



DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE IN UKRAINE: FROM EMERGENCY TO TRANSFORMATION

The Evolution of the Community Resilience
Ecosystem in Wartime (2022–2026)

Felip Daza

NOVACT

Report published by

International Institute for Nonviolent Action – NOVACT

Barcelona, September 2026

ISBN: 978-84-09-92186-7

Author: Felip Daza [felip.daza@sciencespo.fr]

Felip Daza [Barcelona, 1979] is a researcher, consultant and educator specializing in nonviolent civil resistance, community resilience and political advocacy. He has more than two decades of experience working with international organizations, social movements, civil society organizations and research centres across the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. He currently lectures on strategic nonviolent action, corporate responsibility and human rights at Sciences Po in Paris. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4002-8990>

Co-ordinators and editors:

Carlos Díaz [Carlosb@novact.org] and Anna Bondarenko [anna@novact.org]

Design and visualizations: Pau Fabregat [guspiragrafics@gmail.com]

How to cite this report

Daza, Felip. *Democratic Resilience in Ukraine: From Emergency to Transformation. The Evolution of the Community Resilience Ecosystem in Wartime [2022–2026]*. Barcelona: International Institute for Nonviolent Action [NOVACT], 2026.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his deep gratitude to all those who contributed to this research by generously sharing their testimonies, knowledge and experiences. Their contributions have been fundamental to understanding the evolution of the initiatives and dynamics analysed in this report. This work would not have been possible without the close cooperation of the team at the Centre of United Actions, in particular Mariya Levonova, Yevhen Martyniuk and Danylo Yashchuk, whose support has been essential throughout the various phases of the research. The author would also like to thank Igor Semivolos and Mykola Davidiuk for their valuable suggestions and contributions, as well as their respective teams at the Ukrainian Peacebuilding School and Factor Bureau. Special recognition is also due to the invaluable support provided by Denys Sukhanov, Mariya Ocheretiana and Sasha Romantsova, as well as the entire Youth Up team, particularly Anastasia Golovchenko, Valeriia Chaika and Te Yasinchuk. Finally, the author wishes to express his sincere gratitude to Martí Olivella, Cristina Mas, Simonetta Costanzo, Amber French-Griette and Dr Andrea Ellner for their support, guidance and valuable contributions at various stages of this research project.

Cover image: Oksana Ivanets and Oleksandr Shulman / Wikimedia Commons, Social mobilization in response to the destruction of the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv following the Russian missile strike, July 8, 2024. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International [CC BY 4.0].

This report has been produced with the support of the Department of Global Justice and Cooperation at Barcelona City Council.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	9
3. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK	13
3.1. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE UKRAINIAN CIVIC NATION: CULTURE, IDENTITY AND RESISTANCE.....	13
3.2. FROM FORMS OF 'PARALLEL SOCIETY' TO ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION	14
3.3. FOSTERING SOLIDARITY AND BUILDING CIVIC POWER	16
3.4. NONVIOLENT CIVIL RESISTANCE: SELF-GOVERNANCE AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY	17
4. EVOLUTION OF THE RESILIENCE ECOSYSTEM.....	19
4.1. GENERAL EVOLUTION	19
4.2. THE REPERTOIRE OF ACTIONS: TYPOLOGIES AND INITIATING ACTORS	21
4.3. DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES	26
5. IMPACTS OF RESILIENCE	31
5.1. SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT AS A DEMOCRATIZING FORCE	31
5.2. COMMUNITY COMPETENCE: POLYCENTRIC GOVERNANCE	36
5.3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	39
5.4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION:	41
THE ECOSYSTEM'S WEAK LINK.....	41
6. SUSTAINING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE	44
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	46
8. ANNEXES	51

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL INITIATIVES BY TYPE OF ACTION	19
FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL INITIATIVES BY INITIATING ACTORS	20
FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF INITIATIVES BY DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES.....	21
FIGURE 4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INITIATORS AND TYPES OF ACTION.....	25
FIGURE 5. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INITIAL STRUCTURE OF INITIATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES.....	27
FIGURE 6. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL INITIATIVES ACCORDING TO THE DIMENSIONS OF RESILIENCE	30
FIGURE 7. DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES ACROSS RESILIENCE	31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 triggered one of the greatest crises in Ukraine's history and, at the same time, a massive civil mobilization across the country. More than four years on, Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues and, with it, the need for communities to respond, adapt and transform in the face of emerging crises. This report analyses the development of 200 community resilience initiatives between February 2022 and June 2026, supplemented by interviews with 105 community leaders, institutional representatives, experts and local organizations. The aim is twofold: to understand how these initiatives were organized and how they evolved, and to assess their impact on Ukrainian society and the challenges they face.

The mass mobilization of the Ukrainian population observed following the invasion was not spontaneous. It was the expression of an ecosystem of resilience built up over centuries and characterized by accumulated social capital, a culture rooted in self-organization and self-sufficiency, and a civic infrastructure capable of absorbing large-scale disruptions. Contemporary Ukrainian nonviolent civil resistance movements have developed on the basis of this ecosystem of community resilience. Civil resistance and resilience are not separate processes, but interrelated dimensions that amplify and reinforce the repertoire of nonviolent civil action. The nonviolent response to the full-scale invasion illustrates this process with a wave of civil resistance actions on the front line, whilst in rear regions, community resilience maintained the cohesion, solidarity and morale of the population. The consolidation of the volunteer movement reflects a new democratic culture based on the building of social agency, processes of polycentric governance and the promotion of trust and transparency.

The ecosystem of community resilience demonstrated a high degree of sustainability. Three out of every four initiatives remained active at the end of the period analysed, and more than a third evolved into new organizational forms. Formalization proved to be the main factor in survival: the cessation rate of informal initiatives was almost four times that of formal ones. At the same time, informality was essential during the emergency phase, when flexibility and speed were more valuable than structure. Urgent structural problems persist, however: volunteer burnout, a lack of social protection mechanisms and a shortage of resources, amongst others.

The study identifies a **clear consolidation of social capital and community competence**, reflected in higher levels of trust, local leadership and collective capacity to cope with new crises. In contrast, **the economic and communicative dimensions showed signs of structural vulnerability**: dependence on external donors, a reduction in international funding and a weakening of the independent media ecosystem. The future sustainability of Ukrainian resilience depends largely on preserving these capacities.

The research also reveals notable regional differences. Contrary to expectations, **regions close to the front line showed higher rates of persistence than those further behind these territories.** Whilst the latter specialized in hosting and logistical support, those on the front line developed a repertoire geared towards crisis management: emergency coordination, evacuation, response to attacks and emergency reconstruction. The analysis further shows that the cessation of an initiative does not equate to failure: in many cases, it was because the need that gave rise to it had disappeared – such as the humanitarian emergency in certain regions – or because its functions were taken over by public institutions that had regained their capacity. Resilience should be measured by the continuity of essential functions, not by the survival of the organizations that initially performed them.

The effectiveness of the Ukrainian model lies primarily in the interaction between multiple centres of decision-making and action, rather than in the strength of any single institution. Cooperation between



Evacuation of civilians with reduced mobility in Kupyansk, Kharkiv, organized by the civil society organization Free Kharkiv Movement. Photographer: [Yevhen Haystov](#)

local governments, civil society, volunteers and the public gave rise to flexible and redundant governance systems. Ukraine represents a model of polycentric governance—decentralized, with distributed leadership and close cooperation between civil society and local institutions—which demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation.

The new community leaders who emerged from the crisis constitute one of the most valuable assets of Ukraine’s resilience ecosystem. Women activists who went from coordinating evacuations to leading organizations; young people who turned youth centres into humanitarian hubs; social entrepreneurs who promoted community organization in temporarily occupied towns; internally displaced people (IDPs) who moved from being aid recipients to driving their own initiatives; and veterans whose social legitimacy positions them as key actors in recovery processes. These leaders built networks, maintained civic infrastructure and represented their communities in dealings with institutions and donors. Their consolidation and participation in decision-making processes would be a necessary condition for the model’s sustainability.

The Ukrainian experience confirms that community resilience is a strategic asset for democratic systems in crisis. However, **self-organization does not automatically translate into influence over public decisions: the study identifies unequal citizen participation, particularly in frontline territories.** Preserving spaces for participation, transparency and accountability during the emergency and reconstruction phases would be just as urgent as securing funding. Beyond the Ukrainian case, this model offers lessons for the design of crisis management policies in Europe and other contexts facing complex threats.

1. INTRODUCTION

The war in Ukraine has marked a turning point in how we understand and respond to contemporary armed conflicts. Far from being a marginal player, the civilian population has played a decisive role both in the defence of the country and in the preservation and strengthening of the democratic system. Acts of civil resistance in the face of Russia's full-scale invasion were combined with thousands of local community resilience initiatives aimed at protecting the population, ensuring the continuity of essential services and responding to the most urgent needs. This process triggered an unprecedented wave of social mobilization that contributed to the strengthening of collective agency, social cohesion and the dissemination of civic values and practices fundamental to democratic resilience.

The start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, provoked a massive reaction from the population across the country. Thousands of acts of civil resistance were organized in response to the multidimensional and emerging crises caused by the war. In the research study *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War*, we analyse the dynamics, impacts and achievements of nonviolent civil resistance between February and June 2022.¹ The study of acts of protest, civil disobedience and the creation of parallel forms of self-governance in situations of invasion and occupation revealed a decentralized and informal system of local power based on trust, solidarity and social responsibility.

Whilst most acts of civil resistance were organized in the first year of the invasion, community resilience initiatives have persisted over the last four years in response to ongoing Russian aggression. The distribution of humanitarian aid, the evacuation of civilians from temporarily occupied territories, and the reconstruction and recovery of human capital in liberated areas, amongst many other civil actions, have contributed to the development of a robust civic infrastructure.

“From the heart of the city
it is the people who rule.
Land of brotherhood.”

— Inspired from José “Zeca” Afonso,
Grândola, Vila Morena

Against this backdrop, this report examines the evolution of the community resilience ecosystem in Ukraine from the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 until June 2026. All temporal references in the report are confined to this period – hence the use of the past tense – although the war continues and many of the initiatives analysed remain active.

Specifically, the study has a twofold objective. Firstly, it analyses the organization of local initiatives,² focusing on the types of initiators, their geographical distribution, areas of activity and their processes of transformation throughout the conflict. Secondly, it assesses the effects that community resilience has had both on Ukrainian society and in the context of the war, whilst also identifying the main challenges that have emerged during this period.

The report is structured into five chapters. The first provides a conceptual definition of community resilience and its pillars, as well as its relationship with nonviolent civil resistance, crisis management and the democratic transformation of societies. The second chapter presents a contextual and historical framework for Ukraine to identify the main components of the country's resilience, which have been developed within the contexts of nation-building and state-building. The third chapter analyses community resilience strategies and actions from an evolutionary perspective, focusing on the actors who have led them since 2022, the types of actions undertaken and the geographical scope, amongst other aspects. The fourth chapter examines the impacts achieved by these actions through the lens of the pillars of resilience, covering both their achievements and their challenges.

¹ Felip Daza, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War: Analysis of Trends, Impacts and Challenges of Nonviolent Action in Ukraine between February and June 2022* (Barcelona: ICIP and NOVACT, 2022).

² A local initiative is a collective action driven primarily by actors within a specific community, aimed at responding to the consequences of Russia's full-scale invasion by mobilizing local resources and capacities to maintain, adapt or restore the functioning of the community and strengthen its resilience to future crises.

The fifth chapter concludes by highlighting areas requiring attention and reinforcement in Ukraine, as well as lessons for sustaining democratic resilience.

Methodological note

The report adopts a multidisciplinary approach that combines the fields of community resilience, civil resistance, crisis management and democratization processes. The research employed a mixed-methods, comparative and longitudinal design. From a quantitative perspective, it drew on an original baseline of 200 local community resilience initiatives — the primary unit of analysis — in collaboration with the Ukrainian organization Centre of United Actions.³ This data was typologically coded according to the dimensions of community resilience, the type of specific actions, the profile of the organizer, whether the initiative was formal or informal in origin, and the location of activities. Subsequently, the trajectory of these initiatives was studied, expanding the reference base to include development indicators—continuation, transformation and termination—as well as factors of change.⁴

From a qualitative perspective, the results were triangulated using 64 semi-structured interviews—either individual or focus group—with 105 representatives from civil society, public authorities, the academic sector, the media, the business sector and religious institutions, through face-to-face and online field research in Kyiv, Chernivtsi, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Kherson in March, April, June and October 2025, and in June 2026 [see Annex 2]. The process was supplemented by a comprehensive online survey of 26 local initiatives across the country and by documentary verification of the status of certain initiatives using public sources and open data. This enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the development of the initiatives over the four-year study period and to identify the processes of continuation, transformation and cessation of their activities. The analysis of illustrative case studies complemented the

statistical patterns. For further details on the methodological framework of the research, see Annex 3.

Geographical framework

For the territorial analysis, regions are grouped into two macro-zones according to their exposure to military aggression during the study period. On the one hand, the frontline zone comprises the following *oblasts*⁵, which experienced partial occupation or ground combat at any time between February 2022 and June 2026, regardless of their subsequent situation: Kyivska, Chernihivska, Sumska, Kharkivska, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Zaporizka, Donetsk and Luhanska.⁶ Furthermore, the rear zone comprised the western and central regions that were not invaded: Chernivetska, Volynska, Lvivska, Zakarpatska, Khmelnytska, Rivnenska, Ternopilska, Ivano-Frankivska, Zhytomyrska, Cherkaska, Vinnytska, Poltavska, Dnipropetrovska and Odeska. Crimea and other specific locations under temporary occupation were excluded from the study for security reasons. Multi-regional initiatives were counted separately.

Ethical considerations

The study was carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of the International Institute for Nonviolent Action (NOVACT) and the Centre of United Actions, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality for the participants. Primary data were collected and stored in secure digital environments. Furthermore, the database containing personal or sensitive information was encrypted and anonymized, and the list of interviewees was coded and anonymized for security reasons. However, the profiles, gender, location and dates of the research participants are retained [see Annex 2]. In cases where interviewees expressly authorized the disclosure of their identity, their names and positions are cited in the footnotes and annexes.

³ For further information, see: www.centreua.org/en

⁴ Database on Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026, version 1.0, dataset finalized on June 30, 2026. Unpublished research dataset. See Annex 1.

⁵ An administrative division equivalent to a province or region. There are 24 *oblasts* in Ukraine, as well as one autonomous republic and two cities with special status.

⁶ Kyiv and Chernihiv were combat zones, having been invaded and/or besieged in 2022. From April of that same year, they ceased to be so. Insofar as this report takes as its baseline resilience actions initiated in that year, we include these two regions as frontline areas for the present study.

Limitations

The follow-up instruments based on voluntary participation — the online questionnaire and the interviews conducted between 2025 and 2026 — did not allow for complete coverage of the local initiatives recorded in the baseline survey, introducing a survival bias: initiatives that had ceased their activities were unable to respond. To mitigate this, in 2025–26 the author carried out an independent documentary follow-up based on public sources (official records, local media and the organizations' digital presence), as well as consultations with local stakeholders close to the initiatives during the field research. This procedure made it possible to document the status of most of the initiatives and identify the reasons for their termination.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Wars, like other crises, are periods of political, social and economic upheaval that can lead to both setbacks and opportunities for change. Some studies analyse how armed conflicts can give rise to authoritarian regimes, promote social polarization and/or reinforce patriarchal systems.⁷ However, there are also cases demonstrating that the active participation of civil society in the defence of the country can alter power relations and strengthen democratic processes during conflict and post-conflict phases.⁸ This literature also suggests that military mobilization is not a determining factor in democratization processes. Instead, nonviolent civil resistance and forms of community organization established in situations of armed conflict have a more evident effect on the development of democratic systems and more enduring peace processes.⁹ In protracted and inter-state conflicts, the effects on power relations are more evident when the processes

Civil resistance and community resilience are therefore not separate processes, but dimensions that feed into one another in a virtuous circle. The transition from resistance to resilience is a continuum that broadens and strengthens the repertoire of nonviolent civil action.

are endogenous, as they promote citizen participation, the consolidation of new social leadership and civic infrastructure.¹⁰ Nonviolent civil intervention in conflicts is therefore a profoundly democratizing force.

This type of intervention can be categorized into two broad, interrelated dimensions: civil resistance and community resilience. Nonviolent resistance is a method of struggle led by the civilian population that employs social, political, economic and psychological means to confront an adversary without resorting to threat or use of violence.¹¹ It encompasses protest,

non-cooperation and nonviolent intervention, which are often combined within a single resistance campaign.¹² Resistance is also constructive because it contributes to the development of social relationships, creates alternative institutions in times of crisis,¹³ and distributes political power amongst multiple civil society actors.¹⁴ It is this

constructive dimension of resistance which, sustained over time, fosters community resilience: the structures improvised to resist aggression become established as permanent capacities for response, organization and local governance.¹⁵ In turn, for civil resistance to flourish, it requires an ecosystem of community resilience in the form of social capital, community development and other aspects

⁷ Marie E. Berry's work, comparing the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina, shows that war not only causes destruction but can also act as a catalyst for new forms of social organization, civic leadership and political participation [see Marie E. Berry, *War, Women, and Power: From Violence to Mobilization in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018)]. Another relevant example is the work of William W. Harris, which analyses the wars in Syria and Iraq as an interconnected regional conflict, and their effects on the consolidation of authoritarianism, institutional collapse, sectarianism and foreign intervention. See William W. Harris, *Quicksilver War: Syria, Iraq and the Spiral of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁸ See Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elisabeth Jean Wood, 'The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks', *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 [2008]: 539–561; Sara Niner, ed., *Women and the Politics of Gender in Post-Conflict Timor-Leste* (London: Routledge, 2018); and Melissa Johnston, *Building Peace, Rebuilding Patriarchy: The Failure of Gender Interventions in Timor-Leste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). These studies show how the war and resistance to Indonesian occupation fostered new forms of collective action, women's leadership and institutional transformation, with lasting effects on women's political representation.

⁹ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Kaitlyn Webster, Chong Chen, and Kyle Beardsley, "Conflict, Peace, and the Evolution of Women's Empowerment," *International Organization* 73, no. 2 [2019]: 255–289.

¹¹ Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*. (Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005), 41, 547.

¹² See: www.aeinstein.org/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action; Michael Beer expanded this catalogue to 323 nonviolent methods. Michael Beer, *Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021). Available at: www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Civil-Resistance-Tactics-in-the-21st-Century-Monograph.pdf

¹³ Stellan Vinthagen, *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

¹⁴ Brian Martin, *Justice Ignited: The Dynamics of Backfire* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

¹⁵ Majken Jul Sørensen, 'Constructive Resistance: Conceptualising and Mapping the Terrain', *Journal of Resistance Studies* 2, no. 1 [2016]: 49–78.

of civic infrastructure.¹⁶ Civil resistance and community resilience are therefore not separate processes, but dimensions that feed into one another in a virtuous circle. The transition from resistance to resilience is a continuum that broadens and strengthens the repertoire of nonviolent civil action. This study aims to contribute to the field of civil resistance studies by analysing this essential relationship within the protracted and hybrid conflict in Ukraine, where community resilience, by its very nature, becomes resistance.

The present study focuses on the evolution and impact of community resilience in contexts of protracted conflict. To this end, we adopt Fran H. Norris's definition, which understands community resilience as a process that connects a network of adaptive capacities and resources to recover, reorganize and prepare for future crises.¹⁷ This network is structured around four pillars:

1. **Social capital** encompasses social support — understood as actual or perceived help — and social influence, whereby stronger social ties enhance the impact on the community and facilitate the emergence of new leaders. It also includes civic participation in formal and informal groups [for example, local initiatives and religious associations], which is often linked to a sense of attachment to the place. Finally, social capital involves cooperation through organizational links, networks and coalitions.
2. **Community competence** refers to the collective ability to identify needs, make decisions and carry out joint actions. It includes collective effectiveness and empowerment, rooted in trust and

the conviction that the community can respond effectively to crises. This dimension also encompasses political collaboration, which involves advocating for public interests, communication and partnerships with public authorities.

