



Article

Urbanization of Ukrainian Culture in the Context of Globalization: Trends and Challenges

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Abstract

The study aims to characterize the main trends in the urbanization of Ukrainian culture within the context of contemporary globalization transformations. The PRISMA methodological approach was employed to collect literature and research materials, involving a rigorous selection of academic sources through a screening process. Strict criteria were applied for the inclusion of sources relating to content, methodology, language, and time of publication. A total of 60 academic sources were selected. The results present the vital historical milestones of Ukrainian cultural urbanization, identify the impact of globalization on the contemporary process of urbanization in Ukrainian culture, and describe the influence of the war on these processes. It is noted that, as of 2024, 2,093 cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed due to Russian aggression. The conclusions summarize that urban culture in Ukraine has key features of evolution: multiculturalism, the presence of the Ukrainian element, prolonged Russification, and architectural and artistic development.

Keywords: Globalization, Historical Periods, Modernity, Ukrainian Culture, Urbanization, War.

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Introduction

Urbanization and globalization are two powerful forces driving the transformation of modern cultural spaces. Current urbanization processes triggered by migration have led to significant changes in cultural identity, traditions, and lifestyles. These processes are global and have also impacted Ukrainian culture. Accordingly, studying the influence of globalization on Ukraine's ongoing urbanization processes is an essential and relevant task. Contemporary researchers have noted the ambiguous nature of globalization (Posokhov, 2022; Zastavetska et al., 2019).

On one hand, it stimulates the development of new forms of cultural expression and provides access to modern technologies. From this perspective, cities become essential hubs of innovation and cultural exchange, where new art, music, and literature genres evolve (Yanchuk, 2024). Contemporary studies specifically address complex issues such as the development of globalization, strategies for ensuring sustainable development, the interaction between modernity and traditionalism, and the consequences of the rise of the network society (Danilyan et al., 2022; Mazurkevych et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024).

The growing interest in urban studies is one of the notable trends in contemporary academic discourse. However, this process is characterized by various challenges. The main challenge for Ukrainian culture lies in finding a balance between preserving its identity and adapting to a globalized world. A current analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals for Ukrainian cities is presented in the research by Blinova and Rodyk (2024). The specificities of Ukrainian cultural development within the context of contemporary globalization paradigms are explored in the work of Pylypiv and Oliinyk (2024).

Modern trends threaten the loss of authentic elements of national culture. In current globalization processes, cities also become hotbeds of problems that endanger society's ability to survive. These issues encompass a wide range of concerns, requiring the expertise of many specialists to resolve. Consequently, as noted in numerous studies, the further effective development of cities requires formulating cultural policy strategies that support the growth of national culture while integrating into the global cultural space (Habrel et al., 2024; Pylypiv & Oliinyk, 2024). Unsurprisingly, academic interest in cities is growing, and urban studies have become a prominent interdisciplinary research field over the past three decades.

Globalization, sacralization, and urbanization are actively shaping various countries. According to recent studies, urbanization (Fr. urbanization or Lat. Urbanus – urban) refers to the complex process of concentrating populations in large cities. A

vital feature of this process is the growing contrast between urban and rural areas. Meanwhile, urbanism (Fr. urbanisme) is a theory based on the concentration of material and spiritual culture in cities and the further development of urban environments. In modern society, the application of the concept of “urbanization” within the framework of “society’s globalization” has become quite relevant (Joshi, 2024; Lindner & Meissner, 2018). According to recent studies, the term “globalization” entered the contemporary scientific lexicon to interpret the main transformations and changes occurring in various spheres of social activity (Majhanovich & Zajda, 2024; Ray & Ojha, 2024). Consequently, in contemporary studies, globalization is understood as a complex, civilisation-wide process of synthesis and unification across different spheres of human activity (Marukhovska-Kartunova et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2023; Zajda & Whitehouse, 2024). This process can encompass various areas, including culture, politics, production, economy, finance, trade, and more (Aliexsieienko et al., 2024; AlShawaaf & Lee, 2024; Zhang, 2024). This way, globalization is a macro-trend of contemporary global development (Feng, 2023). As a result of globalization trends, culture becomes more interconnected, and there is active convergence and merging of various national cultures. At the same time, contemporary studies emphasize that urbanization processes in the context of globalization are characterized by systematized coverage of all spheres and subjectivity (Rimkus, 2024; Scrase et al., 2015). Accordingly, academic literature presents different viewpoints on the impact of these processes on culture (Shen, 2024; Shukla, 2024; Tevdovski, 2024).

