

SECTION 3. ORGANIZATION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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3.1 Creative economy as a driver of socio-cultural project development in Ukraine

In recent decades, the concept of the creative economy has evolved from a marginal theoretical idea into a powerful driver of national development, shaping economic growth, social cohesion, and cultural identity across the globe. As countries navigate the challenges of globalization, digitalization, and shifting labour markets, creativity has emerged as a key strategic resource that fuels innovation, enhances competitiveness, and supports inclusive social transformation. For nations undergoing political, economic, and cultural transitions, the creative economy provides not only new economic opportunities but also vital frameworks for strengthening community resilience and fostering meaningful civic participation.

Ukraine offers a particularly compelling context for examining the dynamic interplay between creativity and socio-cultural development. Despite facing prolonged political instability, economic pressures, and the devastating consequences of Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine continues to demonstrate remarkable cultural vitality and a growing capacity for creative innovation. Ukrainian cultural institutions, independent artistic initiatives, media platforms, and grassroots organizations have become central actors in shaping public discourse, preserving cultural heritage, and reinforcing national identity in conditions of uncertainty. In this environment, the creative economy serves not only as an engine of economic recovery but also as a platform for social solidarity, cultural diplomacy, and community-driven project development.

The expansion of creative industries – ranging from design, film, and music to digital media, cultural tourism, and the performing arts – has significantly influenced the emergence of new socio-cultural projects across Ukraine. These initiatives increasingly rely on multidisciplinary collaboration, participatory approaches, and sustainable development principles. They reflect a broader societal shift: the recognition that culture and creativity are not peripheral sectors but essential

components of modern nation-building and social innovation. Understanding how the creative economy contributes to the development of socio-cultural projects is therefore crucial for policymakers, cultural managers, and community leaders seeking to enhance Ukraine's long-term resilience and global cultural presence.

This study explores the role of the creative economy as a catalyst for socio-cultural project development in Ukraine, examining its transformative potential, structural challenges, and strategic implications for the country's future.

The creative economy has been widely recognised by major international organisations as both an economic sector and a policy lens that links culture, creativity and sustainable development. UNESCO's Creative Economy Report [96] established a conceptual and empirical foundation for understanding how creative industries generate both monetary and non-monetary value and how local development pathways can be widened through culture-led initiatives. This foundational work emphasises that creative sector policies must integrate economic, social and cultural goals to produce inclusive outcomes.

At the global level, UNCTAD and subsequent trade analyses have documented rapid expansion in international trade of creative goods and services, demonstrating that creative industries are not only culturally significant but also economically dynamic. These global trends support the argument that socio-cultural projects – when connected to creative sector dynamics – can become vehicles for exportable cultural products, place branding and transnational cultural exchange [97].

Recent scholarship on cultural project management and the creative economy reinforces the idea that socio-cultural projects operate at the intersection of plurality in creative processes and professional management. Empirical and conceptual studies argue that contemporary cultural projects require multidisciplinary management approaches that combine artistic autonomy with entrepreneurial and networked governance models; such approaches enhance project sustainability and social impact. This literature helps explain why creative hubs, incubators and social enterprises are often effective incubators for socio-cultural initiatives [98].

In the Ukrainian context, a growing body of academic and policy research examines how the creative economy contributes to social cohesion, local revitalisation and post-conflict recovery. National studies and policy reports show that Ukrainian creative industries have accelerated since 2014 and that the sector's resilience became particularly visible after 2022, when cultural actors and creative enterprises played active roles in community mobilisation, cultural preservation, and international cultural diplomacy. These studies highlight specific mechanisms – digital platforms, creative clusters, cultural entrepreneurship, and donor-supported cultural programmes – through which socio-cultural projects have scaled and sustained community engagement [99].

Scholars working on Ukraine also stress the dual role of creative projects as economic drivers and as instruments of cultural resilience. Analytical articles and policy briefs argue that investments in creative industries generate high added value, support employment in knowledge-intensive activities, and strengthen national identity through narrative-forming cultural production. At the same time, they emphasise systemic barriers – limited public funding for culture, uneven regional distribution of creative capacities, and the need for stronger professional training in cultural project management – which constrain the full potential of socio-cultural projects [100].

