

CREATIVE ECONOMY AS A FUNCTIONAL SUBSYSTEM OF THE REGIONAL SOCIO-GEOSYSTEM: STRUCTURE, INTERACTIONS AND EFFECTS

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Abstract

The article addresses the human-geographical conceptualization of the creative economy as a functional subsystem of the regional socio-geosystem. A socio-geosystemic interpretation of the creative economy is substantiated as opposed to the sectoral approach: it is regarded not merely as a set of industries, but as an integration mechanism that permeates all subsystems of the regional socio-geosystem and contributes to their structural modernisation. The structure of the creative subsystem is defined according to a territorial-hierarchical principle: macro-level (creative regions and cities), meso-level (creative clusters and centers), and micro-level (creative hubs and spaces), connected through vertical, horizontal, and diagonal network interactions of a polycentric nature. The bilateral interaction of the subsystem with the demographic, production, social, cultural, infrastructure-service, institutional, ecological, and financial-economic subsystems is described through a system of resource, information-communication, innovation-technological, and cultural-symbolic flows. Eight functions of the subsystem are identified - economic, innovative, socializing, cultural-identification, spatial-transformation, integration, adaption, and sustainable development - together with their corresponding primary (employment, innovations, cultural production, human capital), secondary (spatial transformations, cultural environment, multiplier effect), and strategic effects (image, competitiveness, social resilience, regional identity, sustainable regional development) within a single analytical model. It is argued that in the context of post-war recovery in Ukraine, social resilience and regional identity as strategic effects of the creative economy acquire priority significance, while the European integration vector opens new opportunities for the structural modernization of regions on the basis of sustainable development.

Key words: creative economy, regional socio-geosystem, creative subsystem, functions, effects, regional development, post-war recovery.

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КРЕАТИВНА ЕКОНОМІКА ЯК ФУНКЦІОНАЛЬНА ПІДСИСТЕМА РЕГІОНАЛЬНОЇ СОЦІОГЕОСИСТЕМИ: СТРУКТУРА, ВЗАЄМОДІЇ ТА ЕФЕКТИ

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Анотація

Статтю присвячено суспільно-географічному дослідженню креативної економіки як функціональної підсистеми регіональної соціогеосистеми. Обґрунтовано соціогеосистемну інтерпретацію креативної економіки на противагу галузевому підходу: вона розглядається не лише як сукупність індустрій, а й як інтеграційний механізм, що пронизує всі підсистеми регіональної соціогеосистеми і сприяє їх структурній модернізації. Визначено структуру креативної підсистеми за територіально-ієрархічним принципом: макрорівень (креативні регіони та міста), мезорівень (креативні кластери та центри), мікрорівень (креативні хаби та простори). Між рівнями існують вертикальні, горизонтальні та діагональні мережеві взаємодії, що відображає поліцентричний характер підсистеми. Описано двосторонню взаємодію підсистеми з демографічною, виробничою, соціальною, культурною, інфраструктурно-обслуговуючою, інституційною, екологічною та фінансово-економічною підсистемами за допомогою системи ресурсних, інформаційно-комунікаційних, інноваційно-технологічних і культурно-символічних потоків. Розкрито вісім функцій підсистеми - економічну, інноваційну, соціалізуючу, культурно-ідентифікаційну, просторово-трансформаційну, інтеграційну, адаптаційну і функцію сталого розвитку - та відповідні їм первинні (зайнятість, інновації, культурна продукція, людський капітал), вторинні (просторові трансформації, культурне середовище, мультиплікативний ефект) і стратегічні (імідж, конкурентоспроможність, соціальна резильєнтність, регіональна ідентичність, сталий регіональний розвиток) ефекти в єдиній аналітичній моделі. Доведено, що в умовах повоєнного відновлення України соціальна резильєнтність та регіональна ідентичність як стратегічні ефекти креативної економіки набувають пріоритетного значення, а євроінтеграційний вектор відкриває нові можливості для структурної модернізації регіонів на засадах сталого розвитку.

Ключові слова: креативна економіка, регіональна соціогеосистема, креативна підсистема, функції, ефекти, регіональний розвиток, повоєнне відновлення.

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Introduction

The current stage of social development is characterized by the growing role of human capital, knowledge, cultural capital, and creative potential as key factors in regional competitiveness. The concept of the creative economy, which has been actively developing since the early 2000s, has proven remarkably productive for explaining new trajectories of regional development. However, most existing studies view it either as a sectoral aggregate of industries or through the lens of the labor market or innovation, overlooking the systemic dimension – its place and role within a broader regional system. A human-geographical approach makes it possible to overcome this limitation. The concept of the regional socio-geosystem (RSG), developed within national human geography, provides a theoretical and methodological framework for considering the creative economy not as an isolated phenomenon, but as an organic functional component of the regional system in interaction with its other subsystems.

The aim of the article is to substantiate the place and role of the creative economy in the structure of the RSG as one of its functional subsystems. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are addressed: to justify the expediency of applying the socio-geosystem approach to the study of the creative economy; to reveal the territorial and hierarchical structure of the creative subsystem; to describe the mechanism of its interaction with other RSG subsystems; to identify the functions of the creative economy and the effects corresponding to them; and to characterize the influence of external environmental factors on its development.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study

Contemporary research on the creative economy is conducted by international organizations, foreign scholars, and domestic researchers representing various disciplinary fields.

