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The Markers of Territorial Identity
in Melitopol, Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

This article is about the territorial identity of inhabitants of Melitopol, Ukraine. It focuses on measuring markers of this identity: emotional attachment (proud of the city; love for the city); knowledge of its historical and cultural heritage; city patriotism and citizenship; the density of social communications; and social trust. It reports on results of a representative sociological study "The Markers of Self-Identification of Melitopol Residents," which was aimed at identifying identities capable of forming a collective identity for this city. This study revealed that there are effective conditions in the city for the formation of a collective territorial identity, namely: There is affinity with its physical space; a significant portion of residents are interested in city issues, which is the basis for forming groups and associations based on common interests within the local community; and there are dense social communications in the media space of the city. On the other hand, the study also found that the city's historical and cultural heritage are not effective factors of the city's identity. Authors conclude the consolidation of the city's identity needs to takes place around contemporary events and circumstances; hence, there is a need to make the city a more useful social space with infrastructure that meets contemporary needs and interests of its residents. The study also reveals that in Melitopol, like the whole of Ukrainian society, there is a lack of social trust, largely due to the post Soviet Union distrust of political institutions both at the national and local levels. At the same time, there is considerable interest in the consolidation of various social groups and the formation of social trust.

Introduction

The interest in territorial identities, especially urban ones as a form of socio-spatial organization, has been stimulated by globalization that simultaneously has given rise to two processes—deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The contradiction between them is obvious: Deterritorialization is the loss of attachment to territories and, on the contrary, reterritorialization refers to the growing role of territory in the modern world. A "new supra-territorial geography of networks and flows" is being formed, which is displacing the "old geography of state territories" (Matvienko, 2013, p. 421).

On the one hand, rigidly-fixed oppositions, such as center versus periphery and lines of demarcation between states are being leveled. According to Virilio, "geographical spaces and distances, which were significant yesterday, are disappearing and depreciating in the world of acceleration and instantaneous interactions, continents lose their geographical outlines and allow the world tele-continent of almost instantaneous communication to assert itself" (Virilio, 2006, p. 14). The positive side of these trends is the strengthening of democratic processes in the world in the direction of increasing life chances and freedom of choice.

On the other hand, there are notions that geographical and political barriers do not protect against anything; therefore, traditional, cultural, individual, and group identities are questioned. Instead, human identification practices are expanding, which are associated with the search for significant support in a fleeting world; new alternatives that allow navigating in life. As Ralph Dahrendorf emphasizes, "In this world, people are looking for new connections without support…" (Dahrendorf, 2007, p. 27).

The processes of deterritorialization have in fact actualized the importance of cities on the world stage, and human, financial, and information flows are concentrated on their territory, which leads to the growth and change of their structural characteristics. According to Castells (2010b), modern society on a global scale is a "space of flows" (information, finance, labor and other resources), based on its own logic of development, and it identifies certain "privileged" places in physical space (especially, cities).

The transformation of cities into new, wider socio-geographical areas strengthens their role in the international division of labor and cross-border cooperation, which affects not only the power of nation-states but international relations as well. Under such conditions, territorial identity

is a cultural and value identity with reference to the origin and status of a person, which gives one the opportunity to navigate in life. The territory, on which a person permanently resides, provides the closest indirect form of support for self-identification.

Therefore, the revision of established and new ways of constructing identity, which can and should be controlled in order to reduce or, in general, eliminate negative aspects, is currently an urgent issue. The analysis of mechanisms of formation, maintenance, and development of identity in the direction necessary for the well-being of society is important today. Measuring territorial identity allows a city to find its own model of development, to emphasize its strengths and advantages, on the one hand, and identify its weaknesses on the other.

The Markers for Measuring City Identity

A city is a socio-geographical space, which determines a person's life trajectory, a space in which he or she constantly constructs himself or herself through a network of work, social, and everyday connections. The production of urban meanings and values is created in the process of these practices, such as expressive symbols of the city, city traditions, cultural and historical figures, and events serve as markers of identification with the territory. A special role belongs to those that have authenticity: unique people, traditions, myths, etc. It is due to them that a person identifies himself or herself with the city and the city becomes recognizable among other cities. According to Natalia Fedotova, "the identity of the city is always authentic," therefore, cities aim to find and emphasize their uniqueness through an authentic image, brand, or recognizable picture that evokes the positive aspects in the perception of the city (Fedotova, 2017).

