“Developing data management tools to identify the colonial impact on monuments in the Sumy region of Ukraine”

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DEVELOPING DATA MANAGEMENT TOOLS TO IDENTIFY THE COLONIAL IMPACT ON MONUMENTS IN THE SUMY REGION OF UKRAINE

Abstract

Ukraine experienced expansionism by multiple foreign groups and states throughout its history. However, Russian colonization of the 18th and 19th centuries and Soviet colonization of 1921–1991 had the most significant impact on Ukrainian national state formation and cultural identification through organized Russian supremacy, systemic totalitarian ideology, and methodical Ukrainian language suppression in public spaces. This paper focuses on developing data management tools to identify the representation of Russian colonial impact in Ukrainian public art through analysis of Ukrainian monuments included in the State Monuments' Rosters for the Sumy region, a territory bordering Russia. The study utilizes digital data collection apparatus and data analysis to evaluate the distribution of monuments as the primary descriptive research technique. A Monument Digital Identification Card was created to indicate that the Russian colonial impact in the Sumy region, represented in monuments through identified criteria such as epoch, political narratives, personalities, and texts' language, is higher than Ukrainian statehood narratives. The developed data management tools compare the degree of colonial impact in public art objects installed and included in the State Monuments' Rosters before 1991 and after Ukraine gained independence. An increase in totalitarian propaganda in 1921–1991 directly impacted the number and narratives of monuments, with 94.9% reflecting colonial narratives and only 5.1% representing national identity. At the same time, no increase in Ukrainian national narratives has been identified since Ukrainian independence in 1991. The research findings confirm the need for state regulatory reforms and regional authorities' amendments to achieve historical justice.

Keywords data management, databases, open data, statistical characteristics, public art, monuments, postcolonial theory, Ukraine, national identity identifiers

JEL Classification O18, Z13, Z38

INTRODUCTION

Addressing the colonial impact in post-Soviet countries is contingent upon the analysis of the tools and methods used to implement colonial and totalitarian narratives. The effects of Russian Westward colonization include national and socioeconomic discrimination, intolerance of ways of thinking other than those imposed by the colonial regime, political marginalization that shaped generations of Ukrainians, Russification, human rights violations, and the physical destruction of citizens (Hansen, 2023).

Recently, postcolonial theory has been applied to post-Soviet states as a contemporary approach that complements traditional colonial studies, which have been historically based on "Discovery" colonization. In Ukraine, this theory is confirmed by common indicators of coloni-

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zation within its specific geo-political landscape, in particular, reflected in public art, which historically functioned as a medium for ideological imposition and symbolic control.

Since public art is a tool influencing placemaking, society, culture, economy, sustainability, wellbeing, wisdom, and innovation (Cheung et al., 2021), its encapsulation of colonial narratives conditions the public to conform to colonial rules and norms. Considering that colonial narratives in various countries, including post-Soviet ones, are characterized by indicators such as conquest and exploitation, the Ukrainian experience involved the imposition of a foreign culture and political system, rejecting the Ukrainian identity, which was portrayed as rural, backward, and inferior to the cultural standards imposed by the metropolis (Telenko & Kurbet, 2023).

In the context of analyzing Russian imperial and Soviet colonization and its indicators in monuments of the Sumy region, which showcases colonial influence on a territory bordering Russia, this study allows the development of complex political measures to strengthen the country's democratic values, independent economy, historical justice, awareness, and anti-totalitarian narratives.

The post-war cultural restoration of Ukraine involves reframing urban toponymy and narratives, particularly in public art – a process that demands significant efforts, an extended timeline, and the utilization of scientific data, including the indicators of colonial impact in public art identified in this research.

Currently, data management in the realm of public art in Ukraine is being implemented by state institutions for brief descriptive facts' documentation with very limited criteria. The main data sources created for the objects' identification are State Monuments' Rosters of National and Local Significance, which represent the title of the object, years of installation and reconstruction, name of the artist, and location address, which is not sufficient for a multifaceted analysis.

Thus, research focusing on identifying colonial impact is essential for providing valuable insights about key metrics of constructed narratives and propaganda in Ukraine to state and local authorities, and policymakers who aim to optimize resource use and deliver qualitative regulatory changes by incorporating the data management tools into data tracking systems.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge is a basic category defining the level of human existence, and monuments are knowledge markers that outline facts, processes of knowledge preservation, memory construction, and opinion building. Historical sites and monuments are also considered a data source that needs to be treated based on data management canons. Applying data management principles to monuments allows systematization and better understanding of the narratives they convey and how they contribute to collective memory and identity formation.