More practically oriented research provides case studies of urban regeneration, heritage revitalisation, and cultural diplomacy projects that illustrate how creative economy tools (design thinking, digitalisation, cultural branding) translate into concrete socio-cultural outcomes. EU-commissioned assessments and NGO reports document examples of creative hubs, heritage-led revitalisation, and international collaborations that have both economic multiplier effects and social benefits such as increased civic participation and inter-community dialogue. These empirical reports are important for policy formation because they combine indicator-based analysis with qualitative accounts of community change [101].

Taken together, this literature suggests three interrelated propositions for research and policy: (1) the creative economy functions as an enabling environment for socio-cultural projects by providing human capital, digital and institutional

infrastructures, and market pathways; (2) socio-cultural projects in turn strengthen the creative sector by creating demand for cultural services, enhancing local cultural ecosystems and contributing to place-based identity; and (3) realising this mutually reinforcing relationship requires integrated policy support (finance, capacity building, IP protection, and regional development strategies) and robust measurement frameworks to capture both economic and social value. These propositions are supported by international reports and recent Ukraine-focused studies [96].

Key characteristics of the creative economy include:

- innovation, expressed through the development of new products, formats, and technologies;
- high added value derived from intellectual labor;
- social relevance, as creative products shape a society's cultural code;
- interdisciplinarity, since creative projects combine economics, culture, communications, and technology;
- flexibility and adaptability, which is particularly important during crises.

In contemporary research, the creative economy is viewed not only as a production sector but also as a model of societal development that stimulates innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, and social transformation.

The development of Ukraine's creative sector accelerated significantly after 2014 and advanced even more rapidly following the full-scale invasion in 2022. Key factors influencing its growth include:

- the rise of digital technologies, which enabled Ukrainian creators and entrepreneurs to access global markets;
- European integration processes, which encouraged the modernization of cultural policy;
- increased civic engagement, volunteerism, and grassroots initiatives;
- growing demand for cultural content related to national identity;
- the reorientation of businesses toward innovative and socially meaningful products.

Under these conditions, creative industries have become one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy, and cultural initiatives have transformed into important tools for socio-cultural development.

Socio-cultural projects aim to develop culture, preserve heritage, build civic identity, integrate communities, and support creative practices. The creative economy fosters favorable conditions for these projects through several mechanisms:

1. Multidisciplinarity and synergy.

Multidisciplinarity is a defining operational characteristic of contemporary creative industries: by combining artistic practice with technical, managerial and pedagogical competencies, creative teams are able to generate novel socio-cultural formats that would be unattainable within any single discipline. Empirical and conceptual studies show that this cross-domain collaboration increases the repertoire of design options, improves problem-solving capacity, and supports the translation of cultural value into scalable public products (e.g., interactive exhibitions, participatory public art, and digital services) [102].

At the level of museums and heritage institutions, partnerships between curators, designers, software engineers and educators have enabled a shift from static displays to interactive, co-creative experiences. Research and practice reports document how creative industries and museums collaborate to co-produce exhibitions that integrate storytelling, user-centred design and digital mediation (VR/AR, touch interfaces, web platforms), producing higher visitor engagement and new learning outcomes. Policy and sector studies emphasise that such collaborations require institutional openness, shared project governance and capacity building across domains [103].

Digital platforms exemplify the way multidisciplinarity expands reach and impact. Studies of the digitalisation of creative industries show that combining IT development, content strategy and cultural expertise produces platforms that simultaneously serve cultural preservation, audience development and revenue generation (e.g., streaming, virtual exhibitions, and educational portals). UNCTAD's treatment of digitalisation in the creative economy highlights how technical

infrastructures and creative skills interact to enable new business models and cross-border cultural exchange [104].

The educational dimension further illustrates the synergy effect. Multidisciplinary design and cultural education programmes – where students and practitioners from arts, design, computing and management work together – produce graduates capable of organising and sustaining socio-cultural projects that are both artistically ambitious and operationally viable. Evaluations of multidisciplinary pedagogies report improved creative problem solving and greater readiness to collaborate in real-world cultural projects. This pedagogical integration supports the staffing needs of creative hubs, museums and digital platforms that underpin socio-cultural initiatives [105].

