

Human-geographical study of creative cities: global and national context

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ПОШУКОВА СТАТТЯ

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Ключові слова: Креативна економіка, креативні міста, креативні індустрії, UNESCO Creative Cities Network, суспільно-географічний підхід, соціогеосистема, міський розвиток, повоєнна відбудова міст.

Анотація: Стаття присвячена суспільно-географічному дослідженню феномену креативних міст у контексті глобальних та національних тенденцій розвитку креативної економіки.

Розглянуто історичну еволюцію концепції креативного міста від початкових ідей 1980-х років (Jane Jacobs, Åke Andersson, David Yencken) через систематизацію підходів у 1990-х роках (Charles Landry, Richard Florida) до сучасного інституційного розвитку у межах діяльності міжнародних організацій.

Проаналізовано чотири основні теоретичні підходи до трактування креативного міста: урбаністичний (креативність як інструмент міського розвитку), економічний (середовище для креативних індустрій), соціально-культурний (простір залучення креативного людського капіталу) та суспільно-географічний (територіально організована соціогеосистема з просторовою концентрацією креативних ресурсів).

Досліджено світовий досвід формування креативних міст на прикладі UNESCO Creative Cities Network, що об'єднує 350 міст із понад 100 країн у семи тематичних категоріях. Особливу увагу приділено національному контексту розвитку креативної економіки в Україні, де у 2021 році креативні індустрії створили 7 % ВВП, забезпечивши зайнятість 352 тис. осіб. Охарактеризовано три українські міста-учасники мережі ЮНЕСКО: Львів та Одесу (література) і Харків (музика).

Обґрунтовано перспективи використання креативної економіки як ефективного інструменту повоєнної відбудови українських міст через міжнародне муніципальне партнерство (Eurocities) та участь у європейських програмах підтримки культури і креативності (Creative Europe). Обґрунтовано значення суспільно-географічного підходу для виявлення територіальних закономірностей формування креативних міст і дослідження просторових диспропорцій їх розвитку.


1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance of the Study

In the contemporary world, the creative economy is gaining increasing importance as a factor of sustainable development and urban competitiveness. The transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy in developed countries has been accompanied by the growing role of

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the creative sector in shaping urban identity, attracting investment, and creating new jobs. Knowledge, creativity, and cultural potential have become the primary resources for urban development. The concept of the creative city, which emerged at the end of the 20th century, views creativity as a driving force for sustainable urban development and social cohesion.

For Ukraine, the development of the creative economy is particularly relevant in the context of post-war urban reconstruction. The large-scale destruction caused by Russian military aggression requires innovative approaches to economic recovery and social reintegration. The creative economy, due to its resilience, flexibility, and adaptability, has the potential to serve as an effective mechanism for urban regeneration and the restoration of human capital.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations of a human-geographical approach to researching creative cities and to analyze the specific features of their development in both global and national contexts.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To outline the stages in the formation of the creative city concept and its key scholarly approaches;
- To justify the human-geographical approach to the study of creative cities;
- To characterize global experience in the development of creative cities, using the example of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network;
- To analyze the peculiarities of the development of the creative economy in Ukraine and assess the potential of Ukrainian cities as creative centers;
- To justify the prospects of utilizing international cooperation to advance the development of the creative economy in Ukrainian cities within the context of post-war reconstruction.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the methodologies of social geography, urban studies, cultural studies, and economics. A combination of general scientific and discipline-specific methods was employed throughout the research process.

- The historical-geographical method was applied to analyze the evolution of the creative city concept from the 1980s to the present.
- The comparative-geographical method enabled the identification of common features and differences in the development of creative cities across various countries and regions.
- The typological method was used to classify the UNESCO Creative Cities Network according to thematic directions.
- Content analysis was employed to systematize theoretical approaches to the concept of the creative city and to analyze international policy documents from UNESCO and UNCTAD.
- Statistical analysis was conducted to assess the economic contribution of creative industries to Ukraine's GDP and employment rates.

To substantiate the human-geographical approach, the study applied principles of spatial differentiation, territorial integrity, and the hierarchical structure of urban socio-geosystems.

The informational base of the study includes analytical reports by international organizations, national statistics, and research materials from both Ukrainian and foreign scholars.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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3.1. The History of the Creative City Concept Formation

Ideas combining culture, creativity, and urban development began to take shape as early as the 1960s, but they gained real traction in the 1980s–1990s (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

The first mentions of the creative city date back to the 1980s: Jane Jacobs (1984) first referred to the creative city, emphasizing the role of small innovative craft enterprises and local initiative (Jacobs 1984); Åke Andersson (1985) in Sweden proposed the idea that creativity is the future of megacities, and that creative "knowledge handlers" would become increasingly important in the new post-industrial economy (Andersson 1985).

