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Ethnocultural Factor of The Formation of Inclusion within The Spatial Boundaries of United Territorial Communities and Districts of Ukraine

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Abstract: According to the Constitution, Ukraine is a unitary state, and the Ukrainian people are Ukrainian citizens of all nationalities, which indicates the ethnic diversity of the country. In this regard, the question of the role of the ethnocultural factor in creating an inclusive environment within the spatial boundaries of newly formed, in the process of decentralization reform, united territorial communities (UTCs) and districts acquires scientific relevance and practical significance. This problem is primarily important for the UTCs and districts of Eastern Ukraine and the Transcarpathian, Chernivtsi, Odesa regions, where Russian, Hungarian, Romanian, Moldovan, Bulgarian and Gagauz minorities live compactly. To implement the goal and objectives of the study, were the sequence of the spread of inclusion was tracked, with the identification of factors restraining it, the state of inclusion at the individual, communities, district levels was analyzed, the essence of inclusive development as a process and result in economic, social, political, and environmental dimensions was characterized. A conclusion was drawn about the significant role of the ethnocultural factor in the formation of the civic identity of Ukraine, the creation of inclusion within the spatial boundaries of UTCs and districts.

1. Introduction

The significant role of the ethnocultural factor in the socio-economic, political, and spiritual and cultural development of sovereign Ukraine is associated with the compact settlement within its territorial borders of significant groups of ethnic minorities such as Bulgarians, Moldovans, Gagauz, Romanians, Hungarians, and Russians, who can be defined as certain ethnic enclaves [Pavlov, 2009, 220]. Dnistrovsky (2001, 18) ranked the regions according to the index of ethnic mosaicism of the rural and urban population. According to his calculations, the highest index of ethnic mosaicism of the rural population is in Odesa (0.64), Chernivtsi (0.45), Donetsk (0.45), Luhansk (0.44), Zaporizhia (0.43) regions, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (0.57). It is lowest in Volyn (0.02), Ivano-Frankivsk (0.02), Ternopil (0.02), Lviv (0.03), Vinnytsia (0.04), Chernihiv (0.04) and Cherkasy (0.05) regions, while the ethnic mosaic index of the rural population of Ukraine as a whole is 0.25. For the urban population, this indicator is 0.48.

Almost 20 percent of the population of Chernivtsi region is made up of Romanians and Moldovans, which is two-thirds and a quarter of their total number in Ukraine, respectively. The Romanian population of the region is concentrated in Gertsaiivs'kyi (90 percent of the total population), Hlybotskyi (60 percent) and Storozhynets'kyi (40 percent) districts. In Novoselytskyi district, 65 percent of its residents are Moldovans (the names of the districts are given taking into account the district-level structure of the administrative-territorial organization of the region in the pre-reform period). The ethno-territorial specificity of Transcarpathia is that it is home to almost all the Hungarians of the republic, whose share is 12.1 percent of the total population of the region. Of these, approximately 60 percent are evenly and compactly settled in rural areas. The majority of the Bulgarian and Gagauz population of Ukraine lives in Odessa region. Before the formation of new districts, their number in Bolhrad district was 83 percent of the total population [Pavlov, 2009, 221–222]. Currently, a considerable number of Ukrainian and Moldovan people live within this district.

Analysis of ethnogeographic parameters of ethnic minorities and the configuration of newly created administrative-territorial units during the decentralization reform showed that the ethnic minority population in Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi and Odessa regions was given the opportunity to organized territorial communities in which they constitute the majority. At the same time, studies have shown that implementing this approach in newly created administrative districts was not easy, given the officially defined criteria, the politicization of the issue and the relatively high degree of mosaic settlement of ethnic groups. Therefore, the ethnogeographic factor was only partially taken into account when forming new administrative districts and choosing district centers (Dnistrianskyi et al., 2024, 395).