Manuel Castells interprets identity as the process in which the social actor recognizes himself or herself and constructs meanings, mainly on the basis of a certain cultural properties or a set of properties in addition to a broader correlation with other social structures (Castells, 2009). The foundation for forming a city identity is a sense of community ownership and use of the territory, its social relations, ways of organizing life, and the system of local values. These factors provide perhaps the closest indirect support of an individual's self-identification. A territory is also a source of group solidarity and a factor in the formation of a certain type of socio-cultural relations (Nagorna, 2008, pp. 54–55).

It follows that a territory is a powerful social and economic resource, a factor in the formation of solidarity relations, as well as a source of social and political mobilization. Anthony Smith in his study of sources of collective identities places local identity in the second place after gender identity, but Smith contends "locality and regionality seem to be characterized by the strength of grouping that mostly lacks gender differentiation" (Smith, 1991, p. 13).

The parameters of city identity correlate with spatial, semantic, value, and temporal forms. The basic parameters of the formation of collective identities are communication, memory, and experience. The commonality of these forms ensures the emergence of traditions that contribute to the formation of long-term collective identities.

At the same time, modern cities are complex socio-spatial systems in a constant process of transformation under the influence of internal and external factors. The internal ones include communications and joint activities of subjects that produce new mental, value, symbolic, and normative meanings. External factors include new constructs generated by the influence of globalization, which integrate with established constructs of identity and produce new meanings and practices. In this way, identities are the object of constant change and transformation and hybrid formation.

Kielmansegg (2006) notes that collective identities are an acquired phenomenon. They are not natural; on the contrary, they are artificial phenomena that have historically changed over time. According to Chantal Mouffe, an identity "arises from a continuous process," which is characterized as a "process of constant hybridization and nomadization" (Mouffe, 1994, p. 110). Therefore, the identity of a city is a temporary, relative, and incomplete construct, which has the ontological status of a project or postulate. Its identity is constantly constructed and can be the object of purposeful action.

Integrating these existing interpretations, we can conclude that in the structure of city identity, there are two main components: cultural and value components and strategic ones. The cultural level is associated with characteristics of permanent features of local uniqueness and values of the city community. The strategic level involves the purposeful use of these features for practical goals, for example, to increase attention to the city, to mobilize the community, to form an image of the city, to position the territory, etc. Since identity is also characterized by the organic unity of personal and social levels, the

city's identity is a realization of its groups' ideas, values, traditions, norms, and interests.

Therefore, to interpret the nature of the territorial and spatial identity of a city, we need to explore values and norms that are shared by the majority of the city's population and which are recognized as significant enough to unite them and, thus, form a collective identity. The emphasis is invariably on "the recognition by a particular territorial community of such common values that are not only recognized as 'theirs,' but they are able to form a lasting basis for consolidation" (Nagorna, 2008, p. 66). The local identity of residents is defined by such markers as emotional attachment (pride in the city or love for the city); recognition of its differences from other cities; knowledge of the city's historical and cultural heritage; city patriotism and citizenship; the density of social communications; and the extent of social trust.

The City of Melitopol as an Object of Study

Melitopol[1] is a relatively young city (236 years old), which is located in the southeastern region of Ukraine. Historically, the city was inhabited by representatives of various ethnic and religious groups, such as Greeks, Germans, Bulgarians, Jews, Poles, Czechs, Albanians, Mennonites, Karaites, and others. The absence of a distinct indigenous population and the presence of many cultures in its common territory has ambiguously affected the identification practices of its inhabitants and complicated the process of city identity formation.

[AQ1]

The development of the city as an industrial center is important for understanding the formation of its identity. The industrialization of the region was carried out under the political and cultural domination of Russia in a manner that undermined the value of the ethnic identity of its constituent communities. The dependence on what has been called a form of "authoritarian nationality," the work of industrial enterprises and close trade ties with Russia has led to strong paternalism, obedience to authorities and living for "today" without thinking about the future. Under the imposition of its political culture from the outside, the processes of acculturation-deculturation and the gradual assimilation of ethnic communities have taken place. In view of this, a Ukrainian researcher, Bohdan Sliuschynskyi has concluded that the identity of inhabitants of the region is "segmental" and the lifestyle and subculture are "hybrid" (Sliuschynskyi, 2008, p. 18).