In 1988, the term "creative city" was officially introduced for the first time at the "Creative City Seminar" in Melbourne, organized with the participation of UNESCO. It was the first seminar devoted to how art and culture could be better integrated into urban development planning (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020). At the seminar, David Yencken first explained the concept of a creative city. He defined a creative city as one that "is committed to fostering creativity among its citizens and to providing emotionally satisfying places and experiences for them" (Yencken 1988). That same year, the British-American Arts Association in Glasgow hosted the "International Symposium on Arts and the Changing City," where art was viewed as a tool for urban regeneration. The symposium presented a report with examples from eight cities in the U.S. and the U.K. that aimed to show how art could be practically applied in urban renewal (Horstman et al. 1988).

In the 1990s, the concept of the creative city was formalized thanks to the work of British researcher Charles Landry and the think tank and consultancy "Comedia" that he founded. In his works, Landry emphasized the key role of cultural resources in urban development and proposed methodological foundations and practical tools for shaping creative urban development strategies. He viewed the creative city as an organism whose development depends on the interaction of creative industries, cultural institutions, education, and local communities. Creativity among urban residents becomes the key driver of a city's dynamic growth. "Human cleverness, desires, motivations, imagination and creativity are replacing location, natural resources and market access as urban resources. The creativity of those who live in and run cities will determine future success" (Landry 2000). He identified a number of "hard" and "soft" factors that determine the success of creative urban strategies (these ideas later evolved into the concept of "hard" and "soft" urban infrastructure for creativity development). In his work, Charles Landry provided recommendations on how cities can become creative, justified the importance of creative thinking for addressing new urban challenges, emphasized the interdisciplinary and synthetic nature of creativity and the need to foster it, and proposed tools for integrating culture into urban planning. In later works, he further developed the idea of a "creative ecology" as the interaction of people, institutions, environment, and values that together create the conditions for sustainable creative development of the city (Landry, Bianchini 1995; Landry 2000; Landry 2012).

At the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s, the concept of the creative city gained further traction thanks to the works of the American-Canadian researcher Richard Florida, who introduced into academic discourse the concept of the "creative class"—a group of "people paid to use their minds" (Florida 2002). The model of the creative city he proposed emphasizes the role of creative labor, that is, the work of highly educated, mobile professionals whom he identifies as representatives of the creative class.

According to Richard Florida's theory, a city is creative if it is able to adopt strategies for the cultivation and attraction of creative talent through school and occupational policies that increase the skills of the resident community and through policies of cooperation, exchange, and immigration, which ease the input and settlement of highly qualified workers coming from other regions or countries. In Florida's view, the primary mission of creative cities is to create conditions for attracting and retaining mobile,

highly qualified talents, as it is their concentration that ensures innovation and the competitiveness of urban development (Florida 2002; Florida 2005; Florida 2009).

Beginning in the 2000s, the concept of the creative city gained institutional development within the activities of international organizations, primarily UNESCO and UNCTAD. Their collaboration contributed to the formation of a global vision of creativity as a resource for sustainable development, combining cultural, economic, and social dimensions. In 2004, UNESCO launched the Creative Cities Network (UNESCO Creative Cities Network, UCCN). According to UNESCO's definition, *a creative city* is a city placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of its development plan at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level (UNESCO 2004). The Creative Economy Reports (UNCTAD/UNDP 2008; UNCTAD/UNDP 2010; UNESCO/UNDP 2013) emphasize that a *creative city* is a space in which creativity is the driving force behind innovation, economic growth, cultural self-expression, and improvement of citizens' quality of life. Thus, the institutional approach defines a creative city not merely as an economic model, but as a comprehensive platform for sustainable development that integrates culture, education, technology, and social responsibility (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

In the 2010s, several new approaches to creative cities emerged that took into account such challenges as cultural diversity (McLean 2014; Yue 2007), the instability and vulnerability of artists' positions (Bain, McLean 2013), social inequality (Chen 2011; Grant, Buckwold 2013), governance specifics (Costa et al. 2007; Mulero, Rius-Ulledemolins 2017; Isar, Anheier 2012), gentrification, and the instrumentalization of culture (Peck 2005; Hahn 2010; Wilson, Keil 2008), among others. Researchers called for viewing the creative city not merely as a brand or economic strategy, but as a space of inclusive, ethical, and environmentally balanced creativity (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

3.2. Theoretical Foundations of the Study

In the course of the evolution of the creative city concept, several scholarly approaches have emerged that reflect various aspects of the interconnection between creativity, culture, the economy, and spatial urban development. Summarizing the main theoretical approaches to studying the phenomenon of the creative city, researchers Milica Matovic and Roberto San Salvador del Valle (2020) identify three key directions that emphasize different aspects of the development of this concept (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

The creative city is centered on the idea of creativity as a toolkit for urban development (urbanistic approach). This approach originates in the works of Charles Landry and his followers, who viewed the creative city as an innovative socio-cultural organism capable of renewal thanks to the creative potential of its inhabitants; these are cities able to find new solutions to everyday problems. In this interpretation, creativity acts as a driving force of urban transformation and as a source of innovation in planning, governance, cultural policy, and the development of the urban community (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