Among international organizations, a key role in shaping the theoretical and methodological foundations of the creative economy has been played by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Bank and a number of others. UNCTAD is the leading source of global analytical reviews. It was this organization that, in 2008, proposed the first international classification of creative industries, which has become the baseline framework for most countries worldwide. The *Creative Economy Outlook* series, including its most recent editions of 2022 and 2024 (UNCTAD, 2022, 2024), provides statistical data on production, trade, and employment in the sphere of creative goods and services, analyzes the economic contribution of creative industries, and systematizes approaches to their classification.

In the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (UNESCO, 2005), UNESCO enshrines the right of states to pursue cultural policy and to protect the diversity of forms of cultural expression, thereby establishing the

international legal basis for supporting cultural industries. The report *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity – Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good* (UNESCO, 2022) develops this approach further by considering culture as a global public good and analyzing contemporary policies for supporting the cultural and creative sectors. For the purposes of international statistics, UNESCO developed the *Framework for Cultural Statistics* in 2009 and updated it in 2025 (UNESCO, 2025). A separate UNESCO instrument is the *Creative Cities Network*, established in 2004, which brings together cities around the world across seven creative fields and serves as a platform for the exchange of experience and for promoting the role of culture in sustainable urban development (UNESCO, 2004).

WIPO systematizes the contribution of copyright-based industries (which, according to the organization's approach, include creative industries) to GDP using a specific assessment methodology (WIPO, 2015). The World Bank examines creative industries across several dimensions: as a tool for addressing youth unemployment (Datta et al., 2023), as a factor in the economic development of emerging economies, and as an investment target through the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The latter, in turn, regards creative industries as a promising financing direction due to their high multiplier effect and low capital intensity (IFC, 2021). The Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), in its report *Creative Economy 2030: Imagining and Delivering a Robust, Creative, Inclusive, and Sustainable Recovery*, explores the link between creative industries and the Sustainable Development Goals (ADBI, 2022). A key normative act in this field was UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/198, which proclaimed 2021 the *International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development* (UNESCO, 2021).

At the EU level, the systematic study of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) is carried out by the European Commission (European Commission, 2024), while the *Creative Europe 2021–2027* program serves as the principal instrument for their support (Creative Europe, 2021). An important instrument for the classification of CCIs in the European context is the *Mapping Strategy and CCI Classification* (Interreg Central Europe, 2019), developed within the framework of the Interreg Central Europe program and aimed at systematizing approaches to the identification and measurement of CCIs across different EU countries. Among national organizations, British institutions occupy a particularly prominent place. Thus, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) was the first to propose a classification of creative industries in 1998 (DCMS, 1998), while the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) is a leading research centre in the field of innovation and creative industries, whose analytical reports have significantly influenced the understanding of the sector's economic contribution and the mechanisms for its support (NESTA, n.d.).

Academic thought has developed the basic conceptual models. The origins of the modern concept of the creative economy can be traced back to the studies of the Frankfurt School, whose representatives (T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer) introduced the concept of “cultural

industries” in the 1930s to analyze the commercialization of culture. The transformation of this concept into “creative industries” took place in 1994 in the Australian government report *Creative Nation* and was subsequently consolidated in DCMS documents (DCMS, 1998). In *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas* (Howkins, 2001), J. Howkins substantiated the concept of an economy driven by creativity, in which human creativity becomes the primary productive resource. In the monographs *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (Florida, 2002) and *Cities and the Creative Class* (Florida, 2005), R. Florida formulated the concept of the “creative class” and the theory of the “three T’s” (technology, talent, tolerance) as the conditions for urban development. C. Landry and F. Bianchini (Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Landry, 2000) introduced the concept of the “creative city” as a space for the purposeful mobilization of creative potential. A. Scott (Scott, 2000, 2006) developed the concept of the “cultural economy of cities” and the “creative region”, emphasizing spatial agglomeration as a prerequisite for generating innovation. D. Throsby substantiated the concept of “cultural capital”, developed the concentric model of cultural industries, and laid the foundations for the economics of cultural policy (Throsby, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2010). J. Potts and S. Cunningham proposed four models of interaction between creative industries and the economy (Potts & Cunningham, 2010). In a review study of the creative economy, J. Newbigin (Newbigin et al., 2010) systematized practical mechanisms for supporting the sector. A critical perspective on the concept of the creative economy is presented by K. Oakley and J. Ward (Oakley & Ward, 2018), who analyze social inequality, precarious working conditions, and the excessive commercialization of culture in the creative industries. An important source of quantitative data is the study of the multiplier effect of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) for cities in the United Kingdom (Gutierrez-Posada et al., 2021). The theoretical basis for analyzing network interactions within the subsystem is also provided by M. Granovetter’s theory of “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973), R. Oldenburg’s concept of “third places” (Oldenburg, 1989), and E. Glaeser’s concept of “face-to-face contact” (Glaeser, 2011).