Key Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanization and Cultural Identity in Ukraine and Beyond

The work of Stefanidou et al. (2024) identifies culture as a driver of sustainable urban development. Ilchenko’s (2020) research describes the role of global processes in the homogenization of urban cultural space. This study also addresses how globalization affects the identification and representation of the past in contemporary Central and Eastern European cities. Himka (2015) noted that the diverse historical experiences of modern Ukrainian regions have influenced the formation of unique political cultures and identities. Zastavetska et al. (2019) described the critical milestones in the development of urbanization in Ukraine, characterizing the main factors that influenced the formation and growth of cities. In their research, the authors identified the key factors that shaped cities in different historical periods. The conceptual foundations of the development and formation of Soviet cities are detailed in the research by Tsymbaliuk (2019). Certain milestones of Ukrainian intercultural bridges are presented in the study by Cherkes et al. (2021). Crawford’s (2017) work describes the main stages in establishing the socialist culture and highlights its primary

feature—standardization. Ivashko et al. (2024) described the distinctive features of the “provincial secession” style in Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century. These authors also characterized the main issues related to preserving monuments of this style during wartime (Ivashko et al., 2024). Saleh Alalawi and Elghonaimy (2024) described the role of certain social aspects in the development of urbanization. Zhou et al. (2022) characterized the potential and possibilities of post-industrial buildings for the contemporary development of Ukrainian cities. Their case study focuses on a thematic analysis of buildings in Lviv. Visual symbols that contribute to the identification of modern cities are analyzed in the work of Linda and Mychajłyszyn (2017).

Socio-cultural Transformations and Urban Challenges in Contemporary Ukraine

Socio-cultural transformations in modern Ukraine are characterized by the work of Skvorets and Kudinov (2021). The issue of identities in modern regional development is raised in the research by Melnychuk and Gnatiuk (2018). The historical foundations of multimobility in Ukrainian cities are presented in the study by Tsypko et al. (2024). Changes in Ukraine’s cultural space during the current Russo-Ukrainian war are described in the work of Slyvka et al. (2017). Artemenko et al. (2024) examine the impact of the war on contemporary globalization processes.

At the same time, other challenges faced by small cities in modern Ukraine are described in the work of Dmytrenko et al. (2019). Gnatiuk (2018) emphasized the importance of renaming streets in Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity. The research explores trends in the reconstructive activity of certain phases of the urban life cycle based on the study of contemporary Ukrainian cities (Pleshkanovska et al., 2024). The spread of active globalization in Ukrainian cities and the decline of rural areas are evidenced in the research by Plotnikova (2015), which justifies specific development strategies for Ukrainian villages. According to Posokhov (2022), the history of cities as a phenomenon of human civilization dates back thousands of years, but in his view, cities now fulfill a special function by embodying modernity.

Contemporary scholars attempting to find a general trend in urbanism have identified a noticeable growing interest in urban culture as one of the key directions. In particular, as evident from this review, more and more scholars in recent years have written in detail about controversial cultural aspects, cultural symbols, and urban identity. Although such problems are complex and multifaceted, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies that describe the main milestones of urbanization in Ukraine and its further challenges, considering current events. This research aims to address this task. Overall, this work will focus on a comprehensive analysis of the impact of

globalization on urban processes by involving a wide range of academic literature and methods of inquiry.

However, discussions of urban studies encompass much more than just urban problems. Accordingly, this research will focus on several key research questions. In particular, this work will analyze the historical milestones of urbanization processes in Ukraine, the current state of Ukrainian cities, and the key challenges that have arisen as a result of the war.

The study aims to describe the urbanization trends in Ukrainian culture, considering its historical development, the impact of globalization, and the challenges associated with the war, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of cultural transformation.

