

Elżbieta Olzacka  
Jagiellonian University

## **The Role of Museums in Shaping National Identity in Wartime Ukraine**

Paper Presented at the 2019 ASN World Convention, Columbia University 2-4 May 2019  
Do Not Cite Without the Permission of the Author

### **Abstract**

The conditions of social, political and military mobilization related to the so-called Revolution of Dignity, as well as the war in Donbas between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists from two eastern provinces of the country, has liberated the Ukrainians' sense of agency, empowerment and faith in people's power to change. One of the manifestations of social activity and involvement are activeness in the field of collective memory, including creating ways of understanding, interpretation and representation of recent and current events. The purpose of this paper is to show that new museums and exhibitions devoted to the Revolution of Dignity and war in eastern Ukraine are not only a place for gathering artefacts, but also a vital space for discussion about Ukrainian identity and patriotism. Referring to the concepts of researchers who theorize the nation-creating function of museums as well as to the concept of a "performing museum", I aim to show that these new Ukrainian institutions are both "sites of remembrance", creating the myth of political community, "spots of propaganda", mobilizing society in the face of war, "sites of mourning", where relatives and friends can worship and mourn the dead, and a "place of healing", where participants of tragic events could work on recovering after experiencing trauma. The paper is based primarily on a qualitative analysis of materials collected during five research stays in Ukraine, from June 2017 to February 2019, and focuses primarily on four cases – Ukraine's First ATO Museum in Dnipro, Museum of the Heavenly Hundred in Ivano-Frankivsk, the project "Ukrainian East" in the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War in Kyiv, and a project of the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, war in Donbas, Revolution of Dignity, museum, national identity

The war in Donbas between the Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists began in April 2014, less than two months after the end of the so-called Revolution of Dignity<sup>1</sup>, a massive uprising, which brought a new, pro-Western government to power. The Ukrainian state recognized the areas controlled by separatists as "occupied territories", and vowed to launch an "anti-terrorist operation" (ATO) against them. The operation quickly took the form of conventional warfare, using large military forces, heavy artillery, armored vehicles and tanks (Yekelchik 2015; Maiorova 2017). Although the armed operations covered only two provinces of the country, the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, the entire territory was involved in mass mobilization. In the spring and summer of 2014, many Ukrainians manifested their commitment by joining volunteer battalions, as well as creating a grassroots network of civil volunteer groups supporting the Ukrainian army (Yekelchik 2015; Wilson 2016; Maiorova 2017). The conditions of political and military mobilization have liberated the Ukrainians' sense of agency, empowerment and faith in change, also in the field of creating a conscious, patriotic and at the same time democratic society. Recently conducted research indicates the "national awakening" and "identity boom", characterized by increased self-identification as Ukrainian, greater pride in being a citizen of the Ukrainian state, stronger attachment

---

<sup>1</sup> Events that took place between 21 November 2013 and 21 February 2014 in Kyiv are called Maidan, Euromaidan, or the Revolution of Dignity (Portnov 2014; Onuch and Sasse 2016). This last term is the official name of the events used both in Ukrainian legislation (e.g. Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 69 (2015)) and in the Ukrainian public sphere.

to national symbols, enhanced solidarity with their compatriots, as well as increased readiness to defend Ukraine and an increase in confidence in the people's power to change the country for the better (Kulyk 2016, 588; cf. Onuch, Hale, and Sasse 2018).

One of the manifestations of social activity and involvement are activeness in the field of collective memory. For example, in the case of removing the Soviet heritage from the public spaces of Ukrainian cities, Ukrainian society itself has turned out to be an important agent (cf. Liubarets 2016). Also the first commemorations of the heroes of the Revolution of Dignity and war in Donbas were not the result of official policy, but the involvement of Ukrainians. Members of the “Heavenly Hundred”<sup>2</sup> (Nebesna sotnya) and killed participants of an “anti-terrorist operation” in eastern Ukraine have quickly become an object of public commemoration, expressed both by the spontaneous “shrines” with candles, flowers, ribbons, flags, mascots, and photos of those killed, as well as by the numerous “memory sites” arising mainly from local initiatives (cf. Liubarets 2016; Sklokina 2018). However, the frames of remembrance, initially expressed in the spontaneous, bottom up form, are becoming increasingly institutionalized. They include not only new monuments, plaques, memorials, names of streets and parks, memory chambers and memory walls, but also various types of exhibitions and even – new museums.

In the paper, I will focus primarily on three cases – Ukraine's First ATO Museum in Dnipro, the Museum of the Heavenly Hundred in Ivano-Frankivsk, and the project “Ukrainian East” in the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War in Kyiv. I will also present a project of the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity in Kyiv – a grassroots initiative that was established in January 2014 during Euromaidan events, and is currently being implemented as a flagship state project. The aim of the paper is to analyze the role of museums in processes related to the shaping of national identity in conditions of armed conflict. I will present the ways in which the new exhibitions create a coherent and integrating story about the Ukrainian nation and its struggle for freedom and independence. It includes both producing an “objective narrative” about the events, as well as creating a “theatrical space”, allowing for experiencing the “atmosphere” of heroic moments of new Ukrainian history.

Concepts of researchers who theorize the nation-creating function of museum exhibitions will be referred to. As they note, museums, as one of the tools of state identity politics, can be used in forging a national consciousness as well as legitimizing the current socio-political order (Macdonald 2003; Kaplan 2006; Knell 2011; Aronsson and Elgenius 2014). As I will point out, in wartime, they could also become “spots of propaganda”, mobilizing the society in the face of war as well as “sites of mourning”, related to experiencing individual trauma and grief. At the same time, although museums claim the right to define a community and the individuals within it, these definitions are often the result of a social consensus, negotiated and discussed in the process of creating and re-creating existing exhibitions. In the concept of “new museology”, the museum becomes a facilitator for grassroots initiatives, enabling the cooperation between the traditional power structured museum and a community (Heijnen 2010). It could create democratic access to creative work on the exhibition and engaging its recipients. Referring to the concept of a “performing museum” (Casey 2005; Williams 2007) allow us to focus on the role of new Ukrainian museums in creating a national, political and civic community through working together on the trauma and memory.