The socio-geographical direction of creative economy research in Ukraine is only beginning to take shape and is represented by a limited number of publications. In particular, the author’s published studies cover the conceptual and terminological apparatus for the study of the creative economy from the perspective of human geography, the definition of the concept of the “creative economy” (Niemets, 2025d), socio-geographical aspects of the evolution of the creative economy concept (Niemets, 2024, 2025h), research on creative cities (Niemets, 2025f), analysis of creative hubs and spaces (Niemets, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025g), the correlation between the concepts of “creative industries” and the “creative economy” (Husieva & Niemets, 2025a, 2025b), trends in the development of the creative economy in the United Kingdom (Niemets, 2025i) and in Ukraine, particularly the IT sector under conditions of full-scale war (Sehida & Niemets, 2024; Niemets, 2025e). Thus, despite the growing number of studies, the socio-

geographical dimension – particularly the substantiation of the creative economy as a functional subsystem of the RSG – remains insufficiently developed and represents a vital aspect of research, which defines the scientific novelty of the proposed article.

Elements of the systems approach in geography began to be used from the middle of the 20th century, and in human geography from the beginning of the new century; however, the pace of their implementation in fundamental human-geographical research was quite intensive (Niemets & Sehida, 2009). In Ukrainian human geography, the systems approach to regional formations developed around the concept of “sociogeosystem” in terms of theoretical and methodological aspects developed at the Department of Socio-Economic Geography and Regional Studies of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. More than thirty PhD dissertations were defended, devoted to the study of a wide range of human-geographical phenomena from the standpoint of the socio-geosystemic approach. The main areas of research were the demographic and geodemographic development of regions, settlement systems and urban agglomerations, migration processes, the functioning and post-industrial transformations of cities, the territorial organization of the cultural, transport, educational and religious spheres, as well as the development of border socio-geosystems. The scale and thematic diversity of these studies convincingly demonstrate the high methodological potential of the socio-geosystem approach for analyzing various regional subsystems.

A socio-geosystem is defined as “...a heterogeneous system that includes social elements or subsystems differing in the level of generalization and hierarchy, as well as technogenic, abiotic, and biogenic elements (subsystems), which interact through flows of matter, energy, and information in the geographical space-time continuum”. Unlike other geosystems, the socio-geosystem includes “special social elements – people, who differ fundamentally from all other components”, since they are “...capable of interacting with one another and with the external environment purposefully, using information channels and connections” (Niemets & Mezentsev, 2019). As Kharkiv human geographers note, the RSG consists of local subsystems and at the same time is itself a subsystem of the national system; its integrity is ensured by direct and feedback information links, as well as by flows of matter and energy (Niemets & Sehida, 2009).

The key systemic properties of the RSG are as follows: **structurality** – the presence of multiple interrelated elements and subsystems forming an integrated organized structure; **functionality** – each subsystem performs a specific function, thereby “working” toward the preservation and development of the RSG as a whole, while the RSG itself also performs a number of functions; **integrity** – the interrelatedness and mutual conditioning of subsystems, which makes the system irreducible to the sum of its elements; **openness** – a continuous exchange of matter, energy, and information with the external environment; **hierarchy** – embeddedness in a system of higher spatial levels and the internal subordination of elements of different ranks; **dynamism** – the capacity for change under the influence of external factors

and internal impulses of development, which are reversible in nature and do not lead to a restructuring of the basic structure of the RSG; **adaptability** – the ability to reorganize its structure in response to environmental challenges; **emergence** – the presence within the RSG of qualities and properties that none of its subsystems possesses separately; **evolutionarity** – the capacity to transition into a qualitatively new state under the influence of internal and external factors, changing its properties, functions, and structure; **territoriality** – the spatial location of the system and the existence of spatial relations and linkages between subsystems as a defining human-geographical characteristic of the RSG.

In the regional dimension, the socio-geosystem appears as a relatively integral, functionally organized formation that reproduces itself over time through a system of internal and external interactions. The socio-geosystem differs from the general concept of a “region” by emphasizing the **systemic nature** of the object rather than its administrative or economic nature: a region is viewed not merely as a unit of management or economic activity, but as a living system in which each subsystem performs a specific function while simultaneously depending on the functioning of others.

Data and methods

This study has the character of a review paper and is based on a comprehensive analysis of academic literature published in Ukraine and abroad, with a particular focus on the concepts of the creative economy, the socio-geosystem, and their intersection. In addition, official government reports and regulatory documents were examined to provide an institutional and policy context for the research. The methodological framework combines critical literature analysis, systematic review and synthesis of diverse data sources, and media screening to identify, evaluate, and integrate current empirical findings and emerging trends relevant to the research objectives. This review-based approach enables the identification of existing knowledge gaps, the comparison of different conceptual perspectives, and the development of an integrated understanding of the relationship between the creative economy and the socio-geosystem.

Results and discussion

Socio-geosystem interpretation and definition of the creative subsystem

A human-geographical study of the creative economy involves considering it not only as a distinct sector or a sectoral aggregate of industries, but also as an organic component of the broader RSG (Fig. 1, color insert). Within the structure of the RSG, the following functional subsystems are distinguished: demographic, productive, social, cultural, infrastructural-service, institutional, ecological, financial-economic, and – as a special case – the creative subsystem.