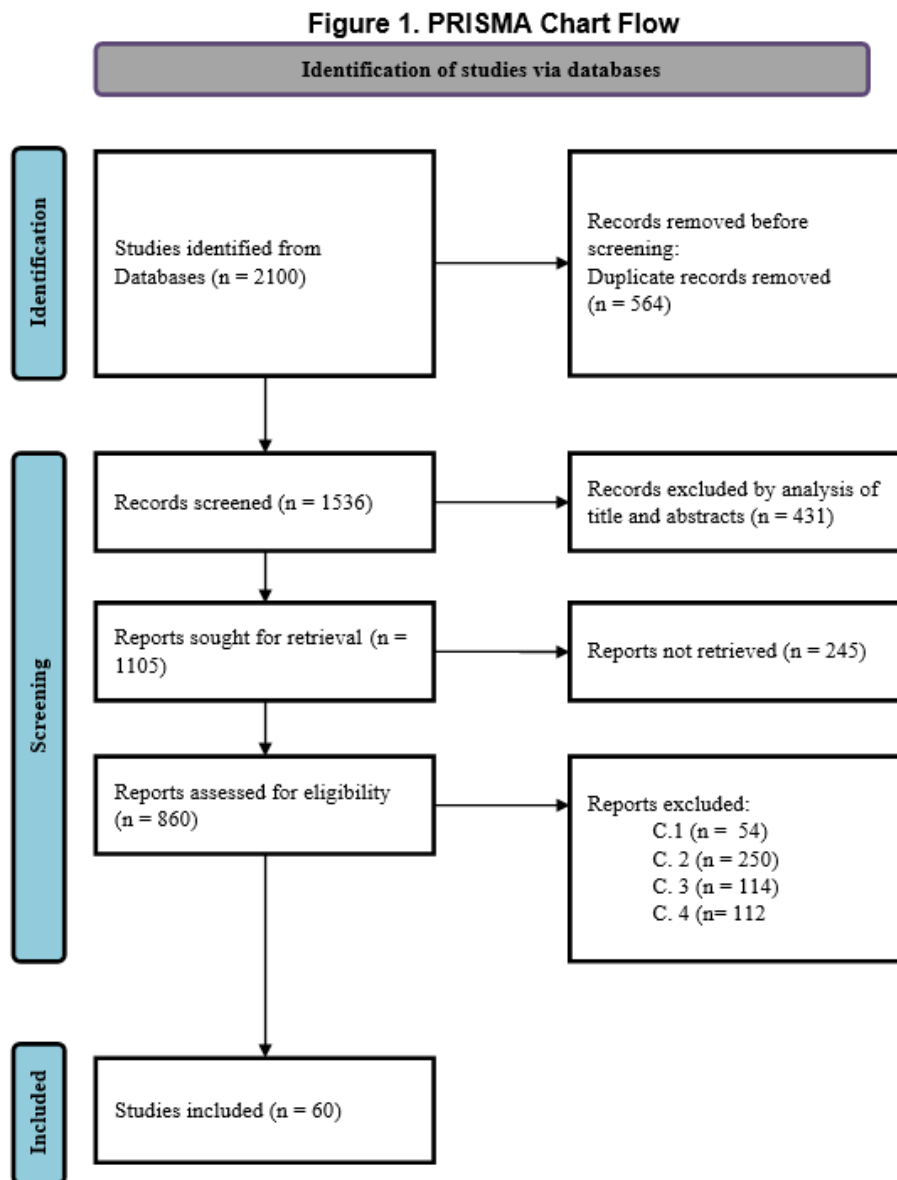
Methodology

This study falls within the category of explanatory quantitative research, aiming to accurately and systematically describe the urbanization of Ukrainian culture in the context of globalization changes. The study's descriptive nature also addresses questions such as: What is urbanization, and when and why does it emerge in Ukraine? The research's explanatory design necessitates applying various research methods, including systematic analysis of scientific sources and the comparative method.

The inclusion of diverse types of sources determined data collection for this explanatory study. The sample was formed by engaging a variety of academic literature, including monographs, chapters from collective monographs, scientific articles, conference materials, and more. All these sources were screened and analyzed before inclusion. The date range for literature selection spanned from 2014 to 2024 to ensure the inclusion of relevant research information from the past ten years.

The procedure for including literature and academic sources in this explanatory study followed the PRISMA approach. Specifically, academic databases were selected, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as "globalization," "Ukraine," "urbanization," "cities," and "war" were entered into the databases, yielding a total of 2,100 results. Subsequently, all duplicates were removed (-564 works). Based on the analysis of titles and abstracts, studies unrelated to the chosen research topic were excluded (431). See Figure 1. The next screening phase was conducted to identify and mark studies that did not fit the research theme as "ineligible." Studies by Russian and Belarusian scholars were also marked as "ineligible." The following inclusion criteria were then applied to the selected works:

1. Content: The study must characterize contemporary urbanization or globalization processes in the world or Ukraine.
2. Language of publication: Only English-language works were included in the study.
3. Peer-reviewed journals: Only studies published in peer-reviewed journals were included in the sample.
4. Date range: The selected studies were published between 2014 and 2024. (See Figure 1).



By applying the predefined criteria and using the PRISMA methodological toolkit, 60 sources were selected.

The data analysis was conducted in several stages. Initially, to carry out this descriptive study, it was necessary to identify the general trends regarding urbanization or globalization in academic studies. To achieve this, relevant tables were created using Microsoft Excel. Specifically, the first table included columns such as author, year of publication, characterization of urbanization or globalization processes in the context of culture, author's perspective, and conclusions. These data were then synthesized and analyzed to determine the critical characteristics of these processes.

The second table addressed components such as author, year of publication, development of Ukrainian cities, development of Ukrainian culture, the impact of globalization on Ukraine, and conclusions. This allowed for the systematization of data relevant to Ukrainian realities. Subsequently, a comparative analysis method was employed, enabling the comparison of the collected data with information found in other academic studies.