Recognizing public art objects and historical sites as data sources requires the use of structured data management methodologies commonly employed in scientific research. In this context, Martin et al. (2017) describe a data management process for scientific needs based on data life cycle stages, which are data production and processing, data preservation, and access, dissemination, and re-use. The data life cycle model consists of creating, processing, analyzing, preserving, giving access to data, and reusing the data. Within this framework, data management can be further understood from two complementary perspectives. From an information-based perspective, it is strictly related to the knowledge of where the information is available for retrieval for addressing a specific issue, while from a technology-based perspective, the focus shifts to the use of information systems applications to retrieve, store, and disseminate information (Merlo, 2017). These perspectives emphasize not only the organizational and cognitive aspects of managing data but also the technological infrastructure required to support the full data life cycle in scientific research. Alzghoul and Aboalganam (2025)

further elaborate on the importance of knowledge management systems, highlighting their direct effect on organizational performance through the interplay of intellectual and human capital, which underscores the critical role of structured knowledge processes.

This study weighs the European recommendations for open data, in particular the Open Data Directive that establishes rules on the re-use publicly funded research data made publicly available through repositories, and the European Data Act which facilitates the voluntary sharing of data and adjusts conditions the public sector data use, without altering material and data access and usage rights established initially.

Wooi (2024) proposes an integrated model of knowledge-sharing culture, technology, and strategies for best practice and a knowledge management framework in the evolving landscape of the 21st century. In their study, Nasution et al. (2025) wrote that Knowledge sharing in MSMEs refers to the exchange of information, skills, or experience between business owners, employees, customers, or other parties such as mentors, business communities, or educational institutions. Gray et al (2005) outline science data centers and define their functions as providing access to the data and to the applications that can analyze the data.

Abu-Al Sondos (2023) specifies the key components of knowledge management systems as strategy, people, process, technology, and culture. The study defines culture as a moderator of knowledge management on the levels of shared values, conventions, and behavioral patterns that reflect shared values and beliefs of the participants. This emphasis on structured approaches to knowledge is further supported by broad academic inquiry, with Sang (2024) providing a comprehensive bibliometric overview of knowledge management research, showcasing its critical importance in diverse sectors like banking.

The data management system development included clarification of identifiers and markers of colonial impact. Russian cultural colonization of Ukraine has been a deliberate and systematic process aimed at imposing Russian political, cultural, and historical narratives over Ukraine's diverse heritage. This process began during the imperial era and intensified under Soviet rule, during which Ukrainian culture and identity were often marginalized or suppressed. Historical figures, events, and cultural symbols were frequently reinterpreted or erased to align with a narrative that framed Ukraine as an inseparable part of the Russian world. Russian cultural colonization aimed at erasing Ukrainian cultural identity has been studied by numerous scholars (Boychuk et al., 2023; Durand, 2022; Szporluk, 2000; Hrytsak, 2015; Palko, 2016; Hagen, 1995; Pavlyshyn, 2016; Shkandrij, 2001).

Among many challenges facing contemporary Ukrainian society is overcoming the postcolonial experience that still weighs on Ukraine. This process has been rather non-systemic, and during its years of independence, Ukraine has not developed full-fledged national narratives. However, the current war should accelerate the process and eliminate colonial markers. Falko and Zhukov (2023) provide valuable insights into organizational transformation within a Ukrainian university, illustrating the transition from a hierarchical to an adhocratic culture as a path from survival to successful development in the conditions of war. Petrushenko et al. (2023) further extend this perspective by examining the crucial role of the university's third mission – its engagement with society beyond teaching and research – in the context of war and subsequent post-war recovery, underscoring the broader societal imperative for adaptive cultural and organizational shifts to foster resilience and articulate new national narratives amidst ongoing conflict.

The concepts of "decommunization" and "de-Russification" have already been entrenched in Ukrainian society through the relevant governmental legislative policy (Law of Ukraine "On Condemnation of Communist and Nationalist (Nazi) Totalitarian Regimes and Prohibition of Propaganda of Their Symbols" of April 9, 2015), which has been carried out with varying intensity since the beginning of Ukraine's independence (Legislation of Ukraine, 2015). However, the discussion around the concepts of "empire-colony" is only now beginning to take shape.