This paper is based on a qualitative analysis of materials collected during five research stays in Ukraine, from June 2017 to February 2019 and covering Kyiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Dnipro.

---

<sup>2</sup> The common name for fallen participants in the Maidan protests. The name comes from the title of a poem by Ukrainian poet Tetiana Domashenko (2014), written directly under the influence of events.

During fieldwork, rich audiovisual material was collected, and interviews were conducted with Ukrainians involved in the new museum projects. The materials used in the article also include descriptions of exhibitions, official leaflets, prospectuses and publications created by museums, their official websites and social media profiles, as well as media materials.

### **Museum and the Making of Community**

As other public institutions related to the promotion of national values, museums “have, since their creation, been at the center of nation-making and nation-building processes” (Aronsson and Elgenius 2014, 2). The intensive demand for national museums appeared along with the Napoleonic wars and with the rise of national states that needed to claim, articulate and represent dominant national values, myths and realities. Museums are institutions of power that rely on “giving meaning to the past and present” and creating official versions of history (Ziębińska-Witek 2018, 9; cf. Sherman and Rogoff 1994). Through strategies for objectivization of reality, they create beliefs that become obligatory in the community. Objects displayed in museums provide visitors the opportunity to experience the shared culture and history, which may reaffirm a sense of common heritage (Macdonald 2003, 2). Narratives created through exhibitions contribute towards the concept of national identity by constructing a positive image of the community, and representing their common myths and values. At the same time, representations of nations and national values created in museums are products of social negotiations between different individuals such as museum employees, scientists, politicians, sponsors, social activists, non-academic historians, teachers, witnesses of historical events and their descendants and the general public. According to Aronsson and Elgenius (2011, 5), national museums have become “significant within arenas of negotiation and consolidation of new answers to questions ultimately related to nationhood, citizenship and the role of nations within a system of other nations”. Therefore, they are institutions capable of providing a foundation for legitimacy and representation of the nation, both domestically and internationally.

In the nation-building context, one of the most important objects of musealization are wars and battles, in the fire of which the nations were born and reborn again, reaffirming their strength and will to survive. As historians note, in the construction of European national communities, wars have played a special role (Mosse 1991; Hutchinson 2007). Wartime, related to the need for social mobilization in the face of an enemy, have reinforced the sense of collective identity, and created an opportunity to build a political community through the “baptism of blood”. Narratives of violence actively shaped collective memory by supplying heroes, martyrs and victims (Brown and Grant 2016; Khalili 2007; Viggiani 2014). For centuries, stories of war and revolution, full of heroic deeds and trauma, were used to develop national images and helped to forge a sense of national unity. This takes on special significance in areas experiencing conflict where the evocation of the “glorious dead” is associated with a reminder of a moral obligation to them (Čolović 2001). In circumstances of ongoing war, not only dead heroes are celebrated, but new ones are also created in the process of memorialization through new monuments, holidays, but also museum exhibitions. The museums are active participants in producing narratives about war heroism and martyrdom, as well as stories about enemies, traitors and injustices suffered by a given community. The way in which museums memorialize and address the conflicts could significantly impact the way the national construct is perceived. Therefore, I believe that analyzing the musealization of the Revolution of Dignity and war in Donbas in newly created Ukrainian institutions could provide interesting insights regarding identity construction in wartime Ukraine.

## **Musealization of the Revolution of Dignity and War in Donbas**

The idea of the musealization of the Euromaidan events appeared as early as January 2014, during the protests at the Kyiv Maidan Nezalezhnosti. Since there were many artists, activists and cultural institution employees among the protesters, the awareness of perpetuating the “history-in-the-making” was clear. In the autumn of 2014, as part of “Maidan Museum / Museum of Liberty” initiative, artefacts and testimonies were collected and secured, and the concept of a new museum began to be developed. The grassroots initiative has been gradually institutionalized, obtaining administrative, legal and financial support from the state and municipal authorities. In November 2015, “The Memorial to the Heroes of the Heavenly Hundred – Revolution of Dignity Museum” (Memorial'nyi kompleks Heroiv Nebesnoi Sotni – Muzei Revoliutsii Hidnosti) was established, and in April 2016, the institution received “national” status (President of Ukraine 2016). Nonetheless, the creators of the museum concept strongly emphasize that it was the result of widely conducted social consultations and discussions with various types of experts, including the international environment<sup>3</sup>. Participants of the Revolution of Dignity, including the organizations of the Maidan Self-Defense, AutoMaidan, the Maidan Library and the Maidan Press Center, as well as the families of the heroes of the Heavenly Hundred, also participated in the process of creating the new institution (Poshyvailo 2017, 28–30). The project for the building of the Museum was the result of the one of the first International Design Competitions in Ukraine, which allowed for transparent and fair assessment in accordance with the standards of Western democracies<sup>4</sup>.

According to the museum concept (Poshyvailo 2017), the main exhibition will “move” the viewers to the winter of 2013–2014, thanks to which the “spirit of the Maidan” will be able to be felt. The presence of such authentic objects as shields, helmets, clubs, flags, banners, posters, tires, pipes, stoves, canisters, fire extinguishers, paving stones, Molotov cocktails, field kitchen items, catapult-slingshots, stretchers, notebooks and diaries, gas masks, bulletproof vests and other protective clothing, photos, clothing and personal items of protesters, will help to create a “reconstruction of real Maidan life”. The museum exhibitions will also include audio recordings of participants' memories, as well as videos that allow to recall authentic protests scenes and understand the modus of common, civic activities. So far, museum staff gathered over 2800 items, and recorded about 50 audio and video interviews. Since the institution still does not have a building for the main exhibition, temporary exhibitions are organized in the public spaces of Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine (Poshyvailo 2018).