The creative city as an environment for the development of creative activities or industries (economic approach). Represented primarily in the works of Richard Florida, Allen Scott, Andy Pratt, Angela Merkel, and others, this interpretation focuses on the economic aspect of creativity. The city is seen as a space that stimulates the development of creative sectors of the economy and attracts members of the creative class. In this case, the production of cultural goods and services and related activities are centers of creativity. Emphasis is placed on the connection between the concentration of talent, innovation, entrepreneurship, and the competitiveness of cities (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

The creative city as a space for attracting and retaining creative human capital (socio-cultural approach). This approach is based on the ideas of Allen Scott, Andy Pratt, Richard Florida, and others, emphasizing that a creative city is above all an environment for creative human potential, where favorable conditions are created for education, mobility, tolerance, cultural interaction, and

social inclusion. In fact, a city's ability to be creative and innovative is directly related to its capacity to educate, retain, and attract the creative class—carriers of knowledge and skills required in advanced sectors that demand high levels of creativity. These sectors, in turn, create the most value and contribute to the competitiveness of modern economies. Thus, creativity in this case is viewed not only as an economic resource but also as a form of social capital (Matovic, San Salvador Del Valle 2020).

Within contemporary geographical science, a human-geographical approach is emerging (Гусєва, Немець 2025; Немець 2024; Niemets 2025), which provides a spatial interpretation of the *creative city* concept and enables the analysis of creativity as a factor in the territorial organization of society. From the standpoint of human geography, a creative city is considered a territorially organized socio-geosystem, in which creative resources, human capital, cultural infrastructure, spatial networks, and forms of territorial identity interact. Special attention is paid to territorial differences in the manifestation of creativity, spatial concentrations of creative activity (creative quarters, cultural districts, creative and innovation hubs), as well as to the mechanisms for forming creative agglomerations and clusters. In this aspect, the creative economy functions as a subsystem of the urban socio-geosystem.

Within this approach, the creative city is analyzed not only as a hub of creative processes but also as an element of a multi-level spatial system interconnected with the regional environment and global networks. This enables the assessment of geographical patterns in the development of creativity, the identification of spatial disparities, and the determination of geospatial factors influencing the competitiveness of cities (such as human-geographical location, transport accessibility, concentration of cultural and educational institutions, quality of the urban environment, and the level of international integration).

Thus, the human-geographical approach complements existing theoretical frameworks by taking into account spatial differentiation, regional peculiarities, and the specifics of the territorial localization of creative resources. The combination of classical urban, economic, socio-cultural, and human-geographical approaches allows for the formation of a holistic vision of the creative city as a multidimensional socio-geosystem operating in interaction with regional, national, and global spatial processes.

3.3. Global Experience in the Development of Creative Cities

The importance of developing the creative economy for cities is becoming increasingly evident. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has identified creativity as one of the key competencies of the future. As John Newbigin, a member of the UK Government's Creative Industries Council, aptly put it: if oil was the main fuel of the 20th-century economy, then creativity is the fuel of the 21st century (Креативні індустрії... 2024).

The shift in focus of cities toward developing the creative economy has had a significant impact on urban renewal policies. A classical example of a national-level creative economic transformation is the policy of UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who initiated the closure of unprofitable coal industries and redirected mining towns toward the development of the creative sector. The Victorian cottages traditionally inhabited by miners' families were demolished and replaced with both budget and elite-class housing. Former mining sites were transformed into new industrial facilities focused on creative industries. For instance, in Yorkshire, the local government opened the Barnsley Digital Media Centre in 2007 to attract high-tech startups, and over 120,000 people now work in the city's creative digital industries (CDI). The transition to a creative economy has contributed to the economic revival of previously depressed mining towns (Sandle 2013).

In 2004, UNESCO launched a global initiative called the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, with the following main objectives:

- To strengthen international cooperation among cities that recognize creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development in economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions;
- To promote and reinforce initiatives aimed at making creativity an integral part of urban development, particularly through partnerships among public and private sectors and civil society;
- To boost the creation, production, distribution, and dissemination of cultural activities, goods, and services;
- To support the development of hubs for creativity and innovation and to enhance opportunities for creators and cultural professionals;
- To improve access to and participation in cultural life, as well as access to cultural goods and services, especially for marginalized or vulnerable population groups;
- To fully integrate culture and creativity into local development strategies and planning processes (UNESCO 2004).

As of 2025, the network includes 350 cities from over 100 countries worldwide (see Table 1).

Table 1. Creative Cities within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network

(compiled by the author based on (UNESCO 2004))