The use of public art, particularly monuments, by the Soviet system and later by Russia was one of the main instruments of influence, especially in

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the border regions of Ukraine, particularly the Sumy region. Having the longest border with Russia among all Ukrainian regions (563 kilometers), the region is the country's northern outpost. Historically, Ukrainian northern territories have played a strategic role as a defensive frontier since the days of Kyivan Rus and continued to do so during the Lithuanian-Polish period, the Cossack Hetmanate of Ukraine, the Civil War (1918–1920), and World War II (1939–1945). In addition, the Sumy region has a rich Cossack history, as its northern part and the city of Romny belonged to the Hetmanate and the southern part to the Sloboda regiments. The cities of Sumy and Okhtyrka were regimental centers, and the city of Hlukhiv was the third capital and residence of the Hetmans of Ukraine.

Szporluk (2000) investigates the historical context of Ukrainian national identity, particularly concerning Russian and Soviet efforts to suppress it. He provides an in-depth analysis of the role Ukrainian identity played in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and explores how the policies of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union sought to suppress Ukrainian nationalism. Plokhy (2015) presents Russian cultural expansionism as a central and ongoing challenge to Ukrainian identity, with deep historical roots that continue to influence the present.

Boychuk et al. (2023) highlight the significant influence of Russian colonialism practices on Ukrainian cultural identity by explicit attempts to eradicate Ukraine's culture, traditions, and values while fostering the illusion of a shared history between Ukraine and Russia. The Ukrainian language was oppressed under Russian occupation, affecting societal norms, customs, and collective memory. During the Soviet Union era, all policies and economic decisions were made to benefit Russia, which in turn caused inequality and hindered Ukraine's economic and democratic development before and after independence.

The suppression of Ukrainian identity is evident when Ukrainian heroes and events are either reinterpreted or minimized (Plokhy, 2015). In contrast, heroes and events of the Soviet period were often portrayed as symbols of resilience and collective strength. Public remembrance of the past – particularly through monuments – is as much, maybe more, about the people who had the power to erect them than they were about the individuals being honored (Rudin, 2019). Pshenychnykh et al. (2024) highlight that erecting monuments materializes dominant narratives of who deserves recognition and visibility in public spaces. The alteration and toppling of such monuments challenge these ideas, helping pave the way for new interpretations through material modifications and symbolic acts. Burima et al. (2016) state that monuments serve as reminders of historical events, with monuments dedicated to a specific person a memento of their significance. Hence, monuments sustain a bond to publicly significant events of the past and function as a building material of historical identity. Each object of cultural legacy is also a part of social life, being a part of the present-day politics. Soviet-era monuments often featured figures like Lenin, Marx, and other now-disgraced individuals or deeds, while Ukrainian historical figures were either removed or downplayed in significance. Thus, monuments as visible and enduring aspects of culture played a crucial role in shaping and projecting Soviet identity to both its citizens and the wider world.

The Soviet system was particularly attentive to historical sites in those Ukrainian territories, like the Sumy area, that were and could again become the piedmont of the Ukrainian revival using monumental propaganda.

The monuments of the Sumy region have been thoroughly analyzed and described in "The collection of historical and cultural monuments of Ukraine: Sumy region" (Pavlenko et al., 2017), which provides detailed descriptions of various sites, their historical context, and their cultural significance. The analysis of the Sumy region revealed that most monuments, as cultural objects, were under the Russian regime's control and influence, and were devoted to the heroes of World War II. During the post-war period, Soviet authorities, while developing new traditions of commemorating Soviet victims, tried to avoid ethnic features in their narratives (Burima et al., 2016). Gabowitsch (2023) notes that, for decades, Soviet leadership saw monument construction as a means of educating the populace. In post-Soviet countries, one encounters not only grand memorials but also mass-produced statues or busts of state and party

leaders, writers, and artists at almost every turn. However, these monument landscapes served as more than mere propaganda props. In many parts of the former USSR, nearly every town and village has memorials dedicated to some of the millions of soldiers, and sometimes to civilian victims, of the Second World War. While a significant number were built by state directive, many were initiated by surviving veterans or family members. Over the second half of the twentieth century, these memorials gradually became central venues of communal life.

Mick (2023) notes that Russian culture and language permeated Ukraine, with gradual Russification having a long tradition but accelerating in the 1970s. In Central and Eastern Ukraine, especially in towns and cities, Russian was spoken more often than Ukrainian, to the extent that in the 1980s, Ukrainian culture and language faced a severe threat. Moreover, monuments were built as if there was no future, only a tragic past.