In 2019, the Information and Exhibition Center of Maidan Museum, located in the renovated House of Trade Unions on Maidan Nezalezhnosti, was opened. On the ground floor, there is a small exhibition named “Towards Freedom!” (Nazustrich svobodi), that presents the chronology of the revolution, ranging from peaceful protests in November 2013 to the tragic events of February 2014. Through text, images but also archival videos and audio memos, visitors are able to plunge into the

---

<sup>3</sup>Among others, Linda Norris – the Program Director for the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and author of the blog "Uncatalogued Museum" (USA), Sarah Blumfield – director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, Elaine Gurian – Former Deputy Director of the National Museum of American Indians in Washington and former deputy secretary of the Smithsonian Institute (USA), and Basil Kersky – Director of the European Solidarity Center (Poland), could be mentioned. Furthermore, the museum staff themselves have made several study visits to the well-known “memorial museums” in Europe and around the world.

<sup>4</sup>Therefore, among the jury there were both Eugen Nyschuk, Minister of Culture of Ukraine and Ihor Poshyvailo, CEO of the state organization “National memorial complex of Heavenly Hundred Heroes – Museum of Revolution of Dignity” as well as Volodymyr Bondarchuk, Chief of the NGO “Families of Heavenly Hundred Heroes”, Myroslav Marynovych, a human rights activist from Lviv and Elaine Gurian as an independent museum consultant (“Arkhitekturnyi konkurs na proekt Muzeiu Revoliutsii Hidnosti” 2018).

atmosphere of the events. On the second floor, visitors can stand on the floor map, which accurately depicts the topography of the revolution and – for event participants – can be a chance to refresh their own memories. There is also a multimedia kiosk, where one can familiarize themselves with the history of Maidan and its participants. Visitors also have the opportunity to mark their presence on the “topographical wall” – and just like the participants of the protests, enter the name of the town from which they came. The Information Center has the task to create a safe and hospitable space for events related to memorialization and commemoration of the Revolution of Dignity and discussions around it (Salo 2018).

Although the Kyiv Maidan Museum “is the only national museum in Ukraine devoted to collecting, exhibiting, interpreting and disseminating the stories of the struggles by Ukrainians for national independence, human rights, individual freedoms, and dignity” (Salo and Pipko 2017), it should be borne in mind that the first museum dedicated to the events of the Revolution of Dignity was established in Ivano-Frankivsk, the administrative center located in western Ukraine. It is a result of a grassroots civil initiative, financed by Olexandr Shevchenko, a local businessman, social activist and politician, in contrast to the Kyiv “national project”, which was financed by the state and supported by state institutions. The Museum of the Heavenly Hundred (Muzeï Nebesnoï Sotni) was opened on 11 September 2015, after a year of intensive work led by the artist Roman Bonchuk, who was the main initiator and the contractor of the project. Local volunteers and artists, who had free space to express their artistic visions related to Euromaidan, actively participated in the creation of the exhibition.

The museum covers an area of five hundred square meters and is being expanded to include a room dedicated to the war struggle in Donbas. Its central part is occupied by a 30-meter paneau depicting the dramatic events which took place in the capital. The open area around it is conventionally divided into several zones: the Maidan kitchen, the Maidan hospital, the Maidan “spiritual center”, the Maidan barricades, and the Maidan self-defense. The objects forming the exhibitions – helmets, shields, clubs, stoves, dishes, stretchers, tires, barrels, elements of barricades – are authentic and unique, therefore they make it possible to empathize with the atmosphere of the revolutionary days. Also, photographs, decor and light help to create a theatrical space, allowing for a mental expedition in time and space, and immersion in the emotions accompanying the revolution – exultation, a sense of community and pride, but also fear, uncertainty and despair. A separate space is occupied by stands devoted to specific heroes, especially to Roman Hurik, one of the youngest members of the Heavenly Hundred, who came from Ivano-Frankivsk. The twenty-year-old student, shot in the head by a sniper on 20 February 2014, is commemorated in many ways in the city space. In the museum, his personal things, such as a backpack, shoes and a computer keyboard were placed. Roman's father, Ihor Hurik, the current Chairman of the Board of the Charitable Foundation “Maidan of Dignity”, helped create the museum and supports its activities.

Just like the museum in Ivano-Frankivsk, the first museum in Ukraine dedicated to the war in Donbas was also the result of a grassroots initiative. It was opened in early 2017 in Dnipro, called Dnipropetrovsk until May 2016. The city is located in the south-central part of Ukraine, about 250 kilometers east of Donetsk and 160 kilometers from the frontlines of the conflict. Dnipro, which was significantly threatened by a pro-Russian separatist movement after the Euromaidan revolution, is considered by its inhabitants as “the eastern outpost of Ukraine’s independence” (cf. Portnov 2015). In the spring of 2014, the residents of Dnipro formed volunteer battalions en masse as well as a grassroots network of civil volunteer groups supporting the Ukrainian army. The city also has the largest hospital in the region, Mechnikov Hospital, where those wounded in areas of conflict are transported and healed. The Museum of “Anti-Terrorist Operation” or “Civil feat of Dnipropetrovsk

region in ATO events” (Muzeĭ Hromadians’kyĭ podvyh Dnipropetrovshchyny v podiakh ATO) is dedicated to this civic uprising of the inhabitants of the region, and focuses on the events of 2014–2015. Its creation was possible thanks to the veterans of the conflict and doctors, volunteers and journalists who participated in the events, supported by the regional administration. The museum is located inside the WWII memorial complex, in the building where the diorama “Battle for the Dnipro” is located. The museum's director and employees, as well as exhibition guides, are veterans of the “anti-terrorist operation”, which results in the creation of a very committed and intimate narrative.