Year	Quantity	Crafts and Folk Arts	Design	Film	Gastronomy	Literature	Media Arts	Music
2004	1					Edinburgh		
2005	5	Santa Fe, Aswan	Berlin, Buenos Aires		Popayán			
2006	3		Montreal					Seville, Bologna
2008	7		Kobe, Shenzhen, Nagoya			Lyon, Iowa City, Melbourne		Glasgow
2009	3	Kanazawa		Bradford				Ghent
2010	8	Icheon	Saint-Étienne, Seoul, Shanghai	Sydney	Östersund, Chengdu	Dublin		
2011	2		Graz			Reykjavík		
2012	5	Hangzhou	Beijing		Jeonju	Norwich		Bogota
2013	7	Paducah, Fabriano			Zahlé	Krakow	Sapporo, Enghien-les-Bains	Brazzaville
2014	28	Jacmel, Jingdezhen, Nassau, Suzhou, Pekalongan	Bilbao, Helsinki, Torino, Dundee, Curitiba	Sofia, Busan, Galway	Florianopolis, Shunde, Tsuruoka	Granada, Heidelberg, Dunedin, Prague	Gwangju, Linz, Tel Aviv-Yafo, York, Dakar	Hannover, Mannheim, Hamamatsu
2015	47	Isfahan, Bamiyan, Al-Ahsa, Jaipur, Lubumbashi, Durán, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Tambasasayama	Budapest, Bandung, Kaunas, Detroit, Puebla, Singapore	Rome, Bitola, Santos	Belém, Bergen, Ensenada, Gaziantep, Tucson, Dénia, Burgos, Rasht, Phuket, Parma	Barcelona, Lviv, Ljubljana, Baghdad, Montevideo, Óbidos, Tartu, Nottingham, Ulyanovsk	Austin	Salvador, Varanasi, Tongyeong, Medellín, Liverpool, Kingston, Kinshasa, Katowice, Adelaide, Idanha-a-Nova

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2017	64	Gabrovo, Barcelos, Baguio City, João Pessoa, Limoges, Kütahya, Tunis, Tétouan, Ouagadougou, Madaba, Chordeleg, Chiang Mai City, Cairo, Carrara, Porto-Novo, Sheki, Sokodé	Brasilia, Geelong, Istanbul, Kolding, Kortrijk, Mexico-City, Dubai, Wuhan, Cape Town	Bristol, Łódź, Yamagata, Terrassa, Qingdao	Buenaventura, Hatay, Cochabamba, Macao, Alba, Panama City, Paraty, San Antonio	Bucheon, Durban, Manchester, Lillehammer, Québec City, Milan, Utrecht, Seattle	Braga, Guadalajara, Changsha, Košice, Toronto	Praia, Pesaro, Chennai, Daegu, Norrköping, Morelia, Kansas City, Almaty, Amarante, Auckland, Frutillar, Brno
2019	63	Biella, Bandar Abbas, Ballarat, Ayacucho, Areguá, Jinju, Kargopol, Caldas da Rainha, Trinidad, Viljandi, Sharjah, Sukhothai	Fortaleza, Bangkok, Baku, Hanoi, Muharraq, Asahikawa, Cebu City, San José, Querétaro	Valladolid, Mumbai, Wellington, Potsdam, Sarajevo	Bergamo, Bendigo, Belo Horizonte, Hyderabad, Afyonkarahisar, Arequipa, Mérida, Yangzhou, Portoviejo	Beirut, Angoulême, Exeter, Lahore, Kuhmo, Leeuwarden, Nanjing, Odessa, Wonju, Wrocław, Slemani	Karlsruhe, Viborg	Santo Domingo, Sanandaj, Ramallah, Port of Spain, Veszprém, Kirşehir, Valledupar, Valparaíso, Metz, Llíria, Leiria, Kazan, Ambon, Havana, Essaouira
2020	3				Overstrand Hermanus		Santiago de Cali	Vranje
2021	49	Bida, Gimhae, Manises, Perth, Nakuru, Weifang, Pasto, Como, Srinagar, Bursa	Whanganui, Doha, Covilhã	Cluj-Napoca, Cannes, Gdynia	Bohicon, Huai'an, Santa Maria da Feira, Kuching, Phetchaburi, Launceston, Lankaran, Usuki, Thessaloniki, Rouen, Saint Petersburg, Kermanshah, Buraidah	Jakarta, Gothenburg, Vilnius	Hamar, Namur, Modena, Tbilisi, Campina Grande	Santiago de Cuba, Tallinn, Huancayo, Kharkiv, Xalapa, Port Louis, London, Recife, Ibague, Abu Dhabi, Batumi, Belfast
2023	55	Montecristi, Hoi An, Ulaanbaatar, Umngeni, Howick, Surakarta, Castelo Branco, Bukhara	Ashgabat, Valencia, Chiang Rai, Granada, Cetinje, Chongqing	Asaba, Kathmandu, Penedo, Vicente Lopez, Ouarzazate	Battambang, Herakleion, Nkongsamba, Iloilo City, Fribourg, Chaozhou, Gangneung City	Bremen, Buffalo City, Iași, Hobart, Kutaisi, Kozhikode, Taif, Tukums, Okayama City, Rio de Janeiro	Oulu, Novi Sad, Casablanca, Caen	Suphanburi, Bydgoszcz, Caracas, Concepción, Da Lat, Veliky Novgorod, Varaždin, Montreux, Mexicali, Şanlıurfa, Toulouse, Ipoh, Gwalior, Banja Luka, Bissau, Bolzano

All creative cities that are part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network are divided into seven thematic types (see Table 2).