Post-war memorialization, understood as a performative act linked to remembrance, has been investigated by many scientists and reflects the post-conflict experience of different countries. Hass (1998), in particular, describes the American experience of processing the memory of the Vietnam War and the creation of public memory through the memorial building. Pinkerton (2012) explores memorialization practices in post-conflict Northern Ireland society, and concerns risks of "double-reading" or treating the past as something that can be instrumentally utilized in the present. Amat et al. (2015) offer case studies demonstrating how monuments in France became agents of reconstruction after conflicts, while Login (2012, 2015) focuses on the experience of Eastern France. Billingsley (2018), who discovers the ways of victims' memorialization in Nepal, pays attention to the homogeneous public approach to the victims, though they have all different personal experiences, whereas Lundqvist (2019) and Robins (2014) propose Nepal memorialization examples as a way of achieving everyday peace. Atabay et al. (2022) focus on conflict-referred destruction of heritage and see memorialization as a means for collective trauma recovery and reconciliation. Lee (2023) proposes metaverse projects that allow memorialization through educational digital platforms in situations of limited physical access to cemeteries or memorials, and these ideas are applied in the research on Ukrainian monuments since there is no entryway to the frontline and occupied territories.

A large body of research demonstrates that post-war memorialization is a process through which societies collectively and publicly express mourning for those lost in armed conflicts, crimes against humanity, and other violations of human rights. It is a complex and ongoing process that evolves as societies come to terms with their past and reinterpret its significance in the present.

Thus, this study aims to showcase the colonial impact embedded in public art in the Sumy region of Ukraine by identifying and interpreting the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of monuments that represent the Russian colonial narrative.

The study tests the following hypotheses, which should be tested through the developed data management system:

H1: Russian colonial impact in the Sumy region represented in monuments through epoch representation, narratives, personalities, and texts, is higher than Ukrainian statehood narratives.

H2: There has been a significant demise of Russian colonial symbolism and magnification of the Ukrainian narrative since 1991.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research methods

The primary descriptive research technique employed in this study is data analysis, which is conducted to evaluate the distribution of monuments based on factors that align with the research objectives.

A digital monument identification card was developed as a data management tool for data collection and distribution. The tool was created with a multidisciplinary systematic approach and included methodological component (de-

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veloping criteria and identifiers for the research goal), managerial (building organizational culture in particular research ethics, skills, and roles), and technical component (data accumulation, statistics, and accessibility). The data dissemination included third-party online platforms that allowed attracting attention to the identifiers of colonial impact and misinterpretation of Ukrainian public art. This tool facilitated the testing of the study's hypotheses and played a critical role in effectively disseminating the research findings to a broader audience. The development process was grounded in a multidisciplinary and systematic approach that ensured depth and coherence across several domains.

The results present the proportions of each variable observed in the universe of monuments and the distribution of monuments that exhibit multiple colonial and Ukrainian statehood factors. The findings highlight positive data correlation between relevant statistical characteristics – such as an object's narrative that commemorates "Imperial era" and "Popularization of the Soviet totalitarian system" and "the culture of war" – and the time classification according to the installation epoch of the "Soviet Period, 1922–1991."

2.2. Research data and tools

The statistical analysis method was applied to 839 public art and commemoration objects (monuments) in the Sumy region. The dataset includes 7 monuments listed in the National Monuments Roster of Historical Monuments of National Significance and 832 monuments listed in the National Monuments Roster of Historical Monuments of Local Significance. The primary data collection method involved secondary documents analysis of the monuments' rosters in the Sumy region as of March 2023, along with archival fact-finding, and visual analysis of photo documentation relevant to the research objectives. Primary data analysis included fact-finding aligned with the newly developed criteria for monument classification, including installation epoch, symbolic memorialization type, statistical information of commemorated personalities (gender, nationality, and social status), narrative classification, and text interpretation of inscriptions.

The primary data-collection and analytical tool used in this study is the Monument Digital Identification Card, which facilitates the collection, storage, and analysis of qualitative and