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the ethnocultural factor is considered in terms of predominantly national and ethnic identity, especially when it comes to border areas. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 brought to the surface a number of traumas while creating new ones. The process of Ukrainization after the collapse of the Soviet bloc was already fraught with challenges related to the diverse ethnocultural composition of the country (Topidi, 2024, 1). Although modern Ukrainians are clearly the majority in their country, they continue to perceive themselves as a minority in terms of fundamental cultural identification (Denysenko 2019, 173). The incomplete transition to full-fledged statehood in terms of diversity management is further illustrated by the lack of political responsibility assumed by successive governments after 1991 towards the ethnocultural minorities living in Ukraine (Topidi, 2024, 1).

The discrepancy between the current state borders of Ukraine and neighboring states and the ethnographic boundaries of the actual residence of their indigenous peoples in the

geographical space of the border region arouses interest in studying the Ukrainian ethnographic border region, the image of which is formed primarily from the national identity of its mixed population, which is directly related to the history, language, material and spiritual culture, religion, and interethnic and interconfessional relations of the inhabitants of the Ukrainian border region. Thanks to the formation of the national identity of the population of the border Chernihiv-Siver region, it was possible not only to liberate a significant part of the territories temporarily occupied in February – March 2022, including Chernihiv region, but also to strengthen a firm faith in the victorious end of this war and in the restoration and development of a prosperous post-war Ukraine (Rendyuk, 2024, 66, 81). That is why, for the final victory over the Russian aggressor and the restoration of the unity of the Ukrainian state, it is necessary to use not only the existing military, geopolitical, diplomatic, political, economic, financial, but also sacred-spiritual, ethno-cultural factors (Fihurnyi and Shakurova, 2023, 41).

However, this does not eliminate the need for a scientific, political and legislative solution to the problem of the correlation of ethno-cultural and national identity of Ukrainian citizens. At one time, Ukrainian lawyers and political scientists proved the need to reform ethno-national legislation, eliminate its declarative, contradictory and conflict-generating norms, and established that the adoption of many specialized laws on the protection of the rights of national minorities was blocked due to the lack of a concept of state ethno-national policy (Dudchenko et al., 2021, 51, 59). Investigating the interrelation of social, political, economic and ethnic processes in the Ukrainian-Romanian borderland in the context of the proximity of the European Union (EU) and regional historical heritage, Józwiak (2014, 27) concluded that phenomena such as border infrastructure (and its impact on the local landscape), visa policy, local cross-border relations and cooperation – can be seen as part of broader processes affecting the eastern borders of the European Union as a whole and are consequences of the catastrophic economic situation in Ukraine – unemployment, low wages, labour migration. As for the issues of the ethnic composition of the population, language use, they primarily have a regional and local context.

While a few small minorities have retained some institutional support and discursive presence, the once very large group of ethnic Russians has ceased to be publicly presented and perceived in society as clearly distinct from the main mass of Ukrainians. At the same time, citizens of Ukraine differ significantly in their ethnocultural practices and ethnolinguistic identifications, so Ukraine certainly remains ethnoculturally diverse, and this definition seems more appropriate than “multiethnic” (Kulyk, 2022, 299).

Ethnocultural identification is one of the spatial and territorial identifications of the population of Ukraine. Preserving national unity is an extremely difficult task, especially for those state entities that have regained their independence and are subject to hostile influence. One of the important components of collective unity is civic (national) identity and territorial cohesion. It is about the specifics of the integration of individuals into a civil community, through their awareness of their belonging to it. Each person has a variety of statuses, performs a whole range of social roles, and is part of or identifies with loosely connected groups that often conflict with each other. It is precisely civic identity, mediating institutional norms, that regulates interpersonal and intergroup interactions on the basis of generally accepted stable values that are important for national unity (Riznyk, 2022).

Ukraine is struggling to define the qualitative content of its national identity. To what extent should the Ukrainian nation be understood in political and territorial terms? To what extent should the Ukrainian nation be grounded in ethnicity and culture? These are central themes of debate in contemporary Ukraine. The related question is obscured by the civic/ethnic dichotomy, which focuses attention on the contradiction between civic and ethnic identity rather than on the conflict over what type of civic or ethnic identity a nation should aspire to. Indeed,

in the Ukrainian case, the question of what, or rather whose, ethnicity and culture should underlie the Ukrainian nation is more important than the question of the relative priority of civic and ethnic identity. It is necessary to pay more attention to the fact that national identities are not only a matter of exclusion and opposition, but also of inclusion and comparison (Shulman, 2004, 35, 39).