Since Ukraine's independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, the city has emerged not as a community united by common interests, but as a community with weak internal integration between groups. At the same time, on account of the polyethnic composition of the population, the city has been an active participant in the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme since 2008 (Intercultural Cities Programme, 2007). Today, the city is a home to representatives of more than 100 ethnic communities and 31 national and cultural organizations.

However, despite the revival of ethnic cultures, these communities are still looking for new forms of representation, and the city as a whole has not developed a common historical memory, common traditions, and common objects of pride. Therefore, it needs to find its identity, to assert itself as distinctive community.

Research Methodology

The empirical basis of this study is the result of a questionnaire survey that was carried out (using Google Forms) among residents of Melitopol. It was conducted in the period from February 9, 2021 to February 25, 2021 by the Center for Sociological Research at Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, Melitopol State Pedagogical University that is named after Bohdan Khmelnytskyi.[2] This survey form was used due to the difficult epidemiological situation in the city and the country as a whole caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was conducted by identifying the user's IP that made it impossible to re-fill the questionnaire. A specialized questionnaire was developed, which included an appeal to the respondent, the survey questions, and socio-demographic section (age, gender, education, and nature of employment).

The population universe was the adult population (18+) of Melitopol, which was 121,275 people in January 1, 2021. Accordingly, a sample of this universe was drawn, which proportionally represents the residents of Melitopol aged 18 and over. The sample was formed according to the following principles: uniqueness (a survey participant could participate in the survey only once) and quotas (survey participants were selected by gender, age, level of education, and nature of employment) so as to reflect the overall portrait of the city based on existing demographic statistical data. The sample population (n) that was selected was 1,200 respondents, error ± 2.3, $P = 95\%$. The sample is unrepeatable.

Emotional Components of Identity

To study prerequisites for identification, it is necessary to find out how residents of a city perceive their city. Identification is possible only if there is a positive perception of the city, which is manifested in an emotional component, such as love for it. It is the image of a city's streets, trees, sounds, tastes, monuments etc., which subconsciously attracts a person and they are psychologically significant for him or her. These elements make up the gestalt of the social space that is created from purely individual personal and psychological characteristics, and it develops according to its own laws and "has its own life," but at the same time, it is inextricably connected with other spaces.

If the social space of the city evokes positive emotions, there is a desire to live in this place, there is an emotional connection with it, and the person identifies himself or herself with this environment (Fedotova, 2017, p. 32). This emotional component remains the least studied and the most difficult to rationally interpret. The attachment to a certain place is an all-encompassing and often unconscious phenomenon that includes physical and mental, natural and social, instinctive and rational, concrete and general, and individual and social sides, but it is not limited to them. This attachment is just one of the substructures of territorial identity.

According to the survey, 72.1% of respondents love Melitopol. This means that most residents see the city as a comfortable living environment, a home where they feel "accepted" and they perceive this social space as "close and native." However, "home" as a metaphor is not the only base for identification. To love the city and to be proud of it are different components of identity. Symbols, historical narratives, personalities, specific objects, signs, cultural and spiritual images associated with special places, history, outstanding events, etc. play a significant role in developing a sense of pride. Such elements are the subject of pride through which identity can be realized. They should be of universal importance and recognized by the city community and, as a result, they can constitute the symbolic capital of the city.

There is pride in the city because it is successfully located at an important crossroads (43.8% of the respondents believe this) because it is inhabited by representatives of many nationalities (40%) and because they are proud of its inter-culturalism (37.5%). Only 20.0% are proud of its historical and cultural heritage, 18.8% are proud of its

horticulture, 11.3% are proud of its industry, and 6.3% are proud of the city's outstanding personalities.

However, among these prominent personalities, citizens named modern political and public leaders and only 3% of respondents named the historical figure of A. Korvatskyi who is the founder of the science of horticulture. Myths, stories, outstanding historical events, and objects of historical and cultural heritage were not named by respondents. One of the legacies of the Soviet Union is that Soviet ideology completely destroyed the memory of past historical events, the uniqueness of different ethnic cultures and languages and historical landmarks, and this is noticeable in the survey results. The post-Soviet process of de-communization/de-Sovietization has reconstructed some old street names, but these names do not mean anything to citizens today.

55.7% of respondents said they are proud of their city, 12.3% are not proud, and 32% are uncertain. Among those who love their city, the majority (64.1%) of those respondents are also proud of it. Accordingly, those who do not love the city do not feel proud of it. For this part of residents (who do not love and who are not proud of their city), the city is not significant to their identity and, as a result, they feel a certain alienation from the community and they may even be ashamed of their place of residence.