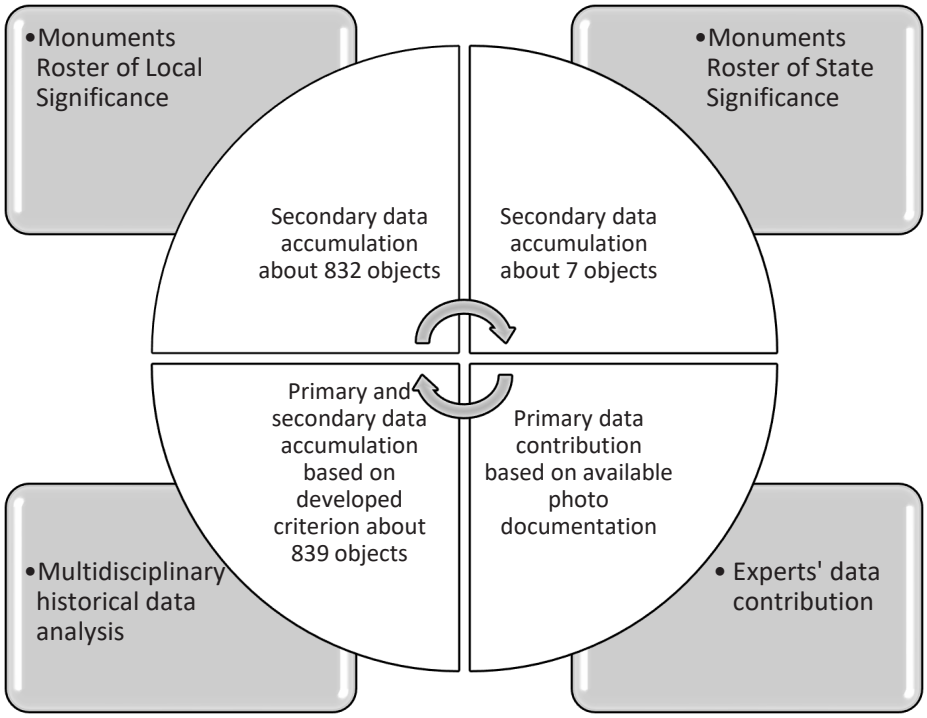

Figure 1. Data accumulation model

Table 1. Monument digital identification card

Object's Main Data	Name of the Monument	Full Name	Short or Non-Official Name
	Region	Chernihiv / Ivano-Frankivsk / Kyiv / Odesa /Poltava /Rivne / Sumy / Zakarpattya	
	Monument's Location	City/Village, Street, Other Location Details	
	Status According to National Monuments Roster	Historical Monument of Local Significance / Historical Monument of National Significance	
	Monument's Installation Year(s) if information is available		
Object's Statistical Characteristics	Time Classification According to the Installation Epoch	Ancient Period – by the end of XVII C / Imperial Period (XVIII C – 1918) / Period of the Ukrainian Revolution and the Struggle for the Ukrainian Statehood's Preservation (1917–1921) / Soviet Period (1922–1991) / Ukraine in Sovereignty From 1991 / Period of Russian Aggression from 2014	
	Person / Event/ Object to which the Monument Is Dedicated	Symbolical Memorialization Type	Real Person(s) / Mythologized Person(s) / Abstract Person(s) / Object(s)
		Gender (if applicable)	Female / Male / Mixed Group / Other
		Nationality	Ukrainian / Other / Mixed / Non-Applicable
		Social Status	Working Class / Management Elite / Persons of War / Other
	Object's Narrative commemorates:	Ukrainian National Resistance During the Lithuanian-Polish Era / Ukrainian Statehood from the 9th to the 18th Centuries / Imperial Era / The Struggle for Ukrainian Statehood in 1917–1921 / Popularization of the Soviet Totalitarian System / The Culture of War, Including Victims / National Heroes / Ukrainian Identity's Defense and Restoration from February 2022	
	Text	Present / Absent	Main Text, Additional Text (If available) in original language
		Language(s) of The Text	Ukrainian / Russian / English / Other(s)
Object's Physical Characteristics	Type of Art Composition / Scale	One-Figure Composition / Multi-Figure Composition / Architectural Object / Technical and Industrial Object / Complex	
	The Preservation State of the Monument at the Time of the Research	Existing / Destroyed / Toppled or Relocated	Requires Immediate Action / Does Not Require Immediate Action
Additional Text Information That Contains Data Valid For Interpretation			

quantitative data in an electronic format while providing public access to the findings (Table 1).

The Monument Digital ID Card is a comprehensive tool that also includes criteria such as artist(s) names, physical classification parameters (size and materials), artistic approach, and other data found not relevant or lacking a linear correlation within the tested hypotheses.

Within the scope of this study, key direct and indirect indicators of Russian colonial impact on Ukrainian monuments in the Sumy region were identified:

1. Direct indicators: time classification according to the installation epoch, object's commemorative narrative, name/title of the monument, and textual content of inscriptions;

2. Indirect indicators: characteristics of the commemorated person, event or object, language of the text, and other contextual elements.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The State Register of Immovable Monuments of Ukraine is an official document that is a list of monuments entered and approved by committees of various levels and, thus, an instrument of power and political influence on the formation of public art and cultural influence.