3. **Economic development** is defined by the availability, diversity and equitable distribution of resources. This study pays particular attention to the diversification of resources, transparency and accessibility for the most vulnerable groups.
4. **Information and communication** involve both formal and alternative systems — such as the media — that disseminate relevant information about services and crisis contexts. Reliable sources that provide accurate information and promote narratives of resilience aligned with local values are particularly important.

However, resilience is a dynamic process of adaptation designed to absorb disturbances. Authors such as Masten regard resilience as the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten its functioning, viability or development.¹⁸ Adaptability is dynamic because it enables local actors to influence the system through gradual adjustments, learning, innovation and internal reorganization. Resilience, therefore, is not merely about withstanding disturbances or returning to the previous state, but rather the capacity of a system to absorb changes, adapt continuously and, when conditions require it, transform itself into new configurations that maintain its essential functions and enhance its ability to cope with future crises.¹⁹ In this vein, Walker distinguishes, alongside adaptability, the concept of transformability: the capacity to create a new system when existing structures become unsustainable, through profound changes in social relations, governance systems or community practices.²⁰

¹⁶ Daniel P. Aldrich, *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

¹⁷ Fran H. Norris et al., "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41, nos. 1–2 [2008]: 127–150; Maryna Rabinovych et al., "Explaining Ukraine's Resilience to Russia's Invasion: The Role of Local Governance," *Governance* 37, no. 4 [2024]: 1121–1140; Louis Lebel et al., "Governance and the Capacity to Manage Resilience in Regional Social-Ecological Systems," *Ecology and Society* 11, no. 1 [2006]: 19; Oleksandra Keudel and Oksana Huss, "Polycentric Governance in Practice: The Case of Ukraine's Decentralised Crisis Response during the Russo-Ukrainian War," *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice* 39, no. 1 [2024]: 10–35; Oleksandra Keudel, Valentyn Hatsko, Andrii Darkovich, and Oksana Huss, *Local Democracy and Resilience in Ukraine: Learning from Communities' Crisis Response in War*, Research Report No. 33 [Visby: Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy [ICLD], 2024].

¹⁸ Ann S. Masten, *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development* (New York: Guilford Press, 2014).

¹⁹ Carl Folke, Stephen R. Carpenter, Brian Walker, Marten Scheffer, Terry Chapin, and Johan Rockström, "Resilience Thinking: Integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability," *Ecology and Society* 15, no. 4 [2010]: 20.

²⁰ Brian Walker et al., "Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social-Ecological Systems," *Ecology and Society* 9, no. 2 [2004], www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol9/iss2/art5/.

Decentralized and horizontal systems are more effective at responding to crises. The literature on crisis management contains extensive work on the role of institutions as the main anchor of resilience. In this regard, institutional resilience involves the preparedness, robustness and adaptive capacity of public institutions to maintain their essential functions and manage the social impacts of a crisis,²¹ through the efficient allocation of information and resources.²² However, approaches to polycentric governance argue that decentralized and collaborative systems, with multiple centres of public and private authority acting autonomously or cooperatively, respond better to crises than centralized models, precisely because they distribute the capacity to respond.²³ Keudel and Huss argue that institutional resilience during wartime is built through close interaction with community resilience via three mechanisms: the mobilization of local knowledge to identify needs, the joint mobilization of resources between authorities and civil society, and the experimentation with adaptive responses.²⁴ From this perspective, resilience is not a pre-existing characteristic of communities, but rather an emergent outcome of interactions between local actors — local governments, organized civil society, local communities — in crisis contexts, aimed

Democracies are better able to withstand crisis when they have a mature civil society capable of acting collectively. This collective action takes place in decentralized spaces where alternative forms of community organization are experimented with, social emancipation develops, and civic values and practices are disseminated.

at defending the fundamental components of the nation, such as culture, identity and institutions.²⁵

Taken together, community resilience contributes to the democratic development of societies. Democracies are better able to withstand crisis when they have a mature civil society capable of acting collectively.²⁶ This collective action takes place in decentralized spaces where alternative forms of community organization are experimented with, social emancipation develops, and civic values and practices are disseminated.²⁷ These processes extend not only horizontally but also vertically: emancipatory pressure rises through the system and structurally shapes the decisions of the elites. This underpins a contemporary strand of democratization theory, which maintains that social emancipation is crucial for promoting and defending democracies.²⁸ From this perspective, democracy is neither preserved nor regenerated solely through institutions, but emerges from the political and social system as a whole, incorporating the role of civil society, communities, collective action and democratic culture.²⁹ Classical theories, by contrast, regard the choice of elites as the fundamental factor in processes of democratization and democratic resilience, and criticize emancipatory

²¹ Maryna Rabinovych, Tymofii Brik, Andrii Darkovich, Myroslava Savisko, Valentyn Hatsko, Serhii Tytiuk, and Igor Piddubnyi, "Explaining Ukraine's Resilience to Russia's Invasion: The Role of Local Governance," *Governance* 37, no. 4 (2024): 1121–1140.

²² Louis Lebel, John M. Anderies, Bruce Campbell, Carl Folke, Steve Hatfield-Dodds, Terry P. Hughes, and James Wilson, "Governance and the Capacity to Manage Resilience in Regional Social-Ecological Systems," *Ecology and Society* 11, no. 1 (2006): 19.

²³ Elinor Ostrom, "Polycentric Systems for Coping with Collective Action and Global Environmental Change," *Global Environmental Change* 20, no. 4 (2010): 550–557; Oleksandra Keudel and Oksana Huss, "Polycentric Governance in Practice: The Case of Ukraine's Decentralised Crisis Response during the Russo-Ukrainian War," *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice* 39, no. 1 (2024): 10–35.

²⁴ Keudel and Huss, "Polycentric Governance in Practice," 10–35.

²⁵ Oleksandra Keudel, "Societal Resilience: Conceptual Lessons from Studies of Ukrainian Resilience," paper presented at the conference 'From Societal Resilience to Obscurantism in the Baltic Sea Region', Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES), Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, November 11, 2025.

²⁶ Rachel Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order: How the World's Deadliest Countries Can Forge a Path to Security* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018).

²⁷ Luke Yates, "Rethinking Prefiguration: Alternatives, Micropolitics and Goals in Social Movements," *Social Movement Studies* 14, no. 1 (2015): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2013.870883>.

²⁸ Christian Welzel, "Democratization as an Emancipative Process: The Neglected Role of Mass Motivations," *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 6 (2006): 871–896.

²⁹ Andreas Duit, "Resilience Thinking: Lessons for Public Administration," *Public Administration* 94, no. 2 (2016): 364–380.

approaches for their weak empirical basis.³⁰ It is precisely this empirical gap that forms the focus of this study, which aims to contribute to that body of evidence through an analysis of the case of Ukraine: a context in which the collective agency of communities operates precisely where institutions reveal their limitations.

³⁰ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, "Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, vol. 4: *Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Boese, Vanessa A., Amanda B. Edgell, Sebastian Hellmeier, Seraphine F. Maerz, and Staffan I. Lindberg. "How Democracies Prevail: Democratic Resilience as a Two-Stage Process." *Democratization* 28, no. 5 (2021): 885–907.; Wolfgang Merkel and Anna Lührmann, "Resilience of Democracies: Responses to Illiberal and Authoritarian Challenges," *Democratisation* 28, no. 5 (2021): 869–884.

3. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

The war in Ukraine, which began in 2014, is the largest interstate conflict in Europe since the Second World War. It is not merely a geostrategic war for control of territories and resources, but a historical, cultural, ideological and political conflict. Russia's hybrid warfare demonstrates that its objectives are not solely territorial, but also social and cognitive. Threats against the civilian population, including the erosion of its cohesion and morale, constitute a central dimension of this strategy. In the face of these threats, Ukraine has, throughout its history, developed an ecosystem of community resilience aimed at preserving its national sovereignty, its institutions, its cultural identity and its democratic practices in the face of Russia and other external aggressors. The following chapter presents the main factors that explain the development of community resilience in Ukraine. Each of these is analysed from a historical perspective, identifying their origins, their evolution and their most recent manifestations in the context of the war.

3.1. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE UKRAINIAN CIVIC NATION: CULTURE, IDENTITY AND RESISTANCE

Nations are social and cultural processes that are constructed and reproduced through language, literature, the media, education and shared practices.³¹ From this perspective, culture is not merely a repository of traditions, but a space where collective identity is shaped, contested and transformed. Consequently, cultural resistance has played a fundamental role in defending Ukrainian civic nationalism against the policies of domination, assimilation and invasion pursued by the powers that have sought to subjugate its sovereignty throughout history.³²

Within this framework, the proclamation of the first modern Ukrainian state in 1917 was

accompanied by an intense cultural, artistic and spiritual expression. Poets, writers and painters focused their work on Ukrainian identity, the new state and its struggle against the empire. During the 1920s, under the auspices of the Soviet policy of Ukrainization [*korenizatsiya*], this movement experienced a veritable flowering; from 1929 onwards, however, the Stalinist regime crushed it through purges, deportations and executions — the generation known as the 'Executed Renaissance' [*Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia*] —, accompanied by the systematic exclusion of the Ukrainian language from education and public life.³³

This repression did not prevent the cultivation of Ukrainian identity in private spheres, which gradually gained visibility. Religion was one such sphere. Following the pseudo-council of Lviv in 1946, the Soviet authorities outlawed the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and attempted to forcibly integrate it into the Orthodox Church controlled by the Moscow Patriarchate. Despite systematic persecution, the imprisonment of clergy and the repression of the faithful, the Church survived underground through secret liturgies, clandestine seminaries and community networks organized in private homes and trusted local venues. Religious practice thus transcended the spiritual dimension: priests, nuns and local communities maintained decentralized structures that preserved the language, historical memory and traditions across generations, strengthening social cohesion in the face of Russification policies.³⁴ In the late 1980s, campaigns for the legalization of the Church became part of the broader movement for democratic and national revival, and its public re-establishment in 1989 became a symbol of both religious freedom and the restoration of cultural sovereignty.³⁵

At the same time, in the 1960s, a new intellectual movement, the Sixtiers [*shistdesiatnyky*], brought together writers,

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

³² Yaroslav Hrytsak, "The Third Ukraine: A Case of Civic Nationalism," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 50, no. 4 (2024): 674–687.

³³ Serhii Plokhyy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

³⁴ Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State [1939–1950]* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1996).

³⁵ Resilient Ukraine, "OPIR: The Tradition of Ukrainian Resistance," *WeAreUkraine.info*, accessed July 26, 2026, available at: www.opir.weareukraine.info/.

poets, artists, academics and activists who defended Ukrainian culture, language and identity in the face of Russification and Soviet ideological control. Through cultural circles, literary debates and informal networks of solidarity, they promoted an intellectual renewal based on democratic values, human rights and the recovery of historical memory. Their main tool was clandestine

self-publishing [*samvydav*, the Ukrainian *samizdat*], which enabled the circulation of poetry, political essays and censored works. These practices did more than simply disseminate banned materials: they created alternative spaces for critical thought and kept the imagined Ukrainian

community alive at a time when the Soviet state monopolized the official press.³⁶ Producing and distributing illegal publications entailed serious risks of surveillance, persecution and imprisonment, but it strengthened networks of trust amongst intellectuals, students and local communities that would lay the foundations for the democratic mobilizations at the end of the Soviet era.

Overall, Ukrainian nation-building is characterized by a civic ethos. Ukrainian cultural resistance movements—the underground Greek Catholic Church, the *samvydav*, the Sixtiers—consolidated a tradition of defending language, culture and identity against imperial projects, centred not on ethnic purity but on collective power and civic values. For this reason, scholars such as Timothy Snyder have characterized Ukraine as a ‘civic nation’: built upon shared values, collective experiences and a common political will to resist authoritarianism and imperialism, rather than on ethnic or linguistic criteria.³⁷

Ukrainian cultural resistance has been

Ukrainian cultural resistance has been present in all processes of civil resistance and community resilience through the recovery and preservation of the country's memory, identity and symbolism.

present in all processes of civil resistance and community resilience through the recovery and preservation of the country's memory, identity and symbolism. Some of the most visible expressions of this process were, on the one hand, the use of traditional Ukrainian flags and symbols, alongside those of other communities in the country, such as the Crimean Tatars, in

the protests against the 2022 full-scale invasion.³⁸ On the other hand, the promotion of the Ukrainian language throughout the country through the work of cultural centres, educational institutions and civil society initiatives stands out. Clearly, these processes have not been without social tensions

and community conflicts. However, they also reflect Ukraine's multi-ethnic, multilingual and plurinational character, as well as the capacity to build a shared civic identity out of diversity. As will be analysed in the following chapters, community resilience has likewise played a key role in strengthening these processes.

3.2. FROM FORMS OF ‘PARALLEL SOCIETY’ TO ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION

During the Soviet period, institutional control over Ukraine was exercised through a highly centralized system directed from Moscow, in which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union monopolized political, administrative and security power. The main Ukrainian institutions — government, the education system, the media, cultural organizations and religious structures — were subordinate to the Party and overseen by elites loyal to the Kremlin. Dissidence was suppressed primarily through the KGB, by means of surveillance, censorship, infiltration and the imprisonment of intellectuals, cultural activists and religious movements. At the same time, policies of Russification sought to weaken the Ukrainian language, culture and historical memory, integrating political repression into a broader

³⁶ Resilient Ukraine, “OPIR: The Tradition of Ukrainian Resistance.”

³⁷ Timothy Snyder, *The Making of Modern Ukraine*, lecture 22, “Ukrainian Ideas in the 21st Century,” Yale University, December 3, 2022, YouTube video, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yz6MSiGZQCU.

³⁸ Daza, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War*, 40.



The Oleksandr Menshov Ukrainian Cultural Centre, located in a shelter in Kherson, an initiative developed by the NGO Sprava Hromad. Photographer: **Carlos Díaz**

strategy of imperial homogenization.³⁹ Added to this was the structural role of informal networks of favours and clienteles, which the system tolerated and exploited as a mechanism of dependency: access to resources, employment, housing or positions of authority depended on political loyalties and patronage networks linking local elites to the Soviet political centre in Moscow.⁴⁰ This combination of coercion, bureaucracy and clienteles limited political and social autonomy and neutralized organized dissent.

In response to this system, Ukrainian society developed forms of parallel organization at the local level, analogous to what the Central European dissident movement had built under the communist system.⁴¹

Formally tolerated or marginal spaces — churches, cultural circles, cooperatives, neighbourhood associations, informal networks — were redefined from the bottom up: they fulfilled social, economic and political functions distinct from those officially envisaged, becoming spheres of partial autonomy, solidarity and everyday resistance. Churches, for example, operated as systems for mutual aid and the exchange of information and resources.⁴² This historical experience does not in itself explain the subsequent reforms, but it constitutes the foundation of political culture — horizontal trust, capacity for self-organization, scepticism towards central power — upon which the decentralization initiated in 2014 was able to take root with a speed and depth unusual in the post-Soviet space.

The reforms undertaken from 2014 onwards were, in fact, driven by a confluence of factors: the desire to break with the Soviet legacy

³⁹ Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe*, 232–233.

⁴⁰ Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Václav Benda, "The Parallel 'Polis'," in H. Gordon Skilling and Paul Wilson, eds., *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991), 35–41.

⁴² Yevhen Hlibovytsky, quoted in Daza, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War*, 2022.

of centralism and corruption; European conditionality and inspiration – with the Polish model of local self-government as a benchmark; and the geopolitical need to offer an alternative to the federalization demanded by Moscow. This last point is crucial to characterizing the reform accurately: Ukraine opted for administrative and fiscal decentralization within a unitary state, transferring powers and resources without fragmenting sovereignty. In parallel, anti-corruption reforms were driven forward—including the creation of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU), electronic asset declaration systems and public transparency mechanisms—⁴³, the partial transformation of the former police structures and initiatives to strengthen judicial independence and purge judges linked to corrupt practices.

The core of the territorial reform was rolled out in two phases: an initial phase of voluntary mergers (2015–2020), supported by tax incentives, which resulted in 1,070 amalgamated territorial communities, and a second, mandatory phase that completed the map in 2020, reducing the number of municipalities from nearly 10,000 to 1,469 units of local self-government (*hromadas*).⁴⁴ The sequence matters: the voluntary phase specifically activated the capacity for community self-organization described above, and empirical evidence showed that the *hromadas* formed early on and voluntarily recorded higher levels of trust in their local institutions.⁴⁵ The new structures were granted expanded powers in education, health, culture and strategic planning, alongside enhanced fiscal capacity. One telling figure was that the proportion of income tax retained by local governments rose from 25% to 60% following the reform, reaching 64% in 2022.⁴⁶

⁴³ OECD, OECD Integrity and Anti-Corruption Review of Ukraine, OECD Public Governance Reviews (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2025).

⁴⁴ Ministry for Communities and Territorial Development of Ukraine, *Monitoring of the Decentralization Reform* [Kyiv: Decentralisation Portal], accessed July 26, 2026.

⁴⁵ Helge Arends, Tymofii Brik, Benedikt Herrmann, and Felix Rösel, “Decentralisation and Trust in Government: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Ukraine,” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 51, no. 4 (2023): 1356–1365.

⁴⁶ Law of Ukraine “On the State Budget of Ukraine for 2022” No. 1928-IX of December 18, 2021, cited in Maryna Rabinovych et al., “Explaining Ukraine’s Resilience to Russia’s Invasion: The Role of Local Governance,” *Governance* (2024): 1123.

At the same time, in 2024 new laws on local government transparency, citizen participation and public consultation came into force, formally strengthening the mechanisms for involving the public in decision-making. However, local authorities retained a wide margin of discretion over the organization of consultation processes, such as which stakeholders were actually included.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the war reintroduced dynamics of recentralization. Specifically, the military administrations established under martial law in regions close to the front line partially restricted the powers of elected local governments and reduced the scope for civilian participation in decision-making.⁴⁸ Ukrainian decentralization is therefore not a static process, but a delicate balance between local autonomy and the demands of a state at war — a balance whose resilience has, in fact, been attributed largely to the *hromadas*’ ability to sustain services and organize community responses under extreme conditions.

3.3. FOSTERING SOLIDARITY AND BUILDING CIVIC POWER

In the late 1980s, the Soviet policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* opened limited spaces for political freedom and public expression, which Ukrainian social, cultural and national movements occupied and expanded upon. Intellectuals, students, cultural activists, former dissidents, religious movements and civic organizations came together around common demands for cultural rights, democracy and sovereignty. The unity amongst previously fragmented movements strengthened their capacity for mobilization and facilitated the emergence of broad platforms for political and civic coordination, which contributed decisively to the outcome of 1991: independence was not merely a by-product of the Soviet collapse, but also the result of an organized society that knew how to capitalize on it.

⁴⁷ Mariia Krasnenko, CSO Meter 2024: Ukraine Country Report. Reporting Period: January–November 2024 [Kyiv: ECNL and ISAR Ednannia, 2025], 29–35.

⁴⁸ Andrii Darkovich and Maryna Rabinovych, “Ukrainian Decentralisation under Martial Law: A Balancing Act,” *Zois Spotlight* 18 (2025), Centre for Eastern European and International Studies, Berlin, www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/zois-spotlight/ukrainian-decentralisation-under-martial-law-a-balancing-act

The most significant example is the Rukh movement [*Narodnyi Rukh Ukrainy*], which emerged in 1989 as the main platform for democratic and national coordination, capable of linking cultural demands with political reforms and aspirations for independence. Rukh brought together a wide range of groups — writers, dissidents, students, scientists, religious organizations and emerging movements — and played a key role in reclaiming the public sphere through mass demonstrations, campaigns for the Ukrainian language and acts of historical remembrance, building civil society networks across regions, particularly in the west and centre of the country.⁴⁹ One of its most symbolic milestones was the Human Chain of January 21, 1990, when hundreds of thousands of people linked Kyiv, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk to commemorate the 1919 Act of Unification between the two Ukrainian republics and to demand greater sovereignty. As the Soviet Union weakened, Rukh shifted from advocating democratic reforms to openly supporting independence, becoming one of the driving forces behind the process that culminated in 1991. As a political force, Rukh fragmented and declined during the 1990s; its legacy, however, was not partisan but infrastructural: the networks, the mobilization strategies and the generations of activists trained within its ranks fuelled the civil society that would take centre stage in subsequent crises.