The museum consists of two parts (*Muzeĭ ATO Dnipro* 2018). The first is a street exhibition, “The Routes of the Donbas” (Shliakhamy Donbasu), which is devoted directly to military operations in the east of Ukraine, including the battle for Donetsk airport, and the battles of Ilovaisk, Debaltseve and Mariupol. The exhibition consists of authentic items brought from battlefields, such as an ambulance, combat vehicles and bunker elements. The other part of museum is the internal exhibition hall, divided into several spheres associated with the military, volunteers, medics, journalists, chaplains, and refugees. Separate stands honor individual local battalions and volunteers who provided essential supplies to the army. The exhibition also consists of multimedia maps and authentic SMS messages sent during the height of the conflict in summer 2014. In a separate room, there is a Memorial Hall dedicated to the fallen heroes from the Dnipropetrovsk region, where next to their photographs, personal items, such as chess, books, icons, a letter from a mother or a mobile phone damaged by the explosion were placed. The most emotional and innovative element of the museum is the video hall where a four-dimensional, panoramic multimedia exhibition is displayed. The video, created by Evgeniy Titerenko and Natalia Khazan, offers a chronology of the conflict and creates the effect of full immersion in the center of events together with the Ukrainian soldiers and volunteers, frontline journalists, and fleeing civilians. The video also touches the issue of Russian TV propaganda, as well as reaction of international public opinion.

Although the museum in Dnipro is the only museum in Ukraine devoted entirely to the war in Donbas, large exhibitions can also be found in Kyiv state museums. In the National Military History Museum of Ukraine, operating at the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, there is a large hall, dedicated to the events and participants of the ATO. The exhibition focuses on professional military personnel and presents a coherent and exhaustive narrative about the subsequent military activities of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Detailed attention is devoted to the arming and equipping of the Ukrainian army, but at the same time, the individualized personal stories of new Ukrainian heroes are presented. The exhibition devoted to the war in eastern Ukraine was also established in the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, which is the most visited Ukrainian museum, by both Ukrainians as well as foreign tourists. The project “Ukrainian East” (Ukraĭns’kyĭ Skhid) was the result of a grassroots initiative of the museum's employees, who wanted to take part in creating a narrative about the latest history of Ukraine. So far, three large exhibitions – “Ukraine. The reality of Modern War” (January 2015 – August 2016); “Ukrainian East” (February 2017 – May 2018); “On the Line of Fire” (from May 2018) – as well as two short-term projects – “The City of Mercy. Mechnikov Hospital” (April – May 2018), devoted to Dnipro's efforts, and “OURS”, dedicated to “cyborgs”, defenders of Donetsk airport (December 11, 2017) – have been presented in the museum building. The activities of the museum's employees are primarily aimed at collecting, describing and showing items from the ATO zone, and representing various military formations, including volunteer battalions, in combat operations in the east of Ukraine. Particular attention is devoted to the presentation of individual figures fighting in Donbas, as well as the various attitudes of civilians, from heroic acts of patriotism to “treacherous” standing on the side of the separatists.

Starting from 2015, the museum narrative adopts an increasingly orderly form, illustrated and legitimized with items brought from the warzone. Its official goal is to create “a story of the victories and tragedies of the patriots of Ukraine, who defend its sovereignty against the Russian aggressor in the eastern territories of our state, overcome the results of enemies' intervention, hybrid war crimes and break the plans of the creeping Putinism” (“Na liniï vohniu” 2018).

All the above-mentioned exhibitions, dedicated to the Revolution of Dignity and the war in Donbas, create a story with a clearly outlined plot, heroes, villains, message and purpose. In addition to showing the chronology of the events, a willingly used strategy is to separately present the key actors involved – people fighting and giving their health and life during the conflict, volunteers, doctors, clerics and journalists. The credibility of the story is served by objects that illustrate, objectify and legitimize it – these are primarily authentic items that took part in represented events. However, none of museums offer a dry and dispassionate story of revolution and war. The emotionality of the presented stories is enhanced by the personal objects of the fallen heroes, authentic SMS messages and social media posts, as well as such elements as children's drawings and letters to parents fighting on the front.

The new Ukrainian museums are connected not only by the content of their exhibitions and the exhibitionary strategies, but also by the way they were created. It should be borne in mind, that the musealization of the Revolution of Dignity and the war in Donbas was largely spontaneous. New exhibitions were mainly the result of civic initiatives – both among employees of state museums and local activists. They have been supported both by state institutions, regional authorities and private individuals. In each of these cases, the exhibitions were created with significant public participation – families and friends of the dead donate their personal belongings to museums, and activists, artists and members of various organizations want to participate in shaping the narrative about the latest history of Ukraine. In this sense, new museums are model “contact zones” (Macdonald 2003, 10), where a story about the community is co-created, but also – where the community is created by working together on the trauma and memory.

### **Performativity in Museums: Between Personal Trauma and Community Construction**

In the concept of “performing museum”, theorized by Valerie Casey (2005) and Paul Williams (2007), the “theatrical tropes”, such as individual audio and video testimonies, interactive displays, architecture, sound and interactive exhibits, which augment the historical artefacts, are used not only to create an affective reenactment and experience of the past, but also to invite or even force the visitor to perform the role of witness (cf. Sodaro 2018a, 185). It “encourages self-reflection, which in turn can lead to moral understanding”, Alice M. Greenwald (2016, 14) notes. Emphasizing affect and emotion, rather than cognition, is particularly important in the so-called “memorial museums”, focused on past violence, atrocity, and human rights abuses (Sodaro 2018b).