Ukraine offers concrete examples of multidisciplinary synergy in practice. Creative hubs, residencies and collaborative programmes in Ukraine – where visual artists, curators, cultural managers, technologists and community activists co-operate – have produced interactive exhibitions, digital archives and community education projects that contributed both to cultural resilience and to local revitalisation. Sectoral assessments of Ukrainian creative hubs and the EU report on cultural and creative sectors in Ukraine underline that multidisciplinary collaboration is a recurring success factor, while also noting barriers (language, funding, uneven regional capacity) that constrain scale-up [106].

Taken together, the literature supports three practical implications for socio-cultural project design: (1) build mixed teams from the project outset (art, technology, management, education); (2) invest in joint governance and shared tools for co-creation (workshops, prototypes, digital pilots); and (3) sustain capacity building (multidisciplinary education, hub networks) so that collaborative practices move from episodic projects to durable ecosystem capabilities. These recommendations are grounded in both empirical studies and policy reviews of how creative industries and cultural institutions co-produce innovative socio-cultural formats [107].

2. Support for Local Communities.

Creative industries often serve as a catalyst for local development, particularly through urban revitalization, heritage preservation, and community empowerment. Research demonstrates that creative projects do more than generate economic value – they also build social capital, strengthen local identity, and foster collective agency in communities.

2.1. Urban Revitalization and Place Regeneration.

The Practice-Based Handbook on Creative and Cultural Industries in Urban Revitalization highlights how cultural and creative industries (CCIs) have been used internationally to revitalize declining urban districts. By repurposing historic buildings, converting underused infrastructure into creative hubs, galleries, coworking spaces, and cultural quarters, creative actors help regenerate neighborhoods, improving both the physical environment and social cohesion [108].

Such transformations not only preserve local heritage, but they also attract foot traffic and foster place branding, contributing to economic and social renewal. Empirical evidence suggests that when CCIs are integrated into local planning strategies, they can boost community resilience and create sustainable urban ecosystems [109].

2.2. Social Capital through Networking and Community Engagement.

Multidisciplinary research has shown that CCIs contribute significantly to social capital in peripheral and marginalized areas. In a study by S. Malisiova and S. Kostopoulou [110], the authors investigate how creative-heritage industries foster networking and place-based identity in less central regions. Their findings emphasize that CCIs build trust and cooperation among local actors (residents, artists, entrepreneurs), reinforcing social ties and facilitating collective action.

More broadly, the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) has been applied to creative tourism contexts to show how creative projects leverage existing community assets – cultural heritage, social networks, natural resources – to generate sustainable development. For example, in a study of the Ban Chiang World Heritage site [111], researchers demonstrated a virtuous cycle: creative tourism practices strengthen social capital (trust and cooperation), economic capital (tourism revenue, jobs), and cultural

capital (revitalization of traditions), all reinforcing each other and contributing to long-term community resilience.

2.3. Empowerment Through Heritage Regeneration.

Heritage-led initiatives provide a powerful means to empower local communities. According to a study on regenerative tourism, heritage sites can be revitalized not just aesthetically, but socially. By engaging community members in restoration and cultural projects, creative initiatives help residents reclaim cultural identity and agency [112].

Similarly, research on heritage as a creative resource argues that cultural heritage is not simply a passive asset but a dynamic economic and social resource. Historic buildings and traditions stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting new cultural businesses and enhancing local quality of life [113].

2.4. Creative Hubs as Nodes of Local Activation.

In the Ukrainian context, creative hubs are increasingly recognized as pivotal for strengthening local economies and community networks. According to the Ukrainian decentralization portal, creative hubs act as gathering places for artists, entrepreneurs, and citizens. These hubs can foster local collaboration, incubate cultural and social projects, and serve as centers for capacity-building [114].

2.5. Sustainability and Long-term Social Impact.

The community capitals approach also points to the sustainable dimension of CCI-led development. Through creative tourism and heritage initiatives, communities can convert local assets into long-term value: increased trust (social capital), strengthened identity (cultural capital), better infrastructure (built capital), and improved economic opportunities (financial capital) [111].