Results

Stages of Urbanization in Ukrainian Culture

The first cities on the territory of modern Ukraine began to form in the 4th–3rd millennium BCE, alongside the emergence and spread of the Trypillian culture. Proto-urban centers – settlements covering an area of approximately 100–340 hectares – have been discovered through archaeological excavations in Trypillia, Vesely Kut, Maidanetske, Myropillia, Volodymyrivka, Bily Kamin, and other locations. Unique artifacts, pottery, samples of proto-writing, and remains of advanced structures indicate the population's high material and spiritual culture at that time. However, in the academic world, the Trypillian culture is considered a proto-civilization that did not evolve into a fully-fledged civilization due to the absence of administrative structures, a distinct writing system, governance institutions, etc. Its legacy did not continue into subsequent periods, as urban life ceased for a long time. Significant urban centers emerged as Greek city-colonies, which became a source of ancient traditions in Ukrainian culture: Tyra, Chersonesus, Olbia, and Panticapaeum (Zastavetska et al., 2019). Active trade with the metropolis spurred economic growth, notably influencing pottery production, building techniques, and urban planning (Greek cities were planned). Cultural life also thrived – archaeological remains suggest the spread of religious beliefs, sculptures, and theatrical performances. Particular attention should be given to “Scythian gold”, the treasures of which became a subject of dispute between Russian authorities and Ukraine during the annexation of Crimea. Greek cities also influenced Ukrainian urban culture during the Byzantine period (as

a border zone between Rus and Byzantium); however, overall, the ancient legacy and its influence, especially the multiculturalism characteristic of Greek cities, had only a peripheral significance for the development of Ukrainian culture (Zastavetska et al., 2019).

Urbanization and cities became the foundation of cultural development during the medieval period. The history of Ukraine-Rus is intertwined with the development of “grads,” urban centers of individual tribes that later evolved into the centers of separate principalities. Urbanization led to population growth, the development of artisanal production, and the emergence of new architectural forms, including stone constructions of churches and temple buildings and defensive structures made of wood and stone and princely residences.

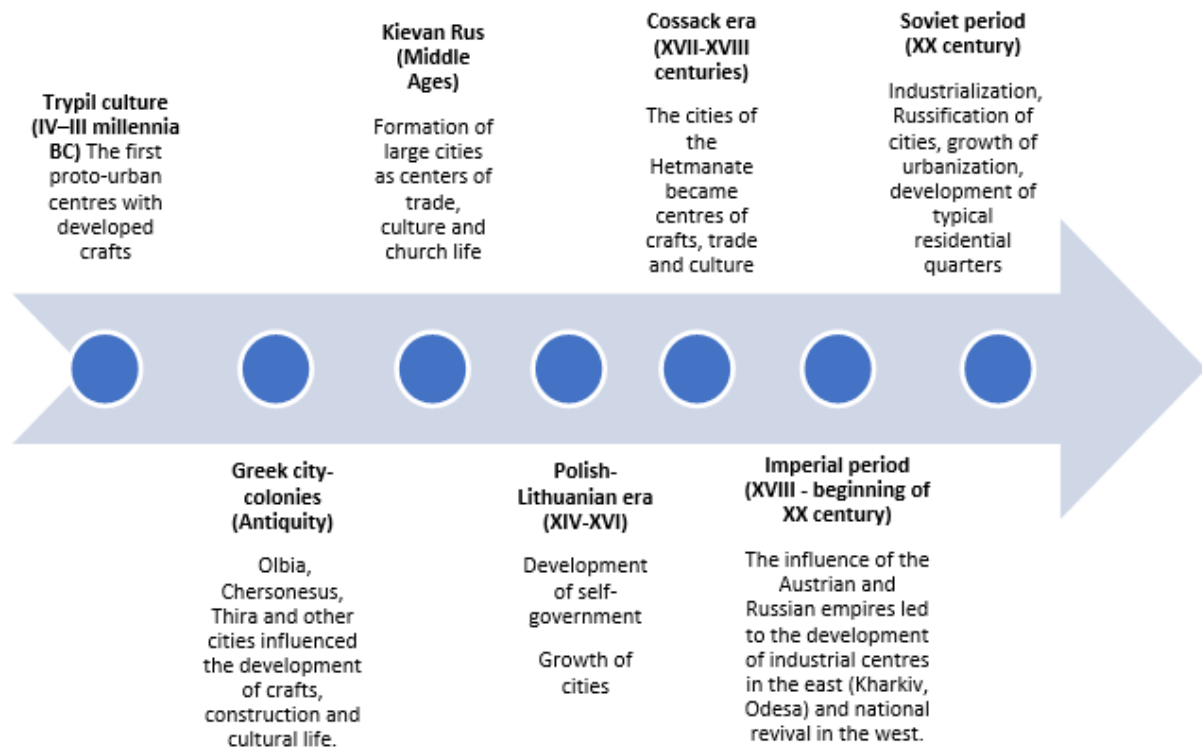
Urban life fostered the emergence of new rituals, administrative development, and participation in decision-making (via the institution of the “veche”). Kyiv, Chernihiv, Peremyshl, Volodymyr, Lutsk, Pereiaslav, Terebovlia, and other cities became centers of church life, where schools (mainly private ones for elite children) were established, chronicles were written, and suburban areas were actively developed. Unfortunately, unlike European countries, the cities of Rus have left almost no secular literary tradition. Thus, despite the development of literacy, little is known about the secular literature of the towns. At the same time, through international trade, the cities of Rus were relatively multicultural (Parshyn & Mereniuk, 2022). This is particularly evident in the case of medieval Lviv, which became a central hub of trade relations with a multinational population during this period (Mereniuk & Parshyn, 2024). However, Ukrainian cities did not have many urban residents for a long time, mainly due to the threat of military invasions.