This ethical aspect of visiting and playing the role of a witness is also visible in new Ukrainian museums. Next to producing an “objective narrative” that takes the form of a visual reconstruction of events and their participants, new exhibitions and installations create the conditions for experiencing “the spirit” and “atmosphere” of the heroic moments of the most recent Ukrainian history. Items that took part in the Euromaidan events, as well as those brought from Donbas, are often deformed, damaged by explosions or even bloodied. Their authenticity evokes strong emotions and commitment, and helps in transforming an impartial viewer into a witness or even a participant of events. This is facilitated by the theatricalization of the space, which is particularly evident in the museum in Ivano-Frankivsk and Dnipro, where with the help of lights, decor and video materials, a convincing simulation of reality has been created. The rational view and assessment of reality are

replaced by the representation that allows the visitor to empathize with the experiences accompanying the participants of the events. Therefore, the museums compel the visitor not only to get acquainted with the evidence and testimonies of Euromaidan and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, but also to moral confrontation with the issues of political violence and military aggression.

At the same time, new Ukrainian museums dedicated to recent and ongoing events do not just offer an individualized experience of being immersed in other people's memories. The story of the Revolution of Dignity and the war in Donbas is primarily a story of the Ukrainians themselves, who from the beginning of independence, have been struggling with the problem of an incoherent and even torn identity (Wilson 2002; Riabchuk 2012). "This war could continue for many years to come, but we cannot wait until it is over before we try to make sense of the events taking place. (...) We need to be clear about what we are fighting for, and where the country is going" (*Muzei ATO Dnipro* 2018), says Yuriy Fanygin, one of the initiators and originators of the ATO museum in Dnipro. Providing a coherent narrative about who the Ukrainians are, what they are fighting for and against whom, is one of the most important tasks that the analyzed institutions set themselves. Although Ukrainians are the main recipients of this message, museums emphasize their role in informing foreign tourists about the current political situation in Ukraine. The museums are open to foreigners, and all the exhibitions discussed in the article, although partly, are described in English, which testifies to the desire and need to disseminate the created narrative on the international arena.

What should be emphasized is an increasingly pronounced crystallization of the "Other" and "the Enemy", represented by the "pro-Russian terrorists" from "occupied territories" and "Russian aggressor", who conducts a hybrid warfare by various methods and means, favors the determination of boundaries of Ukrainian coherent identity, and establishes a new mechanism of national inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, the presentation of the evidence on the participation of professional Russian soldiers in the conflict in eastern Ukraine is important element of exhibitions dedicated to current war. The way the residents of Donbas are presented is also noteworthy. The ATO Museum in Dnipro and the Museum of Military History in Kyiv are focused primarily on the perspective of the victim, exposing the humanitarian catastrophe and the tragedy of people who lost their home and possessions. On the other hand, the exhibition "Ukrainian East" differentiates the attitudes of those who found themselves in the zone of war by taking them into the liquid category "(Non)aliens". Some of them "stepped on the path of separatism and betrayal", but others "remained a patriot of Ukraine, did not lose the state spirit, national consciousness and identity, and joined the resistance against the Russian invaders" ("Na linii vohniu" 2018). The emphasis on the tragic situation of choice between "betrayal" and "patriotism" compels the viewer to take a similar position on his own, and identify on one side of the separated "line of fire".

Through the musealization process, members of the Heavenly Hundred, as well as those who died fighting in Donbas, become the new protagonists of the new heroic story based on their patriotism and sacrifice. "New Ukrainian heroes" may differ in ethnicity, religion and language, but all of them are primarily Ukrainians fighting for their country. Blood they shed laid fresh foundations for building the unity of the nation. The heroization of the fallen Euromaidan and ATO participants takes place in the new museums in many ways. One of them is the individualized stories about their lives, presented as a "one-way road" to make the final choice related to the struggle for freedom and independence of the Homeland. These stories are accompanied by "secular relics" (cf. Pearce 1992, 198). These are both items that accompanied the protagonists during their lifetime, indicating that he or she was the same man as everyone (clothing and footwear, elements of electronic equipment, book, icon, chess), as well as objects that witnessed their heroic death (like elements of uniform and military equipment, sometimes shot or bloody). Alongside the "secular relics", there are also national blue-

yellow flags, which have been stained by the blood of those who stood up for their homeland and did not hesitate to give health and life for it. A unique example of heroization is also the “icon-image”, painted by Roman Bonchuk, which is located in the museum in Ivano-Frankivsk. The members of the Heavenly Hundred are imaged as angels and saints, surrounded by biblical characters.

The construction of new heroes through museums enables creation of a unifying and coherent narrative of the past and present Ukrainian struggle for independence. Contemporary defenders of Ukraine are thus presented as “heirs” of previous generations of Ukrainian warriors for freedom. In Dnipro and Kyiv, exhibitions devoted to the war in eastern Ukraine are part of museums related to the history of the Second World War. It facilitates the incorporation of today's military effort into a multi-century national liberation struggle, and shows contemporary warriors as continuators of this struggle. Also, in the concept of the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity, events in Kyiv are to be incorporated into “large-scale historical processes”. The museum, created primarily for future generations, aims to integrate the story of the Revolution of Dignity into the history of previous Ukrainian “democratic revolutions” – the Granite (1990) and Orange (2004) Revolution, and create a coherent narrative of “the struggle of Ukrainians for human rights and freedom, freedom as a value, Ukraine's independence and its civilized choice” (“Misiia, Viziia, Meta”). This fight, as the exhibitions show, was carried out not only by professional military personnel. The participation of volunteer units – who, without any military preparation, decided to take part in the conflict, especially during the first months of the confrontation – is also emphasized. The new museums underline the participation of civilians in the Revolution of Dignity and the conflict in Donbas, showing that patriotism is not limited to armed struggle, but can also be expressed in voluntary activities supporting the armed forces, in the work of chaplains (“who care about the soul of the soldier”), medics (“who treat and save wounded bodies of soldiers in field conditions”), and journalists (“whose reports bring is a bitter truth about the war inspiring faith in the inevitable Victory”) (“Na liniï vohniu” 2018).