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Table 2. Thematic Types of Cities Participating in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Their Main Characteristics and Criteria (compiled by the author based on (UNESCO 2004))

Thematic Area	Creativity Domain	Key Directions	Selection Criteria
CRAFTS AND FOLK ARTS	Production, design, and promotion of traditional crafts, decorative and applied arts, folk industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation and development of traditional crafts and folk arts as intangible cultural heritage • Support for artisans and folk masters • Integration of traditional techniques into the modern creative economy through craft clusters • Knowledge and skill transfer to younger generations • Development of local brands • Tourism development based on folk industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of a developed folk crafts and trades industry • Functioning craft centers, workshops, markets • Educational programs in folk art (teaching traditional techniques) • Organization of folk art festivals, exhibitions • Economic impact of the crafts sector on the city • Involvement of craft communities in urban planning
DESIGN	Urban, industrial, graphic, fashion, landscape, ecological, and digital design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of industrial, graphic, fashion, and interior design industries; • Use of design to solve social and environmental problems; • Support for design startups and innovations; • Integration of design into policy for urban development and city planning; • Development of design education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of a strong design sector and design industry; • Design schools, faculties, research centers, and innovative design spaces (fab labs, hubs, clusters); • Active professional design community; • Design events, exhibitions, fairs, design weeks; • Use of design for urban regeneration; • Support for young designers and innovation projects
FILM	Film production, distribution, and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of a developed film industry; • Preservation of cinematographic heritage; • Development of film education and media literacy; • Support for independent and auteur cinema; • Use of film as a tool for social dialogue and city promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of film studios and production facilities; • Developed network of cinemas, including arthouses; • Film festivals of international or national significance; • Film archives, film museums, centers for cinematographic heritage; • Support programs for film production by young filmmakers; • Educational programs in cinematography
GASTRONOMY	Culinary heritage, innovations in food culture, local products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of traditional cuisine and local food products; • Development of local food systems; • Support for biodiversity and sustainable agriculture; • Culinary innovations and fusion cuisine; • Development of gastronomic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed culinary culture with local/regional specificity; • Traditional food products and unique ingredients; • Active restaurant community and high level of culinary craftsmanship; • Local markets, culinary festivals, gastronomic events;

		tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culinary schools and educational programs in gastronomy and sustainable nutrition; • Sustainable food initiatives and support for local producers, particularly farm enterprises
LITERATURE	Literary creativity, publishing, librarianship, cultural events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for literary creativity and publishing; • Development of reading culture; • Preservation of literary heritage; • Support for writers, especially young ones; • Literary translation and international exchange; • Literature as part of the city's cultural identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich literary history and traditions; • Active publishing industry; • A developed network of libraries and bookstores; • Vibrant literary life, festivals, readings, contests; • Support programs for writers and translators; • Initiatives to promote reading, especially among youth; • Literary museums, archives, and centers
MEDIA ARTS	Digital art, interactive technologies, VR/AR, video art, media installations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital art and multimedia installations; • Video art, interactive art; • Integration of art, technology, and science; • Development of creative industries based on new media; • Media education and digital culture; • Support for digital artists and startups in creative technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong media arts and digital technology sector; • Media arts centers, labs, hackspaces; • Media art festivals, biennales, exhibitions; • Educational programs in media arts and digital technologies; • Infrastructure for experimentation in new media; • Collaboration between artists, technologists, and scientists; • Use of media arts in urban spaces
MUSIC	Music art, performance, education, music industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of musical creativity across all genres; • Preservation of musical heritage; • Support for musicians and composers; • Music education and access to music; • Music industry and infrastructure; • Music as a component of the city's cultural brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich musical heritage and traditions; • Active musical life: concerts, festivals; • Educational music institutions (conservatories, schools); • Concert halls, music clubs, recording studios; • Music collectives: orchestras, ensembles, choirs; • Support programs for musicians and music industries of different genres – from classical to ethnomusicology; • Accessibility of music education for different population groups; • International cooperation in the field of music education

The Creative Cities Network is a privileged partner of UNESCO, serving not only as a platform for reflecting on the role of creativity as a strategic factor in sustainable urban development, but also as a space for practical actions and innovations, particularly in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for

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Sustainable Development (Мережа креативних... 2021). Specifically, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11: "To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable " (UNDP 2015).

3.4. National Context: Ukrainian Creative Cities

The large-scale destruction caused by Russian military aggression has inflicted serious damage on Ukrainian cities—on their infrastructure, economic base, and human potential. A strategy for building creative cities and orienting urban policy toward the creative economy can become a response to the new complex challenges of post-war urban recovery. The creative economy possesses significant resilience, flexibility, and regenerative capacity, which lies both in the possibility of the economic revival of cities and in the restoration of human capital (Бакальчук 2023).

Creative economy is of key importance for ensuring innovative and stable economic development in Ukraine, especially in cities, as it stimulates entrepreneurship, strengthens competitiveness, and enriches the country culturally.

According to 2019 data, the creative industries generated 3.94% of Ukraine's gross value added (UAH 117 billion), providing employment for 352 thousand people (3.6% of total employment).