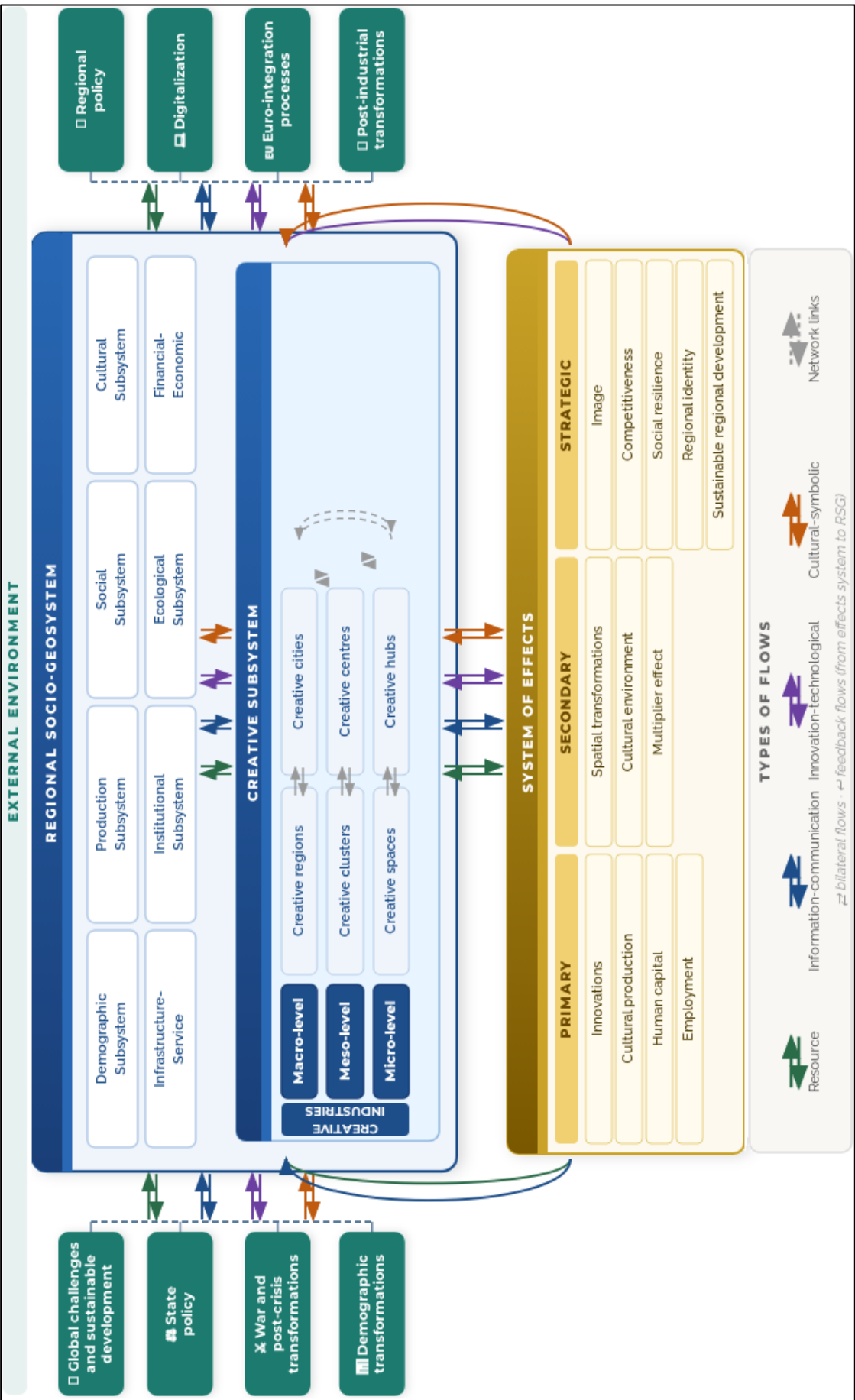


Figure 1. Creative economy as a functional subsystem of RSG (author's model)

Unlike the traditional sectoral approach, in which the creative economy is measured by its share in gross regional product or by the structure of employment, in the socio-geosystem interpretation it is considered not only as a set of creative industries, but also as an **integrative mechanism** that links different regional subsystems and contributes to their structural modernization. Its specific nature lies in the utilization of creative potential, knowledge, and cultural capital as key developmental resources.

We define the **creative subsystem of the regional socio-geosystem** as a functional component that ensures the transformation of the population's creative, cultural, and innovative potential into the competitive advantages of the region through the development of creative industries, the formation of network interactions, and the generation of effects at different levels. In our approach, the concept of the "creative" encompasses both creative and cultural industries. Although these concepts are distinguished in the EU (European Commission, 2024), in this study they are treated as a single spectrum of activities, where the difference lies primarily in the degree of commercialization. What is fundamental is that the creative subsystem is a **functional dimension** of the RSG that permeates and transforms all of its subsystems.

Socio-geosystem interpretation and definition of the creative subsystem

The internal structure of the creative subsystem is organized according to the territorial-hierarchical principle and encompasses three interrelated levels.

The **macro-level** is represented by creative regions and creative cities as spatial units in which the strategic conditions for the development of the creative economy, the specialization of the territory, and its positioning in the national and global space are formed. The concept of the "creative city" (Landry, 2000) emphasizes the role of governance and the urban environment in mobilizing creative potential. The "creative region" (Scott, 2006; Cooke, 2007) is a higher level of generalization, where inter-urban interaction and regional innovation systems play an important role.