That infrastructure of solidarity has re-emerged, transformed, at every subsequent critical juncture: in the Orange Revolution of 2004 and, with particular intensity, from 2013 onwards.⁵⁰ The Yanukovich government's crackdown on the pro-European student movement in November 2013 was the spark that ignited the Revolution of Dignity. Young people once again played a key role in the protests and the subsequent phases of development of the community resilience ecosystem. A telling example is Building Ukraine Together (BUR), a volunteer movement established in 2014 following

the outbreak of war in the east to support communities affected by conflict, displacement and social vulnerability through voluntary reconstruction, youth participation and community development. Since its inception, BUR has mobilized thousands of Ukrainian and foreign volunteers, and following the full-scale invasion of 2022, it significantly expanded its emergency reconstruction and humanitarian aid operations.⁵¹ As Anna Bondarenko, founder of the Ukrainian Volunteer Service, pointed out, initiatives such as BUR created an informal network of youth solidarity that fostered agency, the exchange of information and capacity-building: a civic infrastructure that was already in place – and tested – by February 2022.⁵² Solidarity, in the Ukrainian context, is not a spontaneous reaction to each crisis, but rather accumulated capital that each generation of mobilization passes on to the next.

3.4. NONVIOLENT CIVIL RESISTANCE: SELF-GOVERNANCE AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY

The main civil resistance movements in Ukraine over the last century demonstrate the power of collective action and society's commitment to democratic development. From the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1921) to the resistance against the 2022 full-scale invasion, citizens have responded to external and internal aggressions through collective agency and mobilization.⁵³

This capacity for self-organization did not arise spontaneously in the 20th century but is rooted in a tradition of civil self-government dating back at least to the 'Kievan Rus' (10th–13th centuries), where popular assemblies had the power to elect and oversee their leaders. This tradition was institutionalized between the 14th and 18th centuries through Magdeburg law, which granted dozens of Ukrainian towns elected councils and their own courts, and was replicated at a local level in Cossack and peasant rural self-government (*hromady*), with elected mayors (*starosty*) and community justice systems until the 19th century. Added

⁴⁹ Resilient Ukraine, "OPIR: The Tradition of Ukrainian Resistance."

⁵⁰ Beissinger, Mark R. "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013): 574–592; Sasse, Gwendolyn, and Olga Onuch. "The Maidan in Movement: Diversity and the Cycles of Protest," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 556–587.

⁵¹ For further information, see: www.bur.org.ua/en

⁵² Anna Bondarenko [E30], Ukrainian Volunteer Service, director, female, Kyiv, individual interview, March 31, 2025.

⁵³ See, for example: Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Ukraine: The Forging of a Nation* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2024); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

to this legacy of civil self-government, albeit in a different form, is the political and military experience of the Zaporizhian Sich and the Cossack Hetmanate (16th–18th centuries), which established the election of leaders and collective decision-making in open assemblies (Rada), although this was limited to the male Cossack population and geared towards military ends rather than nonviolent resistance.⁵⁴

This dual legacy — of civil self-government and organized collective agency — re-emerged in the 20th and 21st centuries in the major Ukrainian movements, from the Ukrainian People's Republic to the civil resistance of 2022, and is expressed today in a dense network of Ukrainian civil society organizations, both within the country and in the diaspora. According to Oleksandra Romantsova, executive director of the Center for Civil Liberties — an organization awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022 — every revolution since 1990 has left Ukrainians with a specific political achievement: the Granite Revolution (1990) wrested the first concessions from the Soviet regime and demonstrated that student mobilization could bring the authorities to their knees; the Orange Revolution (2004) halted electoral fraud, promoted pluralism and consolidated the right to transparent elections; and the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014) defended the European course and paved the way for the country's major democratic reforms.⁵⁵

Beyond their immediate political outcomes, each cycle expanded the repertoire of

collective action, strengthened civic networks and reinforced the shared conviction that organized citizens can transform the state. The revolutions were not isolated episodes, but links in a single learning process: each generation inherited the achievements, experiences and infrastructure of the previous one. These crises also gave rise to mechanisms of adaptation — such as the decentralization and self-organization deployed during the Revolution of Dignity, or the information systems that proved resilient in the face of Russian disinformation during the 2022 invasion — which operated in a virtuous circle: each mobilization contributed to strengthening community resilience and, in turn, laid the foundations for subsequent resistance movements.

The full-scale invasion in 2022 triggered a mass mobilization of the population in the form of nonviolent civil resistance against the occupying forces. At the same time, thousands of community resilience initiatives were set up to respond to emergencies, both in terms of protecting civilians and providing humanitarian aid. As the invasion was repelled, Russia stepped up its attacks on social cohesion using hybrid warfare tactics. In this context, the community resilience ecosystem demonstrated strength and adaptability in responding to these multidimensional crises. The following chapter analyses this phenomenon.

⁵⁴ Oleksandra Keudel, Andrii H. Ordynovych, and Amber French-Griette, "Democratic and Civic Resilience against Hybrid War," webinar, Organization for Nonviolent Movements [ONM], July 1, 2026, www.nonviolent-movements.org/webinars.html

⁵⁵ Oleksandra Romantsova, "Civil Resistance in Ukraine under Russian Aggression: Justice, Rights, and Democratic Resilience," paper presented at the webinar *Civil Resistance and Institutional Resilience in Wartime Crisis Response: Insights from Ukraine Since the Russian Full-Scale Invasion*, organized by EuroSME, King's Centre for Military Ethics [KCME], and King's College London, February 12, 2026, www.euroisme.eu/index.php/en/events/euroisme-online-events/webinar-12-feb-2026

4. EVOLUTION OF THE RESILIENCE ECOSYSTEM

4.1. GENERAL EVOLUTION

The study recorded 200 community resilience initiatives, the vast majority of which were launched from February 2022 onwards.⁵⁶ Taken together, these initiatives represent merely the tip of the iceberg of a mass mobilization and the development of a civic resilience infrastructure in times of war. The identification of these initiatives in 2022 and the analysis of their status in 2025 and 2026 provide relevant information for understanding how local initiatives emerged and developed during that period. The actions are categorized according to the four dimensions of community resilience described in the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, with the following breakdown: 67 actions linked to community competence, 59 to social capital, 49 to economic development and 25 to information and communication. Some initiatives may fall into more than one category; therefore, their classification is based on the predominant dimension in each initiative or the one that is most relevant to explaining its contribution to community resilience.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of community resilience initiatives by specific type of action. The data clearly reflect the emergency nature of the initial phase: almost half of the recorded initiatives focused on humanitarian aid, shelter and medical support (28%) and on support for vulnerable groups (20.5%). A second group comprised preparedness measures, local leadership and coordination (10%), cultural, artistic and identity-related initiatives (9%), and infrastructure reconstruction and socio-economic recovery (9%). A third category comprised the protection and evacuation of civilians (7.5%), psychosocial, spiritual and religious support (6%), and communication and information initiatives (6%). Taken together, these three categories demonstrate that,

as early as 2022, the community response was not limited to immediate assistance, but incorporated organizational, communication-related, identity-related, care-related and recovery-related dimensions.

Figure 1. Distribution of local initiatives by type of action



Source: Elaborated by the author using the 'Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026' database [Annex 1].

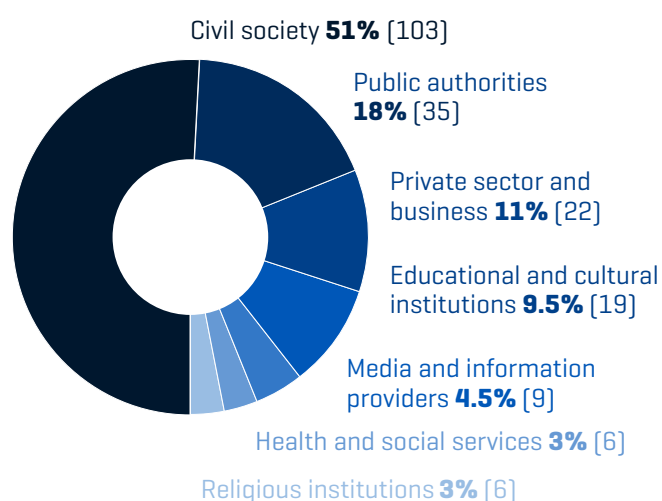
⁵⁶ Of the 200 actions recorded, 86 % took place in 2022, 9 % between 2023 and 2025, and 5 % prior to 2022.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, initiatives relating to dialogue and conflict transformation [2%] and those concerning accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption [2%] recorded a lower number of initiatives. However, this result should be interpreted with caution, as the unit of analysis used is the initiative itself, rather than the number of activities carried out. Thus, facilitating dialogue and mediation to address community and intra-family conflicts constituted essential activities from 2022 onwards, although they were driven by a small number of specialized networks and organizations. Similarly, initiatives on accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption were led mainly by large civil society organizations, which over the last four years have promoted nationwide campaigns and initiatives. It is worth noting that these categories were not static. As shown in the following sections, the community response evolved progressively from actions focused on emergency response towards initiatives aimed at social recovery and strengthening long-term resilience.

The geographical distribution of the baseline initiatives is grouped into two macro-zones defined according to exposure to military aggression during the study period [see methodological note in Chapter 1]. On the one hand, the western and central regions, which, despite being subjected to air raids, were not invaded and became relatively safer areas for rear area activities: these accounted for 87 initiatives [43.5%]. On the other hand, the frontline regions—the north, east and south—which suffered partial occupation or ground combat and were either liberated or remain under direct hostilities: these accounted for 99 initiatives [49.5%], including structures displaced from the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk that operated in areas under government control. Finally, 14 initiatives with a multi-regional scope [7.0%] were identified. This pattern indicates that community resilience was not merely a rear region phenomenon linked to the reception of IDPs, but also a response that emerged in the territories hardest hit by Russia's aggression, where it was exercised under conditions of extreme adversity.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of initiatives according to the actor that promoted them. The data confirm the leading role played by civil society, which drove half of the registered initiatives [51%], through a network that combined NGOs and established coalitions with informal initiatives by neighbours and volunteers. The state administration — primarily local governments and municipal authorities, which accounted for 26 of their 35 initiatives — promoted 18%, followed by the private sector and businesses [11%] and educational and cultural institutions [9.5%]. The media [4.5 %], health and social services, and religious institutions [3% each] played a smaller role in terms of numbers, although they were significant in specific areas such as local news or psychosocial and spiritual support.

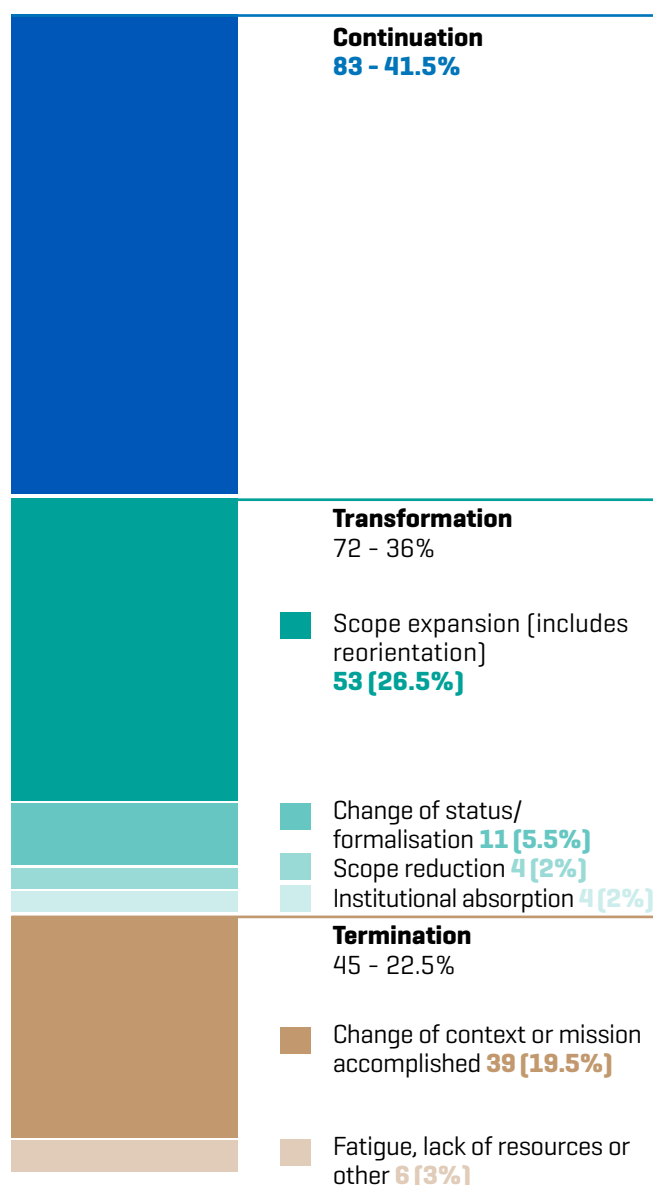
Figure 2. Distribution of local initiatives by initiating actors



Source: Elaborated by the author based on the database *Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026* [Annex 1].

Figure 3 presents the status of the 200 baseline initiatives at the end of the follow-up period. The data reveal a remarkable persistence of the community fabric that emerged in 2022: three out of every four initiatives [77.5%] remained active, either by continuing their original activities [41.5%] or by transforming them in terms of structure, objectives or scope [36%]. The extent of this transformation was

Figure 3. Distribution of initiatives by development trajectories



Source: Elaborated by the author based on the database 'Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026' [Annex 1].

a finding in itself: more than a third of the initiatives did not merely survive, but adapted their mission to a changing context, in line with the transformative dimension of resilience described in the conceptual framework.

The 45 initiatives that ceased operations [22.5%] do not reflect a single narrative of failure, either. In the vast majority of cases [39 out of 45], their closure was due to a change in context that eliminated the need that had originally driven them, or to the

fulfilment of the mission for which they were created. In both cases, the cessation should be interpreted as the fulfilment of their purpose rather than as an organizational failure. Only six initiatives showed signs of exhaustion or a lack of resources to sustain their activities. The following subsections explore these processes in greater depth and analyse their implications for Ukraine's resilience ecosystem.

4.2. THE REPERTOIRE OF ACTIONS: TYPOLOGIES AND INITIATING ACTORS

As we have seen in the previous section, the recorded community resilience initiatives constitute a diverse range of interventions that we have grouped into 10 typologies [see Figure 1]. Below, we describe their objectives and initiating actors. This analysis reflects key trends regarding the activities carried out by the various public and private sectors [see Figure 4].

Firstly. The most visible expression of collective capacity was the provision and distribution of humanitarian aid, shelter and medical support. These kinds of activities required a high degree of collective organization to set up humanitarian hubs, refurbish shelters, develop databases of beneficiaries and organize the distribution of humanitarian aid such as medicines, food, clothing, etc. Youth centres, women community leaders and social entrepreneurs played a central role in cooperation with local and regional authorities. For example, in 2022, the All Ukrainian Youth Centers network transformed its headquarters in Kyiv into a strategic centre for receiving and distributing international aid to the central and eastern regions of the country.⁵⁷ In besieged cities such as Chernihiv and Sumy, residents worked with farmers and woodcutters to identify safe routes through which to deliver humanitarian aid,⁵⁸ whilst in Kyiv neighbourhoods such as Podil, self-sufficiency schemes were organized to provide food for the entire neighbourhood.⁵⁹

Secondly, support for vulnerable groups took the form of specific, specialized assistance tailored to the needs of particular groups, such as IDPs, women, children, people with

⁵⁷ See Annex I, Community Resilience Actions Database, case A184

⁵⁸ See Annex I, Case A163

⁵⁹ Daza, *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War*, 15.

disabilities, veterans and their families, ethnic minority communities and even animals. These initiatives went beyond the provision of basic humanitarian aid, incorporating measures for reintegration, social and economic support, long-term accommodation, and programs for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, amongst other interventions. Local authorities played a prominent role in carrying out these activities, alongside NGOs and women's organizations, which took on a particularly significant role in identifying, systematizing (via a database) and providing support to those in need. Beyond the specific assistance provided, these actions forged a framework of mutual support that strengthened social cohesion: from the community programs run by the organization Indestructible Together to defend the rights and participation of IDPs in Novovolynsk, in the Volynska region;⁶⁰ to support programs for the families of fallen defenders, such as those carried out by the organization Heart Outside in Kyiv;⁶¹ as well as networks of NGOs that ran the 'My telephone friend' initiative to meet the needs of older people in the city of Cherkasy.⁶²

Thirdly, psychosocial, spiritual and religious support activities were led by medical services, NGOs and religious institutions. These activities were vital for maintaining the morale and mental health of members of local communities. Some notable examples range from the Vyshgorod Spiders creative workshops, which used art therapy to heal the trauma caused by the war in the Kyivska region;⁶³ to the spiritual support initiatives organized by volunteers from the Pokrovsk Church in the town of Nizhyn, in the Chernihivska region.⁶⁴ Of particular significance were the physical and mental healing retreats organized by the Chernihiv-based organization Ahalar for community leaders, veterans and others in need of psychosocial support.⁶⁵

Fourth. The protection and evacuation of civilians were among the main tasks undertaken

by civil society. Where escape was not possible, communities organized improvised self-protection initiatives, without instructions or cooperation from public authorities due to the occupation. Women community leaders played a leading role in organizing these initiatives, alongside efforts by young people and volunteers from religious institutions, amongst others. In the small community of Khadivska, in the Kherson region, two local women described this type of action: "We decided to organize resistance and agreed that we would not let them [the Russians] in. We set up groups to monitor the entrances and exits of the village; if we spotted any movements by Russian soldiers, we would raise the alarm on the community chat group and more people would quickly mobilize to block the access points."⁶⁶ Where escape was feasible, local groups set up makeshift evacuation networks in cooperation with public authorities and the police. In Trostyanets (Sumy), five friends managed to evacuate between 2,500 and 3,000 people;⁶⁷ in Kherson, social entrepreneur Denys Sukhanov transported elderly people to safe areas and returned to the city with his boot full of medicines.⁶⁸

Fifth. Actions relating to preparation, leadership and local coordination were fundamental not only to the development of other activities, but also to the empowerment of specific groups such as women and young people. These types of activities included processes of public participation and cooperation with public authorities, community training and management programs, and new decision-making practices such as deliberation. In this regard, the people's assemblies – inspired by the traditional Ukrainian system of direct democracy known as *viche* – stood out;⁶⁹ the best-documented case being Konotop, where images shared on social media showed the

⁶⁰ See Annex I, Case A127

⁶¹ See Annex I, Case A117

⁶² See Annex I, case A55

⁶³ See Annex I, case A129

⁶⁴ See Annex I, case A92

⁶⁵ See Annex I, case A192

⁶⁶ Civil society representatives [E44], women, Kyiv, focus group, May 28, 2025.

⁶⁷ See Annex I, case A175

⁶⁸ Diari Ara, "Civil Resistance in Ukraine: Combat without Weapons," ARA Interactius, accessed July 24, 2026, <https://interactius.ara.cat/en/civil-resistance-ukraine-combat-without-weapons>.

⁶⁹ The 'viche' is a traditional Ukrainian popular assembly in which citizens gather to deliberate and make decisions on matters of public interest. Rooted in the democratic traditions of Kievan Rus', the term has resurfaced in modern Ukraine to describe large civic gatherings and public mobilizations, such as those that took place during the Euromaidan protests.

mayor deciding, alongside his citizens, on the response to the Russian occupying forces.⁷⁰ In towns that were rapidly occupied, the presence of soldiers on the streets and the blocking of telecommunications isolated local residents within their homes and immediate neighbourhoods. With the first demonstrations outside the regional administration building in Freedom Square in March 2022, contacts between residents of different neighbourhoods were re-established, enabling meetings in cafés and shelters, as well as the first initiatives for humanitarian hubs and information-sharing systems.⁷¹ In other contexts, community organization was facilitated through the use of technological tools such as chat groups and platforms like 'Handy.ai' or 'HelpHubUA', developed by companies and communications agencies.⁷² Leadership and empowerment programs for women and young people, such as those developed by the Women's Association of Fastiv in the Kyivska region, also gained prominence.⁷³ Digital platforms created by local authorities in exile from the temporarily occupied territories, used to maintain communication with the population, provided administrative and legal services and, above all, preserved the identity, memory and cohesion of their communities.⁷⁴

Sixth. The restoration of infrastructure and socio-economic and environmental development encompassed both immediate responses to crisis such as destruction of buildings – and measures aimed at socio-economic development and the recovery of the human capital required for reconstruction. Such initiatives contributed directly to the strategic framework for social recovery and infrastructure reconstruction at national level. In this regard, regional and local authorities played a central role in identifying structural needs and coordinating these initiatives in cooperation – including through co-production – with civil society organizations, educational institutions and local businesses.