The rather high levels of uncertainty of respondents indicate that some residents do not have a significant basis for forming a city identity and they do not feel a part of the city community. This part of residents may eventually change their views if it is not possible to leave the city and they begin to assert themselves in the territory of regional or city culture or if they move to another city. The social mobility strategies, associated with one's place of residence, are usually either to become a resident of a prestigious place or to legitimize the prestige of the place where they reside.

The Discourse of the "Other"

The formation of identity is connected not only with the authenticity and history of a place but also, with the discourse of the *Other* because the basic identification connections are often built in comparison with the *Other*. They (I/Other) are not only subjects of communication and mutual cognition but they are a necessary condition of processes of constructing collective identities (Danyliak, 2004). A modern French philosopher,

Marc Crépon notes that "there is no identity that defines itself in another way than through its connection with the many *others* it inherits and, therefore, it belongs to them" (Crépon, 2006, p. 92).

Iver Neumann states that "collective identities are constituted not only by the imaginary material which they are composed of, but also by the material outside them and which they are implicitly compared with" (Neumann, 1999, p. 15). Therefore, the realization of one's own identity as a resident of this city occurs when it is compared with other cities and regions. According to respondents, Melitopol differs from other places because it has a strategic geographical location (it is located at crossroads) according to 62.0%, its intercultural status (32.9%), and its special natural landscape (16.5%).

However, residents did not name any local historical or cultural events, narratives, or symbols. Obviously, the city community is not consolidated by a common historical memory, traditions, or objects of pride. "An identity remains unclear until it has a place in the world" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 206). This condition is determined, on the one hand, by the Soviet heritage that destroyed history and destroyed cultural traditions as a value in the minds of the people, and on the other hand, by the fact that the city is quite young (236 years old) by European standards. One of the ways to remedy this is for city authorities to create certain cultural traditions and through celebrating city holidays. Citywide celebrations, meetings with creative citizens, reading publications about the history of the streets, viewing photos of the city on social networks, etc. can gradually construct city meanings. These events provide additional channels of communication between citizens, acquire the status of traditions, and can consolidate the city community.

According to survey responses, the majority of respondents (58.7%) sometimes take part in such holidays, and 23.3% regularly do that. These results may demonstrate a desire to develop more city identity and to develop common traditions.

City Patriotism and Citizenship

An identity is formed not only due to historical and cultural ties and memory but also, it depends on the current state of society. Each city has its own specifics of socio-spatial organization, which are determined by the social structure, the presence of social institutions and organizations, and social groups and the connections between them. The face of city

culture is the uniqueness of social relations and connections, networks, and forms of communication. An identity may occur in the sense of the city being useful. Then, a resident will develop the city space, create a network of social connections, build the living environment, and thus, contribute to the development of the community.

The socio-geographical aspect of city identity includes the existence of objects that will meet needs of as many citizens as possible. Even if a person has a high city identity as a result of successful socialization, there may be a situation where their needs are not being met at a sufficient level. In this case, there is a crisis of identity and the person seeks to leave the city. The lack of identity resources because of unmet needs and limited social space for self-realization is more common in young cities. Older cities have more resources for identity formation.

However, another process of forming a civil society in the city is extremely important. A responsible citizen understands his or her rights and responsibilities, fulfills them, expands the space for his or her self-realization and does not entirely rely on authorities that will take care of him or her. Therefore, the willingness to participate in solving city issues can be interpreted as city patriotism that can increase the social capital of the city.

According to the survey, only a small amount of residents (13.7%) have an active civic life. This part of the community is interested in city issues, and it is involved in solving them. The survey indicates that 74.7% of respondents are interested in city issues but they do not participate in their solution; and only 11.6% are not interested in them at all. The most active are residents aged 35–55, while only 7% of young people say they are active. This suggests the majority of young people have not yet formed a citizen identity.

This situation is due not only to the passivity of citizens but also, political transformation processes in the country. For countries with an unstable democracy, civic engagement is often not as prevalent as political mobility. The interest in city issues (territorial, economic, cultural and educational, etc.) and the involvement in public affairs provide an opportunity to form a collective social consciousness and thus, acquire local citizenship. Such factors are a condition for the co-organization of the community and the establishment of subsidiary democracy.