The establishment of Polish rule over Ukrainian lands, the power of Lithuanian princes, and the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth led to the spread of Magdeburg law (self-government) in the cities, aligning them with European realities of the 14th–16th centuries. Urban development accelerated, and the network of towns expanded as the gradual colonization of Ukrainian Podillia, Bratslavshchyna, southern Kyiv region, Cherkasy, and other areas took place. At the same time, the focus on Catholicism led to the Ukrainian Orthodox community becoming a minority. This resulted in resistance led by brotherhoods – urban organizations that cared for people experiencing poverty and promoted Ukrainian education, Orthodox religious life, and book printing. Cities became centers of education, as Jesuit colleges and private schools in even small towns fostered cultural life (Zastavetska et al., 2019). The secular literary tradition documented urban history and everyday life. European

urban planning traditions led to the construction of stone (brick) town halls and market squares surrounded by stone buildings in nearly all cities (See Figure 2).

The urban culture of the Hetmanate era (17th–18th centuries) was a unique phenomenon, shaped by local religious traditions, the Cossack military system, trade, population migration, and cultural interaction with other nations and states. During the Cossack rule, cities (especially Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav) enjoyed a degree of political autonomy, and urban life was closely intertwined with the Cossack order, with the Cossack elite influencing the distinctiveness of the cities. Artisanal crafts (such as blacksmithing, pottery, weaving, iron, and wood processing) developed rapidly, and city fairs promoted cultural exchange—elements of European styles, Ukrainian Baroque, and local architectural traditions coexisted in architecture. Monasteries served as religious centers, where books were printed, and icons were created. The first higher education institutions were established, including the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Urban elites encouraged the development of music, literature, and theatrical art (such as the emergence of “oversteps”). Armenian, Jewish, and Greek communities also contributed to the development of urban crafts and trade (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Main Historical Stages of Urbanization in Ukrainian Culture



Ukrainian lands were incorporated into the Austrian and Russian Empires during the second half of the 18th century and the early 20th century, leading to

divergent urban cultural development. Under Russian rule, municipal governance was reorganized along Russian lines, causing cities to lose their self-government and come under centralized control. Cities such as Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odesa, and Katerynoslav (modern-day Dnipro) evolved into major industrial centers. The development of railway transport (since the 1860s) transformed Ukrainian cities into transport hubs. Workers (often brought from Russian territories) became a significant social stratum (Zastavetska et al., 2019). The Russification of intellectual life resulted in cities becoming predominantly Russian-speaking while the rural population remained Ukrainian-speaking. Monumental buildings such as universities, theatres, administrative buildings, and libraries were erected in the larger cities. Under Austrian rule, urban development also progressed. Although the Austrian authorities did not prohibit the Ukrainian language, cities were dominated by Polish and German ethnic groups. At the same time, urban culture experienced a national revival based on specific traditions of self-government, political life (the formation of the first Ukrainian political parties), and cultural development (literary, theatrical, civic, etc.). Although western Ukrainian cities did not become significant industrial centers, they also developed as hubs of production and labor due to the expansion of the railway network.

The collapse of the empires and the formation of the Soviet Union profoundly impacted urbanization and the cultural life of cities. Industrialization accelerated urbanization rates, with an influx of workers leading to significant Russification, and cities' lifestyles and appearance changed (Tsymbaliuk, 2019). The emergence of factories and plants transformed cities into industrial agglomerations. In the post-war years, extensive reconstruction of war-damaged cities modernized infrastructure. Cities grew through the construction of new standardized residential quarters. Typical schools, hospitals, and kindergartens were also built (Tsymbaliuk, 2019). Urban planning was generally based on functionalist principles, leading to simple, rational architectural forms. Urban culture took on both formal and informal expressions. At the center of formal cultural life was the Soviet paradigm of socio-political development promoted through cultural centers. Cinema, theatre, new schools, vocational colleges, and universities became important educational and scientific institutions. Soviet modernism became the dominant style in urban art and architecture (Skvorets & Kudinov, 2021). Even after the collapse of the USSR, certain cultural development paradigms continued into the early years of independent Ukraine.