National Ukrainian identity, according to the legislation of Ukraine, is “a person’s persistent awareness of belonging to the Ukrainian nation as a distinctive community, united by a name, symbols, geographical and ethnosocial origin, historical memory, a complex of spiritual and cultural values, in particular the Ukrainian language and folk traditions” (On the Basic Principles of State Policy in the Sphere of Establishing Ukrainian National and Civic Identity).

“The problem of the population identifying themselves as Ukrainians, in particular by region, exists, and its solution requires permanent comprehensive actions aimed at a long-term result in achieving unity in Ukrainian society by overcoming contradictions of a socio-cultural, linguistic, and regional nature” (Strategy for the Establishment of Ukrainian National and Civic Identity for the Period Until 2030).

The results of nationwide public opinion polls in May 2023 indicate that the absolute majority of respondents (94 percent) are proud to be citizens of Ukraine (Effectiveness of the Implementation of State Policy in the Sphere of Establishment of Ukrainian National and Civic Identity). Also, the absolute majority of respondents (81 percent) identify themselves with the Ukrainian cultural tradition, and this figure has increased to 76 percent among residents of the East compared to 2006, when it was 51 percent (Identity of Ukrainian Citizens: Trends in Change). Having reviewed Ukraine's international obligations and national legislation in the field of national minority protection, with an emphasis on existing problems in legislation and practice, foreign researchers, taking into account the circumstances related to the participation of minorities in the life of Ukraine, in particular in matters of consultations, elected bodies and the consequences of administrative reform, and analyzing the provisions of the Law on National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine in the context of international standards in the field of minority rights, note that some of the complexities of the minority rights regime in Ukraine, in particular those related to the problem of finding a balance between the promotion of the Ukrainian language as the only state language and the use of Russian and other languages, still persist. This dynamic has often led to the politicization of language issues with polarizing consequences. Meanwhile, the participation of national minorities in these debates – and more generally in the development of laws and policies on issues affecting them – has been limited (Prina and Pentassuglia, 2023, 880–881).

In ethnoculturally diverse countries, to which Ukraine belongs, the ethnocultural phenomenon and social aspects of human life and the nature of their functioning depend on the specific conditions of development of a particular society (Kolesnichenko, 2021, 14). In this regard, the experience of China as a multinational country facing dual problems arising from ethnic identity and folk-cultural adaptation is instructive. Chinese scientists conducted a cross-sectional survey of 372 residents of multi-ethnic border areas of Yunnan during July–August 2024, using the ethnic identity scale, social distance questionnaire, social support scale, and revised socio-cultural adaptation scale, in order to measure ethnic identity, social distance, social support, and folk-cultural adaptation. The results of this study revealed a positive relationship between ethnic identity and folk cultural adaptation, partly mediated by social distance (Hai et al., 2025). In recent years, due to historical, natural, economic and other reasons, the spaces that carry and display ethnic cultures have been significantly damaged. As a result, the ethnic and rural characteristics of ethnic villages have rapidly disappeared. In response to these problems, the Chinese government has carried out pilot work on the protection

and development of ethnic minority villages and adopted the “Master Plan for the Protection and Development of Ethnic Minority Villages” for implementation (Gao et al., 2024).

In Ukraine, considerable attention was paid to the role of the ethnocultural factor in the inclusive development of local communities during the implementation of the decentralization reform, which primarily contributed to social cohesion and ethnocultural diversity in border regions (Osland et al., 2022, 122).

In this sense, the issue of the formation and reproduction of social cohesion at the level of new local communities in Ukraine – united territorial communities – has become of great relevance. The focus of researchers’ attention is on ethnically heterogeneous newly created communities, on whose territory representatives of different ethnic groups live compactly (Deyneko, 2021, 103).