The **meso-level** is represented by creative clusters and creative centers, which ensure the concentration of creative enterprises, cultural institutions, and educational organizations. The cluster functions based on the diversity effect: the decisive role here is played by the constant recombination of people, ideas, and competences of different origins. It is here that "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973) circulate – informal contacts that constitute the main channel for the diffusion of tacit knowledge and creative impulses.

The **micro-level** is represented by creative spaces and creative hubs – co-working spaces, studios, workshops, art residencies, and similar entities. It is here that the direct generation of ideas, implementation of creative projects, and development of entrepreneurial initiatives take place, constituting the essence of creative activity based on the realization of creative potential.

Their key property is the ability to generate spontaneous interactions during “face-to-face contact” (Glaeser, 2011), where new ideas are born.

Creative industries function across all three levels simultaneously: the same sector is present within regional strategies, within clusters, and within specific spaces. Both vertical links and horizontal and diagonal network interactions exist between these levels, reflecting the polycentric nature of the subsystem.

Interaction of the creative subsystem with other RSG subsystems

The interaction of the creative subsystem with other RSG subsystems is realized through a system of bilateral flows of different types:

- resource flows (human capital, financial resources, and infrastructural resources move from the RSG into the creative subsystem; in the opposite direction flow new jobs, tax revenues, and attracted investments);
- information and communication flows (the dissemination of knowledge and information: from the institutional subsystem come regulatory and legal conditions, managerial decisions, and strategic development priorities; from the productive subsystem come demands for innovative solutions and new creative products; from the creative subsystem come new cultural ideas and images (the image of the city, the cultural brand of the region, architectural symbols, etc.) which shape the creative environment of the territory and influence its socio-economic development);
- innovation and technological flows (the exchange of technologies, knowledge, and innovations between the creative economy and other RSG subsystems: the results of creative activity – design, architectural solutions, digital technologies, and IT developments – are used in production, thereby contributing to the modernization of production processes and increasing the value added of products);
- cultural and symbolic flows (a special type of interaction characteristic specifically of the creative subsystem of the RSG: from the cultural subsystem come historical and cultural heritage, traditions, local images, symbols, and identities, which serve as the resource base for the creation of creative products; from the creative subsystem come new cultural products and the cultural brand of the region, which strengthens its image, increases its attractiveness for creative professionals, tourists, and investors, stimulates the development of cultural tourism and creative entrepreneurship, and thereby contributes to the socio-economic development of the territory).

Feedback flows are directed from the system of effects back to the RSG, which gives the model a reflexive character: the results of the functioning of the creative subsystem become new conditions for its further development.

The creative subsystem functions in interaction with other RSG subsystems, each of which performs a specific role in the development of regional society and space.

The **demographic subsystem** ensures the formation of the region's human potential through processes of natural increase, migration, urbanization, and the age-sex structure of the population. The presence of a young, mobile segment of the population is a necessary demographic condition for the functioning of the creative economy, as it forms a reserve of creative personnel and ensures an influx of new ideas. Simultaneously, the development of creative industries enhances the region's attractiveness for youth and highly qualified specialists, restrains brain drain, and stimulates creative migration.

The **productive subsystem** (industry and the agricultural sector) generates demand for creative products and serves as an important environment for the formation and development of the creative economy, providing its material, technological, and economic prerequisites. The reciprocal influence is seen in how design solutions, technological innovations, marketing concepts, and digital products are utilized in production, thereby increasing its technological level and competitiveness.

The **social subsystem** (education and science, physical culture and sports, healthcare, recreation and tourism, social protection) shapes the region's creative capital through high-quality education, while social security creates conditions for the realization of non-standard ideas and the development of creative entrepreneurship. Regions with a developed social subsystem are more attractive for the residence and activities of creative professionals. Conversely, the development of the creative economy enriches the region's social subsystem by expanding the range of informal educational practices (master-classes, workshops, creative laboratories, etc.), stimulating new forms of cultural tourism, promoting the social mobility of youth, and fostering an innovative culture within the scientific community. It also contributes to job creation, increased social activity, and the formation of creative communities, positively impacting the region's social development.

It is fundamentally important to distinguish between the cultural subsystem of the RSG and the creative subsystem: the former is the foundation and prerequisite for the latter but is not identical to it. It is no coincidence that in the concept of the creative economy, **cultural industries were the primary basis**: the British DCMS model (1998) and early UNCTAD reports built it around cultural production – music, film, publishing, and fine arts. Only later was a broader range of sectors included. The **cultural subsystem** includes libraries, museums, archives, club-type facilities, the protection of cultural heritage, cultural-educational institutions, and other entities involved in the preservation, transmission, and non-commercial reproduction of culture. The creative subsystem, by contrast, ensures the transformation of cultural resources into new socio-economic value. Accumulated cultural potential forms the basis for creative activity and provides it with authenticity. In turn, the creative economy promotes the development of the cultural sphere by creating new cultural products, disseminating creative practices, supporting cultural initiatives, and expanding public access to cultural resources.

The **infrastructural-service subsystem** (transport and communication, housing and communal services, digital infrastructure, trade) ensures the mobility of resources, the exchange of information, and the interaction of creative actors. On the other hand, the creative economy stimulates infrastructural development through the creation of creative spaces, hubs, and cultural centers, the revitalization of urban areas, and the implementation of modern digital technologies into the region's infrastructure.