Commemoration is expressed not only in material exhibitions, but also through events organized by the museums. These are both photo exhibitions and book promotions related to recent and current events in Ukraine, celebration of official holidays, such as the Independence Day, Defender of Ukraine Day, the Day of the Ukrainian Volunteer, or Victory Day over Nazism in World War II, as well as more intimate events, for example, the celebration of the birthday of the dead heroes. Furthermore, all of the described museums create a space for expressing personal regret and loss. This is particularly evident in the museum in Dnipro, where the Memorial Hall has been spatially separated from the rest of the exhibition, creating a special sacred space. Visitors can stay there for a moment in solitude, leave flowers and light a candle. A similar place can be found in the museum in Ivano-Frankivsk, where under the previously mentioned “icon-image”, the visitors light candles and lay flowers. In Kyiv, such places are located on the Institutcka (in February 2014, renamed the Heroes of Heavenly Hundred Avenue) and Hrushevskoho Streets, that is, where the tragic events of Euromaidan took place, as well as near the St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery, where The Wall of Memory, dedicated to those who died in Donbas, was created. Also, the Maidan Museum declares in its plans that it wants to become a place where “the transition from crying over tragedy to healing through action” will be possible. This shows that the places of commemorations of the new heroes, arising directly under the influence of their heroic deeds, are both “sites of remembrance”, creating the myth of political community and “sites of mourning” (cf. Winter 1995), where relatives and friends can worship and mourn the dead, What more, they are also a place, where participants of tragic events could work on recovering after experiencing trauma.

As scholars note, such a confrontation with trauma and loss is possible through artistic activities. Paul de Bruyne and Yves de Maeseneer (2013, 1) express that art “creates a time and a

space to remember, to mourn, to forgive, to heal, and to glimpse a new future”. According to them, art make it possible to take personal traumatic stories to a higher aesthetic level. This allows not only to overcome personal grief, but also to participate in building a collective narrative address to the past events. The employees of the Ukrainian museums who are keen to inspire and promote such activities are aware of this fact. As part of the Ivano-Frankivsk museum, there is a ceramic workshop that runs classes for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The museums, as part of their exhibitions, also eagerly promote the art created by the participants of the conflict, for example sculptures from bullets of cartridges or icons painted on ammunition boxes.

Scholars also note the healing role of theatre. As Marie-Chantal Kalisa (2006) states, “theatre has the potential to encourage performers and the audience to envision new imagery, new language, and to reconnect with ritual”, which “allows people both to rediscover community, and to find a grave for the irreconcilable”. As the researcher notes, this is particularly important in restoring order and justice in post-conflict societies, but also can be used in societies experiencing conflict. Therefore, the new museums are trying to create a space for performances that promote healing in the aftermath of trauma. One example can be the periodic action-performance “Angels over Ukraine” (Ianholy nad Ukraïnoiu), organized in the framework of the “Ukrainian East” project. During this event, children cut and color “angels”, imagining the dead “defenders of the fatherland” – very often their fathers, brothers, relatives or friends. The other, an artistic project called the “Guardian” (Storozha), is led by artist Viktoriya Romanchuk (2019). The title guards – heroes who died many centuries ago, and those who died in Kiev during protests and in Donbas – represent the protective forces that guard the country, but also guard anyone who saw evil during the revolution and war. During the celebration of the anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity in February 2019, in the Information and Exhibition Center of Maidan Museum, in the framework of this project, the artistic performance “Time to recall” (Chas zhadaty) was presented. Its goal was to create direct contact between the artist and the audience and to recall the atmosphere of the Maidan. The whole action took place without words, which strengthened emotional contact and produced an intimate space for anyone who wanted to share memories, emotions or traumas with the artist (Romanchuk 2019). Also, the theatricalization of exhibitions, creating the possibility of becoming an actor-witness, and even an actor-participant of events, can not only serve a deeper understanding of historical processes (cf. Rokem 2000, 6), but also replay traumatic events, which may have a therapeutic function.

## **Conclusions**

Theoretical concepts of the museums conceived in the article are both useful and challenging to analyze phenomena in contemporary Ukraine. On the one hand, the new Ukrainian museums are focused on creating a national narrative, depicting the history of the nation as a progressive and successful development. According to Sharon Macdonald (2003), it was characteristic of nineteenth-century museum institutions which, by creating an “objective” scientific point of view on past events, shaped the viewers' sense of stability, awareness of progress, coherent and strongly rooted identity. Similarly, in contemporary Ukraine, the new museums become a stage for exhibiting new national myths legitimized with authentic stories and objects (Knell 2011, 4). On the other hand, the exhibitions that were discussed in the article seem to be part of the concept of “new museology”, becoming a place of civic participation and dialogue. As I aimed to prove, museums and exhibitions devoted to the Revolution of Dignity and the ATO are not only a place for gathering artefacts of recent/current events (like helmets, shields, weapons, pennants, elements of barricades, flags), but also a space for discussion about Ukrainian identity and patriotism. New museums engage viewers to confront problems such as sacrifice and death for their homeland, the values and dangers of

nationalism, the individual and collective dimension of trauma related to violence and military aggression, and the moral right of the nation to defend and self-determination.