The above-mentioned issues are relevant to the topic of inclusive development of UTCs and districts, by which a number of publications have been published in recent years: on the inclusiveness of these socio-spatial formations (Pavlov et al., 2022); the paradigm of inclusive territorial development of Ukraine in the context of decentralization reform (Pavlov Jr, 2023); of the capacity, sectoral and socio-spatial orientation of inclusive development of rural-urban agglomerations (Pavlov et al., 2024); theoretical and methodological principles and practical aspects of inclusive development of rural-urban agglomerations of Ukraine (Pavlova, 2025).

Certain aspects of socio-spatial inclusion are highlighted in the works of foreign scholars, in particular regarding the relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals and inclusive development (Gupta et al., 2014); the characteristics of social integration as a universal goal aimed at achieving an inclusive society, as a process that allows citizens to participate in making decisions that affect their lives, as a result that ensures the reduction of inequalities, the elimination of any forms of isolation and discrimination, and the achievement of social justice and unity (Dugarova, 2015); need to realize the multi-spectral nature of “inclusion” (Hospes and Clancy, 2011).

The factor of involving different segments of the population in productive employment as of condition for ensuring an adequate standard of living and creating inclusive well-being is also being paid attention to by influential international institutions and organizations.

Thus, the World Bank associates inclusive development with sustainable rapid development of all sectors of the economy, which contributes to the involvement of a significant part of the labor resources of countries and is characterized by equality of opportunities in access to the labor market (Ending Poverty and Sharing Prosperity).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) interprets inclusive development as stable and comprehensive in terms of employment opportunities; development that requires support from public institutions to solve problems in the labor market (OECD/WTO, 2015).

In the important document of the European Union “Europe 2020”, one of the goals of its activities is defined as achieving growth based on knowledge, sustainability and inclusion, creating an economy with a high level of employment to ensure social and territorial cohesion. At the same time, employment should be provided taking into account the needs and individual abilities, effective use of the potential of communities, their professional opportunities, etc. (EUROPE 2020, 3).

The Territorial Agenda 2030, adopted on 1 December 2020 at an informal meeting of ministers responsible for territorial cohesion and/or territorial development hosted by Germany, stresses the desire to promote an inclusive and sustainable future for all places as one of the

conditions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Europe (Territorial Agenda 2030, 2021).

The EU document “Europe 2020 Targets” considers social inclusion as the state-guaranteed equality of rights of every member of society to receive public services and goods, as well as to actively participate in economic development (Europe 2020 targets, 2015).

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Area, Scale and Period

The study was conducted on a national scale, based on an analysis of the functioning of 1438 UTCs and 119 districts in 24 regions of Ukraine, which allowed reflecting the spatial specificity of the object of study. Generalized indicators and trends characterizing the current state of socio-economic, political and cultural development of these socio-spatial formations during 2015–2025 were taken into account.

In this period begins of the reform of decentralization of public power and management, which created the prerequisites for the development of UTCs and districts on the basis of inclusion, which is currently taking place under the significant influence of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war. It was this reform, expanding the powers of administrative-territorial units of Ukraine at the basic and district levels, laid the inclusive foundations for their further vital activity. It was taken into account that the dynamics of the spread of inclusion within the spatial boundaries of UTCs and districts depends on the action of the ethnocultural factor. In view of this, the ethnic structure of the population of Ukraine, the distribution of ethnic minorities in certain regions, and the places of their compact settlement were taken into account.

2.2. Data collection and generalization

The following data were used in the research process: materials of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, analytical reviews, regulatory legal acts on the reform of decentralization and ethno-cultural development, official materials of state authorities and local self-government bodies, information from the Internet, the authors' own observations on the problem under study, which were reflected in their publications. Considerable time and attention were devoted to the collection, processing and analysis of data contained on the website “Decentralization in Ukraine”, in the statistical collections of Ukraine. However, the collection of data on various aspects of the problem under study is complicated by the lack of sufficient information at the level of basic and district units of the administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine

2.3. Scientific approaches and research methods

Particular attention was paid to the analysis of the content of modern Ukrainian and foreign scientific publications, which were selected in accordance with the hypothesis, goal and objectives of the study. The scientific provisions of the study are based on the interdisciplinary principle, systemic, territorial approaches and special research methods. The use of the statistical method allowed us to identify quantitative characteristics of the composition of UTCs and districts and their influence on the manifestations of inclusion. The comparative method contributed to the establishment of common and distinctive features of different types of UTCs and districts, their significance for identifying ethnocultural features of different communities. The use of SWOT analysis helped to clarify the strengths and weaknesses of the mentality of ethnocultural communities at the level of UTCs and districts. The method of analysis and synthesis was used to determine the contradictory nature of the relationship between such paired dichotomies as “alienation – involvement”, “exclusivity – inclusion”, “segregation – integration”. The significance of the generalization method was to track the role of the ethnocultural factor in the formation of civic identity by representatives the ethnic communities

in the context of the regions of their compact residence and the promotion of inclusion in their living environment.

3. Results and Discussion

The Fundamental Law of Ukraine contains a definition of the Ukrainian people as citizens of all nationalities (Constitution of Ukraine, preamble), which indicates the ethnic diversity of the country. This has meant a significant role of the ethnocultural factor in inclusive development, which confirms the theoretical relevance and practical value of the research.

The current legislation of Ukraine defines a national minority (community) as a stable group of Ukrainian citizens who are not ethnic Ukrainians, live on the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, are united by common ethnic, cultural, historical, linguistic and/or religious characteristics, are aware of their belonging to it, and demonstrate a desire to preserve and develop their linguistic, cultural, and religious identity (Law of Ukraine “On National Minorities (Communities) of Ukraine”).

As a result of the consolidation of communities and districts, certain changes occurred in their quantitative composition (Table 1).

Table 1. Quantitative characteristics of the administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine

Period	Number of administrative-territorial units		
	Community level	District level	Regional level
Before the decentralization reform	11250	490	27*
After the decentralization reform	1470 (actually functioning 1439)	136 (actually functioning 119)	25**

Source: compiled by the authors based on data (Decentralization)

* In addition to 24 regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Kyiv and Sevastopol were also included in this level as cities with special status

**24 regions and Kyiv as a city with the status of the capital of Ukraine

As shown in Table 1, decentralization contributed to the reduction of territorial communities and districts and their corresponding consolidation. On the one hand, it contributed to the unification of resources within single administrative-territorial units, creating the prerequisites for community cohesion and their inclusion in the process of inclusive development. On the other hand, as a result of the unification of communities and districts, this led to the loss of administrative status by some settlements with a compact population of national minorities, which could have a negative impact on the ethnocultural identity of the population. Generalized data on the distribution of UTC and districts by region are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of UTC and districts by oblasts of Ukraine

Oblast	Number of districts	Number of UTC	Number of settlements	Area, km ²	Number of population
Vynnytsya	6	63	1503	26484	1545416
Volyn	4	54	1087	20121	1031421
Dnipropetrovsk	7	86	1501	31878	3176978
Donetsk	5	46	856	18018	1843578
Zhytomyr	4	66	1668	29621	1208212
Zakarpattia	6	64	605	12749	1253791
Zaporizhzhya	5	67	953	27209	1682534
Ivano-Frankivsk	6	62	804	13871	1368097
Kyiv	7	69	1180	25522	1781044
Kirovograd	4	49	1029	24566	933209
Luhansk	4	26	544	18242	661028
Lviv	7	73	1928	21800	2512084
Mykolayiv	4	52	911	24319	1119862
Odesa	7	91	1173	32103	2363126
Poltava	4	60	1841	28724	1386079
Rivne	4	64	1026	20021	1152961
Sumy	5	51	1490	23810	1068247
Ternopil	3	55	1058	13796	1036590
Kharkiv	7	56	1746	31386	2654375
Kherson	5	49	698	27337	1027913
Khmelnyskiy	3	60	1451	20615	1254702
Cherkasy	4	66	854	20867	1192137
Chernivtsi	3	52	417	8071	901632
Chernihiv	5	57	1510	31841	991294
Ukraine	119	1438	27833	553818	35146310