In terms of time and historical era, most monuments on the territory of the Sumy region (94%) were erected during the Soviet period (1922–1991). A much smaller result of monuments installed (6%) is observed in other periods: the ancient period – until the end of the seventeenth century – 1%; the imperial period of the seventeenth century (1918) – 2%; the period of the Ukrainian Revolution and the struggle for the preservation of Ukrainian statehood (1917–1921) – 1%; Ukraine in the conditions of independence since 1991 – 1%; the period of Russian aggression since 2014 – 1%.

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Table 2. Quantitative representation by periods of monument installation correlated to the political narrative

Epoch/narrative	Total in the epoch	Ukrainian National Resistance During the Lithuanian-Polish Era	Ukrainian Statehood from The 9th To The 18th Centuries	Glorifying Imperial Era	The Struggle For Ukrainian Statehood In 1917-1921	Popularization of The Soviet Totalitarian System	The Culture of War, Including Victims	Glorifying National Heroes	Ukrainian Identity's Defense and Restoration from February 2022
Ancient Period – by the end of XVII C	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imperial Period (XVIII C – 1918)	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Period of the Ukrainian Revolution and the Struggle for the Ukrainian Statehood (1917–1921)	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Soviet Period (1922–1991)	817	0	26	3	1	20	766	1	0
Ukraine's Sovereignty from 1991	14	0	3	1	0	1	8	1	0
Period of Russian Aggression from 2014	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	839	1	31	7	2	21	775	2	0

The quantitative representation was analyzed according to the periods of monument erection correlated with the political narrative (Table 2).

Monuments, devoted to the Culture of War, Including Victims, installed during the soviet Period (1922–1991) were analyzed according to the textual identifier, in particular the frequency of lexical units identifying colonial impact in the monuments' titles. The most frequently used lexical elements in the titles of this category are phrases containing the word "soviet", such as "establishing of soviet power", "hero of the Soviet Union", "a soviet soldier".

The lexical unit "soviet" is an identifier of a Russian colonial impact based on the historical fact that the soviet regime and soviet ideology were forcefully imposed by the soviet totalitarian system from 1922 to 1991.

Phrase "Red Army" in context "a grave to a Red Army soldier" is an identifier of colonial impact based on the fact that this was the army and air force of the Russian Soviet Republic (Soviet Union from 1922), later called "Soviet Army", was fighting on the territory of Ukraine to oppose the military forces of the new nation's adversaries during the Russian Civil War, especially the various anti-bolshevik groups known as the White Army. The Red Army was representing exclusively soviet colonial interests and was fighting against the national interests of Ukraine.

Phrase "Civil war" in titles of the monuments is commonly represented within the word group "fallen in civil war", "participant of Civil war", and commemorates soviet heroes. The "civil war" in Ukrainian monuments represents the Russian Civil war of 1917–1923 and resulted in the formation of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and later the Soviet Union. Since Ukraine was occupied by the Red Army during the Russian civil war and lost its independence in 1921, the words "civil war" identify Russian colonialism.

Table 3. Culture of war, including victims

Total	Lexical identifiers of colonial impact				Lexical units without colonial impact	Lexical identifiers of national Ukrainian origin
	676					
766	"soviet"	"Red army"	"civil war"	"classes' struggle"	"monument of glory, victims of Nazism, partisans, villagers" etc.	"Ukrainian hero, national statehood" etc.
	656	4	12	4	90	0
100%	85.6%	0.5%	1.6%	0.5%	11.8%	0%

The term "class struggle" is another identifier of colonialism since the phrase was popularized by Marxists and developed into the social revolution in 1917. Using this lexical unit in titles of monuments within the phrase "heroes of class struggle" reflects the implementation of the Russian soviet revolution that caused a humanitarian disaster for Ukrainian citizens.

Thus, during Soviet Period (1922–1991), out of 817 monuments installed in the Sumy region, 28 (3.4%) glorify Ukrainian Statehood from the 9th to the 18th centuries, The Struggle for Ukrainian Statehood in 1917–1921, and National Heroes through the political narrative and Glorifying Imperial Era 3 (0.4%) (Table 2).

The number of monuments glorifying Soviet heroes and the regime through titles (Table 3) is 676 (88%). Popularization of the Soviet Totalitarian System (including terms "Red Army", "Civil War", "Class Struggle") as a narrative is characteristic of 20 monuments (2.6%). Ukrainian national narrative is presented by the records: Ukrainian National Resistance during The Lithuanian-Polish Era; Ukrainian Statehood from the 9th to the 18th centuries; The Struggle for Ukrainian Statehood in 1917–1921; Ukrainian Identity's Defense and Restoration from February 2022.