The Impact of Globalization on Ukrainian Urban Culture: The Russian-Ukrainian War and Urban Cultural Life

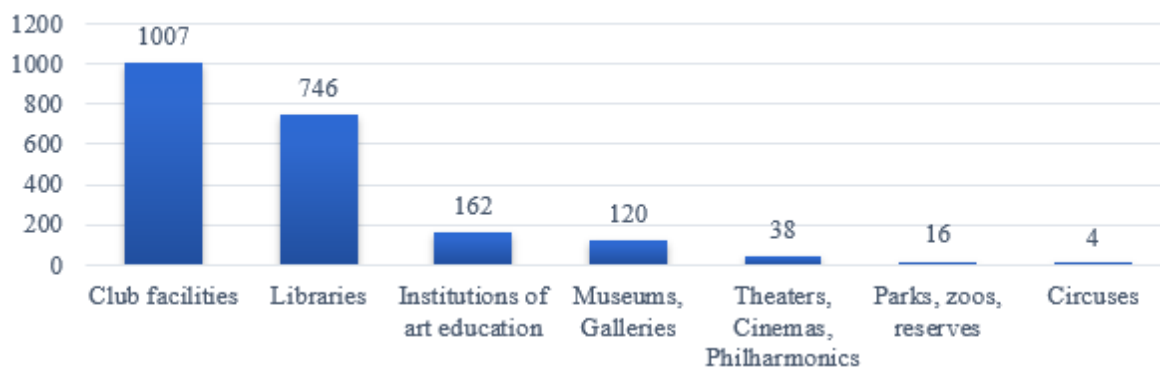
In the current stage of cultural development, globalization plays a crucial role. This process fosters the search for new ideas, the exchange of creative concepts, the integration of specific values, and the active circulation of cultural products between individual countries and across continents. In such circumstances, Ukrainian urban culture has been transformed, incorporating contemporary trends in popular music, cinema, and literary festivals and events (Habrel et al., 2024). As a result, Ukrainian artists can showcase their works on international platforms. Cross-cultural projects have also been developed, introducing Ukrainian culture in interaction with other global cultures. Urbanization has contributed to the creation of new forms of art in cities. This growth includes the emergence of new buildings (in contemporary European and American styles), new art spaces, educational institutions for children, galleries, museums, and venues for festivals. Urbanism, characterized by a fast-paced lifestyle and eclecticism in style, has shaped modern artistic forms: performances, installations, and graffiti art, among others. It is important to note that the digital evolution of communication tools has significantly deepened the globalization and urbanization processes. This development influences all aspects of public life, including the dissemination and perception of cultural heritage. Social media, streaming platforms, and other technological innovations offer new opportunities for artistic interaction at various levels and stages (Habrel et al., 2024). On the one hand, this process has elements of democratization, while on the other, it expands the audience for Ukrainian artists.

At the same time, globalization has also created specific challenges. On the one hand, the influx of people into significant cities (Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa) poses risks to the social life of small towns and rural areas. Another challenge is preserving Ukrainian identity amid the globalization of cultural processes. For a long time, the danger to Ukrainian urban culture was Russification, as well-funded meetings, conferences, seminars, concerts, exhibitions, etc., carried a distinct Russification agenda. On the other hand, the intensive urbanization processes, despite Western influences, have also heightened interest in traditions, folklore, and national heritage, which have counterbalanced cultural homogenization. Urban art has begun experimenting with national symbols and various aspects of Ukrainian identity (Pylypiv & Oliinyk, 2024). European integration has played a role in the development of urban culture. According to the decisions of the Council of Europe, cities and urban landmarks have a special status, and infrastructure development must align with the historical urban

environment. Installations, cultural objects, and ethnic exhibitions fit the broader European motto, “Unity in Diversity!”

Russian aggression against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated in February 2022, has had a profound impact on all aspects of Ukrainian society, including the cultural development of cities. Several cities have fallen under occupation, many urban centers have suffered significant destruction, and some have been entirely obliterated by Russian airstrikes (Orlova et al., 2024; Rodinova et al., 2024). Large-scale internal and external migrations have affected urban demographics, affecting everyday life. Significant blows have been dealt to infrastructure, with museums, libraries, universities, theatres, galleries, and other cultural sites being damaged or destroyed, creating a cultural vacuum. As of September 2024, 2,093 cultural institutions have been affected, not including heritage sites (see Figure 3). The most numerous damaged cultural institutions comprise club establishments (48.2%).