Source: compiled by the authors based on data (Statistical Yearbook of Ukraine for 2022, 2023; Statistical Yearbook of Ukraine for 2023, 2024; The size of the current population of Ukraine as of January 1, 2022, 2022; Decentralization)

According to our observations, as a result of the implementation of the decentralization reform, all three ethnocultural districts in Chernivtsi region lost their independent district status - Gertsayivskiyi, Storozhynetskiy and Novoselytskyi districts, becoming part of Chernivtsi district. That is, this did not territorially affect the compactness of the settlement of the Romanian and a significant share of the Moldovan population in these socio-spatial formations. Of course, their percentage of newly formed districts has significantly decreased. In the Transcarpathian region, Berehivskiy district, two-thirds of whose population is Hungarian, retained its status, and the former Vynohradivskiy district (26 percent of the Hungarian population became part of Mukachevo district, which is dominated by ethnic Ukrainians.

In Odessa region, the Bolgrad district, which was composed of over 83 percent Bulgarians and Gagauz, expanded at the expense of the former Artsyz (almost 40 percent Bulgarians, 27 percent Ukrainians, and 22 percent ethnic Russians) and Tarutyn (37 percent Bulgarians, 24 percent Ukrainians, 16 percent Moldovans) districts.

These changes did not significantly affect the state of social cohesion of the listed communities.

Interesting in this context are the results of a study on the role of ethnocultural diversity in the formation of social cohesion, conducted on the eve of the war by a Kharkiv sociologist. Based on the results of 16 semi-structured interviews conducted with public activists, local council members, community leaders, and experts on decentralization of seven UTCs in Chernivtsi region, the author identified two perspectives for the formation of social cohesion, which he nominated as “positive” and “negative” focuses. The first focus is constructed on the

basis of the idea of unification in order to obtain “common goods” in the form of opportunities provided by the decentralization reform; the “negative” focus promotes the idea of unification around the need to solve common problems and new challenges that arise already at the stage of life of newly created communities. Using the example of empirical data analysis, it is concluded that both “positive” and “negative” foci of association “erase” the visibility of the ethnocultural factor in the everyday life of ethnically heterogeneous communities. The probable reasons for the different pace of implementation of the decentralization reform are based on the different potential for reciprocity of local communities in Ukraine, which determines their ability to consensually form a new social order. It is precisely the failures of reciprocity mechanisms at different social levels that lead to the prolongation of the implementation of the decentralization reform in Ukraine (Deyneko, 2021, 103).

The inclusiveness of these socio-spatial formations is primarily achieved thanks to the synergistic effect of involving the rural and urban population in joint activities within a single space of villages, settlements, cities, which was initiated by the decentralization reform.

The common resource around which the circle of common interests of the urban and rural population living within the UTC and districts is formed is agricultural land and the territory occupied by villages. Accordingly, it is they who have become an important factor in involving the residents of UTC and districts in inclusive development.

Social inclusion involves, according to foreign researchers, adherence to five principles (Gupta et al., 2014):

- adopting principles of justice for the distribution of development opportunities and benefits;
- incorporating the knowledge of the marginalized in defining development processes and goals;
- ensuring a social minimum through a higher level of protection for the most marginalized;
- targeted capacity building to help the poor take advantage of opportunities that they would not otherwise be able to use;
- involving the marginalized in development management policies.

In our opinion, the presence of a high degree of inclusion depends, firstly, on the ability and desire of individuals to increase their level of well-being, and secondly, on the level of socio-economic development of a particular country.

That is, to create and maintain an inclusive environment, it is important that all members of communities, different segments of the population of districts are psychologically prepared and socio-economically motivated to participate in public, social, economic and political activities. Therefore, the occurrence of inclusion is possible only with the active participation of the subjects of its creation in this process.

At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the multiplicity of interpretations of the term “inclusion”: inclusion of whom (for example, social groups or communities), inclusion of what (goods, services, resources), inclusion in what (labor market, social security system or space, physical, political, social or cultural), how (equally, fairly, voluntarily or involuntarily), for what purpose and under what conditions. Caution is needed regarding the conditions under which social inclusion is carried out. Many impoverished and exploited people are actually included, but under very unfavorable conditions (Hospes and Clancy, 2011, 25).