They also facilitate performing and affirming a new civil society. The political and social crisis in Ukraine became a test also for Ukrainian museums, which more than ever before in their history appealed to the concept of “museum with the nation” (Poshyvailo 2017, 28), formulating questions and answers important in the times of transformation. According to Vadim Yakushchenko, director of the ATO Museum, “We had no right to lose this unique historical and social experience in a critical period” (*Muzeї ATO Dnipro* 2018). Since not only state museum employees are involved in the creation of new exhibitions, but also volunteers, artists, participants of the events and their families, museums have a chance to become a place of dialogue between state and non-state actors, and negotiate meanings concerning the recent history of Ukraine, as well as the vision of the future Ukraine and its place in the world. Civic activity around new museums includes the already mentioned events and celebrations, as well as activities such as actions of support and solidarity with prisoners, protest actions, or writing letters to soldiers fighting on the front. Each of the museums conduct educational and patriotic activities, creating the opportunity not only to learn about recent and ongoing events, but also to meet the participants of these events and free communication and dialogue. Visitors are encouraged to ask questions, discussions and leave entries in the “books of memory”. Among the special features of the new museum in Dnipro, its director Vadim Yakushchenko emphasizes “its openness to visitors, democracy and modernity of museum space, a respectful approach to the defenders of Ukraine. In this context, the museum is a reflection of today's days, a witness to the birth of a healthy and free society, with glorious traditions of Ukrainian military victories, the phenomenon of volunteering and chaplaincy, self-sufficiency of all our citizens in the face of opposition to Russian aggression” (*Muzeї ATO Dnipro* 2018).

Also, the Museum of the Revolution of Dignity expresses this need of promoting social responsibility and public civil activism very deliberately, declaring that its mission is to galvanize and consolidate Ukrainian civil society, and support democratic transformations in Ukraine. The museum aims to be “a platform for the development of Ukrainian society and joint activities”, related not only to the “preservation of the memory of the struggle for freedom in the modern history of Ukraine” and “honoring the memory of the heroes of the Heavenly Hundred and the participants of the Revolution of Dignity” but also to “encourage the development of creativity and responsible critical thinking” (“Misiia, Viziiia, Meta”). It should be noted that the museum's motto “We study Freedom! We protect Freedom! We create Freedom!” (*Piznavaïmo Svobodu! Zakhyshchaïmo Svobodu! Tvorimo Svobodu!*) is already implemented in new Ukrainian institutions, which, not only in their assumptions, but also in their current activity, are a creative space that enables the development of individual and collective initiatives. Responsibility for co-creating history is a very important element of the emerging Ukrainian civic consciousness. This is proven by the involvement in museum activities, as well as various bottom-up commemorative projects. An example of this is the “Living Memory” (*Zhyva pam'iat'*) project by Marian Prysiazhniuk (2019), the purpose of which is “honoring, storing and cultivating the memory of people who have lost their lives during the war in eastern Ukraine against the Russian Federation”.

Finally, as researchers of post-conflict societies note, traumatic events, such as revolutions and wars, “disrupt continuity and generate powerful emotions, most notably fear, anger and resentment” (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008, 385). Dealing with the legacy of such traumas is a major political challenge, especially because “the way the violent past is remembered proves to be a core element of collective identity construction – either in rejection or rapprochement of previous opponents” (Buckley-Zistel 2006, 4). Politicians use emotions, such as fear, anger and hatred to

achieve their goals and justify particular policy approaches. In the conditions of waging war, these emotions are “natural” and needed in the military mobilization of society, and the creation of attitudes of readiness to defend the country while risking their own health and life. However, one should keep in mind that “such an appropriation of emotions (...) contributes to building a sense of identity and political community that rests on a stark separation between a safe inside and a threatening outside” (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008, 386). The war and trauma experiences may constitute a unique political opportunity to construct new forms of identity and community, both based on fear, mistrust, resentment that makes a divided, willing to further conflicts society as well as focused on empathy, compassion and forgiveness, creating an opportunity to heal traumas and build a strong and coherent community. Lesson learned from peace processes in various post-conflict societies should already be taken into account by those who create historical and symbolic policy in Ukraine, including the creators of new Ukrainian museums.

## Bibliography

- “Arkhitekturnyĭ konkurs na proekt Muzeiu Revoliutsii Hidnosti.” 2018. *Visnyk Muzeiu Maidanu*, no. 2 (kviten' - cherven): 1–5.
- Aronsson, Peter, and Gabriella Elgenius. 2011. “Making National Museums in Europe – A Comparative Approach.” *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010. Conference Proceedings from EuNaMus*, 5–20.
- . , eds. 2014. *National Museums and Nation-Building in Europe 1750-2010: Mobilization and Legitimacy, Continuity and Change*. London-New York: Routledge.
- Brown, Kris, and Adrian Grant. 2016. “A Lens Over Conflicted Memory: Surveying ‘Troubles’ Commemoration in Northern Ireland.” *Irish Political Studies* 31 (1): 139–62.
- Buckley-Zistel, Susanne. 2006. “In-Between War and Peace: Identities, Boundaries and Change after Violent Conflict.” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35 (1): 3–21.
- Casey, Valerie. 2005. “Staging Meaning: Performance in the Modern Museum.” *TDR: The Drama Review-a Journal of Performance Studies* 49 (3): 78–95.
- Čolović, Ivan. 2001. *Polityka symboli: eseje o antropologii politycznej*. Kraków: Universitas.
- De Maeseneer, Yves, and Paul De Bruyne. 2013. “Secret and Sacred Places: The Role of Art in Processes of Reconciliation.” *Concilium: International Review of Theology - English Edition*, no. 1: 24–34.
- Greenwald, Alice M. 2016. “Through the Lens of Memory: Creating the 9/11 Memorial Museum.” In *No Day Shall Erase You: The Story of 9/11 as Told at the National September 11 Memorial Museum*, edited by Alice M. Greenwald, 11–30. New York: SkiraRizzoli.
- Heijnen, Wilke. 2010. “The New Professional: Underdog or Expert? New Museology in the 21th Century.” *Cadernos de Sociomuseologia –Sociomuseologia*, no. 37: 13–24.
- Hutchinson, John. 2007. “Warfare, Remembrance and National Identity.” In *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism : History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*, edited by A. Leoussi and S. Grosby, 42–54. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hutchison, Emma, and Roland Bleiker. 2008. “Emotional Reconciliation: Reconstituting Identity and Community after Trauma.” *European Journal of Social Theory* 11 (3): 385–403.
- Kalisa, Chantal. 2006. “Theatre and the Rwandan Genocide.” *Peace Review: A Journal of SocialJustice* 18 (4): 515–21.
- Kaplan, Flora Edouwaye S. 2006. “Making and Remaking National Identities.” In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald, 152–69. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Khalili, Laleh. 2007. *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*. Cambridge University Press.