The **institutional subsystem** defines the legal framework and coordination mechanisms – the legal environment, the system of local self-government, civil society, and business culture. For instance, insufficient protection of intellectual property rights is a key structural constraint on the development of creative industries. Conversely, the creative economy initiates new forms of public-private partnership and fosters a culture of openness and innovation in governance.

The **ecological subsystem** shapes the quality of the natural environment, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the territory for residence and creative activity. Conversely, the creative economy contributes to the dissemination of environmentally oriented practices, the development of ecodesign, sustainable models of production and consumption, and the promotion of environmental values.

The financial-economic subsystem (banking sector, insurance market, stock market, budget system, venture financing) determines the possibilities for financing creative projects, developing creative entrepreneurship, and investing in creative industries. Simultaneously, the creative economy contributes to the diversification of the regional economy, the creation of new revenue sources, the development of small and medium-sized businesses, and the enhancement of the territory's investment attractiveness.

Functions and effects of the creative subsystem

Generalizing the approaches of UNCTAD (UNCTAD, 2022, 2024), UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/198 (UN, 2019), and scholarly research, we identify eight functions of the creative subsystem of the RSG. Each function is not an abstract definition of its role; rather, it directly generates specific effects (primary, secondary, and strategic) (Fig. 2). Primary effects (employment, human capital, cultural products, innovation) are direct and quantitatively measurable. They are the direct result of creative industry activities and manifest primarily within the production sphere and the labor market. Secondary effects (multiplier effect, cultural environment, spatial transformations) are indirect and arise as a consequence of the diffusion of the results of creative activity to other RSG subsystems. They have a multiplicative character and manifest in the transformation of the economic and spatial development of the territory. Strategic effects (image, competitiveness, regional identity, social resilience, sustainable regional development) are the most long-term in nature. They are associated with profound transformations of the region and determine its competitive position in the national and global space.

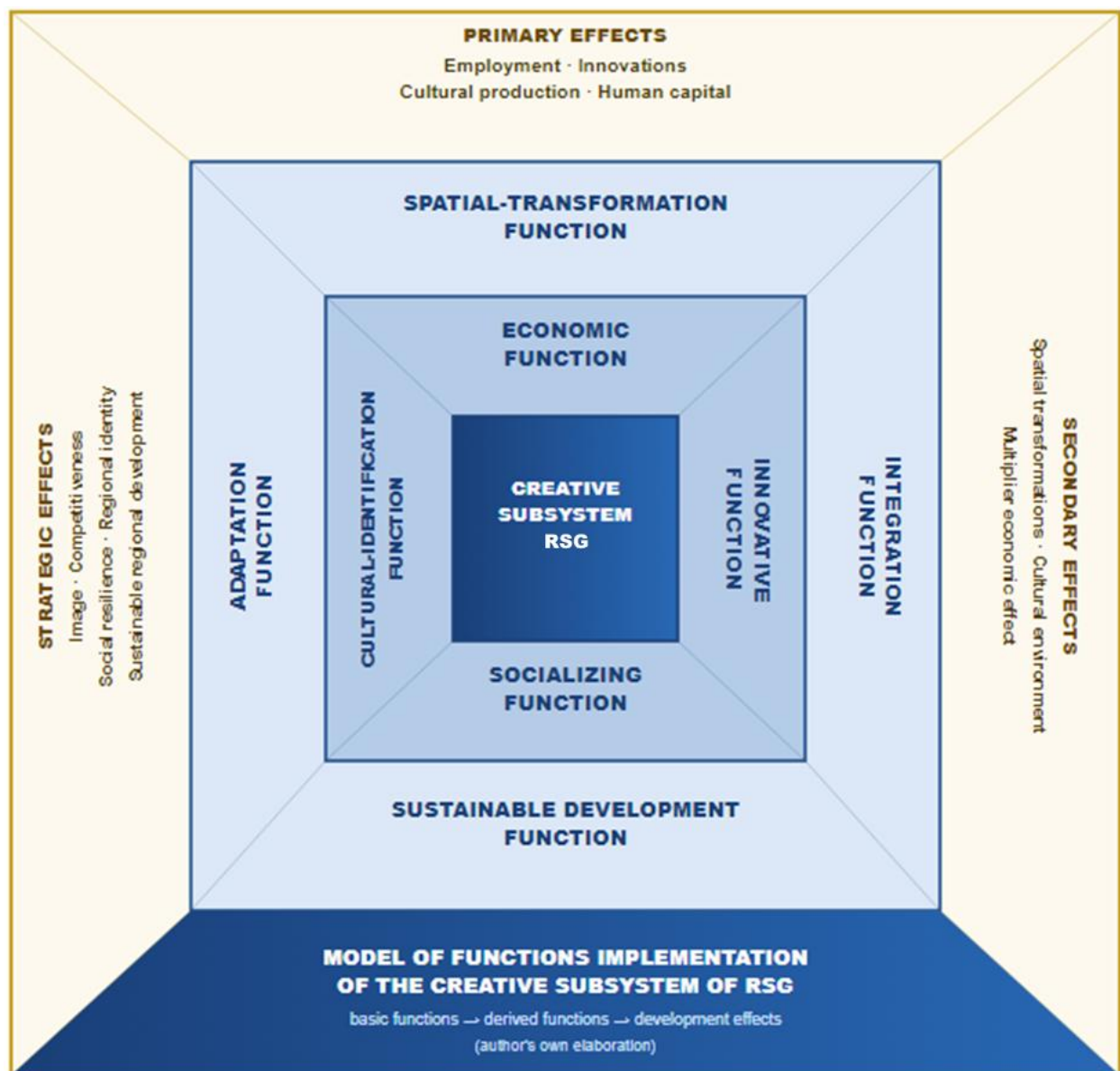


Figure 2. Model of Functions Implementation of the Creative Subsystem of RSG
(created by author)