For example, in Kherson, the regional authority organized an agricultural development cluster in 2023 with the participation of civil society and the region's business community.⁷⁵ In Chernihiv, the Regional Agency for Development has been developing a community recovery and development strategy since 2024, with the involvement of civil society and business leaders.⁷⁶

The private sector, in general, played an active role during the emergency and civil infrastructure restoration phases by donating building materials and generators, and supporting the reconstruction of shelters.⁷⁷ In some cases, small and medium-sized enterprises also developed training and empowerment programs for young entrepreneurs.⁷⁸ In this regard, other social actors such as universities and organized civil society played a significant role in socio-economic development. The '*Seeds for Ukraine*' initiative, organized by the Kyiv School of Economics, focused on the distribution of seeds and greenhouses to liberated territories.⁷⁹ The *Victory Gardens* initiative revived the tradition of wartime vegetable gardens from the Second World War to promote local food production, strengthen food security and mobilize communities affected by the war, including IDPs.⁸⁰ Finally, organizations such as Green Bucha⁸¹ and Enough to Poison Kryvyi Rih focused on environmental recovery in the face of the effects of pollution caused by the war and other industrial activities.⁸²

Seventh. With a more specialized focus, initiatives aimed at facilitating dialogue, conflict management, confidence-building and integration addressed various types of social conflict: ranging from intra-family problems to tensions within local communities, such as conflicts between IDPs and host communities.

⁷⁰ See Annex I, case A166. Source: www.facebook.com/StratcomCentreUA/videos/497120731797586/?v=e8fs=e8mibextid=wwXlfr&rid=GHAuTIR9idW9hzm9

⁷¹ Oksana Pohomii [E19], director of the NGO Sprava Hromad, female, Kherson, individual interview, March 28, 2025.

⁷² See Annex I, case A64

⁷³ See Annex I, case A118

⁷⁴ See Annex I, case A149

⁷⁵ Representative of the regional authorities [E23], deputy head, male, Kherson, individual interview, March 29, 2025.

⁷⁶ See Annex I, case A171

⁷⁷ See Annex I, case A154

⁷⁸ Private sector representative [E34], director, female, Chernihiv, individual interview, April 1, 2025.

⁷⁹ See Annex I, case A153

⁸⁰ See Annex I, case A53. See also: www.sh.se/english/sodertorn-university/news/research/2026-03-23-growing-resilience-in-war-torn-ukraine---the-victory-gardens-that-keep-community-alive

⁸¹ Diari Ara, "Civil Resistance in Ukraine: Combat without Weapons."

⁸² See Annex I, case A121

In the latter case, the initiatives also addressed conflicts linked to Ukrainian identity, accountability processes for alleged collaborators in contexts of temporary occupation, and other experiences endured during the armed conflict, amongst others. These resilience-building initiatives, which are key to maintaining social cohesion, were led by professionals with extensive experience, such as the League of Mediators of Ukraine,⁸³ Dignity Space⁸⁴ and the Ukrainian Peacebuilding School.⁸⁵ On another level, numerous youth centres, such as the Lviv Regional Youth Center, organized awareness-raising activities and facilitated the integration of IDPs through social spaces.⁸⁶

Eighth. In the information sphere, against a backdrop of hybrid warfare involving information blockades in temporarily occupied areas and disinformation campaigns, Ukrainian society developed its own repertoire of communication and information initiatives. A first strand involved the creation of reliable information infrastructures and the development of resilient narratives. These included numerous initiatives at national and local levels, such as Media Center Ukraine, established with government support, and the Occupied.Media platform, organized by the media outlet Realna Gazeta, which brought together various media organizations to report on the situation in the temporarily occupied territories.⁸⁷ These were complemented by community-based early warning systems in temporarily besieged and/or occupied areas to manage risks and ensure the distribution of aid; and digital platforms for community support and databases of beneficiaries developed by NGOs.⁸⁸ As well as journalists and telecommunications experts who broke the isolation of besieged areas, such as Kherson and Chernihiv, in 2022 to report on the real situation and keep the population's morale high.⁸⁹ Radio became a key tool for information. "Radio consumes very little energy and is widely accessible to the population. It

leaves no digital footprint and is immune to surveillance. [...] When the Russians arrived, radio was our hope," said Vadym Miskiyi, director of Detector Media.⁹⁰

In a second phase, narratives of resilience were promoted by local media outlets which, through rigour and satire, helped to boost public morale. Some notable examples included the Tsukr Media group in Sumy and More Liudei in Odesa.⁹¹ These narratives were also accompanied by campaigns to raise funds, distribute aid or connect volunteers with vulnerable people. Particularly noteworthy was the work of the Factor Bureau agency with campaigns for the reconstruction of the town of Borodianka, and Postmen with the campaign 'Nazovni' to support small Ukrainian businesses.⁹²

A third section focused on initiatives to combat Russian disinformation and propaganda. In this context, media literacy initiatives promoted by youth centres in Romantika [Sumy], Kyiv and Odesa, amongst others, were highlighted.⁹³ Also featured were campaigns and platforms to debunk fake news.⁹⁴ Finally, local media carried out sophisticated operations to jam Russian radio frequencies that were spreading fear and disinformation amongst the population; some such incidents were recorded in Kharkiv.⁹⁵

Ninth. Cultural, artistic and identity-related initiatives. In the first months of Russia's full-scale invasion, numerous artistic and religious initiatives were organized to champion Ukrainian culture, identity and language, as well as those of other minorities in the country, driven mainly by cultural centres, universities and parishes. Of particular note were the Ukrainian-language conversation clubs organized by organizations such as the Bukovina Centre for Culture and Art in Chernivtsi,⁹⁶ the 'City of a Thousand Sculptures and Murals' initiative in Korostyshiv [Zhytomyrska], rooted in Ukrainian tradition,⁹⁷

⁸³ See Annex I, case A162

⁸⁴ See Annex I, case A178

⁸⁵ See Annex I, case A150

⁸⁶ See Annex I, case A151

⁸⁷ See Annex I, cases A196 and A198

⁸⁸ Civil society representative [E30], director, female, Kyiv, individual interview, March 31, 2025. Examples include cases A32, A34, A51. [See Annex I]

⁸⁹ Media representative [E31], editor-in-chief, male, Chernihiv, individual interview, April 1, 2025.

⁹⁰ Vadym Miskiyi [E9], Detector Media, director, male, Kyiv, individual interview, March 25, 2025.

⁹¹ See Annex I, case A195

⁹² See Annex I, case A33. See also: www.factorbureau.com/

⁹³ See Annex I, case A167

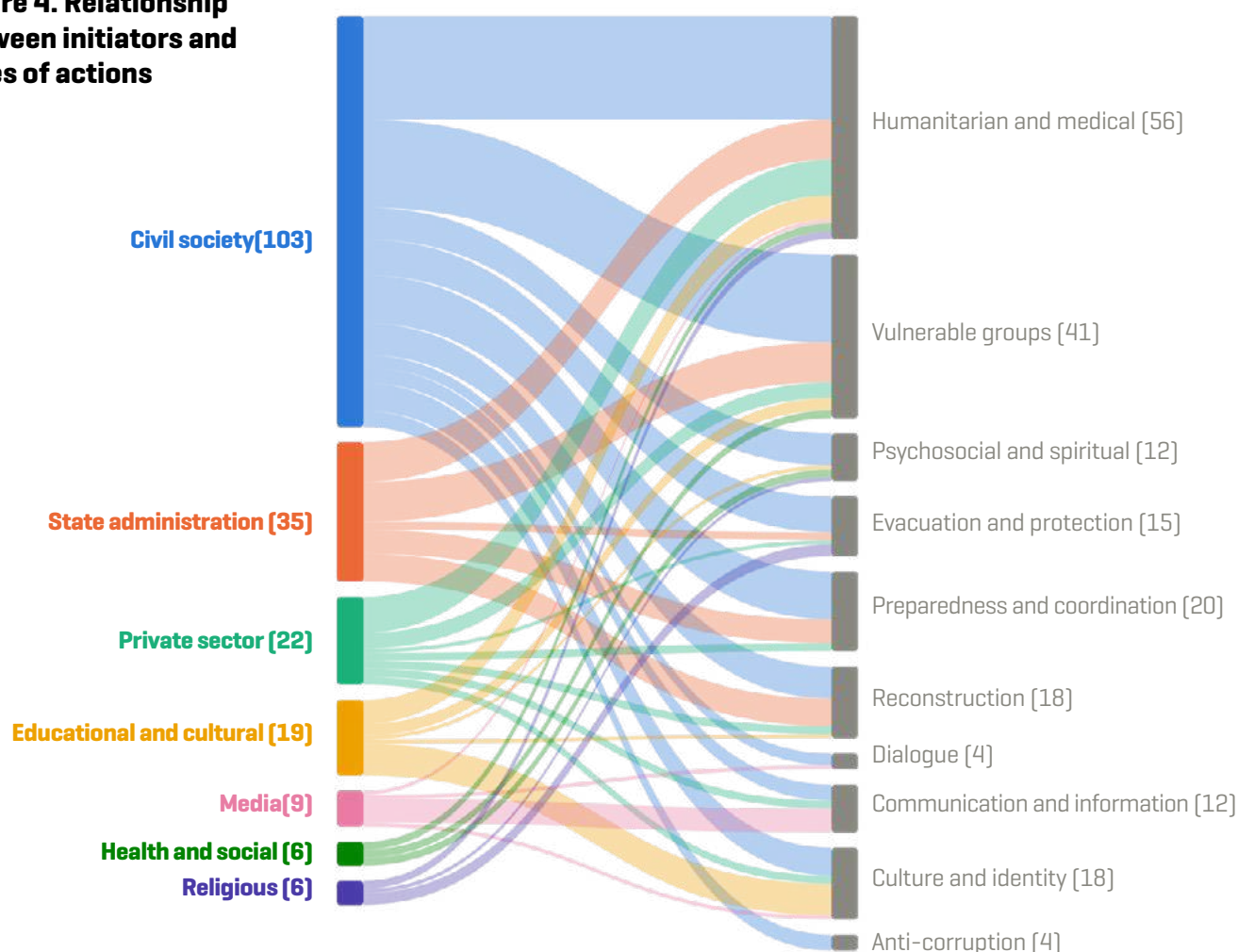
⁹⁴ See: www.disinfo.detector.media/en

⁹⁵ Representatives of local media [E61], directors (woman and man), Kharkiv, focus group, June 11, 2026.

⁹⁶ See Annex I, case A12

⁹⁷ See Annex I, case A112

Figure 4. Relationship between initiators and types of actions



Source: Elaborated by the author based on the database 'Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026' [Annex 1]

and the charity concerts held in shelters in Cherkasy, organized by young people from the Ukrainian Volunteer Service in collaboration with the NGOs FRI Cherkasy and Sich, and the local group Worth Attention.⁹⁸

Tenth. Measures relating to accountability, transparency and anti-corruption were key to maintaining social cohesion, justice and socio-economic development. This framework included activities to scrutinize the distribution of resources and anti-corruption initiatives. Of particular note were the journalistic campaigns and investigative work carried out by the Anti-Corruption Action Centre and the Mezha Centre for Legislative Initiatives, which focuses on anti-corruption, democratic governance and institutional accountability in times of

war.⁹⁹ Furthermore, in 2022, the RISE Ukraine coalition was formed with the aim of promoting sustainable, transparent reconstruction underpinned by accountability mechanisms.¹⁰⁰ On another level, there are also initiatives to document war crimes and ensure accountability, such as the 5AM platform or the 'Tribunal for Putin' initiative, led by the Center for Civil Liberties, whose development and international impact are analysed in the following chapters.¹⁰¹

4.3. DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES

Whilst the previous section depicted the ecosystem at its inception, this section reconstructs what became of it. The follow-up

⁹⁹ See Annex I, case A143. See also: www.mezha.net/eng/bukvy/vitaliy-shabunin-faces-fraud-charges-amid-political-controversy-in-ukraine/

¹⁰⁰ See Annex I, case A142

¹⁰¹ For further information, see: www.5am.in.ua/en; www.ccl.org.ua/en/campagins/tribunal-for-putin/

⁹⁸ See Annex I, case A55

carried out in 2025–2026 on the 200 baseline initiatives shows that more than three-quarters of the ecosystem was still active four years later. However, these aggregate figures mask the essential point: the evolution was not uniform but followed different trajectories depending on the type of action, the nature of the initiating actor and the territory. This section identifies the five main vectors of that transformation.

The survival of the resilience ecosystem

Figure 5 cross-references the initial status of the initiatives with their status at the end of the follow-up, and the result shows that formalization made all the difference to the ecosystem's persistence. Initiatives that were established with a formal structure continued or were transformed in 88.4% of cases, with only 11.6% ceasing operations. As for informal initiatives, discontinuations reached 42.3%—a rate more than three times higher. This divergence, however, should not be interpreted as a failure of the informal sector: virtually all informal discontinuations [27 out of 30] were due to a change in context that eliminated the need for the initiative or signalled the fulfilment of the mission that had given rise to it. Informality was the characteristic organizational form of the emergency response – rapid, flexible and with low start-up costs – and its subsequent winding down, in most cases, signalled that the emergency had been dealt with, not that the structure had collapsed. Only three informal initiatives ceased due to burnout or a lack of resources.

Furthermore, the informal initiatives that persisted showed signs of consolidation. Of the 23 initiatives that underwent transformation, 11 moved towards more institutionalized forms – nine changed their status to become NGOs, foundations or associations, and two were absorbed by local public bodies. Almost half of

the transformations of informal initiatives thus involved a transition from the informal to the formal sector: the ecosystem's path to maturity. The case of the association 'United by our love for children' in Kherson illustrates the full journey: founded as an emergency humanitarian initiative, it is now a registered organization with a database of over 3,600 beneficiary families, having shifted its focus from humanitarian aid to career guidance, psychosocial support and policy advocacy.¹⁰²

Survival rates also varied markedly depending on the type of organizer. NGOs and coalitions showed the most robust track record: 96% of their initiatives were still running or had been transformed by the end of the follow-up period [54 out of 56], with only two cases of

cessation recorded. They were followed by local authorities, with 85% continuing or having been transformed [22 out of 26], and two groups with no cessation of activities: regional governments and youth centres.

These rates revealed different patterns of persistence. Civil society organizations combined survival with adaptability: their organizational infrastructure—legal status, access to funding, stable teams—enabled them both to sustain their activities and to reorient them, confirming that formalization acted as a platform for adaptation.

status, access to funding, stable teams—enabled them both to sustain their activities and to reorient them, confirming that formalization acted as a platform for adaptation. Youth centres also demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and persistence. All recorded cases indicated continuity and transformation. In 2022, they focused on humanitarian aid and support for vulnerable groups. However, in subsequent phases, they combined their statutory activities aimed at community development and youth empowerment with community resilience programs and activities promoting Ukrainian culture.

¹⁰² See Annex I, case A158

Whilst public authorities persisted by mandate – regional governments continued to operate but underwent little transformation – this institutional stability ensured the continuity of functions but demonstrated less adaptability in the face of changes in the context. Local government, by contrast, showed more instances of transformation based on a broadening of the scope of its activities; for example, a reduction in emergency programs and an increase in recovery and community development services. A prime example was the I’Mariupol initiative. Although it initially focused on emergency humanitarian aid, it evolved into a long-term recovery program. By the end of the monitoring period, its activities included psychosocial support centres, legal aid, medical services, housing initiatives, support for families, assistance for veterans, education and community development.¹⁰³

At the other end of the spectrum, resilience initiatives promoted by businesses (41% of their total initiatives), educational institutions (37%) and the media (44%) were those that showed the highest cessation rates. This may be explained by a return to their original functions, one-off initiatives that ended when the crisis was over, or by fatigue or financial difficulties.

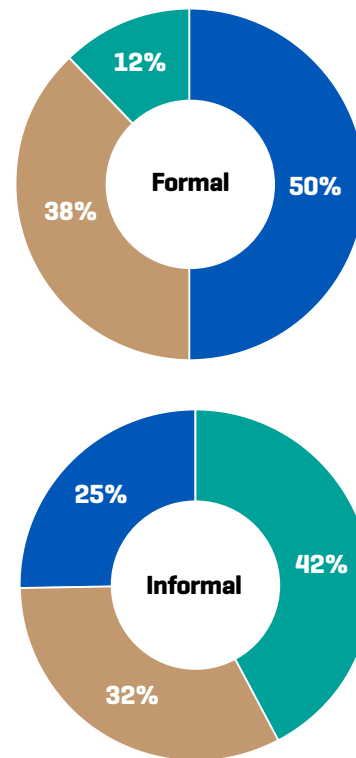
Expansion of scope: addressing the scars of war

The second trend concerns change in the focus of work. 72.2% of the initiatives that underwent transformation broadened their thematic scope or reoriented their activities; in some cases, this broadening of focus also involved an expansion of the geographical area of operation. Only 6.9% (5 cases) reduced their scope in recent years.

In most cases, the reorientation of activities was driven by changing contextual needs. The thematic focus shifted from the emergency sector to social recovery, including community resilience programs, psychosocial support and long-term development. For example, some humanitarian hubs that were distributing food and medicines in 2022 have expanded or refocused their services on community development, first-aid training, etc., over

Figure 5. Relationship between the initial structure of initiatives and their development trajectory

Continuation
Transformation
Completion



Source: Elaborated by the author based on the 'Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026' database [Annex 1].

the past four years. The Sievierodonetsk humanitarian hub, an initiative set up in 2022 to provide aid to IDPs from Luhansk, reported in 2026 that it was providing medical assistance, psychosocial support, administrative services for veterans and promoting cultural activities.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the Lviv Regional Youth Center, which in the early years of the Russia's full-scale invasion had focused on the integration of IDPs, reported in 2025 an increase in activities relating to psychosocial support, resilience programs and crisis response.¹⁰⁵

It also highlighted a refocusing of support towards specific population groups. On the one hand, support for war veterans became a priority. Whilst in 2022 support for veterans appeared as a secondary activity within local

¹⁰³ See Annex I, case A193

¹⁰⁴ See Annex I, case A194

¹⁰⁵ See Annex I, case A151

initiatives, the follow-up in 2025–26 recorded organizations dedicated specifically to this purpose. For example, Ahalar, an organization specializing in psychosocial work, has stepped up its work with veterans and their families in recent years.¹⁰⁶ Some initiatives of this kind were driven by the government, particularly the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs. A notable example is Vesta – the Veteran Development Centre, which focuses on community reintegration through employment opportunities, training and social adaptation, and which has expanded its services and geographical reach via universities in Ternopil, Rivne and Uzhhorod since 2023.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, the expansion of infrastructure for the prevention of gender-based violence was noted. A prime example is the Survivor Relief Centre, which opened its first centre in Zaporizhzhia in July 2022 and, between 2024 and 2025, expanded its presence to operate in a dozen cities across the country, as well as deploying three mobile units to serve communities in government-controlled territories and along the front line.¹⁰⁸ Another initiative, Vilna [free woman], established in 2022, grew within two years to include nearly thirty centres for psychosocial recovery, empowerment and protection.¹⁰⁹ It is worth noting that both initiatives were supported by funding from international organizations. Ultimately, these trends and examples demonstrate that the resilience ecosystem not only persisted but was reshaped in response to the wounds inflicted by the protracted war.