Among the creative industries as components of the creative economy, the largest volumes of value added were generated in IT; advertising, marketing, and PR; the audiovisual sector; architecture; and publishing. Technological progress in these fields stimulates the inflow of investment and supports business initiatives. Investment in the creative industries has a strong multiplier effect: 1 hryvnia of capital investment in these sectors yields a GDP increase of 1.9–2.2 hryvnias. The field of programming demonstrates the highest capital multiplication coefficient compared to other branches of the economy (Креативні індустрії... 2021).

According to a study conducted by the Center for the Development of the Creative Economy, in 2021 the share of creative industries in Ukraine's GDP amounted to 7%, while expert estimates of their potential exceeded 10% of GDP (UAH 182.1 billion).

Since 2022, Ukraine's creative industries have faced a deep crisis as a result of the onset of full-scale war and its negative impact on the entire national economy. At the same time, despite these challenges, workers in the creative industries continue their activities, adapting to new realities and external changes. International partners provide assistance in ensuring the safety of Ukrainian specialists and restoring their work, creating numerous opportunities both within Ukraine and abroad.

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in 2022 exports of creative services reached USD 3,766 million, with imports of USD 724 million, resulting in a positive balance of USD 3,042 million. The share of creative services in total service exports rose to 41.1% (compared to 30.1% in 2021), with the IT sector providing computer services accounting for a dominant 40.5%. A further 0.4% fell on royalties and 0.2% on cultural and recreational services (Креативні індустрії... 2024).

International cooperation offers significant opportunities for harnessing the creative economy in the post-war reconstruction of Ukrainian cities, in particular through accession to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. At present, three Ukrainian cities are members of this network.

Lviv – a Creative City of Literature (since 2015). In 2009, Lviv was recognized as the Cultural Capital of the country. Known for its rich literary history and printing traditions, Lviv is undoubtedly a city of writers, publishers, and readers: half of its residents are registered with the city's libraries. Since 1997, the city has hosted an International Festival of Literature that includes more than 200 events and is one of the largest festivals in Eastern Europe. In addition to various literary forums, Lviv develops its literary culture through cooperation with Norway within the framework of the "More Countries – More Books" program, aimed at fostering international literary partnerships.

The City Council has introduced special programs to support cultural projects, including the Annual Competition of Ukrainian Book Publishing. According to the city development strategy, culture and creativity have been defined as key priorities for social cohesion and sustainable development, as well as for shaping a resilient urban environment, favorable social policy, equal access to education, and the support of research and innovation centers.

Key initiatives of Lviv as a City of Literature in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network:

- Establishment of the “University Library of Tomorrow” as the main center for literature, humanities, and social research;
- Implementation of Programme for Support of Reading for vulnerable population groups and literary education for youth;
- Implementation of the “Urban-Library” initiative — an open space for young creative entrepreneurs focused on urban development;
- Strengthening international cooperation with UNESCO Creative Cities and other cities around the world and encouraging interdisciplinary projects with them ([UNESCO 2004](#)).

Since 2015, the city has operated the office “Lviv – UNESCO City of Literature.” Its team of creative managers is responsible for promoting the status at the local, national, and international levels, as well as for communication with UNESCO ([Lviv – City... 2015](#)).

Odesa – a Creative City in the field of Literature (since 2019). Odesa is the third largest city in Ukraine, an important industrial, cultural, and resort center on the Black Sea, with a rich literary heritage.

The Odesa City Council pays considerable attention to the development of literature and is the founder of several important cultural events, among which are: the Municipal annual literary contest named after K. Paustovsky (since the 1990s); the municipal annual award “Cultural Capital” for outstanding figures in the city’s culture and arts in the fields of literature, painting, theater, and cinema; the literary project “Mobile Library” for people with special needs.

According to the city development strategy, culture and creativity have been defined as the main priorities for social cohesion and sustainable development, as well as for ensuring equal access to education and supporting research and innovation centers.

Key initiatives of Odesa as a City of Literature in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network:

- Creation of a literary space through the implementation of the municipal library hubs program;
- Holding creative and theatrical literary performances;
- Organizing literary events and competitions for young authors;
- Deepening international cooperation with UNESCO Creative Cities and other cities around the world, and encouraging interdisciplinary projects with them, particularly through the city’s Literary and Music Festival, its international film festival “Cinema Literature”, amongst others ([UNESCO 2004](#)).

Since 2019, the office “Odesa – UNESCO City of Literature” has been operating in the city ([Odessa – City... 2019](#)).

Kharkiv – a Creative City in the field of Music (з 2021 року). In 2019–2020, over 5,400 cultural events were held in Kharkiv, with a total audience of more than 520,000 people.

Kharkiv is internationally recognized for its high level of musical education, as well as its rich musical and cultural heritage. The musical sphere forms the foundation of the city’s cultural development. International music and youth festivals enjoy great popularity. The city has a developed music infrastructure represented by the Kharkiv National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre named after Mykola Lysenko, the Kharkiv Philharmonic, the Kharkiv Academic Theatre of Musical Comedy, and many other institutions. Additionally, the city is home to a significant

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number of music schools and schools of the arts, specialized higher education institutions, and modern venues for music festivals and concerts ([Харків приєднався... 2021](#)).

