakaz rektora).

As university official ceremonies grow more and more corporate in nature, forms of institutional self-representation, such as Open House Day, "Day/Night of Science," "Science Picnic," are becoming increasingly important. Such public events are traditional for universities. Universities are characterized by an "extravert culture"; they have long been opening their doors to all, demonstrating diverse devices, gadgets, and collections that emphasize their enlightenment value and promote the popularization of scientific knowledge in appealing and exciting forms (Posokhov, *Universitet i gorod* 25). Universities attract visitors to their museums and lecture halls and showcase their rituals and traditions—on such occasions, university space essentially becomes public space.

Today, university ritual performances are gaining so much importance we can call them "rites of passage," using the terminology of Arnold van Gennep. In the university environment, such "rites" include the First Bell celebration (symbolizing the start of the new academic year and new student orientation), the ceremonies of student initiation and graduation, the awarding of diplomas. The diversity and heterogeneity of the sign systems employed on such occasions is extremely high. For instance, indispensable components of university "rites of passage" are the public showing of university and faculty emblems (usually in the form of standards), and a performance of the institutional anthem and the State Anthem of Ukraine. Among other things, during the ceremony of student initiation, a symbolic student card may be used, a student oath may be pronounced, or a symbolic "Flame of Knowledge" might be lit (Rachkov, *Symvolny ta emblemy* 150-55).

Figure 12. First-year student initiation ceremony at the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, 2016. Courtesy of the Museum of History of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University.



Figure 13. First-year student initiation ceremony at the H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, 2018. Official website of the H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University (see Anna).



An important part of the university graduation ceremony is a solemn procession of school officials and graduates through the central part of Kharkiv. Despite the fact that this is a borrowed tradition with western European roots, today it is perceived by the university community as a traditional and inseparable part of Ukrainian university culture. First and foremost, the solemn procession symbolizes the unity of the university community. But at the same time, it can be regarded as an attempt by the university to symbolically appropriate the section of urban space that the university community considers its own. For example, it is traditional for the newly-minted graduates of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University to march wearing academic gowns and carrying university and faculty standards from the school's main building to the M. V. Lysenko Kharkiv National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. The route of the procession mainly lies through the Taras Shevchenko City Garden, which until the early twentieth century was the property of the university and was known as University Garden. The ceremony includes the laying of flowers at the monument dedicated to the founder of the university, V. N. Karazin (the monument is now located at the entrance to the main building of the university), and at the monument dedicated to Taras Shevchenko (located in the city garden on the spot where the monument to Karazin was originally erected in 1907). This procession was started in 2002 (Zaitsev et al. 35), and since 2010, before the concert that follows, the best students of the university are awarded with special medals (Rachkov, *Symvol ta emblemy* 155-56).

Similar events are now popular among Kharkiv's other post-secondary institutions. For example, it is now traditional for the graduation ceremonies of Kharkiv National Medical University and National University of Pharmaceutics to take place in the large auditorium of the M. V. Lysenko Kharkiv National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. Iaroslav the Wise National Law University and National University of Technology "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" usually use their own Palaces of Students for graduation ceremonies.

With the dominance of media culture, the photographic record of official university ceremonies assumes special significance when there is acute competition between universities. The academic attire and the university and faculty standards captured in photographs represent visual signs that mark the boundaries of university space. The employed symbolic forms are not only decorations for celebratory events, they are also a means of outlining the university terrain and an attempt to symbolically appropriate particular urban zones.

Not all members of university communities, even members actively involved in the ceremonies and their organization, are aware of the

significance of these ceremonies for the construction of collective memory (*Interv"iu vypusknykiv*).

UNIVERSITY SPACE AND UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

The genesis of university sign-space and mnemonic sites is directly connected with the problems of university memory (Posokhov, "O pamiati"). Consider, for instance, the information gathered in surveys of V. N. Karazin Kharkov National University alumni over several years. The surveys (interviews and questionnaires) were conducted by students in the university's Faculty of History and staff of the Museum of History as part of the project "Obrazy universytets'koi nauky: Kharkiv's'kyi universytet v 1950-1980-kh rokakh" ("Research and Scholarship Showcase: Kharkiv University, 1950s to 1980s") under the direction of S. I. Posokhov. Using the survey materials, we have tried to determine how members of the university community perceive the symbolic space of the university and how they define its boundaries and divide it into zones. In total, 205 interviews were analyzed: 130 interviews with alumni from the 1950s to the 1980s and 75 interviews with alumni from the 1990s to the 2010s. The information and value statements gained from the interviewees vary widely and are often contradictory, partly because memory can be aberrated over time and partly due to an informant's point of view, which can depend on factors such as group membership and postgraduate experiences.

An analysis of these interviews shows that members of the university community clearly identify the boundaries of university space, drawing a line between university and non-university (primarily urban) space. They imagine the university space as something whole, coherent, and concrete. For most respondents, the university space is immutable, and its existence is historically motivated and traditional.