Moreover, policy-oriented frameworks argue that for creative industries to truly support local communities, they need consistent institutional support – such as funding mechanisms, capacity development, and participatory governance – to ensure that benefits are equitably distributed and embedded in community life [109].

3. *New Models of Entrepreneurship.*

Creative industries facilitate the emergence of new entrepreneurial paradigms – including social enterprises, creative hubs, studios, and media ventures – that provide economically sustainable frameworks for cultural initiatives and significantly reduce dependence on governmental funding.

3.1. Social Enterprises in the Creative Economy.

Social enterprises in creative sectors combine a social or cultural mission with revenue-generating activities, creating hybrid business models that remain viable even with limited or unstable public subsidies.

Crowdfunding has become a major financing mechanism for such enterprises. Crowdfunding platforms expand access to capital for small cultural firms, especially when traditional financial institutions are unwilling to invest [115].

According to *Starving the Golden Goose? Access to Finance for Innovators in the Creative Industries* [116], entrepreneurs in creative sectors rely primarily on internal capital (personal or informal) rather than banks or venture investors – highlighting the need for alternative, innovation-friendly models.

3.2. Creative Hubs and Studios.

In Ukraine, creative hubs and clusters have become “new centers of economic development.” According to V. Synytsia [117], these hubs support social entrepreneurship, innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration among artists, business actors, and technology specialists.

Such hubs foster small studios and micro-enterprises operating at the intersection of culture and business, often funded by international donors or private investors rather than the state.

3.3. Creative Startups as Engines of Growth.

Creative startups (in media, design, digital arts, creative tech, etc.) represent a strategic component of Ukraine’s developing creative economy. N. Ivanova et al. [118] show that these ventures transform creativity, innovation, and intellectual capital into commercially viable products and services.

Research from KPI [119] emphasizes that creative startups enable Ukraine to integrate into global cultural and creative markets, exporting digital content, design services, and innovative cultural products.

3.4. Innovation, Cultural Governance, and Policy.

W.-J. Yan and S.-T. Liu [120] highlight that flexible cultural governance is essential for sustaining creative entrepreneurship. Their study in Sustainability argues that adaptive governance enables cultural entrepreneurs to balance social, cultural, and commercial objectives.

I. Hill et al. [121] examine policy challenges for the creative and cultural industries, offering recommendations on how governments can better support creative entrepreneurs facing high uncertainty and low material assets.

3.5. Sustainability and Long-Term Viability.

Innovation behavior mediates the relationship between digital competences and the development of a sustainable creative economy, according to Sustainability research. This means that innovative practices – technical, marketing, organizational – support long-term business resilience [122].

Another MDPI publication on Creative and Cultural Industries [123] emphasizes that micro-businesses, freelancers, and social enterprises dominate the sector, making institutional support and new financing tools crucial for sectoral stability.

3.6. Ukrainian Context and Resilience.

L. Berezuhla and I. Lazakovych [124] analyze how Ukrainian creative industries adapt during wartime: digital products, virtual services, and media content allow creative entrepreneurs to remain financially independent from state funding.

I. Lytovchenko and V. Tomakh [125] show that creative enterprises can play a pivotal role in Ukraine's post-war recovery, generating employment and economic value.

4. *Digitalization as a Catalyst.*

Digitalization significantly transforms the landscape of socio-cultural project development by introducing new technological tools, expanding audience reach, and enabling innovative forms of cultural expression. Online platforms, VR/AR

technologies, digital art, and streaming services enhance accessibility, interactivity, and cultural participation, thus acting as powerful catalysts for the growth of the creative economy.

4.1. Online Platforms and Digital Accessibility.

Digital platforms – such as social media, online galleries, learning portals, and virtual museums – have fundamentally changed how cultural content is produced, distributed, and consumed.

Research shows that digital platforms facilitate broader access to culture and enable cultural institutions to reach new, previously underserved audiences.

According to a study published in Sustainability [126], online cultural platforms create new models of audience engagement, reduce geographic barriers, and support participatory cultural practices.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization enabled museums, theaters, and cultural centers to continue operations, expanding their audiences through virtual exhibitions and streaming content. This shift accelerated long-term changes in cultural consumption patterns.