Consequently, if a city resident shows an active position in life of the community, is interested in city issues, they tend to feel like a member of a single city community. However, only 18.5% of survey

respondents feel that way, 46.5% of them feel this way to some extent, 12.7% of respondents do not feel like they are members of a single city community, and 22.3% are uncertain. Among those who feel members of a single city community to some extent, the majority (79.8%) is interested in city life but they do not participate in the solution of city issues.

Social Trust and Responsibility

A well-known Israeli researcher, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt singles out two aspects of the process of constructing a collective identity, namely delineating boundaries and creating a basis for trust, solidarity, and internal equality (Eisenstadt, 1998, p. 139). Collective unity is impossible without the phenomenon of trust, which is social in its nature because it is based on common moral values and it is the result of collective efforts. Long ago, founders of sociological studies, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber considered trust to be the main component of social capital and under certain conditions trust may cease to be an individual quality that characterizes the personality and it may extend to the whole social group or society as a whole.

The level of trust in the community reflects the quality of interpersonal, intergroup, and social interactions. In addition, conceptually, the culture of trust provides a certain degree of national and mental experience of social interactions, enshrined in cultural traditions; this experience generates the energy of social success (Kozhemiakina, 2016).

However, there is a significant lack of trust in the city: Only 3.0% of respondents believe that city residents fully trust each other and 21.3% of respondents say they mostly trust others. Thus, it can be stated that the "sense of community" based on mutual trust and solidarity both between individuals and local groups in the city is practically absent.

Obviously, the radius of trust is small and applies only to relatives and friends. On the one hand, it is an indicator of the state of Ukrainian society as a whole, in which there is a lack of trust everywhere—in politics, economics, local government, etc., on the other hand, various local groups in the city have not developed solidarity norms of behavior, and, thus, they have not created conditions for the development of inclusive social capital. This means that a person does not see any the value in involvement in public life and they are minimally involved in various activities in the city.

One of the main integrative features of trust is the ability to establish deep interpersonal relationships and to encourage interaction. Social communications in the city are built on trust. They reflect the degree of inclusion of sociability and the ability to reconcile personal and collective interests in social contacts. The higher the trust between people, the more intense and effective social communication between them tends to take place.

The significance of the phenomenon of trust lies in the fact that without trust, it is impossible either to form a city community within a municipality or to build a civil society within the state. The lack of trust erodes solidarity and leads to a deepening of social fragmentation. The phenomenon of mistrust arises between subjects who are characterized by differences (including ethnic differences), different values, norms, and rules of behavior. Their interaction takes place in conditions of uncertainty and they can only be united by an interest in cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

The analysis of survey responses on this aspect of our study leads us to conclude that in the city of Melitopol, there is a "culture of distrust," and this causes problems, such as social exclusion and conflicts.

Social Communications

A person's self-determination is carried out within a certain social context that is today actively shaped by the media of communication. This mediated context provides alternatives and interpretations of facts and events and thus, shapes people's identity. Generally speaking, the higher the level of social communication, the higher the interest in city issues, and the greater their sense of city identity.

In addition to direct contacts, there are other interactive means of communication in the city. They are local newspapers, television, websites, and social networks. Social networks play a special role because they facilitate both horizontal and vertical connections. Horizontal social communications are carried out by individuals and groups with the same or similar social status. Vertical ones are carried out by individuals and groups with different social statuses, that is, between government officials and ordinary members of the community, and between leaders and subordinates as well. The majority of respondents (69.3%) indicated they use local websites, 46.0% of them said they read local Internet newspapers, 26.7% watch television, and 8.0% read print newspapers. Significantly,

57.8% of respondents said they communicate on Facebook and 87.5% use Instagram. While the older generation prefers television and print media, younger people tend to communicate on social networks and read online newspapers and websites. In general, survey responses indicate that social communications in the city are quite dense.

The Ratio of National to City Identities

City identities and national identities are dialectically interconnected. One of the markers of a country's democracy is the level of subsidiary political relations that are built from the bottom to top. Survey results show that national identity prevails over city identity: 61.3% of respondents have a stronger national identity than city identity. Some respondents chose other types of identities: regional—7.5%, cosmopolitan—7.5%, European—3.8%, ethnic—1.3%, and 7.5% of respondents said they are uncertain. 45.7% of respondents who chose both national and local identity are 45.7%.

