

HOTEL, CATERING BUSINESS AND TOURISM

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A CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINIAN, MOLDOVAN, AND ROMANIAN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The research focuses on the intersection of prehistoric heritage and modern socio-economic revitalisation, specifically analysing the “In the Ways of the Trypillian Foremother” destination cluster as a model for sustainable rural development. This study posits that the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture, characterised by its unique proto-cities [1] and sophisticated social organisation, serves as a vital unifying factor for cross-border cooperation between Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania [2]. The investigation seeks to answer several fundamental scientific questions: how can the cultural capital of prehistoric megasites be converted into sustainable economic assets without compromising archaeological integrity? What role does the “cluster approach” play in mitigating the socio-economic disparities of rural borderlands? And how can SMART specialisation frameworks be adapted to the unique needs of communities facing modern challenges, such as high urbanisation fatigue and population displacement?

The research employs a multifaceted methodology that integrates the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP), comparative regional analysis, and a complex stakeholder engagement model. By examining the cooperation between 21 communities in the Cherkasy, Vinnytsia, and Kirovohrad regions of Ukraine, the study outlines tasks centered on establishing community-business-government partnerships, integrating internally displaced persons (IDPs), and developing export-worthy cultural products [3]. Ultimately, this research framework aims to demonstrate that cultural heritage-led regeneration is not merely a look into the past but a strategic pathway toward achieving the goals of the United Nations Agenda for the 21st Century, ensuring a harmonious balance between economic growth, environmental ethics, and the formation of a resilient civil society [4].

The research adopts a multidisciplinary methodological framework that blends economic planning with cultural preservation. The integrated methodology for sustainable tourism development synthesizes *Smart*

Specialization (S3) and the *Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP)* to identify and commercialise unique local assets, such as traditional crafts and cultural heritage, thereby fostering regional competitiveness and economic diversification. Framed within the global *Agenda 21* [5] and the *European Tourism Agenda 2030* [6], this approach prioritises environmental ethics and social inclusivity, utilising the *European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)* [7] to ensure rational resource consumption. By incorporating the “four accents” of successful European practices – complexity (legal, social, and economic substantiation), openness (interactive planning with the population), broad participation, and reliance on local resources – the methodology provides a robust scientific framework for the post-war recovery of Ukrainian communities, transforming historical legacy into high-value, digitalized, and competitive tourism products that enhance rural employment and territorial resilience.

This study integrates the strategic objectives of sustainable regional development into a cohesive framework, aligning local initiatives with European standards for institutional governance, social inclusion, and economic resilience.

The fundamental architecture of this approach rests upon a functional tri-level governance framework designed to facilitate systemic synergy between community stakeholders, local private enterprises, and public authorities. By moving beyond fragmented efforts, this tripartite structure ensures that regional policy execution is grounded in the principles of subsidiarity and collective responsibility. Such institutional cooperation serves as the necessary foundation for synchronising socio-economic interventions, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and efficiency of local development.

Building upon this governance structure, the strategy prioritizes the enhancement of regional social resilience through two critical demographic interventions. First, it addresses the social integration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by developing mechanisms that facilitate their transition from aid recipients to productive stakeholders. By aligning the human capital of IDPs with the evolving needs of the local labour market, the community mitigates social fragmentation and fosters a more inclusive ecosystem. Second, the framework targets the stabilisation of rural territories by addressing “brain drain.” By creating high-value employment opportunities and stimulating local entrepreneurial ecosystems, the strategy aims to counteract involuntary migration and ensure the long-term demographic viability of the active youth population.

The economic vitality of these communities is further driven by the diversification of the rural economy and the strategic mobilization of local assets. A key component of this diversification is the analytical investigation into the development of high-value cultural and artisanal commodities. By standardizing authentic regional products – such as traditional crafts and experiential educational offerings – local intangible heritage is transformed into competitive, market-ready assets. This process not only preserves cultural integrity but also positions these “cultural exports” within the international creative economy, strengthening the destination’s global brand identity.

Ultimately, this holistic model for sustainable development culminates in the creation of self-sustaining economic ecosystems. By leveraging unique historical assets, such as the heritage of the Trypillian civilization, the strategy curates a distinct tourism brand that aligns with European Union benchmarks for inclusivity, digital innovation, and environmental stewardship. Through the integration of inter-municipal synergy and the strategic use of financial, natural, and human capital, this comprehensive approach ensures the long-term competitiveness and resilience of local economies within a global context.

The ultimate task of the research is to facilitate a common European path for Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania. By formalising the "In the Ways of the Trypillian Foremother" cluster, the initiative seeks to promote the UNESCO recognition of the Cucuteni-Trypillia complex as a "historical duty" that fosters peace and mutual respect. This strategy demonstrates that heritage is not merely a focus on the past, but a tool for addressing the contemporary fatigue with highly urbanised civilisations and providing a prestigious rural alternative for the 21st century.

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