- Knell, Simon J. 2011. "National Museums and the National Imagination." In *National Museums: New Studies from Around the World*, edited by Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson, and Arne Bugge Amundsen. London, New York: Routledge.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. 2016. "National Identity in Ukraine: Impact of Euromaidan and the War." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68 (4): 588–608.
- Liubarets, Andriy. 2016. "The Politics of Memory in Ukraine in 2014: Removal of the Soviet Cultural Legacy and Euromaidan Commemorations." *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 0 (3): 197–214.
- Macdonald, Sharon. 2003. "Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities." *Museum and Society* 1 (1).
- Maiorova, Alina, ed. 2017. *Donbas in Flames. Guide to the Conflict Zone*. Lviv: Prometheus.
- "Misiia, Viziiia, Meta." n.d. <http://www.maidanmuseum.org/uk/storinka/misiya-0>.
- Mosse, George L. 1991. *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Muzei ATO Dnipro. 2018. Dnipro: Dnipropetrovs'ka Oblasna Derzhavna Administratsiia.
- "Na liniï vohniu." 2018. Description of the exhibition.
- Onuch, Olga, Henry E. Hale, and Gwendolyn Sasse. 2018. "Studying Identity in Ukraine." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34 (2–3): 79–83.
- Onuch, Olga, and Gwendolyn Sasse. 2016. "The Maidan in Movement: Diversity and the Cycles of Protest." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68 (4): 556–87.
- Pearce, Susan M. 1992. *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Portnov, Andriy. 2014. "EuroMaidan: Context and Meanings." *Euxeinos. Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region*, no. 13: 9–14.
- . 2015. "'The Heart of Ukraine?' Dnipropetrovsk and the Ukrainian Revolution." In *What Does Ukraine Think?*, edited by Andrew Wilson, 62–70. London: European Council of Foreign Relations.
- Poshyvailo, Ihor, ed. 2017. *Maïdan: Landshafty Pam'iaty*. 2017th ed. Kyïv: Natsional'nyi muzeï Revoliutsii Hidnosti.
- . 2018. "Vid stratehii - do dii." *Visnyk Muzeiu Maïdanu*, no. 3–4 (lypen' - hruden): 1–2.
- President of Ukraine. 2015. *Pro vshanuvannia podvyhu uchashnykiv Revoliutsii Hidnosti ta uvichnennia pam'iaty Heroïv Nebesnoi Sotni*. <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/692015-18468>.
- . 2016. *Pro nadannia derzhavnomu zakladu "Memorial'nyi kompleks Heroïv Nebesnoi Sotni - Muzeï Revoliutsii Hidnosti" statusu natsional'noho*. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/138/2016>.
- Prysiashniuk, Marian. 2019. "Zhyva Pam'iat'. Pro proekt."
- Riabchuk, Mykola. 2012. "Ukraine's 'Muddling through': National Identity and Postcommunist Transition." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45 (3–4): 439–446.
- Rokem, Freddie. 2000. *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Romanchuk, Viktoriia. 2019. *Kataloh proektu "STOROZHA"*. Kyïv: Natsional'nyi muzeï Revoliutsii Hidnosti.
- Salo, Olha. 2018. "Mistse zustrichi z vidviduvachem." *Visnyk Muzeiu Maïdanu*, no. 3–4 (lypen' - hruden): 6–7.
- Salo, Olha, and Antonina Pipko. 2017. *The Courageous: Our Heroses. A Guidebook for Multimedia Traveling Exhibition*. Kyiv: Maidan Museum Press.
- Sherman, Daniel, and Irit Rogoff. 1994. *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*. First Edition edition. Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press.
- Sklokina, Iryna. 2018. "Vshanuvannia Nebesnoi Sotni ta zahyblykh v ATO na skhodi ta pivdni Ukraïny." In *Polityka i pam'iat': Dnipro – Zaporizhzhia – Odesa – Kharkiv vid 1990-kh do s'ohodni*, edited by Georgiy Kas'ianov. Lviv: FOP Shumylovych.

- Sodaro, Amy. 2018a. "Affect, Performativity and Politics in the 9/11 Museum." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 14 (3): 171–92.
- . 2018b. *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. None edition. New Brunswick Camden ; Newark: Rutgers University Press.
- Viggiani, Elisabetta. 2014. *Talking Stones: The Politics of Memorialization in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books.
- Williams, Paul. 2007. *Memorial Museums. The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Wilson, Andrew. 2002. *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- . 2016. "The Donbas in 2014: Explaining Civil Conflict Perhaps, but Not Civil War." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68 (4): 631–52.
- Winter, Jay. 1995. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yekelchik, Serhy. 2015. *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know®*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ziębińska-Witek, Anna. 2018. *Muzealizacja komunizmu w Polsce i Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.