The professionalization of the civil sector: consolidation of structures and capacities

The third driver of transformation concerned the changes experienced by the organizers of the initiatives, with the consolidation of capacities and structures being a key feature. According to the data obtained, 34% of the initiatives analysed reported positive transformations [see Figure 3].¹¹⁰

Firstly, a significant number of informal organizations [11 cases] were incorporated as public associations or foundations during the research period. This enabled them to strengthen their operational capacity by accessing international grants and municipal permits for activities, amongst other things. Data on the registration of non-profit organizations in Ukraine showed a reconfiguration of this ecosystem. The most significant change was the sharp rise in the number of charitable organizations between 2022 and 2023, which rose from around 11,900 to 20,671, representing an increase of 74%.¹¹¹ During this process of transformation, our study identified the evolution of local initiatives led by women – such as humanitarian hubs or evacuation efforts – into formal organizations focused on the empowerment of vulnerable groups, psychosocial support and the prevention of gender-based violence.¹¹²

Secondly, numerous organizations strengthened their structures. Some sources indicated that the period 2022–25 was characterized by a decline in the creation of public associations – with the exception of charitable foundations, which increased substantially during the first year of the full-scale invasion – but by greater consolidation and professionalization of existing ones.¹¹³ These instances of consolidation included improvements in advance strategic planning, organizational expertise, support from donors and partners, cooperation with other civil society organizations, and an expansion of staff numbers, amongst other things. A prime example is the Okhtyrka Youth Centre, a civil society organization based in the Sumy region, which grew from 5 staff members in 2022 to 50 in 2025.¹¹⁴

Thirdly, the professional capabilities of the teams improved. A specialization and expansion of the capabilities of the organizations' management teams was identified. For example, a shift from operational tasks to more

¹⁰⁶ See Annex I, case A192

¹⁰⁷ See Annex I, case A144

¹⁰⁸ See Annex I, case A136

¹⁰⁹ See Annex I, case A137

¹¹⁰ Note: 36% of changes, but 2% of these reflect a reduction in scope.

¹¹¹ For further information, see: <https://opendatabot.ua/en/analytics/non-profit-2023>

¹¹² Iryna Kosteniuk [E21], director, NGO 'United by our love for children', female, Kherson, individual interview, March 29, 2025.

¹¹³ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), Ukrainian Civil Society under the War – 2022: A Report Based on the Findings of the Study [Kyiv, 2023]; ISAR Ednannia, Civil Society in Ukraine During Wartime, 2022–2025 [Kyiv, 2025], 21.

¹¹⁴ Rado Dubrovka; Vladislav Golyakov [E52], Okhtyrka Youth Centre NGO, director and programme coordinator, online, focus group, May 30, 2025.

strategic activities. Numerous organizations reported an expansion of their services towards the empowerment and development of local initiatives.¹¹⁵ Oksana Malchenko, director of Space for Equal Opportunities, explained that whilst in 2022 her work was more operational and linked to the distribution of humanitarian aid, by 2025 her role had shifted towards planning and strategic advice for organizational development: “For me, it is a success to have supported the creation of four organizations in the field of youth policy.”¹¹⁶ Organizations such as Indestructible Together [Novovolynsk, Volynska] were also highlighted for their contribution to enhancing the capacities of internally displaced activists in terms of fostering community relations, political advocacy to defend the rights of these groups, and networking activities.¹¹⁷ In this way, groups of IDPs went from being aid recipients in 2022 to becoming promoters of their own organizations, with projects developed in cooperation with public authorities and international organizations.

Regional divergence: priorities in socio-economic recovery

The fourth factor was territorial. The trajectories of the initiatives diverged between regions that experienced occupation or ground combat — the north, east and south of the country, including the Kyiv region, which was the scene of direct ground clashes until April 2022, as well as organizations relocated from Donetsk and Luhansk — and the relatively stable regions of the centre and west. However, this difference was not reflected in the survival of the initiatives, as might be expected. In fact, continuity was even higher in the frontline regions [41.4%] than in the rear regions [36.8%], and overall persistence — taking into account both initiatives that continued and those that were transformed — reached 80.8% compared with 70.1%. This persistence was a response to the ongoing emergency in frontline areas, where the context compelled civil society to maintain functions of community resilience.

The centres of activism and volunteer networks established in 2022 continue their work—and in some cases expand it—to respond to crises and the emerging needs of the population. Furthermore, unlike in other regions—where, for example, many initiatives supporting IDPs were gradually taken over by local authorities—in frontline areas, organized civil society retained these functions because the authorities had to devote their resources to defence and military coordination.

The main difference at the regional level lay in the type of activities. In 2022, in the rear regions [the centre and the west], the ecosystem focused on reception and reintegration: humanitarian assistance to IDPs and support for vulnerable groups accounted for two out of every three initiatives, alongside a significant proportion of cultural and identity-related initiatives. In the frontline regions, by contrast, the scope of action was broader: humanitarian assistance, local preparedness and coordination for crisis response, the protection and evacuation of civilians, psychosocial support and communication and information accounted for more than six out of ten initiatives.

However, the 2025–26 follow-up revealed divergences in priorities. These differences became apparent in the areas of reconstruction and socio-economic and environmental recovery. In the centre and west, the focus was on long-term social development and recovery; on the front line, reconstruction took the form of emergency repairs to attacked infrastructure and the maintenance of minimum living standards and security — retaining human capital through employment and support for local businesses, and rebuilding the community fabric and bonds of trust, with strategies adapted to the context. This divergence also shaped relations with public authorities, whose cooperation with civil society followed different approaches in each area; its implications for participation and impacts are examined in the following chapter.

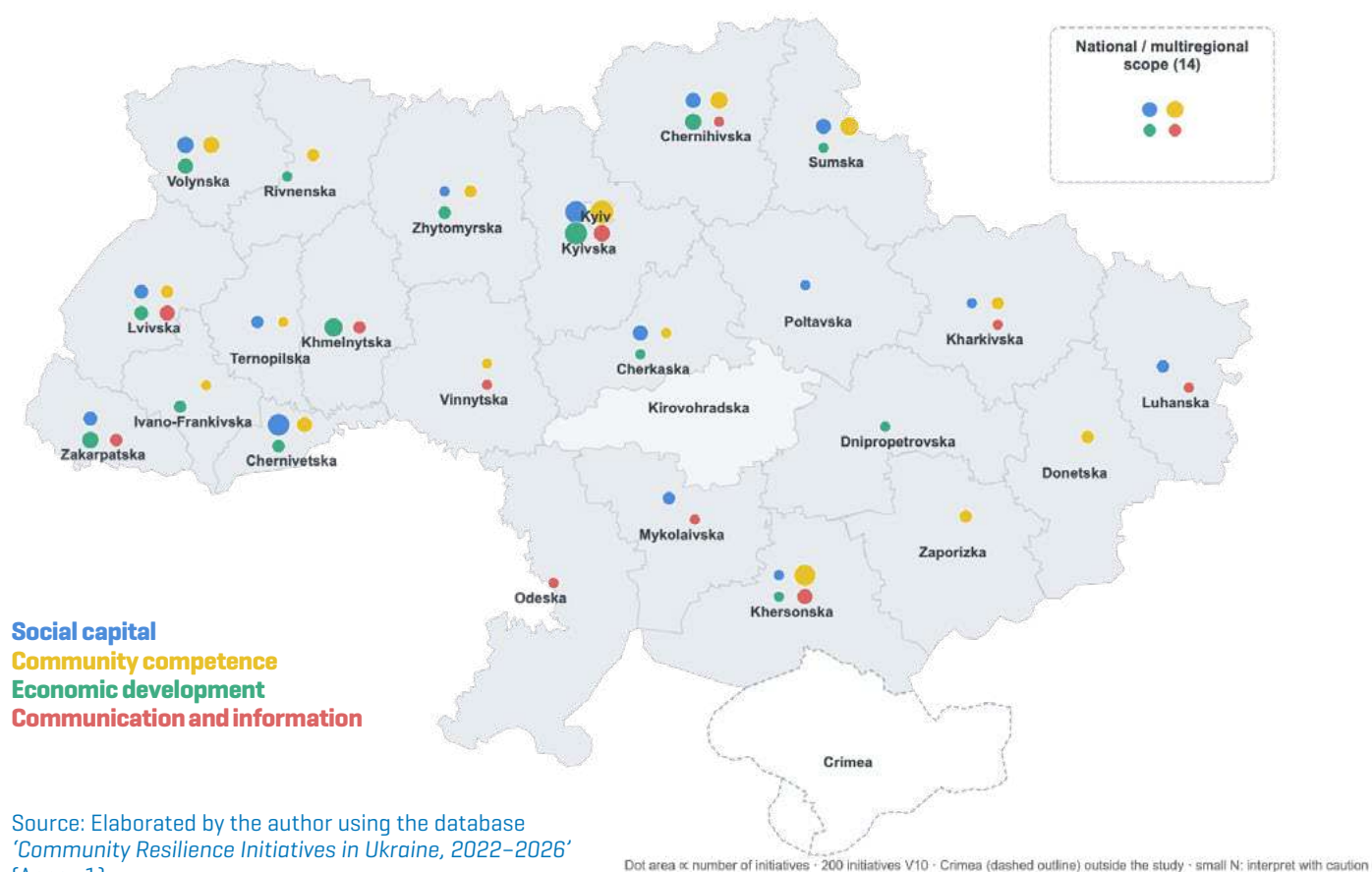
Discontinuity

Finally, the monitoring process allows us to take a close look at the initiatives that ceased operations — 45, just under a quarter of the

¹¹⁵ Dmytro Tyshchenko [E54], Tsukr media, director, male, online, individual interview, June 3, 2025. See also www.ccl.org.ua/en/tools/kyiv-school-of-human-rights-and-democracy/

¹¹⁶ Oksana Malchenko [E47], Space for Equal Opportunities, director, female, online, individual interview, May 30, 2025.

¹¹⁷ See Annex I, case A127

Figure 6. Geographical distribution of local initiatives according to the dimensions of resilience

baseline figure [22.5%]. The distribution of these closures was not random, and it is important to identify their causes. The vast majority of closures [39 out of 45, or 86.7%] were due to a change in circumstances that either eliminated the need for the initiative or meant the mission for which it was created had been achieved. The other, minority cause was exhaustion: six initiatives [13.3 %] ceased due to the impossibility of sustaining teams, funding or momentum during a protracted war—a pattern that intensified from 2024–2025 onwards with the sector’s funding crisis and which is analysed, along with its impacts, in the following chapter.

From a geographical perspective, the closure rate was higher in the central and western regions [29.9%] than in the frontline regions [19.2%]. The concentration of closures in Kyivska and Chernivetska regions suggests that the initiatives that ceased were linked to emergency response tasks, such as the mass

reception of IDPs and humanitarian aid, which were particularly relevant in 2022.

The decision by organizations to wind up their activities due to the fulfilment of their mission or a change in context is legitimate and consistent with the aims that led to their creation. As we saw at the start of this section, many initiatives survived by reinventing themselves through changes in thematic focus or geographical coverage. The case of those that wished to continue but were unable to do so, however, requires greater attention.

5. IMPACTS OF RESILIENCE

This chapter analyses the effects of democratic resilience on Ukrainian society and within the context of war. To this end, the categories of community resilience proposed in the conceptual framework—social capital, community competence, economic development, and information and communication—are used as lenses of analysis. These categories should be understood as a network of interconnected adaptive capacities for responding to emerging crises, such that the effects at each level of analysis are interrelated. For example, improvements in social capital can strengthen the competence and effectiveness of civil society networks and coalitions, whilst the weak economic sustainability of local media can undermine communities' communication and information infrastructure.

Statistical analysis of the baseline data reveals that this network of capacities did not evolve uniformly. Figure 7 shows how social capital and community competence initiatives exhibited the greatest persistence: 50.8 % of social capital initiatives continued and 37.3 % were transformed, whilst 34.3 % of community competence initiatives continued and 43.3 % were transformed. In contrast, the information and communication and economic development pillars recorded the highest cessation rates for the period—32 % and 30.6 % respectively, more than two and a half times higher. Although many of the discontinuations appear to be due to changes in the context or the fulfilment of the objectives that gave rise to the initiatives, a more in-depth analysis reveals, as we shall see in this chapter, significant gaps in the resilience ecosystem that must be taken into account.

5.1. SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT AS A DEMOCRATIZING FORCE

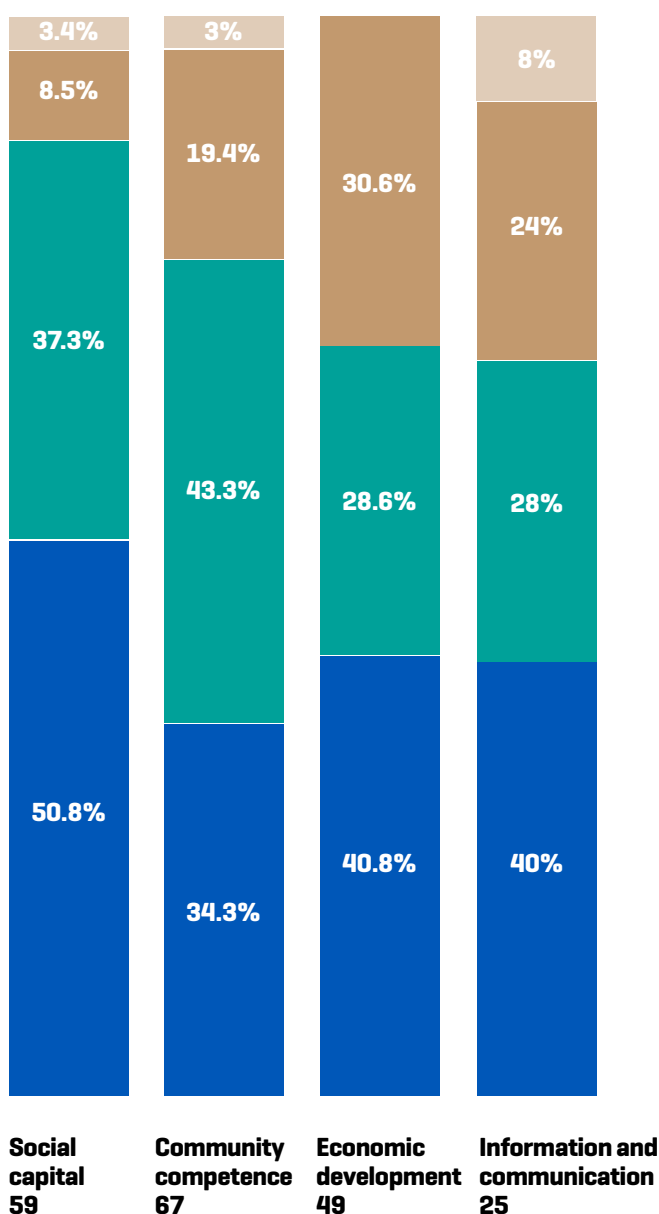
Social capital comprises the actions that create networks and coalitions amongst civil society actors, build trust and solidarity, and promote participation in local associations and initiatives, thereby enhancing the cohesion and reciprocity of the community fabric.

“I am not prepared to die for my country, but I am prepared to die for the people.”
Valeriy Danilenko, deputy director of the civil society organization Free Kharkiv Movement

Figure 7. Distribution of Development Trajectories across Resilience Dimensions

Continued Transformation

Termination due to a change in circumstances
Cessation due to burnout or lack of resources



Source: Elaborated by the author based on the ‘Community Resilience Initiatives in Ukraine, 2022–2026’ database [Annex 1].

The baseline recorded 59 initiatives in this dimension, distributed evenly across the rear regions [30], the frontline regions [25] and the multi-regional level [4].

The development of the social capital pillar demonstrates that, during the period analysed, there was a widespread dissemination of democratic values and practices through the Ukrainian volunteer movement. Although this movement did not emerge in 2022, the full-scale invasion took it to an unprecedented level: 80% of the population reported having contributed to the collective effort through donations, voluntary activities or other forms of civil resistance.¹¹⁸

Beyond its quantitative scale, this mobilization constituted a process of collective agency underpinned by democratic values and practices. Principles such as autonomy, mutual trust, solidarity, responsibility, transparency and inclusion lent cohesion and legitimacy to the volunteer movement. In this vein, Onuch and Mateo analysed how civic participation in Ukraine, particularly volunteers, is closely linked to democratic values and a sense of civic duty. The authors argue that the defence of democracy became one of the main drivers of sustained public participation during the war.¹¹⁹

From the perspective of Norris's conceptual framework, this mass participation not only strengthens social capital by fostering trust, reciprocity and networks of cooperation, but also promotes the dissemination of democratic

norms and expands citizens' capacity to influence political elites. It is therefore no coincidence that social support for democracy remained high throughout the war. Between 2022 and 2023, three-quarters of the Ukrainian population continued to regard democracy as the most suitable political system in times of war.¹²⁰

These shared values helped to strengthen social bonds, trust and new forms of cooperation. In practice, this resulted in a civic infrastructure

of resilience that was deployed across different themes and geographical areas: clusters of initiatives and organizations coalesced around hubs of activism to protect the population and provide basic services (humanitarian and protection dimension), prevent conflicts (mediation and dialogue), combat impunity (documentation of war crimes), counter disinformation [communicative resilience] and address the individual and

collective traumas of war, including activist burnout [care and wellbeing].

This infrastructure operated on three levels. The first is the local initiative itself, which is organized according to levels of social relationships and responsibility. Denys Sukhanov, an activist from Kherson, explained it as follows: "During the occupation, we first helped our closest circle – friends and family; we then extended our support to a second circle comprising neighbours or acquaintances from our own neighbourhood; in a third circle, we went on to help people from across the district and even other parts of the city".¹²¹

The second level is cooperation between civil society organizations. The study confirms

This process of collective agency underpinned by democratic values and practices. Principles such as autonomy, mutual trust, solidarity, responsibility, transparency and inclusion lent cohesion and legitimacy to the volunteer movement.

¹¹⁸ Olga Onuch, David Doyle, Evelyn Ersanilli, Gwendolyn Sasse, Sorana Toma, and Jacquelin van Stekelenburg, *MOBILISE 2022: Ukrainian Nationally Representative Survey Wave Three* [Version 2, with Oversample, N=1218]. MOBILISE Project, survey conducted May–June 2022. Available at www.mobiliseproject.com/2022/06/01/ukraine-war-time-nation-al-surveys/.

¹¹⁹ Olga Onuch and Emma Mateo, "A Duty to Defend: Survey Analysis of Citizen Wartime Engagement in Ukraine," *East European Politics* 42, no. 1 (2026): 63–96.

¹²⁰ Onuch et al., *MOBILISE 2022: Ukrainian Nationally Representative Survey*.

¹²¹ Denys Sukhanov [E15], social entrepreneur, male, Kherson, individual interview, March 27, 2025.

the predominance of informal, decentralized coalitions and networks, geared towards specific, clearly defined objectives. According to Rybiy, these coalitions evolved to perform functions typical of informal institutions, by facilitating problem-solving, rebalancing power relations between the state and civil society, and strengthening participatory decision-making processes.¹²² In this context, participation in networks and coalitions became a strategic component for many of the leading civil society organizations, as it enabled them to generate synergies, coordinate efforts and increase their capacity to influence their respective agendas. A prime example illustrating this process is the monitoring carried out from 2022 to 2026 of a coalition of six organizations established in Sumy. Established to exchange information and resources, by 2025 the network was operating informally and had evolved towards greater political advocacy. Oksana Malchenko, an activist and member of the network, explained: “Together we have greater capacity to influence local authorities, and the absence of a fixed framework reduces the workload whilst increasing our operational flexibility.”¹²³

The third level consists of spaces — whether physical, virtual or hybrid — where activists coordinate their efforts, exchange information, make decisions, allocate roles and take action: offices, cafés, parish halls, cultural and youth centres, markets, humanitarian hubs or even virtual spaces such as messaging apps. In this vein, some authors point out that decentralized and informal structures, with horizontal information-sharing and decision-

making processes, are fundamental factors in empowerment, capable of transforming victims of the system into activists and community leaders.¹²⁴ Specifically, the literature on community organization indicates that the creation of spaces where the abuses suffered by the community—but also its collective aspirations—are shared creates the conditions for individuals to reinterpret their experience as a political issue; to find meaning in helping others; to develop a sense of responsibility towards the community; and ultimately to take on roles of civic leadership.¹²⁵ Consequently, physical, virtual or hybrid spaces became genuine ‘centres of power’ that enabled social organization, empowerment and the regeneration of democratic values such as solidarity, trust, transparency and mutual aid.