Key initiatives of Kharkiv as a City of Music in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network:

- Deepening international cooperation with UNESCO Creative Cities and other cities around the world that recognize culture and creativity as strategic drivers of development, and encouraging interdisciplinary projects with them;
- Increasing the number of creative events and hubs in the city, as well as expanding educational programs and courses for representatives of creative industries and for the international community;
- Ensuring access for all residents to cultural and creative events;
- Further integration of culture and creativity into city programs and initiatives, along with strengthening the role of the creative sector in the City Development Strategy;
- Development of the city's cultural heritage and support for the creative potential of its residents ([UNESCO 2004](#)).

In 2025, Kyiv submitted an application to obtain the status of a UNESCO City of Music ([Київ офіційно... 2025](#)).

A number of Ukrainian cities possess significant potential to obtain the status of a creative city. Thus, in 2021, the city of Kosiv in the Ivano-Frankivsk region was selected for the international initiative "Creative Towns and Regions Initiative" (EU–UNESCO) as a pilot city for the development of creative industries at the local level. This initiative is part of the "EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme" ([Culture and Creativity 2021](#)). This experience has laid the foundation for the potential preparation of Kosiv to submit an application to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the category of "Crafts and Folk Art." Active cultural projects, institutions, and international support programs are present in the cities of Vinnytsia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lutsk, Chernivtsi, Dnipro, and Kherson.

Among the effective tools for the post-war recovery of Ukrainian cities through the development of the creative economy, international municipal partnership should be highlighted. In August 2022, a Memorandum with Eurocities was signed ([In the presence... 2022](#)) regarding support for the rebuilding of Ukrainian cities. Eurocities is the largest network of European cities. It comprises over 200 large cities, representing more than 150 million people in 38 countries, both within and outside the EU. The main mission of Eurocities is to create places where people enjoy a high quality of life. Eurocities recognizes that culture and the creative sector are driving forces for positive change. In this regard, the members of Eurocities promote and support cultural and creative industries as tools of social change and recognize their role in the economic development of cities ([EUROCITIES 1986](#)). Thus, the development of a creative urban economy can become a priority direction of international municipal partnership within the framework of Eurocities.

It is particularly relevant for local self-government authorities to develop a vision for the post-war reconstruction of cities within partnerships with twin cities in the creative economy sector and to implement at the local level the principles of sustainable development of European cities ([Бакальчук 2023](#)). At the same time, it is worth noting that as of 2022, only about half of Ukrainian communities had established partnership relations with municipalities of other countries (46%). The most active in establishing partnerships are the regions of Ukraine located near the borders with European countries, primarily Zakarpattia, Lviv, Chernivtsi, and Odesa regions, where on average, each community with international partners has 5–6 partnerships. The most active in establishing partnerships are regional centers ([Козіна, Кошелюк 2022](#)).

Among the main EU programs in the field of creative economy available to Ukraine, it is worth mentioning "Creative Europe" ([Culture and Creativity 2014](#)). The program is aimed at the

preservation, development, and promotion of European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage; at enhancing the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, particularly the audiovisual sector.

The program has three strands:

- 1) Culture strand, which supports a wide range of cultural and creative sectors, including architecture, cultural heritage, design, literature and publishing, music, performing arts;
- 2) Media strand, which supports the film and audiovisual industry in the development, distribution, and promotion of European works, taking into account the modern digital environment;
- 3) Cross-sectoral strand, which supports cooperation between different cultural and creative sectors to help them address common challenges and find innovative solutions ([Culture and Creativity 2014](#)).

In Ukraine, as in other participating countries, a National Bureau of the program operates ([Creative Europe in Ukraine 2016](#)).

Effective support for the development of the creative economy may become one of the key directions of post-war recovery and reconstruction of Ukrainian cities, contributing to their economic growth and social integration. Urban policy focused on the development of the creative economy is the result of establishing strong partnerships between various levels of government, the local economy, and international cooperation ([Бакальчук, 2023](#)). Further academic development is required regarding post-war economic recovery of Ukrainian cities and territories based on creative human potential. At the center of such research should be the human-geographic approach, which makes it possible to uncover territorial patterns in the development of creative forms of activity. An important component of the creative economy is creative hubs and spaces, which are now actively emerging in various regions of Ukraine, acting as centers of innovation, co-creation, and social interaction. In the author's future publications, it is planned to consider the human-geographical aspects of the functioning of creative hubs and their role in shaping the creative economy as a factor in post-war economic recovery and regional resilience of Ukraine.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of the creative city has undergone significant evolution — from local cultural initiatives of the 1980s to a global model of urban governance oriented toward sustainability, innovation, and human development. In modern academic tradition, three main theoretical approaches are distinguished: the interpretation of the creative city as a tool of urban development (Charles Landry), as an environment for the creative activities or industries (Richard Florida, Allen Scott), and as a space for attracting and retaining creative human capital. These approaches are complemented by the human-geographical approach, which is focused on the spatial interpretation of creativity.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network is the largest global platform for the development of creative cities, uniting 350 cities from over 100 countries in seven thematic categories: crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music. The network promotes international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and the integration of culture and creativity into strategies for sustainable urban development.