The **economic function** consists in generating value added through the transformation of creative and cultural potential into a market product. The creative economy contributes to increasing **employment** levels: according to estimates by international organizations, creative industries provide nearly 50 million jobs worldwide. Approximately half of these workers are women, and these sectors employ more individuals aged 15–29 than any other sector (Datta et al., 2023). The development of creative industries facilitates the buildup of a region's **human capital** by attracting and retaining highly qualified specialists. The creative economy is characterized by a **high economic multiplier effect**: experts estimate that every job in the creative industries creates up to 1.9 jobs in adjacent sectors (Gutierrez-Posada et al., 2019). Other studies indicate that every \$1 spent in the creative sector generates \$2.5 in economic impact (IFC, 2021). Participation in the international trade of creative goods and services is of

particular importance – this aspect is central to the UNCTAD approach in assessing the role of the creative economy. Through the development of the creative subsystem, a region enhances its **competitiveness** – the ability to attract talent, investment, and tourists; creates new sources of revenue; stimulates the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); diversifies its economic base; and facilitates the transition from a resource-intensive to an intellectually oriented economy.

The **innovation function** manifests in the production of new ideas, solutions, and technologies that extend beyond the creative industries themselves and diffuse into other RSG subsystems. Creative industries serve as a source of both technological and social/organizational **innovations**, thereby increasing the region's overall innovation activity. The dissemination of creative activity results into other subsystems promotes digitalization and enhances the technological level of production.

The **socializing function** is associated with the formation, through creative practices and non-formal education, of specific qualities and creative competencies of the population: the capacity for non-standard thinking, creative collaboration, and the generation of new ideas, without which the creative economy is impossible. The implementation of this function contributes to the development of the region's **human capital**, enhances the social activity of the population, and fosters the formation of creative communities, while also opening new channels of social mobility, primarily for young people.

The **cultural-identification** function involves the preservation, reinterpretation, and transmission of local identity through modern creative forms. The result of this function is **cultural production** – a carrier of regional identity and a foundation for cultural tourism – and the enrichment of the inhabitants' **cultural environment**. New creative spaces, cultural events, and opportunities for creative participation and leisure, alongside cultural and event tourism, enhance the quality of the urban environment and the region's attractiveness for living and visiting. The creative subsystem transforms cultural heritage into a living resource, forming a recognizable territorial cultural brand. A region's **image** as a creative and dynamic territory is shaped through cultural events, iconic creative personalities, architectural objects serving as territorial symbols, and the region's reputation among professional communities. The creative economy strengthens **regional identity**, helping people feel a connection to their region through local cultural events, creativity rooted in the area's history and traditions, and shared experiences that unite residents.

The **spatial-transformational function** manifests in the physical and functional alteration of urban and regional space. Examples of such **spatial transformations** include the restructuring of the settlement system, changes in functional zoning, the formation of creative spaces and clusters, and other forms of the territorial organization of creative activity, as well as the revitalization of neglected areas.

The **integration function** ensures the connection between RSG subsystems through a system of resource, information-communication, innovation-technological, and cultural flows, where cultural capital is transformed into economic capital, social networks into innovation networks, and local identity into a regional competitive advantage. As previously noted, the creative subsystem serves as a distinctive **integration mechanism** that links various regional subsystems and facilitates their structural modernization. The synergy between subsystems imparts qualities to the RSG that no single subsystem possesses individually – a manifestation of the emergent nature of the socio-geosystem. Creative communities also act as active participants in civil society, initiating new forms of public-private partnership and fostering a culture of openness and innovation in governance.

The **adaptation function** involves increasing the RSG's capacity for structural restructuring in the face of crises and transformations. The realization of this function builds **social resilience** – the ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from stresses and shocks (Tverdokhlib, 2024). Social resilience is formed through participation in collective creative activities; cultural events and creative spaces become, according to Ray Oldenburg's concept, "third places" – informal spaces outside the home ("first place") and work ("second place"), where people voluntarily gather, communicate, and unite around shared interests, thereby strengthening social stability (Oldenburg, 1989).