Within this civic infrastructure, new leaders with democratic values, social legitimacy and the potential for political influence emerged or were strengthened. Firstly, over the past four years, Ukrainian women have expanded their presence in community, business and political leadership roles. Female representation in Parliament reached an all-time high of 21% in 2025,¹²⁶ and in 2024, women accounted for 59% of the country’s new sole traders.¹²⁷ This progress, driven in part by the mobilization of

Physical, virtual or hybrid spaces became genuine ‘centres of power’ that enabled social organization, empowerment and the regeneration of democratic values such as solidarity, trust, transparency and mutual aid.

¹²² Olena Rybiy, “Coalitions of Civil Society Organisations in Ukraine: Role, Types, and Impact,” *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 32, no. 1 (2024): 61–84.

¹²³ Oksana Malchenko [E47], Space for Equal Opportunities, director, female, online, individual interview, May 30, 2025.

¹²⁴ Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker, “Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment,” *Gender & Society* 12, no. 6 (1998): 729–756; Regina Bateson, “Finding Meaning in Politics: When Victims Become Activists,” *Perspectives on Politics* 23, no. 1 (2025): 250–269.

¹²⁵ Marshall Ganz, *People, Power, Change: Organizing for Democratic Renewal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024); Jason Wood, “The Power to Act: Dissecting Distinctive Elements of Power and Ownership in Community Organising in England and Wales,” *Community Development Journal* 60, no. 1 (2025): 200–217.

¹²⁶ For further information, see: www.equalfuture-eurasia.org/womens-representation-in-politics-and-public-administration/ukraine

¹²⁷ Snizhana Shevchenko, “Ukraine’s Workforce Gap: How Can War Spur Women’s Economic Inclusion?,” *Global Workplace Law & Policy*, April 28, 2025, www.legalblogs.wolterskluwer.com/global-workplace-law-and-policy/ukraines-workforce-gap-how-can-war-spur-womens-economic-inclusion/

men on the front line, coexists with persistent pay gaps and low representation at senior levels of government. It is worth noting that women's leadership in Ukrainian society is nothing new. From a historical perspective, Ukrainian women have played a significant role in the public sphere, particularly in politics, education, culture and civic initiatives. This role was particularly significant during national crises such as the Granite Revolution, the Orange Revolution, the Revolution of Dignity and the volunteer movements following 2014.¹²⁸

Secondly, young people contributed a combination of civic energy, technological skills and social innovation. Youth groups have also historically been one of the main driving forces behind civic mobilization in Ukraine, from the student strikes of the 1990s to their leading role in the Revolution of Dignity.¹²⁹ During Russia's full-scale invasion, initiatives such as the Ukrainian Volunteer Service provided platforms for coordinating volunteering and exchanging information, whilst youth centres established themselves as hubs of activism, driving a wide range of actions: from humanitarian aid and the evacuation of civilians, to programs offering psychosocial support, as well as initiatives focusing on digital literacy, critical thinking and fact-checking – all essential for countering Russia's information warfare.

Thirdly, social entrepreneurs, who organized humanitarian hubs, protests and emergency actions in the early stages of the invasion. In Kherson, for example, a large proportion of the humanitarian centres were set up by these professionals, who possessed strong organizational, logistical and financial skills, in a context where large civil society organizations were unable to operate for security reasons and the vast majority of local authorities had fled. This aspect will be discussed in greater depth in the section on economic development.

Fourthly, the group of IDPs: initially recipients of aid, they subsequently led their own initiatives, including setting up organizations

and identifying the needs of their communities. Dialogue between this social sector and the authorities has increased significantly in recent years, giving rise to formal spaces for consultation and decision-making. Specific case studies are provided later on.

And the fifth group comprises war veterans, who enjoy broad credibility and social legitimacy due to years of commitment and dedication to the defence of the country. Their experience is fundamental to the development of community resilience and the country's socio-economic recovery. However, their reintegration into civilian life poses challenges due to the serious physical and psychological after-effects they suffer. Furthermore, as we shall see later, their capacity for social influence has also given rise to threats of these figures being exploited for political ends.

The emergence of these leaders presented two challenges. The first was of a political nature. According to surveys conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in late 2024, the volunteer movement was the civil society institution that inspired the greatest trust among the Ukrainian population (81%), ranking second only to the Armed Forces and well ahead of most of the country's political and administrative institutions.¹³⁰ This political power and capacity to influence communities gave rise to two situations. On the one hand, some local authorities perceived the new community leaders as political rivals and excluded them from decision-making processes.¹³¹ On the other hand, some political groups attempted to absorb this political power through strategies to co-opt figures such as war veterans.¹³² Without political experience or training, there is a risk of political exploitation, reducing these actors' autonomy and their ability to adequately represent the interests of local communities.

The second challenge is burnout. The study's data show that the termination of initiatives

¹²⁸ Yevhen Martyniuk and Danylo Yashchuk [E8], Centre of United Actions, researchers, male, Kyiv, focus group, March 24, 2025.

¹²⁹ Yevhen Martyniuk and Danylo Yashchuk [E8], Centre of United Actions, researchers, male, Kyiv, focus group, March 24, 2025.

¹³⁰ Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), *Dynamics of Trust in Social Institutions in 2021–2024*, January 9, 2025, www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1467&page=1.

¹³¹ Oksana Malchenko [E47], Space for Equal Opportunities, director, female, online, individual interview, May 30, 2025.

¹³² Mariya Levonova [E29], Centre of United Actions, director, female, Kyiv, individual interview, March 31, 2025.

due to fatigue was marginal [6 cases]; the interviews, however, identified burnout as one of the challenges most frequently mentioned by both formal and informal groups. This apparent contradiction is revealing: burnout did not result in closures but was absorbed – a hidden cost that organizations bear without it being reflected in survival figures, and which therefore constitutes a latent risk to sustainability rather than a visible cause of failure. Yana Biletska, coordinator of the Vokzal humanitarian hub in Kharkiv, put it this way: “For a long time, I didn’t realize I was suffering from burnout. The adrenaline. I was doing all the work, all the tasks, with no time to reflect, and I was driven by a great mission: to help people. I was highly motivated, but when I stopped, I would collapse. I realized I was exhausted, and that’s when I felt that weariness. That’s when you realize something is wrong. If you take a breather, it’s still emotionally difficult.”¹³³ Furthermore, this risk of burnout was not evenly distributed; it was concentrated in unpaid care work, carried out predominantly by women: “The serious risk and problem is exhaustion... women and mothers try to help, but they work incredibly hard, as volunteers and without pay,” noted an activist from the Sumy region.¹³⁴

This issue is linked to a much more structural problem: the lack of an institutional protection system for the volunteer sector. Among the findings identified by this study were a lack of resources, robust international support, and state compensation and protection, amongst others. Other studies, such as those carried

out by national and international organizations, also identified similar structural weaknesses, such as staff shortages, psychological burnout, excessive red tape, and dependence on public donors with short-term funding cycles, amongst others.¹³⁵ This situation weakened the volunteer movement and contributed, for example, to a shortage of civilians available to respond to emergencies.¹³⁶ However, the

resilience ecosystem was sustained by a sense of urgency, responsibility and a shared identity. This was particularly relevant in frontline areas in a state of permanent crisis. In this regard, some authors note that external threats increase internal cohesion and the willingness to engage in collective effort, although the intensity of this effect varies with the duration of the conflict and individual perceptions of risk.¹³⁷ The incentives and foundations of social capital that underpin volunteer

networks do exist, but their sustainability requires the guarantee of decent and adequate working conditions, backed by mechanisms for compensation and social protection.

“For a long time, I didn’t realize I was suffering from burnout. The adrenaline. I was doing all the work, all the tasks, with no time to reflect, and I was driven by a great mission: to help people. I was highly motivated, but when I stopped, I realized I was exhausted”

¹³³ Yana Biletska [E60], Vokzal Humanitarian Hub, director, female, Kharkiv, individual interview, June 11, 2026.

¹³⁴ Vladimir Galkin [E51], BO BF Man Olga, director, male, online, individual interview, May 30, 2025.

¹³⁵ ActionAid, *From the Ground Up: Ukraine’s Civil Society in Recovery: An Analysis of Civil Society Dynamics and Perspectives for the Future*, Johannesburg, 2025, p. 12; ISAR Ednannia, *Civil Society in Ukraine During Wartime, 2022–2025*, Kyiv: ISAR Ednannia, 2025, p. 19.

¹³⁶ Yevhen Bielov, Valeriy Danilenko [E59], Free Kharkiv Movement, director and deputy director, men, Kharkiv, focus group, June 11, 2026.

¹³⁷ Arthur A. Stein, “Conflict and Cohesion: A Review of the Literature,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 20, no. 1 (1976): 143–172; Pamela Aall and Chester A. Crocker, “Building Resilience and Social Cohesion in Conflict,” *Global Policy* 10, no. S2 (2019): 68–75.

Case study 1. Civic infrastructure for the protection and evacuation of civilians: Free Kharkiv Movement

In Ukraine, organized civil society led the evacuation of civilians. Since 2022, numerous local initiatives, organizations, members of religious institutions and activists have led efforts to relocate and shelter civilians, in many cases in cooperation with government actors. Over the course of these four years, a civic infrastructure was built that connected these civic organizations with one another to exchange information and resources. All of this enabled them to improve their coordination and collective action and to work in a decentralized manner, including through joint evacuation missions.

A case study illustrating this process is the Free Kharkiv Movement (FKM). Founded on the second day of the full-scale invasion, when the Saltivka district came under siege, the group began with just two basic tools: an interactive map of the city, created by walking the streets to identify which services were still operational — pharmacies, petrol stations, shops — and shared on social media; and a makeshift humanitarian hub that used its own funds to purchase essential supplies for hospitals. In its first six months, it managed to mobilize 180 volunteers in various roles – logistics, driving, communications – and organized the transport of residents without their own vehicles to the railway station using private cars. Like so many initiatives in 2022, it began as an informal movement and was registered as an organization in 2023; today it comprises 12 active members, all volunteers who balance the evacuation work with their jobs. Most of its team are women.

Four years on, that improvised effort has evolved into a system with its own structure. Evacuation in frontline areas operates in stages: a first leg from the most dangerous zones, now accessible only by armoured vehicles due to the threat from drones; a second leg to transit centres — buildings provided by the local council to civil society organizations, offering psychological support and public funding for

IDPs —; and a third leg to the final destination. Cross-sectoral coordination is equally systematic: a regional coordination centre with a direct telephone line routes each request according to a database of organizations' areas of expertise; the police handle compulsory evacuations, which civil society organizations are unable to carry out; and the FKM has developed specific operational protocols with the police and the army, as well as co-producing services with municipal emergency services — including the joint construction of a hospital — and providing training in anti-drone security protocols to students, local authorities and international organizations. Its own training system for evacuation missions, with safety protocols and mandatory advance planning, encapsulates the lessons learnt: “We have learnt a great deal in four years,” summarized Yevhen Bielov, the organization’s founder and director.

5.2. COMMUNITY COMPETENCE: POLYCENTRIC GOVERNANCE

Community competence refers to a community’s ability to organize itself, make decisions and act effectively in the face of a crisis—the collective capacity to solve problems—which involves the development of individual and collective agency and trust, as well as cooperation between public institutions and civil society actors. This dimension recorded 67 initiatives, concentrated notably in the frontline regions [42], followed by the centre and west [19] and at the multi-regional level [6].

An analysis of these initiatives reveals an intense process of information exchange, resource mobilization, cross-sectoral cooperation and experimentation in response to the crises caused by the war. Solidarity, creativity and flexibility were social qualities essential for survival under extreme conditions. These ranged from energy shortages during the winter months to the flooding caused by Russia’s destruction of the Kakhovka dam, as well as the forced and mass displacement of

138 Yevhen Bielov, Valeriy Danilenko [E59], Free Kharkiv Movement, director and deputy director, men, Kharkiv, focus group, June 11, 2026.

the population. The findings of this research are consistent with the studies on polycentric governance in Ukraine conducted by Keudel and Huss.¹³⁹ Furthermore, we observed an improvement in the forms of community organization and decision-making processes through new digital tools¹⁴⁰ and practices of citizen deliberation, such as the citizens' assemblies held in Hostomel, Slavutych and Zvyahel, amongst others.¹⁴¹

The study documented 36 local initiatives developed through co-production [18%] between institutional and civil society actors. A prime example is the institutionalization of the Councils for Internally Displaced People. These councils were established in various communities as informal initiatives to facilitate coordination between IDPs, local authorities and civil society organizations. In mid-2023, the Ukrainian Government approved model regulations for this type of council and recommended their establishment within the country's public authorities. By the end of 2023, there had been a major expansion, culminating in the organization of the First National Forum of Councils for Internally Displaced People, with some 529 such bodies already established across the country. In 2024, the network was consolidated, exceeding 800 councils, and the Congress of Internally Displaced People's Councils was organized to coordinate their work at a national level.¹⁴²

In some contexts, local officials viewed the social credibility and professionalism of the new community leaders as assets rather than as a source of rivalry. As a result, numerous young volunteers entered local government, bringing with them new values, participatory practices and renewed energy.

The relationship was mutually beneficial, but not symmetrical: most of the civil society actors interviewed reported receiving information from local authorities, access to public spaces, and formal permits or agreements, particularly near the front line.¹⁴³ The authorities, for their part, valued civil society's ability to mobilize volunteers, disseminate information, access communities, provide systematized data on beneficiaries and secure international funding.¹⁴⁴ This last aspect gave rise to

recurring tensions: several organizations felt they were being exploited for financial and operational purposes.¹⁴⁵ Although Ukraine exemplifies the development of polycentric governance with multiple centres and decision-making processes, this phenomenon coexists with complex power dynamics that run through these alliances.

In this regard, the growing influence of volunteers and

community leaders in local governance elicited institutional responses that ranged from resistance to accommodation. In some contexts, local officials viewed the social credibility and professionalism of the new community leaders as assets rather than as a source of rivalry. As a result, numerous young volunteers entered local government, bringing with them new values, participatory practices and renewed energy.¹⁴⁶ This constituted a transformation of municipal governance

¹³⁹ Oleksandra Keudel and Oksana Huss, "Polycentric Crisis Response and Societal Resilience: How Local Communities Address Internal Displacement in Ukraine due to the Russian Full-Scale Invasion," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 41, no. 5 (2025): 436–458.

¹⁴⁰ For example: www.restartfuture.org/en/projects/hurtoma-dpp%20

¹⁴¹ For further information, see: www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/pioneering-democracy-under-war-time-conditions-ukraine-concludes-its-first-citizens-assemblies

¹⁴² For further information, see: www.dp-reintegration.gov.ua/en/the-constituent-assembly-of-the-public-organization-congress-of-idp-councils-was-held/

¹⁴³ Gala Bonderenka [E39], director of the civil society organization Time for Us, female, Nizhyn [Chernihiv], individual interview, April 2, 2025; Iryna Kosteniuk [E21], director of the NGO United by our love for children, female, Kherson, individual interview, March 29, 2025.

¹⁴⁴ Regional Administration representative [E16], male, Kherson, individual interview, March 28, 2025; Local authority representative [E18], Kherson, individual interview, March 28, 2025; Iryna Simonova [E32], Regional Agency for Development, director, Chernihiv, individual interview, April 1, 2025; Sumy local authority representative [E48], deputy mayor, male, individual online interview, May 30, 2025.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Military representative [E41], captain of the civil-military cooperation unit, male, Chernivtsi, individual interview, April 3, 2025.

from within, as the democratic values and technical capabilities of the volunteer movement were transferred to regional and local administrations.¹⁴⁷ At the state level, significant developments were also observed, such as cooperation between organizations documenting war crimes and state judicial bodies. In 2025, the Ukrainian government reported having evidence of 190,000 cases of war crimes.¹⁴⁸ A significant number of these cases were documented and transferred to the Public Prosecutor's Office by organizations from the 5AM and T4P coalitions. According to Oleksandra Romantsova, director of the Center for Civil Liberties, this process substantially improved the capabilities of the Ukrainian justice system.¹⁴⁹

However, civil society's participation in decision-making showed mixed results. Whilst there were concrete results from co-production initiatives in reconstruction, shelter management, education and child protection – including emergency response protocols, participatory planning of urban resilience strategies and volunteer coordination programs – the overall pattern indicated that influence over policy decisions and governance frameworks remained limited. The most frequently cited obstacles were a lack of institutional openness, rigid hierarchical structures, the complexity of multi-level arrangements, and the discretion exercised by officials in their dealings with local initiatives. Therefore, although Ukraine has an extremely active civil society, this does not automatically translate into widespread institutional influence.

Some experts pointed out that this situation varied from region to region,¹⁵⁰ whilst others highlighted the personal approaches of specific officials, rather than regional differences.¹⁵¹ In

any case, these problems appeared to be more pronounced in frontline regions, where civilian and military government structures coexisted. Civil society representatives in Kherson, Kharkiv and Sumy indicated that over the past four years, some local authorities had become increasingly 'closed off', making decisions in a less transparent manner and limiting civil society participation to informational activities.¹⁵² Civil society representatives in Kharkiv noted, for example, that since 2022 the media had been unable to request information on the city's budgets.¹⁵³ These cases indicated that there was a degree of discretion when it came to establishing consultations and formal decision-making mechanisms between public authorities and civil society. This was an issue that was also not resolved by the laws on monitoring and citizen participation introduced by the Ukrainian Government in 2024. This regulatory framework obliged local government to organize public consultation processes, but did not specify which stakeholders should be consulted, thereby giving public officials the final say on the composition of these processes.¹⁵⁴

Case study 2. The destruction of the Kakhovka dam as a turning point in civil society's organizational capacity

The explosion of the Kakhovka dam on June 6, 2023 constituted one of the war's greatest crises and tested the responsiveness of Ukraine's community resilience ecosystem. The first few hours were marked by a spontaneous mobilization in which local residents, the military and volunteers began evacuations before the arrival of the emergency services and international humanitarian actors. In the days that followed, civil society organizations, foundations, local authorities and the State Emergency Service (SES) coordinated a joint response for evacuations, needs assessments and the distribution of aid, continually adapting to an extremely volatile situation, exacerbated

¹⁴⁷ Local authority representative [E18], male, Kherson, individual interview, March 28, 2025.

¹⁴⁸ See: www.gp.gov.ua/en/posts/ponad-190-tisyac-vojennix-zlociniv-ofis-genprokurora-predstaviv-komisiyi-onn-masstabu-zlociniv-rf-proti-ukrayini

¹⁴⁹ Sasha Romantsova [E26], Center for Civil Liberties, executive director, Kyiv, individual interview, March 31, 2025.

¹⁵⁰ Iryna Bieliaieva, Anna Ostrikova [E13], Yednannia, director and programme coordinator, Kyiv, focus group, March 26, 2025.

¹⁵¹ Yevhen Martyniuk, Danylo Yashchuk [E8], Centre of United Actions, researchers, Kyiv, focus group, March 24, 2025.

¹⁵² Dmytro Tyshchenko [E54], Tsukr Media, director, online, individual interview, June 3, 2025; civil society representative [E47], director, female, online, individual interview, May 30, 2025.

¹⁵³ Media representatives [E61], directors, Kharkiv, focus group, June 11, 2026.

¹⁵⁴ Krasnenko, *CSO Meter 2024: Ukraine Country Report*.



Neighbours being rescued in a flooded area in Kherson following the destruction of Nova Kakhovka by Russia. June 7, 2023. See case study 2. Author: **REUTERS/Vladyslav Musiienko**

by Russian shelling of rescue areas and difficulties in accessing the region by river.

The crisis also highlighted that the response was not starting from scratch. In Kherson and Mykolaiv, many local organizations had gained experience during previous crises. This enabled them to take charge of evacuation, shelter and humanitarian aid operations. Meanwhile, the SES was responsible for transport operations using motorboats, setting up camps, and distributing generators and life jackets. The work of medical services and teams of psychologists in providing psychosocial support to victims and in training and preparing support groups was also noteworthy.

At the same time, Kakhovka highlighted the limitations of the international humanitarian response system. Whilst international organizations demonstrated a high capacity to mobilize standardized supplies and support coordination mechanisms through the cluster

system, various local actors pointed out that the initial response relied mainly on community networks and volunteer groups who improvised boats, organized evacuations and tailored aid to specific needs.