Based on the above provision, we have proposed our own understanding of the logic of the process of forming inclusion within the spatial boundaries of ATCs and districts (Fig. 1).

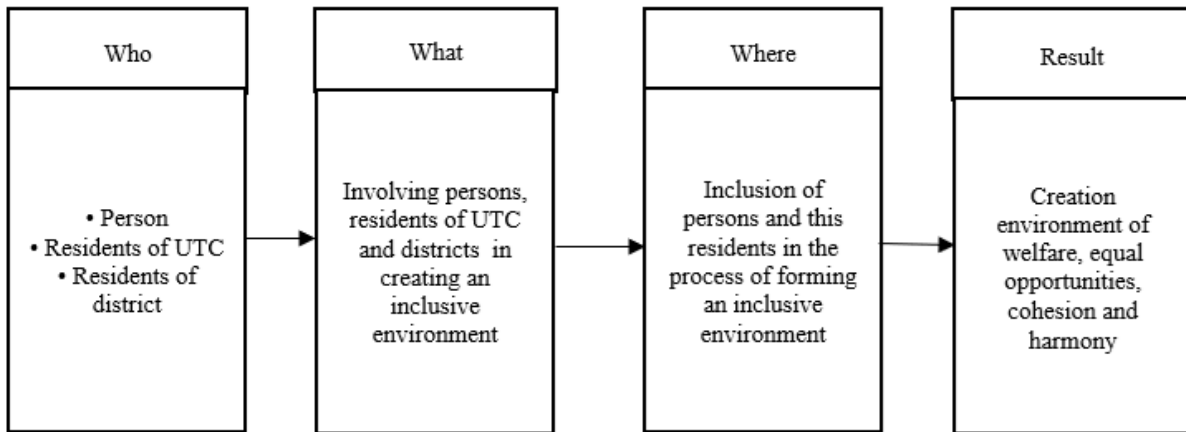


Figure 1. The process of forming an inclusive environment within the spatial boundaries of UTCs and districts

Source: constructed by the authors

The information presented in Figure 1 characterizes the inclusiveness of UTCs and districts as a social phenomenon that manifests itself through the activities of those interested in forming the inclusion of local communities.

The phased nature of the spread of inclusion within the boundaries of UTCs and districts is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The sequence of deployment of inclusiveness of the UTCs and districts

Stages of forming an inclusive environment	Problem that need to be solved	Result
The first stage	Dichotomous contradiction “alienation” – “involvement”	The state of involvement
The second stage	Dichotomous contradiction “exclusivity” – “inclusiveness”	The state of inclusion
The third stage	Dichotomous contradiction “segregation” – “integration”	The state of integration

Source: compiled by the authors

By overcoming contradictions at the level of the first paired dichotomy, the effect of involvement is achieved, the second – inclusion, and the third dichotomous contradiction – integration.

The denial of alienation is characterized by the presence of a common living environment for residents of territorial communities and districts within these administrative-territorial units, including settlements, population, infrastructure, economic complexes, natural and other resources.

At the initial stage of the functioning and development of UTCs and districts, inclusiveness is realized in the form of a synergistic effect of the interaction of two or more of their components, the joint action of which significantly exceeds the simple sum of the actions of each of them, which is a consequence of the implementation of the reform of decentralization of public power and management.

Commenting on the sequence of the spread of inclusiveness, we note that this process is currently in the transition stage from the first to the second stage. It is certain that this was

significantly influenced by the war, in which the main attention of the state and ordinary citizens is directed to resisting the external threat.

The process of creating an inclusive environment within the spatial boundaries of UTCs and districts is ensured thanks to the social cohesion of ethno-cultural communities, including national minorities, which is manifested in economic, social, political and environmental dimensions (Table 4).