The **sustainable development function** lies in the creative subsystem's contribution to the long-term balance of the region due to the lower resource intensity of production, orientation toward intangible assets, social inclusivity, and cultural diversity. Based on the *Concept of Sustainable Development of Settlements*, **sustainable regional development** can be defined as the socially, economically, and ecologically balanced development of a region aimed at creating its economic potential and a high-quality living environment for current and future generations. This is achieved through the rational use of resources (natural, labor, productive, scientific-technological, intellectual, etc.), technological re-equipment, restructuring of enterprises, and the improvement of social, productive, transport, communication-informational, engineering, and environmental infrastructures, as well as the preservation and enrichment of biodiversity and cultural heritage (Resolution of the Verkhovna..., 1999). Urban and design initiatives of creative communities promote "green" solutions and raise the environmental awareness of the population. All this forms a specific "creative" dimension of sustainable development, which, according to UNESCO's approach, may be regarded as the fourth pillar of sustainability alongside the traditional ones: economic (efficient management), environmental (environmental preservation), and social (human well-being and equality) (UCLG, 2011). This is precisely why UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/198 proclaimed 2021 the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, recognizing the creative subsystem as a tool for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2021).

In the context of Ukraine's post-war recovery, the hierarchy of creative economy effects is shifting: social resilience and regional identity are moving to the forefront as means to overcome the consequences of war, return displaced persons to normal life, and form a shared vision of the future. Culture, creativity, and intellectual labor are acquiring the function of **social restoration**. At the same time, the European integration vector opens access to the *Creative Europe 2021–2027* program (Creative Europe, 2021), *Horizon Europe* (European Commission, 2021b), and the instruments of the *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)* (European Commission, 2021a), thereby transforming post-war recovery into a window of opportunity for the structural modernization of the RSG.

External environmental factors

RSG and its subsystems function under the constant influence of the external environment:

- **Global challenges and sustainable development.** The UN 2030 Agenda directly links the development of culture and creativity to reducing inequality, sustainable economic growth, and the building of inclusive societies (UN, 2015). This strengthens the creative economy's position as a vital development priority, expands access to international funding, and orients development toward resource-efficient models.
- **State and regional policy** determine the legal and financial conditions for the functioning of creative industries. The existence of creative economy development strategies, small business support mechanisms, intellectual property rights protection, and cultural grant programs directly affects the scale and forms of creative activity in the region.
- **Digitalization of the economy** is one of the most powerful structural factors. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence tools, and remote collaboration instruments facilitate market entry for small creative enterprises while simultaneously exacerbating issues of fair remuneration for creative labor and copyright protection.
- **European integration processes** grant Ukraine access to the *Creative Europe 2021-2027* (Creative Europe, 2021) and *Horizon Europe* (European Commission, 2021b) programs, CCI development standards, and European partners and markets. This prompts legislative refinement, improved governance, and the development of support systems for culture and creativity.
- **Demographic transformations.** The shrinking youth population and the migratory outflow of specialists narrow the base for creative industry development. Conversely, the concentration of young, educated populations in large cities and towns creates favorable conditions for the local creative environments formation.

- **Post-industrial structural changes** are accompanied by an increasing share of the knowledge economy and service-oriented activities, which heightens the social demand for products of creative labor.
- **War and post-crisis transformations.** This is a specific factor for Ukraine, acting simultaneously as a threat and a catalyst for change. The destruction of infrastructure and forced displacement of the population have dealt a direct blow to the material base of the creative subsystem. However, the mobilization of society's creative potential, international solidarity, and the growing demand for cultural self-expression and identity preservation open new opportunities for creative economy development during recovery. Notably, the creative subsystem is capable of ensuring high-quality recovery at a faster pace than traditional capital-intensive sectors because it relies primarily on human and cultural capital and does not require the rapid mobilization of substantial financial resources.

Conclusions

The conducted study allows formulating the following conclusions.

First, the socio-geosystem interpretation provides a methodologically more appropriate basis for analyzing the creative economy than the sectoral approach. Considering it as an integrative mechanism that permeates all regional subsystems makes it possible to identify systemic interactions and effects that remain invisible in sector-based analysis. The principled distinction between the cultural and creative subsystems of the RSG allows for a more precise definition of the object of managerial influence.

Second, the internal structure of the subsystem is three-level: the macro-level (creative regions and cities), the meso-level (creative clusters and centers), and the micro-level (creative hubs and spaces). Between these levels there exist vertical, horizontal, and diagonal network interactions of a polycentric nature.

Third, the interaction of the subsystem with other RSG subsystems is realized through a system of bilateral resource, information and communication, innovation and technological, and cultural-symbolic flows. The presence of feedback flows gives the system a reflexive character and ensures a mechanism for the cumulative growth of the creative economy.

Fourth, the proposed integrated model of "function-mechanism-effects" makes it possible to overcome the artificial division between the description of functions and the enumeration of effects. The eight identified functions (economic, innovation, socializing, cultural-identification, spatial-transformational, integration, adaptation, and the sustainable development function) simultaneously serve as mechanisms of interaction between the creative subsystem and the RSG, and as generators of primary, secondary, and strategic effects.

Fifth, in the context of Ukraine's post-war recovery, social resilience and regional identity gain paramount importance as strategic effects of the creative economy. The European

integration vector opens opportunities for the structural modernization of the RSG through the Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, and ERDF programs. Since the subsystem relies on human and cultural capital rather than solely on material infrastructure, it can ensure qualitative recovery at a faster pace compared to traditional capital-intensive sectors. In the author's future research, it is planned to analyze the creative economy as an essential component for ensuring sustainable development and the transition to the implementation of the circular economy.

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Conflict of interest

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