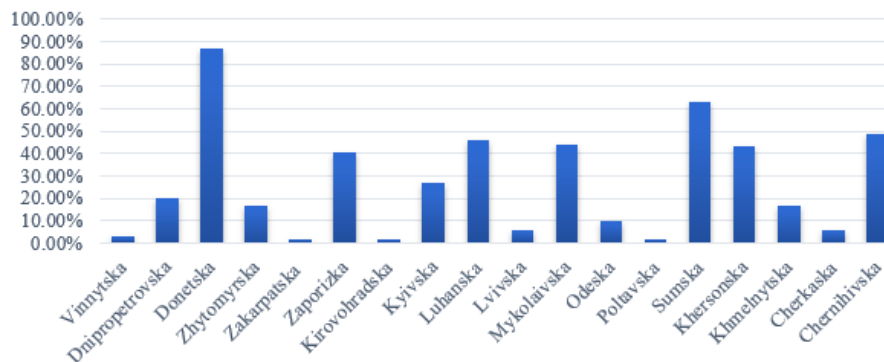
Figure 3. Number of Cultural Institutions in Ukraine (as of September 2024)



Source: Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine (2024).

The most affected cultural institutions are located in the Donetsk, Kherson, Kharkiv, and Kyiv regions, as well as in the city of Kyiv, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, and Zaporizhzhia regions (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of Damaged Cultural Institutions in Ukraine (by Regions)



Source: Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine (2024).

On the other hand, the war has heightened the sense of justice, leading to new forms of solidarity. Artists, individually or collectively, support cultural initiatives and organize charitable events to preserve the national heritage. Thus, while Russian military aggression has caused severe physical destruction, it has also strengthened among Ukrainians (including artists) an understanding of the importance of cultural self-awareness, which is a critical component in the formation of national values.

A crucial aspect of the present moment is the potential to consider the post-conflict period, which will become an essential phase in restoring Ukrainian cultural life. The rebuilding of cities will foster cultural transformations, providing opportunities to adopt new, less conventional architectural forms and to combine traditional and modern elements.

Physical reconstruction will also involve the creation of new cultural spaces that will meet the needs of a digitized society, incorporating Ukrainian ethnic styles and more. International cooperation can be seen as a significant tool for realizing such initiatives, as establishing the necessary contacts with foreign cultural institutions will attract the required financial resources and implement specific cultural projects with world-class professionals. (The war has also left its mark on European consciousness; notably, the famous Banksy added his graffiti to support the Ukrainian people.) However, infrastructural damage and the loss of many cultural heritage sites remain pressing issues. Additionally, there is a need to help Ukrainian refugees who have found themselves detached from their cultural environment. Support from both Ukrainian and international institutions is necessary to enable them either to return home or to integrate into new urban life abroad.

Discussion

Given the study's overarching aim, namely the analysis of the urbanization of Ukrainian culture in the context of contemporary globalization trends, it has been determined that the development of Ukrainian culture at this stage faces several challenges. Specifically, the first task involved analyzing the historical periods of urbanization within Ukrainian culture. Accordingly, the research results indicate that the primary stages of urbanization include the periods of the Trypillia culture (IV–III millennium BCE), Antiquity (development of Greek proto-cities), Kyivan Rus, where the formation of large cities (Kyiv, Chernihiv, Pereiaslav) as centers of trade, culture, and pastoral life occurred, the Polish-Lithuanian period (XIV–XVI centuries), which influenced the emergence of self-governance and the growth in the number of cities, the Cossack period (XVII–XVIII centuries), during which the cities of the Hetmanate became centers of crafts, trade, and culture, blending European styles with local

traditions, the Imperial period (XVIII–early XX century), characterized by the influence of the Austrian and Russian empires, and the Soviet period (XX century), notable for industrialization, Russification of cities, increased urbanization, and the development of typical residential districts and modernist architecture. These findings correlate with the study by Zastavetska et al. (2019), which identifies similar stages in the urbanization process of Ukraine, including the emergence of Greek colonies, the establishment of ancient Rus cities, the strengthening of urban development under the influence of factory production, the development of cities influenced by industrialization, and the contemporary period of urban settlement development. The results also highlight that Ukrainian cities within the empires experienced significant impacts from introducing urbanization trends. In Russian contexts, cities transformed into industrial centers and experienced Russification, whereas citizens had opportunities for cultural and national development in the Austrian Empire. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the collapse of empires and the formation of the Soviet Union significantly impacted urbanization and the cultural life of cities. In particular, it has been established that industrialization increased urbanization rates, and the influx of workers led to marked Russification, altering the population's lifestyle and the appearance of cities. The emergence of factories and plants made cities more industrialized—industrial agglomerations. However, after the dissolution of the USSR, the dominant influence of Russian culture persisted for an extended period, while Ukrainian culture found itself in an informal position in Ukrainian cities. The challenges of war have intensified the significance of the Ukrainian element in contemporary culture. Modern researchers studying the historical foundations of urbanization have indicated that cities have always promoted individualization and isolation; however, their scale and large populations facilitated self-expression (Posokhov, 2022). They contributed to the formation of individuality and the construction of identity as distinct and atypical.