Responses to this indicator demonstrate a certain amount of ambivalence toward their city community: one part of citizens who responded to the survey has a strong foundation of identity with conscious cultural and civic values, willingness to participate in socially significant decisions for the benefit of their city and the country as a whole. The other part of residents shows a certain passivity, an unwillingness to act for the benefit of their territorial community, in particular for innovative means.

Since world global processes create new ways of life, these create new identities. The synthesis of the global and local can be seen in those respondents (7.5%) who feel like citizens of the world and the respondents (7.5%) who have not identified who they are. These are mostly young people under the age of 35 who have not formed a stable foundation of identity at any level. One of the reasons some chose cosmopolitanism is they believe that it is necessary to form planetary thinking that is based on a sense of responsibility for everything that happens and not only to single societies, but to humanity as a mega-community.

On the other hand, this category of respondents may be ashamed of their origins and not willing to reveal their identity. Some prefer to transfer the status of the city to their own status or they will consider it necessary to assert themselves on the basis of another regional or urban culture. And, the third way is the possibility of forming new local communities that are concentrated around a certain area, but they absorb all the fea-

tures of communities existing at the global level. In addition, integration into new local communities is possible not only around a certain place, but also around common interests and ideas, such as ecological housing and a certain subculture.

Russian Aggression and the Struggle of Ukrainians for their Authenticity

In the morning of February 24, 2022, residents of Ukrainian cities of Kyiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Mariupol, Melitopol, and others were awakened by rocket explosions. The Russian army bombed airfields and critical infrastructure. Thus began the Russian aggression against sovereign Ukraine. As invaders themselves declare, they think Ukraine is not an authentic nation state, and Ukrainian identity is an anti-Russian construction that has no substance of its own. Their "military operation" (invasion) is supposedly aimed at the "denazification" of the government, but in fact, is aimed at the de-Ukrainization and de-Europeanization of the country.

The result is the punishment of Ukrainians through imposing on them hardships of war, re-education, ideological repression (suppression), and strict censorship in the political sphere, but also in the spheres of culture and education. The ultimate goal is the destruction of the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian identity. Russian occupiers have clearly confirmed this by killing and torturing Ukrainians in cities of Bucha, Irpin, and Mariupol and in many villages in the Kiev, Sumy, Chernihiva, and Kharkiv regions.

After the annexation of Crimea and the formation of the "Donetsk People's Republic" (DPR) and "Luhansk People's Republic" (LPR) in the easternmost provinces of Ukraine in 2014, Ukrainians learned that Russians invaded those territories where Ukrainian identity is the weakest. However, since their full-scale invasion of the country, the consolidation of Ukrainian society has taken place at two levels: (a) at the horizontal level (through the rallying of citizens to help the military and people displaced from the war zones, as well as other forms of volunteering); and (b) at the vertical level (through the general rallying together of society, the government and political opposition at the national level).

The phenomenon of the volunteer movement that arose during the political Revolution of Dignity and the start of the war in the eastern Donbas region back in 2014 has resumed on a larger scale in response

to the full-scale war launched by Russia in 2022. Now, in this most difficult period, this movement has united Ukrainian society, created an effective structure of public organizations and groups of people ready to take on the solution of the most pressing and painful problems of the country. These volunteer organizations and groups provide all kinds of assistance to armed forces of Ukraine, territorial defense forces of each city, millions of internally displaced persons, seriously ill, low-income people, and more.

Melitopol, due to its geographical position, was occupied early by the Russian army on February 25. And like all the occupied areas, the city began civil resistance to the invaders. Since most of the shops were looted by the Russian invaders, many residents were not able to obtain necessary things and food. Therefore, from the first days of the occupation, three centers of volunteer assistance arose in the city, which were created by civilians themselves to help low-income and needy people. Local businesses also provided assistance to residents whose houses were damaged by rocket attacks and bombs.

One of the most effective methods of resistance to invaders in the first days of the occupation were thousands of public meetings of disobedience. Residents every day gathered on the main square of the city with Ukrainian flags, city symbols, sang the anthem of Ukraine and marched around the city with slogans "Glory to Ukraine, ""Melitopol is Ukraine," calling for invaders to go home, and blocking the way for their military vehicles. This put a lot of moral pressure on invaders who shot at the legs of the protestors and threw stun grenades at them. A few days later, the invaders began to kidnap representatives of legitimate city authorities, activists, and relatives of Ukrainian servicemen. The fate of some of them is unknown.