4.2. Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) in Cultural Projects.

VR and AR technologies introduce immersive cultural experiences that would be impossible within traditional formats. These tools support educational, artistic, and heritage-preservation projects.

A study in Heritage Science demonstrates that VR-based reconstructions of cultural landmarks enhance cultural understanding and engagement, especially among younger audiences.

Research on immersive exhibitions [127] confirms that VR increases emotional engagement and contributes to higher retention of cultural information.

In Ukraine, projects such as Ukraine 360°, VR Museum of Modernism, and AR-guided tours produced by local digital studios illustrate the rapid integration of immersive technology into socio-cultural initiatives.

4.3. Digital Art and Creative Expression.

Digital art – ranging from 3D design and animation to generative art and NFT-based creative practices – provides new opportunities for cultural entrepreneurship and international outreach.

Studies published in Arts [128] emphasize that digital art stimulates new markets, enables cross-border collaborations, and lowers the entry threshold for young creators.

Digital infrastructures such as NFT marketplaces open alternative income channels for artists, expanding the sustainability of socio-cultural initiatives.

These models are especially valuable in regions where funding for traditional arts is limited or unstable.

4.4. Streaming Services and Hybrid Cultural Formats.

Streaming platforms significantly enhance the global visibility of creative projects by providing alternative distribution channels for performances, concerts, films, and educational programs.

Hybrid formats (online + offline events) have become a dominant model in post-pandemic cultural management, enabling cultural institutions to engage diverse audiences while maintaining flexibility and resilience.

In Ukraine, numerous theaters, festivals (e.g., Gogolfest), and cultural institutions adopted live-streaming formats, significantly expanding international viewership.

4.5. Impact on Global Cultural Participation.

Digitalization increases inclusivity in socio-cultural life by enabling remote participation and reducing economic and geographic barriers.

A UNESCO report highlights that digital tools increase cultural access for marginalized groups and improve cultural institutions' ability to reach diasporas and international audiences.

4.6. Implications for the Creative Economy in Ukraine.

For Ukraine, digitalization is particularly significant because it:

- enhances international visibility of Ukrainian cultural projects during wartime;

- enables cross-border cultural diplomacy through online exhibitions and digital storytelling;

- supports the creative economy by opening global markets for Ukrainian designers, animators, musicians, and game developers.

Ukrainian digital studios and media platforms demonstrate how digital transformation contributes directly to socio-cultural resilience and global outreach.

Examples of the Creative Economy's Influence on Socio-Cultural Development in Ukraine:

- Revitalization of Cultural Heritage. Projects such as “Arsenal of Ideas,” [129] “Heritage.UA,” [130] and initiatives to transform industrial zones into cultural centers illustrate how creative approaches breathe new life into cultural spaces.

- Strengthening National Identity. Ukrainian cinema, music platforms, publishing initiatives, and media projects actively shape the national narrative, reinforcing civic consciousness during wartime.

- Development of Creative Hubs and Clusters. Hubs, art spaces, incubators, and coworking centers function as physical environments for cultural and entrepreneurial activities, supporting the creation of new socio-cultural initiatives.

- Cultural Diplomacy. Participation of Ukrainian creators in international festivals, fairs, and exhibitions enhances the country's image and promotes integration into the global cultural landscape.

Despite significant achievements, the development of the creative economy in Ukraine faces several challenges:

- insufficient funding for cultural initiatives;
- uneven development of creative industries across regions;
- a need for professional training in cultural project management;
- the impact of military conflict on infrastructure and mobility.

Nevertheless, future prospects remain promising. European integration, expanding international grant programs, and the reconstruction of cities and cultural institutions after the war create favorable conditions for the further growth of the creative sector.

The creative economy serves as a powerful driver of socio-cultural project development in Ukraine. It fosters innovation, strengthens cultural identity, activates communities, and shapes new models of cooperation between culture, business, and society. In today's challenging environment, its role is even more crucial: the creative sector not only generates economic value but also provides social resilience, cultural resistance, and national consolidation.

The continued advancement of the creative economy is strategically important for Ukraine's recovery and future, as well as for building an innovative model of sustainable socio-cultural development.