In Ukraine, the creative economy demonstrates significant potential for the socio-economic revitalization of cities in the post-war period, particularly through the development of IT, design, literature, media, music, crafts, and cultural tourism. In 2021, the share of creative industries in the GDP amounted to 7%, providing employment for over 352,000 people. Three Ukrainian cities — Lviv and Odesa (literature) and Kharkiv (music) — are members of the UNESCO Creative Cities

Network, which creates a foundation for international cooperation and attraction of investment into the creative sector.

The development of the creative economy holds substantial potential for the post-war reconstruction of Ukrainian cities through mechanisms of international municipal partnership (Eurocities) and participation in European programs supporting culture and creativity (Creative Europe). Effective urban policy aimed at developing the creative sector requires the establishment of strong partnerships among different levels of government, the local economy, and international organizations. In the process of post-war recovery of Ukraine, a critical role will be played not only by the creative economy of cities as a whole, but also by its individual components — primarily creative hubs and spaces, which are becoming centers of innovation, entrepreneurship, and social interaction. Human geography possesses significant potential in studying these processes in the territorial dimension, which opens up new prospects for spatial analysis of the creative economy. The application of the human-geographical approach allows for identifying the territorial patterns of the formation of creative cities, assessing their role in the spatial structure of the national economy, and determining the prospects for Ukraine's integration into global creative networks.

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Keywords: Creative economy, creative cities, creative industries, UNESCO Creative Cities Network, human-geographical approach, sociogeosystem, urban development, post-war urban reconstruction

Abstract: The article presents a comprehensive human-geographical study of creative cities in the global and national contexts, focusing on their theoretical foundations, spatial organization, and practical implications for sustainable urban development. The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing role of creativity, knowledge, and innovation as key factors in post-industrial transformation and by the need to explore new models of urban recovery and competitiveness, particularly in Ukraine's post-war conditions. In this regard, the creative city is analyzed as a multidimensional human-geographical phenomenon that integrates cultural, economic, social, and spatial components of modern urban systems.

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological framework for the human-geographical analysis of creative cities and to identify the features and patterns of their development at the global and national levels. The methodological basis of the research combines interdisciplinary approaches from human geography, urban studies, cultural economics, and regional development theory. The methods applied include comparative and structural analysis, systematization of scientific literature, content analysis of UNESCO and UNCTAD documents, and cartographic and analytical-statistical methods to identify territorial regularities and spatial disproportions in the development of creative cities.

The article traces the evolution of the creative city concept from the 1980s to the present. The early foundations were established by Charles Landry, who introduced the idea of the city as a creative organism capable of solving urban problems through imagination, innovation, and cultural resources. His works proposed methodological tools for integrating creativity into urban planning and management. Later, Richard Florida's theory of the "creative class" (2002, 2004, 2007) shifted the emphasis to the economic dimension, arguing that the concentration of highly skilled and mobile professionals is a key determinant of

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Human-geographical study of creative cities: global and national context

urban competitiveness. The institutional approach, developed through the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) and international reports on the creative economy, conceptualized creativity and culture as strategic resources for inclusive and sustainable development.

According to Matovic and San Salvador del Valle (2020), three main research directions can be distinguished in the study of creative cities: (1) creativity as a toolkit for urban development (urban approach); (2) the creative city as an environment for the creative activities or industries (economic approach); (3) the city as a space for attracting and retaining creative human capital (socio-cultural approach).

Building on these perspectives, the present article introduces a fourth – the human-geographical approach, which extends the analysis to the spatial dimension of creativity. From this standpoint, the creative city is viewed as a territorially organized sociogeosystem that reflects the interaction of human capital, cultural infrastructure, innovation potential, and regional development processes.

The study analyzes the experience of cities participating in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which currently includes more than 350 cities from over 100 countries across seven thematic categories – literature, music, film, design, gastronomy, crafts and folk art, and media arts. The geographical distribution of these cities demonstrates the growing importance of creativity as a global development resource, bridging cultural, economic, and technological spheres. The research highlights that creative cities function as nodes of global networks, fostering cultural exchange, innovation diffusion, and sustainable growth.

In the Ukrainian context, the article emphasizes the significance of developing creative cities as a strategic direction for post-war recovery, regional reintegration, and economic modernization. Cities such as Lviv, Odesa, and Kharkiv, which are members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, exemplify the role of cultural industries in promoting local resilience and international cooperation. The analysis reveals that the creative economy in Ukraine, despite wartime challenges, retains considerable potential for the diversification of urban economies, job creation, and the revitalization of historical and cultural spaces.

The findings confirm that the human-geographical approach provides an effective conceptual and analytical framework for understanding creative cities as spatially organized systems of innovation and human development. It allows for the identification of territorial patterns of creativity, assessment of spatial disproportions, and formulation of evidence-based policies for balanced and sustainable regional development. The practical significance of the research lies in the possibility of applying its results to improve national and local strategies in the fields of creative economy management, urban governance, cultural planning, and post-war reconstruction of Ukrainian cities.