In order to block the public access to information and minimize uncensored communications, invaders turned off mobile communications and the Internet. In this situation, residents rallied in their micro-districts of the city and strengthened neighborly ties on the street and in the courtyards of multi-story apartment buildings. In this way, assistance was provided to neighbors and useful information and news from war zones were exchanged and distributed.

The next forms of resistance have been sabotage, non-cooperation, concealment of city equipment, computers, documents, and more. Hence, one of the tasks of the invaders was to start their propaganda process in the schools in Russian and through Russian programs. To this end, they

began to intimidate school principals, and four of them were kidnapped. However, not a single director agreed to become a collaborator, they all wrote a letter of resignation. Thus, occupiers could not "show a picture" on television of "everyone is happy" in occupied cities.

Another failure of the policy of occupiers was the impossibility of introducing the Russian Ruble in occupied territories, including in Melitopol, thanks to the effective financial sanctions of the United States and countries of the European Union.

With the intensification of repression (everyday people are kidnapped in Melitopol), a humanitarian catastrophe (lack of food, hygiene products, and medicines even for the seriously ill), the blocking of Ukrainian humanitarian convoys by occupiers, and residents are massively trying to leave the city.

Faith in the victory of Ukraine and all the work to bring it closer is the main priority for all Ukrainians, including Melitopol residents. Hence, according to the data of the Sociological Group "Rating" (which is a Ukrainian non-governmental polling organization, Sociological Group "Rating", 2022), 95% of respondents believe that Ukraine will be able to repulse the Russian invasion. This confidence prevails in all regions of the country. In addition, 82% of respondents consider the split of Ukraine is unlikely, since the level of cohesion of citizens has significantly increased in reaction to the Russian invasion. The most friendly countries, according to Ukrainians, are Poland, the USA, Great Britain, Lithuania and France, while Russia (98%) and Belarus (84%) are perceived as hostile countries by Ukrainians (Sociological Group "Rating", 2022).

Discussion and Implications

The city is a map of real life social actions because the lives of individuals take place not in an abstract living space, but in a particular space. However, it is possible for a person to live in a city and not associate themselves with city's values and thus, not identify with it. A city has to have certain conditions to become a part of the self-identification of its citizens.

One of the prerequisites for city identification is affinity with the particular physical space of the city, and the feeling that the city is something they "own and is close." A person does not necessarily recognize their connection to the city is significant. This can happen unconsciously and imperceptibly. This is typical of most residents.

However, in order to be proud of the city, it is necessary to articulate its characteristic features or significant personalities who are associated with it and known to people outside it. The citizens in Melitopol feel a deficit in such articulation and in such iconic personalities. Therefore, in Melitopol, there is a process of finding identity in two ways: the first through identifying with its authenticity and historical heritage, and the second through identifying with its modern resources. The second way is easier for many residents.

The city seeks to declare its identity, features, and find differences from other cities. Old cities with strong traditions usually do not need self-affirmation, they experiment less with new forms, show less expression. They do not claim any symbolic titles, such as "the intercultural capital" or "the youth city" as well. Melitopol is trying to find a business card of the city, symbolically claiming the title of "The Cherry Capital."

Also, the city's self-determination revolves around modern events and holidays. The fact that people of different ages and social backgrounds positively perceive them and visit them shows that they can become traditional, unite the community, and form a certain image of the city.

Therefore, results of the study were taken into account in the Comprehensive Program of Intercultural Integration of Melitopol for 2021–2023, which is a part of the City Development Strategy until 2030. Thus, the Comprehensive Program provides for the reconstruction of historical and cultural buildings reflecting ethnic specifics of the city, a number of activities to draw attention to the historical heritage. There are planned celebrations taking place in the city recently, for example, Cherries Festival or intercultural weeks.

However, the study reveals weaknesses in the development of the city community. First of all, there is a low level of social responsibility and trust between residents. This situation has not developed today, but it is inherited from the Soviet government that did not allow people to unite so that they would not form unions, meet, or talk to each other. They wanted collective, civil activity to be vanished. Therefore, several generations have been brought up on the idea that no one can be trusted, even relatives.

This explains the fact that almost half of the city residents are passive about modern transformations and public participation. One of the possible mechanisms for solving this problem is to expand the methods of participation by involving citizens in the life of the city. Civic activists are gradually being involved in the work of local governments, expert councils, various government agencies, and these actions contribute to

the subsidiary solution of problems at the local level, in particular, in the field of public safety, health, social protection, education, and support of socially significant business projects.