5.3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Economic development comprises three components: the level and diversity of economic resources, equity in their distribution, and exposure to risk — that is, ensuring that vulnerability to threats is not concentrated amongst the least well-off groups. Unlike the previous pillars, the aim of these initiatives is not so much to strengthen the associative fabric or collective response capacity, but rather to secure the material basis of resilience: the provision of basic services, access to resources for the most vulnerable groups, and the diversification of the economic sources that

155 Vostok SOS, *Aftermath of Kakhovka Dam's Explosion by the Russian Army: Report from the Monitoring Mission* (Kyiv: Vostok SOS, 2023), 8.

156 Olga Kartashova [E22], NGO The Tenth of April/Kherson CMA, programme coordinator, Kherson, individual interview, March 29, 2025.

157 Regional administration representative [E16], male, Kherson, individual interview, March 28, 2025.

158 Nonviolent Peaceforce, *Kakhovka Dam: Civilian Protection Needs & Responses* [Nonviolent Peaceforce, June 2023], 5–6.

sustain the community. The baseline recorded 49 initiatives in this area, distributed across the rear regions [28], the frontline regions [19] and the multi-regional level [2].

In terms of economic sustainability, a key feature of economic development was the massive increase in individual donations following the large-scale invasion: the proportion of people making donations in Ukraine rose steadily from 53% in 2019 to 73% in 2024.¹⁵⁹ According to some authors, financial donations were the main form of civic participation by Ukrainian society [74%].¹⁶⁰ These funds were mainly channelled to the humanitarian and defence sectors – to government-sponsored institutions and campaigns, large humanitarian and military foundations, civil society organizations and informal local groups – actors who, together with international aid, transformed these contributions into tangible resources for the final recipients.

Between 2024 and 2025, however, the pattern of donations changed. According to a study by the Zagoriy Foundation, Ukrainians preferred to contribute to local entities through financial donations or volunteering [51%] rather than to large charitable foundations.¹⁶¹ The two leading military-humanitarian foundations, Come Back Alive and the Prytula Foundation, reported a decline in donations from private individuals in 2024. Specifically, Come Back Alive raised 184 million dollars in 2022, whilst in 2024 these figures fell to 89 million, representing a decline of 51.6%. Thus, in two years, the organization lost more than half of its volume.¹⁶² The Serhiy Prytula Foundation also noted increasing difficulty in sustaining individual donations. Both organizations attributed this trend to the economic strain on the population and the shift of contributions

towards local campaigns or those aimed at specific military units.¹⁶³

This internal weakening was compounded by an external shock: the cessation of funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The cessation of USAID funding in early 2025 dealt a significant financial blow to Ukrainian civil society. According to some sources, more than 50% of civil society organizations received funding from the US government, which accounted, on average, for 26% of their annual budgets, whilst some relied on these funds for up to 90 % of their income. Against this backdrop, numerous organizations were forced to suspend programs, reduce staff or cease operations.¹⁶⁴ However, during fieldwork, new strategies for diversifying funding sources were identified in some cases, including local businesses and subscribers, as well as strategies for reorganizing workforce structures to avoid redundancies.¹⁶⁵ For example, independent media organizations diversified their funding sources. The regional media outlet Tsukr entered into agreements with local businesses and increased its membership base from 120 in 2022 to 900 in 2025, with members contributing 30% of its annual budget.¹⁶⁶

Another of the most visible effects of Ukraine's democratic transformation was the growing public demand for transparency and accountability regarding public and private resources allocated to the war effort. The fight against corruption was one of the main political reforms implemented in 2014, leading to the establishment of the NABU, the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO), the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAZK) and the High Anti-Corruption

¹⁵⁹ Zagoriy Foundation, *Charity Sector in Ukraine: Research 2024*, December 2024, www.zagoriy.foundation/en/researches/charity-survey-2024/.

¹⁶⁰ Onuch, Olga, David Doyle, Evelyn Ersanilli, Gwendolyn Sasse, Sorana Toma and Jacquelin van Stekelenburg [2023]. *MOBILISE 2023: Ukrainian National Survey*. MOBILISE Project. Available at: www.mobiliseproject.com

¹⁶¹ Zagoriy Foundation, *Charity Sector in Ukraine*.

¹⁶² Yehor Kononov, "Grassroots Funding for Ukraine's Military Declines as Groups Look for Creative Ways to Raise Money," Associated Press, December 17, 2024, www.apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-charity-music-military-economy-5753a6a2950ec498400c9b23721f894a

¹⁶³ Ukrinform, "Prytula: Truce Talks Reduce Donations to Volunteer Funds," March 20, 2025, www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/3973019-prytula-truce-talks-reduce-donations-to-volunteer-funds.html

¹⁶⁴ ACAPS, *Ukraine: One Year On: The Implications of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Humanitarian, Development, and Government-Led Programmes* (Geneva: ACAPS, March 31, 2025), 6–8; see also: UN Women, *Major Funding Cuts Undermine the Ability of Ukraine's Women's Rights Organisations to Provide Humanitarian Aid at a Crucial Time of Insecurity* (New York: UN Women, February 2025).

¹⁶⁵ Vadym Miskyi [E9], Detector Media, director, Kyiv, individual interview, March 25, 2025; Dmytro Tyshchenko [E54], Tsukr Media, director, online, individual interview, June 3, 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Dmytro Tyshchenko [E54], Tsukr Media, director, online, one-to-one interview, June 3, 2025.

Court.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, numerous civil society organizations such as the Anti-Corruption Action Centre, NAKO and Transparency International Ukraine complemented this system with political and social advocacy campaigns and investigative journalism projects, amongst other initiatives. During the war, this monitoring was relaxed during the first year until the scandal, popularly known as ‘golden eggs’, revealed that the Ministry of Defence had signed contracts to supply food to the army at prices far above market rates.¹⁶⁸ Organizations such as Mezha reported that, following this case, anti-corruption organizations resumed their work.¹⁶⁹ The work of the anti-corruption sector demonstrated how to continue the process of accountability without weakening the country’s defence system. The persistence of the anti-corruption agenda in times of war was once again brought into sharp relief by the protests in July 2025 – the first major demonstrations since the Russia’s full-scale invasion – against the central government’s attempt to subordinate the anti-corruption system. Public pressure forced the measure to be reversed on July 31, 2025.

Finally, in the sphere of economic development, the role of private actors in community resilience stood out. According to the existing literature, social enterprises play a fundamental role in community resilience and socio-economic development due to their capacity for self-organization and to fill systemic gaps left by weakened state and market actors. Social entrepreneurs are becoming hybrid actors who combine market mechanisms with

Another of the most visible effects of Ukraine’s democratic transformation was the growing public demand for transparency and accountability regarding public and private resources allocated to the war effort.

civic missions.¹⁷⁰ In Ukraine, since the start of the full-scale invasion, nearly 202,000 new sole traders and over 30,000 new businesses have been registered.¹⁷¹ The expert Yevhen Hlibovytsky noted: “This war brings to light our hidden and masked traits that could not initially manifest themselves. It has become

clear that Ukrainians are great warriors and highly enterprising, capable and creative people.”¹⁷² In this vein, recent studies have documented that Ukrainian entrepreneurship in times of war blends subsistence strategies with a commitment to resilience, solidarity and the preservation of community life.¹⁷³

In short, social

entrepreneurs have become emerging leaders in the resilience ecosystem thanks to their professional skills, diverse motivations and social connections within their communities.

5.4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION: THE ECOSYSTEM’S WEAK LINK

This dimension analyses the infrastructure, capacities and actors responsible for developing resilient narratives and reliable sources of information for the population. In Ukraine, these actions were key to exchanging information, establishing early warning and communication systems in high-risk situations, and sustaining morale during the worst phases of the invasion. The baseline survey recorded 25 initiatives, distributed across frontline regions (13), rear regions (10) and the multi-regional level (2) —

¹⁶⁷ See the contextual framework for this report [Chapter 3].

¹⁶⁸ Heorhiy Shabayev, Valeriya Yegoshyna, Nadia Burdyye, and Natalie Sedletska, “Prices for Ukrainian Army Food Supplies Inflated, Investigation Finds,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 8, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-army-food-prices-inflated/32352747.html>

¹⁶⁹ Olena Kupina [E27], deputy director of the Mezha Anti-Corruption Centre, female, Kyiv, individual interview, March 31, 2025.

¹⁷⁰ Liudmyla Kot, “Social Entrepreneurship in Wartime: Adaptation Strategies and Economic Resilience,” *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies* 11, no. 3 [2025]: 344–352, <https://doi.org/10.30525/2256-0742/2025-11-3-344-352>

¹⁷¹ Olga Reznikova and Oleksandr Korniiievskyi, “Resilience of Ukrainian Society in Wartime: Components and Influencing Factors,” *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 15, no. 1 [2024]: 113–133

¹⁷² Tsyperdiuk, Ivan and Viktoriia Dubinets. “Talking in the Shelter about What Matters: Yevhen Hlibovytsky,” *Souspilnist Foundation*, May 30, 2022, www.souspilnist.org/en/2022/05/30/talking-in-the-shelter-about-what-matters-yevhen-hlibovytsky/

¹⁷³ Sanita Rugina and Kim Klyver, “War and Entrepreneurship: Why [‘On Earth’] Do People Start Businesses in Wartime?,” *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 24 [2025]: e00574, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2025.e00574>

the smallest pillar of the ecosystem and, as will be seen, also the most fragile.

Information and communication showed a persistence rate of 68%, with significant experiences of transformation and adaptation. As noted in the previous chapter, there were numerous initiatives in this area: ranging from communication campaigns featuring narratives of resilience to actions to jam Russian radio frequencies, as well as local information-sharing systems in situations of siege and/or occupation. In this context, independent media outlets based in major cities strengthened their capacities and resources, whilst others located in areas under occupation or close to the front line relocated their newsrooms to safer areas so that they could continue operating. Furthermore, local media outlets took on new roles in relation to IDPs. On the one hand, media outlets in local host communities supported these people by providing local information to help them understand the context, whilst media outlets in frontline areas kept internally displaced communities informed about the situation in their hometowns.¹⁷⁴

The cessation of communication and information initiatives highlighted the fragility of Ukraine's resilience ecosystem. The cessation rate was the highest (32%), although most of these closures were due to changes in context and the end of the need for such services. However, a more in-depth analysis of the media landscape reveals deeper gaps. A study by the Media Development Foundation analysed 1,434 local media outlets, finding that only 11% met the criteria for editorial independence and adequate coverage of the community's information needs. Of the 138 districts analysed, only 23% were classified

as 'informationally healthy'; the rest were considered partially or entirely 'unhealthy'. Furthermore, whilst the bulk of the media ecosystem was concentrated in districts close to regional centres, a 'media desert' prevailed in the central *oblasts* and small *hromadas* – that is, areas without local media outlets. Underlying this situation was socio-economic decline, including the deterioration of the business sector and the local advertising market – traditional sources of media funding. Against this backdrop, many media outlets came to rely exclusively on international funding. This situation was exacerbated in the temporarily occupied territories, where Russia destroyed independent journalism.¹⁷⁵

Local media outlets play a key role in combating disinformation; with their loss, many towns in frontline regions have been left without a resilient news infrastructure, opening the door to the infiltration of Russian propaganda and fake news.

The withdrawal of USAID funding in early 2025 dealt a severe blow to the media ecosystem, with implications for the course of the conflict. Around 80 % of Ukrainian media outlets received funding from the US agency, which in some cases accounted for their entire budgets.¹⁷⁶ Recent studies have indicated

that the withdrawal of this funding triggered a sustainability crisis, particularly amongst regional and local media outlets, where the lack of funding became the sector's main challenge, increasing the risk of closures, redundancies and reduced news coverage. In 2025, a study by the Media Development Foundation noted that local media outlets regarded the lack of funding as their main challenge [72%].¹⁷⁷ The disappearance or deterioration of their work has serious implications for the war. According to Vadym Miskyi, director of Detector Media, these local media outlets play a key role in combating disinformation; with their loss, many towns in frontline regions have been left without a resilient news infrastructure, opening the door

¹⁷⁴ Media Development Foundation, *News Deserts in Ukraine 2.0* [Kyiv: Media Development Foundation, January 2025], www.research.mediadevelopmentfoundation.org/en/news-deserts-in-ukraine-2-0.html.

¹⁷⁵ Media Development Foundation, *News Deserts in Ukraine 2.0*.

¹⁷⁶ For further information, see: www.imi.org.ua/en/news/oksana-romaniuk-90-of-ukrainian-media-survived-thanks-to-grants-i66314

¹⁷⁷ Media Development Foundation, *State of Local News in Ukraine 2025* [Kyiv: Media Development Foundation, 2025]. Available at: <https://research.mediadevelopmentfoundation.org/en/2025.html>

to the infiltration of Russian propaganda and fake news.¹⁷⁸

Compounding this situation is the fact that the population is obtaining information and organizing on a massive scale via Telegram and other messaging platforms¹⁷⁹ without considering the security risks involved, even though Russia and its associated companies are monitoring these channels to identify individuals and sensitive information. Experts in strategic communication had long been warning of this threat, but there was still no alternative or clear strategy in place.¹⁸⁰ Despite efforts to improve digital literacy and technological development in the country, at the time of the study's completion, this remained the weak point in community resilience.

¹⁷⁸ Vadym Miskyi [E9], Detector Media, director, Kyiv, individual interview, March 25, 2025

¹⁷⁹ Valentina Troyan, "Research: Ukrainians Get Their News Mainly from Social Media and Increasingly Less from News Websites," *Institute of Mass Information (IMI)*, November 7, 2024, www.imi.org.ua/news/doslidzhennya-ukrayintsi-otrymuyut-novyny-perevazhno-iz-sotsmerezh-i-vse-menshe-z-novynyh-sajtiv-i64760

¹⁸⁰ Results from www.stratcom.online/en/

6. SUSTAINING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The Ukrainian resilience ecosystem offers lessons that transcend its own context. Contemporary conflicts demonstrate that military objectives are not solely territorial, but also social and cognitive. Russia's war against Ukraine can be interpreted not only as an attempt to conquer territory, but also to weaken the identity, unity and morale of Ukrainian society. From this perspective, the civilian population is not merely a victim of war, but a central actor due to its capacity for collective organization and for defending its institutions, values and culture. In this context, whole-of-society participation is fundamental to responding to the multidimensional crises generated by the war. To this end, it is essential to consolidate community resilience based on democratic values and practices. The lessons set out below are drawn from the Ukrainian model and offer principles applicable to other states for the development of their own systems of community resilience.

1. Resilience is built.

The social capital, community capacities, socio-economic development and communication and information infrastructure that enabled civil resistance in 2022 were built up over decades. This ecosystem cannot be improvised; it requires organization. Civil preparedness must include systematic training, resources, equipment, technological tools and physical workspaces. Public authorities and civil society must be trained jointly in the various areas of the crisis prevention and response cycle.

2. Resilience should transform.

Democratic development guarantees the mechanisms of polycentric governance that enable a more effective response to crises. It is necessary to ensure civil society's participation in public decision-making processes at all levels, through regulatory frameworks that institutionalize spaces for deliberation and guarantee the traceability of decisions taken.

3. Resilience is multi-sectoral.

The Ukrainian community resilience ecosystem rests on a decentralized infrastructure of organizations, relationships and centres of power — physical and digital hubs and clusters where community organization takes shape. It is necessary to preserve this decentralization through principles of autonomy and cooperation that enable these centres to share resources, experiment and lead actions within their spheres of influence. The diverse experiences of responding to the war and the community resilience strategies employed in Ukraine present an opportunity for exchange between regions and local stakeholders.

4. Resilience requires genuine recognition

The volunteer system is fragile due to a shortage of resources, bureaucratization and a lack of political recognition. It is necessary to develop public policies with specific funding to uphold the dignity of voluntary work and, in particular, to create mechanisms for risk compensation, social protection and insurance cover for civil society actors operating on the front line.

5. Resilience requires investment.

The financial sustainability of civil society organizations – and, in particular, local media – is critical to the continuity of the ecosystem. International organizations, international NGOs and the Ukrainian central government must pay particular attention to creating a basic, flexible and unconditional funding framework that strengthens and sustainably supports these organizations over time. Furthermore, the varying impact of the war across different regions makes it necessary to adapt socio-economic recovery programs to each specific context.

6. Resilience implies empowerment.

An effective system of community resilience is characterized by social empowerment. Institutions must view this people's power as an essential asset for preserving national sovereignty. Restricting these empowering processes—by excluding organized civil society from decision-making processes, or through the co-optation or political instrumentalization of new community leaders—is counterproductive.

Conversely, involving community leaders in strategic planning and local government structures, and strengthening their capacity to represent the interests of their communities, are practices that should be actively promoted.

7. Resilience is human.

The sustained efforts of civil and institutional actors within the resilience ecosystem mask a structural exhaustion. Organizations, services and specialist groups providing care and psychosocial support must be strengthened so that they can support activists, volunteers and first responders in crisis situations.

8. Resilience is endogenous.

Communities, civil society organizations and local authorities are best placed to lead crisis preparedness and response. Any intervention aimed at strengthening community resilience must be based on their leadership and participation, recognizing that the most effective resilience arises from within the communities themselves. The role of international cooperation is not to replace this local agency, but to reinforce it and ensure its sustainability through flexible funding, capacity-building and institutional support.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aall, Pamela, and Chester A. Crocker. "Building Resilience and Social Cohesion in Conflict", *Global Policy* 10, S2 [2019]: 68–75.

ACAPS. *Ukraine: One Year On: The Implications of US Foreign Aid Cuts on Humanitarian, Development, and Government-Led Programmes* [2025].

ActionAid. *From the Ground Up: Ukraine's Civil Society in Recovery*. Johannesburg: ActionAid International, 2025.

Aldrich, Daniel P. *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Arends, Helge, Tymofii Brik, Benedikt Herrmann, and Felix Rösel. "Decentralization and Trust in Government: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Ukraine." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 51, no. 4 [2023]: 1356–1365.

Bateson, Regina. "Finding Meaning in Politics: When Victims Become Activists." *Perspectives on Politics* 23, no. 1 [2025]: 250–269.

Beer, Michael A. *Civil Resistance Tactics in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2021.

Beissinger, Mark R. "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 [2013]: 574–592.

Benda, Václav. "The Parallel 'Polis'." In H. Gordon Skilling and Paul Wilson, eds., *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia*, 35–41. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991.

Berry, Marie E. *War, Women, and Power: From Violence to Mobilization in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Bociurkiw, Bohdan R. *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State [1939–1950]*. Edmonton: Canadian

Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1996.

Boese, Vanessa A., Amanda B. Edgell, Sebastian Hellmeier, Seraphine F. Maerz, and Staffan I. Lindberg. "How Democracies Prevail: Democratic Resilience as a Two-Stage Process." *Democratization* 28, no. 5 [2021]: 885–907.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J. Stephan. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Darkovich, Andrii, and Maryna Rabinovych. "Ukrainian Decentralisation under Martial Law: A Balancing Act." *ZOiS Spotlight*, no. 18 [2025].

Daza, Felip. *Ukrainian Nonviolent Civil Resistance in the Face of War: Analysis of Trends, Impacts and*

Challenges of Nonviolent Action in Ukraine between February and June 2022. Barcelona: ICIP and NOVACT, 2022.

Duit, Andreas. "Resilience Thinking: Lessons for Public Administration." *Public Administration* 94, no. 2 [2016]: 364–380.

Folke, Carl, Stephen R. Carpenter, Brian Walker, Marten Scheffer, Terry Chapin, and Johan Rockström. "Resilience Thinking: Integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability." *Ecology and Society* 15, no. 4 [2010]: 20.

Ganz, Marshall. *People, Power, Change: Organizing for Democratic Renewal*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024.

Harris, William W. *Quicksilver War: Syria, Iraq and the Spiral of Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Hrytsak, Yaroslav. "The Third Ukraine: A Case of Civic Nationalism." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 50, no. 4 [2024]: 674–687.

Hrytsak, Yaroslav. *Ukraine: The Forging of a Nation*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2024.