This study includes the quantitative indicators of the Russian colonial narrative and the Ukrainian one for all studied eras. The Ukrainian narrative includes the number of monuments dedicated to the protection of statehood and national heroes in categories: Ukrainian National Resistance During the Lithuanian-Polish Era, Ukrainian Statehood from the 9th to the 18th Centuries, The Struggle for Ukrainian Statehood in 1917–1921, Glorifying National Heroes, Ukrainian Identity's Defense and Restoration from February 2022.

The Russian colonial narrative is reflected through narratives as Glorifying Imperial Era, Popularization of the Soviet Totalitarian System, partially in The Culture of War, Including Victims. It is also conveyed through lexical units and names of personalities. The Russian colonial narrative through personalities is presented in Table 4.

Analysis of named personalities (opposed to unnamed, such as "unknown hero", "villagers", fighters", "victims", etc.) in the monuments' titles is presented through intellectuals, war and management elite, and ordinary fighters. The Ukrainian national narrative is presented through 29 names in the titles of monuments (Table 5).

The category "Intellectuals" includes names of scientists, poets, writers, and artists. The significant number of monuments within this category is devoted to the Ukrainian poet T. Shevchenko, who criticized the Russian colonial regime. Category "Civil management elite" includes 1 name of a Princess of Kyevan Rus of the 11th century, Anna Yaroslavna. "Cossack management elite" includes names of Hetmans and Cossack chieftains. One monument title contains the phrase "Russian and Ukrainian scientist" and is not included in the polar statistics.

The objects museified during the Soviet era are also referred to as the category containing the

Table 4. Monumentalized personalities and groups representing colonial narratives

Total	People of War			Soviet Regime Representatives		Imperial Regime Representatives	Intellectuals
	Heroes of the USSR	Individual soldiers and officers	Mass graves of Soviet soldiers	Heroes of Social Labor	Fighters for establishing Social power, collective farms, and Komsomol	+ Russian December 1825 revolutionist	+ writers, scientists, musicians
666	12	22	622	1	4	1	5

Table 5. Monumentalized personalities and groups representing Ukrainian national narratives

Total	Intellectuals			Cossack management elite
30	Poet T. Shevchenko	Other intellectuals	Civil management elite	
	21	5	1	3
Total by category	27			3

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Table 6. Technical objects representing narratives of Russian colonialism

Technical objects	Tank T-34	Tractor "Universal-6"	Steam Train Engine 3-m 708-89 made by the "Red Profintern" factory	Vehicle GAS AA	Vechicles used in Afgan War	Total
Amount	4	6	1	1	1	13

Russian colonial narrative (Table 6). The technical objects were turned into monuments and erected on pedestals with commemoration plates with text glorifying the achievements of the Social economy. There were no objects with the Ukrainian narrative monumented and included in the rosters.

The total number of monuments with political narratives was 712, and included 676 (94.6%) those of the Russian colonial narrative, and 36 (5.1%) of the Ukrainian national one.

One of the indicators of colonial impact on Ukraine is the use of the Russian language in public art. Decolonization may include rethinking one's attitude to the Russian language, switching to Ukrainian in formal communication, refusing to consume Russian verbal content, etc. In this context, a special place is occupied by public space, usually marked by monuments and memorials to reinforce the uniformity and commonality of cultural and historical memory.

Language of accompanying texts is Russian 76%, Ukrainian 24%, including the monuments with and without political narratives. Monuments erected and included in Rosters after 1991 have textual information in Ukrainian.

According to Viatrovych (2023), Russia has long used its language to preserve, restore, and strengthen its influence on Ukraine: "The common names of streets and settlements, monuments, and the same traditions are an argument in favor of the thesis that underlies the current aggression: "Ukrainians are one people with Russians". Therefore, decolonization in Ukraine today means getting rid of the imperial heritage with colonial narratives used to restore imperial influence."

The number of monuments representing Ukrainian national and political narratives after 1991 is 6 (including 1 from the category "Glorifying National Heroes' and 5 from "The Culture of War') (Table 7).

Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed: Russian colonial Impact in the Sumy region represented in monuments through epoch, narratives, personalities, and texts, is higher than Ukrainian statehood narratives.

Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed. There has been no increase in the Ukrainian narrative since Ukrainian independence in 1991. Ukrainian narratives and identifiers for the period from 1991 to 2024, at the time of the research, according to the registers of monuments, make up 1.2%.

Thus, monumental propaganda was too entrenched in the border region, and this explains the close ties between the population and the authorities before the full-scale invasion in 2022. Ukraine inherited the system of managing monumental propaganda after the collapse of the Soviet Union and has shown its extraordinary effectiveness because even after thirty years of de jure inde-

Table 7. Percentage of political narratives out of the total 839 monuments

Epoch/narrative	Total in the epoch	Ukrainian National Resistance During the Lithuanian-Polish Era	Ukrainian Statehood from the 9th To The 18th Centuries	The Struggle for Ukrainian Statehood In 1917–1921	Glorifying National Heroes / through culture of war	Ukrainian Identity's Defense and Restoration from February 2022
Ukraine in Sovereignty from 1991	0.6%	0	0.36%	0.12%	0	0.12%
Period of Russian Aggression from 2014	0.12%	0	0	0	0.12%	0
Total	0.72%	0	0.36%	0.12%	0.12%	0.12%

pendence from the colonial system, it retains atavistic signs of de facto central state control.

Currently, the process of decolonization in Ukraine is complex. It includes decommunization and de-Russification, which began with the collapse of the USSR and intensified during the Revolution of Dignity and the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2014. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the understanding of the need to move away from manifestations of Russian imperial policy increased; in particular, the law was passed that gave the decolonization process a legitimate framework and defined effective mechanisms (Legislation of Ukraine, 2023).

Thus, the results of the study are in line with the opinions of scholars that Russian cultural colonization acted as an elimination of Ukrainian cultural identity (Boychuk et al., 2023; Durand, 2022; Hrytsak, 2015; Palko, 2016; Hagen, 1995; Pavlyshyn, 2016).

The analysis of monuments in the Sumy region clearly showed that Ukrainian identity is being suppressed, with Ukrainian heroes and events either reinterpreted or minimized (Plokhy, 2015). The conclusions of this study are confirmed by the constant attempts to suppress Ukrainian nationalism (Szporluk, 2000).

Thus, the study results showed that the Sumy region is mainly represented by monuments erected in the Soviet period in honor of natural persons and events of the war periods, as well as commemorating the culture of war and the memory of the dead. Therefore, as a result, the hypothesis that the Russian colonial influence in the Sumy region, represented in monuments through the era of establishment, narrative, personalities, and texts, is superior to Ukrainian statehood narratives can be confirmed. The hypothesis that after 1991, there was a significant decrease in colonial narratives and an increase in Ukrainian statehood narratives in the monuments of the Sumy region was not confirmed.

The detailed analysis of the locations of monuments showed that public space is not homogeneous and consists of places and territories of different public status and access levels. The Monument Rosters have revealed that many objects related to Russian and Soviet history and culture are currently listed in them. It happened because one of the ways the empire established its power over the territory was to establish a single cultural space, including by erecting monuments and memorials of the relevant symbols (Russian and Soviet) and placing burials, including in public places. Therefore, in the Sumy region, monuments of the imperial and Soviet past are still used as "arguments" to deny the existence of the Ukrainian nation and state, pushing the "one nation" thesis and promoting the "Russian world" as the ideology of Putin's Russia in the war against Ukraine. This fact is worrisome when Ukraine is defending its right to its own identity against Russian invasion, and monuments associated with the national historical and cultural past and present play a de facto decisive role in uniting the nation and fostering patriotism.

CONCLUSION

The study aims to identify and evaluate the colonial impact embedded in public art in the Sumy region of Ukraine, using Monument Digital Identification Cards as a comprehensive research tool. These identification cards incorporated key indicators, including time classification based on the installation epoch, object's commemorative narrative, name/title of the monument, characteristics of the commemorated person, event, or object, and language of the accompanying text.

The study results revealed that monuments in the Sumy region of Ukraine are diffused, which was caused by Russian Imperial and Soviet colonization of Ukraine. Based on the hypothesis, the study showed that:

1) Colonial impact in the Sumy region is represented in monuments through common indicators as epoch, narratives, personalities, and texts;

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2) Russian colonial impact on public art in the Sumy region is higher than Ukrainian statehood narratives; and

3) There has been no increase in the Ukrainian narrative since Ukrainian independence in 1991.

These results are decisive in the renewal of the region's historical justice and further decolonization and decommunization of narratives in public art and public spaces.

The findings confirm the necessity for effective monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of reforms in public art policy in the Sumy region.

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