Another way to build social trust is to spread volunteerism, voluntarily initiated humanitarian projects (various actions of assistance and support), and environmental and cultural-historical initiatives, the implementation of which is due to the unique regional features and available opportunities of public organizations.

Strong determinants in forming a solid foundation of identity are a sufficient level of public interest in city issues and the density of social communications in the city. They can be aimed at consolidating different social groups and individuals, as well as building trust within the community. These factors determine the formation of city identity. On this basis, the relationships of reliability and trust can be built on a horizontal level that is the core level of local participation and self-organization.

Conclusions

The contemporary world is characterized by the extreme dynamism, uncertainty, and the unpredictability of social changes. Globalization and transnational cooperation are gradually overcoming geographical distances and borders between states while increasing the influence of certain territories in different countries. These processes have created an identification syndrome that manifests new mechanisms for the creation of territorial, socio-group, and individual identities. Because of these conditions, there is a constant need for research.

A city identity is an unstable, continuously changing entity that is performatively constructed through sometimes contradictory discourses and practices. The markers of this identity are determined by many factors: the geography of cultural areas, the historical boundaries of socio-political formations, transformations in any aspect of the socio-cultural system, etc. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to take into account the complexity, multidimensionality, and the dynamism and dialogic nature of city identity.

Therefore, contemporary interpretations of identity reject it as a frozen phenomenon. City identity is rooted in public consciousness (more precisely, ideas of individuals about the social space of their city). It is also constructed by the cultural and political repertoires which people

access, as well as by the structural context in which they live. As a result, identification patterns significantly vary across different contexts.

In addition to the already established and well-known markers of measuring the strength of identity, namely the affinity with physical space (love for the city, pride in it, and its difference from other cities), in our opinion, there are the following markers: the density of communication, social trust, public participation in city events, usefulness of the city for its residents, etc.

In the postmodern world, there is the tendency for cities to follow identity policies aimed at making the external and internal perceptions of their cities more stable and favorable to attract more social, economic, and other resources. There is a conscious invention and promotion of constructed uniqueness. The city's identity is both constructed and deconstructed in different ways.

If the city has distinct historical and socio-cultural features, social, cultural infrastructure that meets the demands of residents, a strong local elite, then the "image of the city" is naturally formed, and on this basis the city self-consciousness is naturally formed. However, such trends are typical of older cities and large megacities. Younger and smaller cities try to find their identity by expressing themselves through various festivals, high-profile events, and/or symbolic names, such as "The Youth Capital," "The Cherry Capital," etc.

In the long term, cities that depend on classical factors of production (land, labor, and natural resources) may lose their benefits at some stage of globalization. And, those communities that develop more creative and more "educated" factors (based on intelligence, innovation, information, cooperation, networks, social capital, etc.) have a chance to become leaders. They will be able to position themselves more favorably in relation to other communities and territories and gain special competitive advantages in attracting the best investments for: the creation of innovative enterprises, formation of high added value, export production, new skills, more professional management, improvement of infrastructure, and integration into the world economy.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

FUNDING

NOTES

1. Melitopol (translit. Melitópol') is a city in southeastern Ukraine, which is currently under Russian military occupation. It is situated on the Molochna River that flows through the eastern edge of the city and eventually joins the Sea of Azov. Its population is approximately 150,768 (2021 est.). The city is located at the crossing of two major European highways: E-58 (Vienna–Uzhhorod–Kyiv–Rostov-on-Don) and E-105 (Kirkenes–St. Petersburg–Moscow–Kyiv–Yalta). An electrified railway line of international importance goes through Melitopol. Prior to the 2014 Russian occupation of Crimea, 80% of the passenger trains heading to the Crimean Peninsula passed through the city and during the summer road traffic would reach 45,000 vehicles per day. Melitopol was attacked by Russian forces on February 25, 2020 and the city was captured after heavy fighting by March 1, 2022. For more detailed information, see: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Melitopol#

2. Bohdan Zynoviy Mykhailovych Khmelnytsky was aseventeenth century Ukrainian military leader and Hetman of the Zaporozhian Host, which was then under the suzerainty of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. He led an uprising against the Commonwealth that resulted in the creation of an independent Ukrainian Cossack state. For more information, see https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Bohdan_Khmelnytsky

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