Table 4. Characteristic of inclusive development as a process and outcome

Inclusive environment as	Dimensions of Inclusion			
	Economical	Social	Political	Ecological
Process	Promoting economic development, achieving high rates of economic growth, reducing economic inequality, income and wealth distribution	Meeting social needs related to employment, education, health, housing and livelihoods	Ensuring the relationship between various groups and individuals regarding the maintenance and exercise of power in order to fulfill socially significant interests and needs	Careful attitude towards the natural environment, ensuring its protection and preservation of biodiversity, promoting renewable energy sources
Result	Achievement high level welfare	Achievement of equal social opportunities	Achievement of political cohesion	Achievement of harmony with the natural environment

Source: compiled by the authors

The dimensions of inclusive development as a process presented in Table 4 orient its towards achieving harmony in the socio-spatial environment in the main spheres of communities life, as well as ensuring balanced relations between society and the surrounding natural environment. The specifics of the manifestation of this process and its results are determined by the available resources and ethno-cultural and spiritual attitudes of its participants – residents of UTCs and districts.

The formation of the state of inclusiveness of UTCs and districts, like any social process, occurs under the condition of tolerance of object-subject relations, which are formed on the basis of the reciprocity of various interests of ethno-cultural communities and their social activity. The Participation of subjects of the process of forming inclusiveness is manifested at three levels: individual, communities and district (Table 5).

Table 5. Levels of inclusion state and their characteristic

Levels state of inclusion	Characteristic of the level of inclusion
Individual level	Psychological readiness and socio-economic motivation of a person to participate in civic, social, economic and political activities. with the aim of creating and maintaining an inclusive environment
Community level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into account specific individuals and groups that are objects of inclusive development • Relying on local resources and the initiative of self-governing communities • Integration of rural and urban communities
District level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the efficiency of using the district's potential and activating its application in the economic activities of the region and the country • Inclusion in regional and national socio-economic development and ensuring the territorial unity of the country

Source: compiled by the authors.

The attribution of each person to the subjects of inclusion within the spatial boundaries of the UTC and districts indicates the need to transform each individual physically and psychologically capable person into a citizen capable of realizing their natural rights as the primary subject of self-government and a representative of the people – the only source of power in Ukraine.

High cohesion in the community, a significant level of trust in each other, readiness for cooperation, respectful attitude to common values, rules of common life, understanding between the public and self-government institutions, relations between the authorities, business structures and the public in cohesive communities should be subordinated to the idea and goal of forming an inclusive environment.

4. Conclusions

The scientific formulation of the problem of determining the importance of the ethnocultural factor in the formation of inclusion within the spatial boundaries of UTCs and regions of Ukraine is due to at least three objective circumstances. First, we are talking about the creation of the necessary prerequisites for this as a result of the implementation of the reform of the decentralization of the territorial organization of society and the functioning of public authorities. Second, this – the presence of a certain vacuum in the field of creating a national idea and developing the theory of ethno-national relations during a long period of development of modern Ukrainian society. Third, this is related to an external challenge in the form of a full – scale war launched by a neighboring state, which, according to formal ethno-cultural characteristics, is “close” to one of the national minorities of Ukraine, the share of which is 17 percent of the total population of the country. As evidenced by the analysis of literary sources and the realities of Ukrainian society, the issue of ethnic identity is more theoretically relevant than practically. The process of forming inclusiveness of UTCs and districts indicates a sufficiently high level of cohesion of Ukrainian society based on civic identity. During the war, the absolute majority of Ukrainian citizens, including representatives of national minorities, demonstrate their devotion to Ukraine as its patriotic citizens.

At the same time, for the successful development of the process of inclusion within the spatial boundaries of UTCs and districts, it is necessary to improve the legislation of Ukraine and its national policy in terms of the implementation of the rights of national minorities, which relate to the language issue, education, and satisfaction of spiritual and cultural needs. It is also advisable to enshrine in regulatory legal acts provisions on recognizing the primary subject of local self-government not as a territorial community, but as an individual. The problem is urgent of formulating a national idea, the basis of which should be of Ukrainianness as a civic, and not as an ethnic phenomenon.

Authors' contribution

The authors declare an equal contribution to the manuscript, the final version of which was reviewed and approved by them.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

All authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study.

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