The next task involved determining the impact of globalization on the urbanistic processes of culture. It has been established that when examining the search for general trends or directions in urban studies, one of the key events is the growing interest in urban culture. This is corroborated by the work of contemporary scholars (Marukhovska-Kartunova et al., 2024; Palamarchuk, 2024; Potlogea, 2018). In particular, an increasing number of researchers describe various discursive and cultural practices, the symbolic space of the city, and the issue of national identity (Potlogea, 2018; Shkola, 2023). Such questions are quite complex and contentious, as they are all synthesized from a perspective of plastic subjectivity. This occurs because individuals may perceive and easily alter the angle from which they evaluate

themselves and the surrounding world. However, without such testimony, it is impossible to adequately characterize the vibrant Ukrainian urban culture's interpretation. The results of this study correlate with the work of Anestis and Stathakis (2024), which indicates that urbanization is becoming a global phenomenon that is occurring rapidly, and no country can escape this trend. The study of urban representation in the era of globalization cannot be limited to specific external markers (Pavlov et al., 2024; Posokhov, 2022; Sayed, 2023). Accordingly, the symbolic urban space plays an important role, representing a distinctive city element with a symbolic world of signs, architecture, and landscapes. In the modern era, despite the popularity of 'mass culture' in huge cities, there is a constant search for their 'individual' culturally relevant 'face' (Posokhov, 2022). Thus, the contemporary city possesses various symbols that have developed in the consciousness of its inhabitants and visitors. These processes are synthesized based on modern technologies and are intertwined with diverse stereotypes and symbols, emotional reactions, and so forth (Iskakova, 2024; Shestopal et al., 2017). All these reflections also correlate with the results of this study.

The final task involved determining the current state of urbanization in Ukraine and characterizing the main challenges. Contemporary researchers have also noted that urbanization is currently developing intensively. Specifically, according to the United Nations, by 2030, 60% of the world's population will live in cities, with one in three residing in towns with at least half a million inhabitants (Posokhov, 2022). This correlates with the obtained results. Consequently, urban dwellers, including Ukraine, constitute a significant majority of the population in Europe today. However, this is not merely about quantitative data. According to some scholars, by the end of the 20th century, the typical 'non-urban' lifestyle, in a sense, ceased to exist (Posokhov, 2022). Thus, cities now play a crucial role as innovation centers, particularly in terms of exchanging ideas and experiences.

However, cities are also becoming clusters of problems that threaten the sustainable development of society. The range of these problems can vary. Accordingly, the final task of the research involved characterizing the main issues of contemporary cultural urbanization, considering the military realities. In this regard, the results demonstrate that alongside military destruction, pressing threats remain, including the potential for further Russification of Ukrainian urban culture and the decline of cultural life in small towns. The research by Anestis and Stathakis (2024) highlights other issues, including pollution, poverty, and climate change, which require effective urban planning and environmentally sustainable management of cities.

However, this research has certain limitations, particularly in selecting scientific literature and collecting primary data. Specifically, the study primarily includes English-language and, in some cases, Ukrainian-language works. However, works written in other languages have not been included, meaning that valuable information in these works has not been incorporated. Simultaneously, the geographical focus presents a limitation. Consequently, future research will primarily focus on a comprehensive study of European urban processes and undertake a comparative analysis of Ukrainian and European urbanization processes. Despite these limitations, this study is characterized by its scientific novelty, which implies a comprehensive approach to the issue of the impact of globalization on urban processes in Ukraine through the lens of historical understanding.

Conclusions

The development of urban culture in Ukraine has a long history, from antiquity to the present day. The accumulated cultural experience—often multicultural or even Russified—has been intertwined with characteristic architectural forms, European styles, and traditional folk art. National life has also transformed within musical, literary, and artistic traditions. Since gaining independence, this legacy has influenced urban life, merging with the forces of globalization. Cultural life has manifested in organizing artistic events, literary conferences, exhibitions, theatrical performances, installations, and other contemporary forms of creative expression. Digitization has also played a significant role, enabling the presentation of Ukrainian cultural achievements to an international audience while actively adopting existing international experiences. A considerable challenge for Ukrainian society as a whole has been Russian aggression, which has profoundly impacted the cultural life of Ukrainian cities. The destruction of infrastructure and cultural monuments and the loss of control over numerous cultural heritage sites pose severe threats to the preservation of national identity. The prospects for the further reconstruction of urban cultural life are intrinsically linked to the restoration of cities, the emergence of new architectural forms, and the creation of artistic spaces, among other factors. International cooperation could serve as a vital tool for such reconstruction, facilitating the necessary financial resources and ideas for further integration of Ukrainian cultural heritage into the international context.

Considering this study's potential methodological limitations, promising avenues for future research include engaging with a broader range of scholarly literature written in various languages. Additionally, a pertinent direction for further exploration is the in-depth study of European urban processes and the comparative analysis of the Ukrainian model of urbanization with its Western European counterparts.

Conflicts of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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