Perhaps that is why, in response to questions about their favourite university locations, alumni from the 1950s to the 1980s named not only the university buildings on University Street, the square (Freedom Square) on which the school's current main building stands, and the monument to V. N. Karazin, but, above all, the lane in the former University Garden (the Taras Shevchenko City Garden) where the monument to V. N. Karazin stood until 2004, the zoo (located next to the university), and the Café "Kristall." Among the most popular purely university sites, alumni named the school's Central Academic Library, the university dining hall, and the sports complex. Most of the questionnaires for this period did not include answers to the questions

about stories associated with university buildings and monuments.⁴ The main building of the university and the monument to the school's founder, V. N. Karazin, are mentioned only a few times (the latter mostly in connection with its repeated relocations). Among university ceremonies, the respondents named first and foremost student initiation (the oath, the student anthem "Gaudeamus," the lapel pins commemorating the "First Bell" ceremony) and student graduation (receiving diplomas and graduate lapel pins) (*Interv''iu vypusknykiv*).

When asked about "favourite sites," university alumni from the 1990s to the 2010s named first of all those that are directly related to the university space—"the parapet across the street from the university" (smoking has recently been banned in the school buildings and smokers congregate in the square in front of the university) and the entrance hall of the main building (where benches are now installed and people meet up). The attitude of the university community toward the main building of the university and the monument to V. N. Karazin has changed: they are now considered to be the main symbols of the university. The mythologization of the university space is evident. The most popular "university" myths are "rumours" about the university's flooded underground floors, underground galleries under Freedom Square, a "tunnel between the central and northern buildings," and reasons for the relocations of the Karazin monument (*Interv''iu vypusknykiv*). The increase in the number and variety of university symbols during the 1990s and the 2010s did not go unnoticed by the respondents. Alumni also often recalled the celebratory ceremonies of student initiation and the solemn procession of the gown-clad graduates through central Kharkiv (*Interv''iu vypusknykiv*). All of this, in our view, indicates significant changes during the 1990s and the 2010s in the way the university is remembered. There is now an urge to find something belonging specifically to the university in the symbolic space of the city. Urban space is not perceived as alien, but the imaginary boundaries between university and urban space are becoming ever clearer, while remaining fluid. University buildings, monuments, memorial plaques, and symbols signal these lines of demarcation (*Interv''iu vypusknykiv*). At the same time, when we analyze alumni reactions to a university's appeals for unity and a coming together of the university community, we note a distinct lack of enthusiasm. This is especially true for alumni from the last several decades, who are not inclined to exhibit group solidarity. This casts doubt on the effectiveness of the university politics of memory (not only for effective branding, but first of all

⁴ This is evidence of "memory gaps" of the university community and a striking example of a special type of perception of the university and its symbolic space by the university community.

for the construction of an identity of the members of the university community).

CONCLUSIONS

In the new socio-political and socio-economic conditions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Ukraine's universities have intensified self-presentation activities. In particular, given the growing competition in the educational services market and the socio-economic instability in Ukraine, university communities are increasingly orienting their establishments toward local resources, seeking to identify the boundaries of their own symbolic space, and placing their communities at the heart of the regional educational system. Universities in Ukraine present their mission to be the provision of a world-class education and a dedicated engagement in scientific research. Both historical arguments and various symbolic forms are used for this purpose.

These conditions fully apply to Kharkiv. Much has been done to make Kharkiv's "university myth" a part of the city's narrative of memory. Kharkiv's post-secondary institutions strive to be perceived as leading institutions of higher education in Ukraine when they call Kharkiv "the student capital" and try to attract foreign students. All these aspirations are reflected in university symbolic practices, which in turn affect the transformation of the urban cultural landscape and the local identity.

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University is the regional leader in the symbolic advertisement of educational expertise. This university has initiated symbolic and ritual forms that were then borrowed by other centres of higher education in the region. At the same time, each university is trying to implement a distinctive branding policy. The result is a motley sign terrain. Ritual practices and symbols become the means of creating attractive visual images of universities. University sign-space represents a system of views that describe the modern university, its functions, its purpose, and its ideals. Still, this sign-space often remains unread. We think this is because the modern forms of visual representation utilized by Kharkiv's post-secondary institutions fail to account for many of the specifics and traditions of both the educational institutions and the urban environment. Although ritual practices enacted at the universities are often random and do not represent an extended historical tradition, they are intended to play important utilitarian and extra-utilitarian (signifying) roles. Many new ritual practices are borrowed from foreign universities and adapted to the Ukrainian university tradition. Accordingly, members of the university community often perceive them as "advertising" rather than logical continuations of existing traditions. Such borrowings tend toward

standardization characteristic of today's "flexible capitalism" (Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* and *The Culture of the New Capitalism*). Such image-making strategies clash with the "old" ideals of high-minded enlightenment, and this conflict is reflected in the perception of symbolic and ritual forms by the university community.

Thus, today the symbolic space of Kharkiv as a university city is eclectic and fragmentary; it often has to accommodate contradictory trends of development. Ritual practices and symbolism as markers of university identity testify to a certain crisis of perception. At the same time, the perception of universities as superplaces (i.e., symbolic centres) in a city such as Kharkiv makes it possible to better understand the identity of its inhabitants. We share the view of Michael T. Westrate that Kharkiv represents a region in which people "did not move across borders; rather, the borders moved across them" (148). However, we recognize that educational institutions (primarily universities) are powerful factors (of no less importance than ethnicity or religion) in the formation of a "Kharkovian" regional identity. Kharkiv University and other higher educational institutions in the city are examples of the transfer and adaptation of western European cultural practices and values to the eastern European terrain. In the case of Kharkiv, the educational factor and the frontier factor appear inseparable.

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