ISAR Ednannia. *Civil Society in Ukraine During Wartime, 2022–2025: Report on a Comprehensive Sociological Study*. Kyiv: ISAR Ednannia, 2025.

Johnston, Melissa. *Building Peace, Rebuilding Patriarchy: The Failure of Gender Interventions in Timor-Leste*. Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Keudel, Oleksandra. "Societal Resilience: Conceptual Lessons from Studies of Ukrainian Resilience." Paper presented at the conference *From Societal Resilience to Obscurantism in the Baltic Sea Region*, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies [CBEES], Södertörn University, Stockholm, November 11, 2025.

Keudel, Oleksandra, and Oksana Huss. "Polycentric Crisis Response and Societal Resilience: How Local Communities Address Internal Displacement in Ukraine due to the Russian Full-Scale Invasion." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 41, no. 5 [2025]: 436–458.

Keudel, Oleksandra, and Oksana Huss. "Polycentric Governance in Practice: The Case of Ukraine's Decentralised Crisis Response during the Russo-Ukrainian War." *Journal of Public Finance and Public Choice* 39, no. 1 [2024]: 10–35.

Keudel, Oleksandra, Valentyn Hatsko, Andrii Darkovich, and Oksana Huss. *Local Democracy and Resilience in Ukraine: Learning from Communities' Crisis Response in War*. Research Report No. 33. Visby: Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy [ICLD], 2024.

Kleinfeld, Rachel. *A Savage Order: How the World's Deadliest Countries Can Forge a Path to Security*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2018.

Kyiv International Institute of Sociology [KIIS]. *Ukrainian Civil Society under the War – 2022: A Report Based on the Findings of the Study*. Kyiv: ISAR Ednannia, 2023.

Kot, Liudmyla. "Social Entrepreneurship in Wartime: Adaptation Strategies and Economic Resilience." *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies* 11, no. 3 [2025]: 344–352.

Krasnenko, Mariia. *CSD Meter 2024: Ukraine Country Report. Reporting Period: January–November 2024*. Kyiv: ECNL and ISAR Ednannia, 2025.

Lebel, Louis, John M. Anderies, Bruce Campbell, Carl Folke, Steve Hatfield-Dodds, Terry P. Hughes, and James Wilson. "Governance and the Capacity to Manage Resilience in Regional Social-Ecological Systems." *Ecology and Society* 11, no. 1 [2006]: 19.

Ledeneva, Alena V. *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies 102. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Martin, Brian. *Justice Ignited: The Dynamics of Backfire*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Masten, Ann S. *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*. New York: Guilford Press, 2014.

Media Development Foundation. *News Deserts in Ukraine 2.0*. Kyiv, January 2025.

Media Development Foundation. *State of Local News in Ukraine 2025*. Kyiv, 2025.

Merkel, Wolfgang, and Anna Lührmann. "Resilience of Democracies: Responses to Illiberal and Authoritarian Challenges." *Democratization* 28, no. 5 [2021]: 869–884.

Niner, Sara, ed. *Women and the Politics of Gender in Post-Conflict Timor-Leste*. London: Routledge, 2018.

Nonviolent Peaceforce. *Kakhovka Dam: Civilian Protection Needs & Responses*. Nonviolent Peaceforce, June 2023.

Norris, Fran H., Susan P. Stevens, Betty Pfefferbaum, Karen F. Wyche, and Rose L. Pfefferbaum. "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41, nos. 1–2 [2008]: 127–150.

O'Donnell, Guillermo, and Philippe C. Schmitter. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

OECD. *OECD Integrity and Anti-Corruption Review of Ukraine*. OECD Public Governance Reviews. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2025.

Onuch, Olga, and Emma Mateo. "A Duty to Defend: Survey Analysis of Citizen Wartime Engagement in Ukraine." *East European Politics* 42, no. 1 [2026]: 63–96.

Ostrom, Elinor. "Polycentric Systems for Coping with Collective Action and Global Environmental Change." *Global Environmental Change* 20, no. 4 [2010]: 550–557.

Plokhyy, Serhii. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

Rabinovych, Maryna, Tymofii Brik, Andrii Darkovich, Myroslava Savisko, Valentyn Hatsko, Serhii Tytiuk, and Igor Piddubnyi. "Explaining Ukraine's Resilience to Russia's Invasion: The Role of Local Governance." *Governance* 37, no. 4 [2024]: 1121–1140.

- Reznikova, Olga, and Oleksandr Korniiievskiy. "Resilience of the Ukrainian Society in Wartime: Components and Influencing Factors." *Eastern Journal of European Studies* 15, no. 1 (2024): 113–133.
- Rugina, Sanita, and Kim Klyver. "War and Entrepreneurship: Why ['On Earth'] Do People Start Businesses in Wartime?" *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* 24 (2025): e00574.
- Rybiy, Olena. "Coalitions of Civil Society Organizations in Ukraine: Role, Types, and Impact." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 32, no. 1 (2024): 61–84.
- Sasse, Gwendolyn, and Olga Onuch. "The Maidan in Movement: Diversity and the Cycles of Protest." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 556–587.
- Sharp, Gene. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*. Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005.
- Shevchenko, Snizhana. "Ukraine's Workforce Gap: How Can War Spur Women's Economic Inclusion?", *Global Workplace Law & Policy*, April 28, 2025.
- Snyder, Timothy. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Sørensen, Majken Jul. "Constructive Resistance: Conceptualising and Mapping the Terrain." *Journal of Resistance Studies* 2, no. 1 (2016): 49–78.
- Stall, Susan, and Randy Stoecker. "Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment." *Gender & Society* 12, no. 6 (1998): 729–756.
- Stein, Arthur A. "Conflict and Cohesion: A Review of the Literature", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 20, no. 3 (1976): 143–172.
- Troyan, Valentina. "Research: Ukrainians Get Their News Mainly from Social Media and Increasingly Less from News Websites." Institute of Mass Information, November 7, 2024.
- UN Women, *Major Funding Cuts Undermine the Ability of Ukraine's Women's Rights Organizations to Provide Humanitarian Aid at a Crucial Time of Insecurity* [2025].
- Vinthagen, Stellan. *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works*. London: Zed Books, 2015.
- Vostok SOS. *Aftermath of Kakhovka Dam's Explosion by Russian Army: Report from Monitoring Mission*. Kyiv: Vostok SOS, 2023.
- Walker, Brian, C. S. Holling, Stephen R. Carpenter, and Ann Kinzig. "Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social-Ecological Systems." *Ecology and Society* 9, no. 2 (2004): 5.
- Webster, Kaitlyn, Chong Chen, and Kyle Beardsley. "Conflict, Peace, and the Evolution of Women's Empowerment." *International Organization* 73, no. 2 (2019): 255–289.
- Welzel, Christian. "Democratization as an Emancipative Process: The Neglected Role of Mass Motivations." *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 6 (2006): 871–896.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. "The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 [2008]: 539–561.

Wood, Jason. "The Power to Act: Dissecting Distinctive Elements of Power and Ownership in Community Organizing in England and Wales." *Community Development Journal* 60, no. 1 [2025]: 200–217.

Yates, Luke. "Rethinking Prefiguration: Alternatives, Micropolitics and Goals in Social Movements." *Social Movement Studies* 14, no. 1 [2015]: 1–21.

Zagoriy Foundation. *Charity Sector in Ukraine: Research 2024*. December 2024.

Other online sources

Diari Ara. "Civil Resistance in Ukraine: Combat without Weapons." *ARA Interactius*. Accessed July 24, 2026. <https://interactius.ara.cat/en/civil-resistance-ukraine-combat-without-weapons>

Keudel, Oleksandra, Andrii H. Ordynovych, and Amber French-Griette. "Democratic and Civic Resilience against Hybrid War." Webinar. Organization for Nonviolent Movements [ONM], July 1, 2026. www.nonviolent-movements.org/webinars.html

Kyiv International Institute of Sociology [KIIS]. *Dynamics of Trust in Social Institutions in 2021–2024*. January 9, 2025. www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1467&page=1.

Onuch, Olga, David Doyle, Evelyn Ersanilli, Gwendolyn Sasse, Sorana Toma, Jacqueliën van Stekelenburg et al. [2024]. *MOBILISE: National Representative Panel and Protest Surveys, 2019–2022* [Dataset]. UK Data Service. DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-856910. <https://mobiliseproject.com/2022/06/01/ukraine-wartime-national-surveys/>

Resilient Ukraine. "OPIR: The Tradition of Ukrainian Resistance." *WeAreUkraine.info*. Accessed July 26, 2026. <https://opir.weareukraine.info/>.

Romantsova, Oleksandra. "Civil Resistance in Ukraine under Russian Aggression: Justice, Rights, and Democratic Resilience." Intervention at the webinar *Civil Resistance and Institutional Resilience in Wartime Crisis Response: Insights from Ukraine Since the Russian Full-Scale Invasion*, EuroISME, King's Centre for Military Ethics, and King's College London, February 12, 2026. www.euroisme.eu/index.php/en/events/euroisme-online-events/webinar-12-feb-2026.

Shabayev, Heorhiy, Valeriya Yegoshyna, Nadia Burdyey, and Natalie Sedletska. "Prices for Ukrainian Army Food Supplies Inflated, Investigation Finds." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 8, 2023. www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-army-food-prices-inflated/32352747.html.

Snyder, Timothy. *The Making of Modern Ukraine*. Class 22, "Ukrainian Ideas in the 21st Century." Yale University, December 3, 2022. YouTube video. www.youtube.com/watch?v=yz6MSiGZQCU.

Tsyperdiuk, Ivan and Viktoriia Dubinets. "Talking in the Shelter about What Matters: Yevhen Hlibovytsky." *Souspilnist Foundation*, May 30, 2022. www.souspilnist.org/en/2022/05/30/talking-in-the-shelter-about-what-matters-yevhen-hlibovytsky/

Ukrinform. "Prytula: Truce Talks Reduce Donations to Volunteer Funds." March 20, 2025. www.ukrinform.net/rubric-society/3973019-prytula-truce-talks-reduce-donations-to-volunteer-funds.html.

8. ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Database of local community resilience initiatives (February 2022 – June 2026)

To conduct this study, a database of local community resilience initiatives was developed. Although the database is dynamic and updated periodically, **the first 200 initiatives constitute the dataset used for the analysis presented in this research.** The database is available at: www.odr2.org.

Annex 2 – List of people interviewed

Code	N°	Name & Surname	Organization	Field/type	Position	Type of interview	Location	Date
E1	1	Nick Dvydiuk	Factor Bureau	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	24/3/25
E2	2	Oleksandra Keudel	Kyiv School of Economics [KSE]	Academia	Academic	Individual	Online	24/3/25
E3	3	Igor Semivolos	Ukrainian Association of Middle East Studies [AMES]	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	24/3/25
E4	4	Vitya Dumaska	Chesno movement	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	24/3/25
E5	5	Mariya Ocheretiana	Centre of United Actions	Civil society	Researcher	Individual	Kyiv	24/3/25
E6	6	Victoria Dmechko	Good Neighbour	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	24/3/25
E7	7	Roksolana Nesterenko	KSE	Academia	Researcher	Individual	Kyiv	25/3/25
E8	8	Yevhen Martyniuk and Danylo Yashchuk	Centre of United Actions	Civil society	Researcher	Focus group	Kyiv	24/3/25
E9	9	Vadym Miskyi	Detector Media	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	25/3/25
E10	10	Valeriia Radchenko	Anti-corruption Action Centre	Civil society	Head of Communications	Individual	Kyiv	25/3/25
E11	11	Iryna Gorlach	Independent	Civil society	Political analyst	Individual	Kyiv	25/3/25
E12	12-13	Andrii Darkovich and Tetiana Lukeria	KSE	Academia	Academics	Focus group	Kyiv	26/3/25
E13	14-15	Iryna Bieliaieva and Anna Ostrikova	Ednannia	Civil society	Partnership Development Coordinator, Head of Grants and Development Programmes	Focus group	Kyiv	26/3/25
E14	16	Kateryna Butko	Avtomaidan	Civil society	Chair of the Board of Directors	Individual	Kyiv	26/3/25
E15	17	Denys Sukhanov	Independent	Civil society	Activist	Individual	Kherson	27/3/25
E16	18	Representative regional administration [male]				Individual	Kherson	28/3/25
E17	19	Nataly Shatylova	NGO Hromada UA	Civil society	Programme manager	Individual	Kherson	28/3/25
E18	20	Local government representative [male]				Individual	Kherson	28/3/25
E19	21	Oksana Pohomii	NGO Sprava Hromad	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kherson	28/3/25
E20	22	Dementii Bilyi	Committee of Voters of Ukraine in Kherson	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kherson	28/3/25
E21	23-24	Iryna Kosteniuk Natalia Vashchenko	NGO United by our love for children	Civil society	Director	Focus group	Kherson	29/3/25
E22	25	Olga Kartashova	NGO The Tenth of April/ Kherson CMA	Civil society	Programme Manager	Individual	Kherson	29/3/25

E23	26	Regional military administration representative (male)				Individual	Kherson	29/3/25
E24	27-28	Civil society representatives (men)				Focus group	Kherson	29/3/25
E25	29	Maksym Cherkashyn	Educationally-analytical center of community development	Civil society	Deputy Director	Individual	Kyiv	30/3/25
E26	30	Sasha Romantsova	Center for Civil Liberties	Civil society	Executive Director	Individual	Kyiv	31/3/25
E27	31	Olena Kupina	Anti-corruption Center MEZHA	Civil society	Deputy Director	Individual	Kyiv	31/3/25
E28	32-34	Anastasia Golovchenko, Valeriia Chaika and Te Yasinchuk	Youth Up	Civil society	Director; Project Coordinator; SexUp Programme Director	Focus group	Kyiv	31/3/25
E29	35	Mariya Levonova	Centre of United Actions	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	31/3/25
E30	36	Anna Bondarenko	Ukrainian Volunteer Service	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kyiv	31/3/25
E31	37	Andriy Titok	Suspilne – Regional branch	Media	Editor-in-chief	Individual	Chernihiv	1/4/25
E32	38	Iryna Simonova	Regional Agency for Development	Regional Authority	Director	Individual	Chernihiv	1/4/25
E33	39	Yuliia Darnytska	Local Council of Chernihiv	Local authority	Councillor	Individual	Chernihiv	1/4/25
E34	40	Business sector representative (female)				Individual	Chernihiv	1/4/25
E35	41	Semen Pustovit	Mayor's team municipality Nizhyn	Local authority	Political analyst	Individual	Chernihiv	1/4/25
E36	42-43	Yuriy Trofimenko y Yuriy Usovich	Ahalar	Civil society	Head of Development, Chair of the Board	Focus group	Chernihiv	1/4/25
E37	44	Daryna Matushka	Parish of Ukrainian orthodox church	Civil society	Activist	Individual	Nizhyn [Chernihiv]	2/4/25
E38	45	Angelika Tymchenko	NGO Laboratory of Initiative Youth	Civil society	Director	Individual	Nizhyn [Chernihiv]	2/4/25
E39	46	Gala Bondarenko	NGO Time for us	Civil society	Teacher	Individual	Nizhyn [Chernihiv]	2/4/25
E40	47	Roman Pushka	Caritas	Religious organization	Priest	Individual	Nizhyn [Chernihiv]	2/4/25
E41	48	Representative of the civil-military unit of the Ukrainian Army (male)				Individual	Chernivtsi	3/4/25
E42	49	Olena Rybiy	University of Basel	Academia	Academic	Individual	Online	14/5/25
E43	50	Ivan Gomza	Kyiv School of Economics	Academia	Academic	Individual	Kyiv	27/5/25
E44	51-52	Civil society representatives from Kherson (women)				Focus group	Kyiv	28/5/25
E45	53	Sergey Danilov	Ukrainian Peacebuilding School	Civil society	Researcher	Individual	Kherson	29/5/25
E46	54-60	Civil society representatives from various towns in Kherson (3 men, 4 women)				Focus group	Kyiv	29/5/25
E47	61	Oksana Malchenko	Space for Equal Opportunities	Civil society	Director	Individual	Online	30/5/25
E48	62	Local government representative from Sumy (male)				Individual	Online	30/5/25
E49	63-67	Civil society representatives from various towns in Zaporizhzhia (1 man, 4 women)				Focus group	Kyiv	30/5/25
E50	68	Alexey Klyuev	NGO "Dobrobat"	Civil society	Director	Individual	Online	30/5/25

E51	69	Vladimir Galkin	BO "BF Man Olga"	Civil society	Director	Individual	Online	30/5/25
E52	70-71	Rado Dubrovka; Vladislav Golyakov	Okhtyrka Youth Center	Civil society	Director; Programme Coordinator	Focus group	Online	30/5/25
E53	72	Civil society representative from Sumy [female]				Individual	Online	30/5/25
E54	73	Dmytro Tyshchenko	Tsukr media	Media	Director	Individual	Online	3/6/25
E55	74-84	Several people interviewed	Vinnytsia, Kyiv, Bucha	Local authorities	Various roles	Focus group	Kyiv	3/10/25
E56	85-86	Civil society representatives (men and women)				Focus group	Kyiv	10/6/26
E57	87	Yevheniya Ohryzko	RISE network	Civil society	Head of International Relations	Individual	Kyiv	10/6/26
E58	88-91	Dmytro Davydyants, Mariam Satuieva, Galyna Lytvynets [+1]	Kharkiv Reform Office	Local authority	Programme managers	Focus group	Kharkiv	11/6/26
E59	92-93	Bielov Yevhen y Valeriy Danilenko	Free Kharkiv Movement	Civil society	Director and deputy director	Focus group	Kharkiv	11/6/26
E60	94	Yana Biletska	Vokzal Humanitarian hub	Civil society	Director	Individual	Kharkiv	11/6/26
E61	95-96	Representatives of local media (men and women)				Focus group	Kharkiv	11/6/26
E62	97-100	Mykola Chernotytskyi [+3]	Suspihne	Media	Chair of the Board of Directors	Focus group	Kyiv	12/6/26
E63	101	Ivan Diachenko	Building Ukraine Together	Civil society	Administrator	Individual	Kyiv	12/6/26
E64	102-105	Several people interviewed	ActionAid, Youth Platform, ALDA Vinnytsia, Ukrainian Volunteer Service, etc.	Civil society and local authorities	Various roles	Focus group	Kyiv	12/6/26

Annex 3 – Methodological framework

The report adopts a multidisciplinary approach that integrates contributions from studies on democratization, crisis management, civil resistance and community resilience. Methodologically, the research is based on a mixed-methods, comparative and longitudinal design that combines the systematic analysis of quantitative data with qualitative social research techniques. From a quantitative perspective, the study takes as its starting point a baseline of 200 local community resilience initiatives — the primary unit of analysis — compiled jointly with the Centre of United Actions between 2022 and 2023 and expanded during subsequent monitoring [see the methodological note]. Each initiative was monitored until June 2026 and coded using a matrix of indicators that included, amongst other aspects, the dimension of community resilience to which it contributed [Norris et al., 2008], the type of action, the profile of the organizer, the degree of formalization, the geographical location and its development trajectory—distinguishing between continuity, transformation and termination—as well as its various subtypes.

The qualitative strategy was aimed at contextualizing and interpreting the patterns identified in the quantitative analysis. To this end, 64 research sessions were conducted — including semi-structured interviews and focus groups — with a total of 105 representatives from civil society organizations, public authorities, universities, the media, businesses and religious institutions. The fieldwork, carried out in person and online in Kyiv, Chernivtsi, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Kherson between March and October 2025, and supplemented by a further round of interviews in June 2026, enabled

us to reconstruct the evolution of the initiatives over more than four years of war [see Annex 2]. The information obtained was supplemented by an online survey targeting 26 local initiatives and by a process of documentary verification based on public records, websites, social media and other open sources, with the aim of verifying the status of each initiative and identifying the factors explaining its continuation, transformation or dissolution. Finally, the analysis of case studies helped to illustrate and explore in greater depth the main patterns observed in the quantitative evidence.

The research process was carried out in five phases:

- 1. Literature review.** Exploration of existing sources, including both academic articles and reports from international organizations and organized civil society. This mapping exercise identified under-researched areas and key actors, who were subsequently contacted during the fieldwork.
- 2. Establishment of a baseline of community resilience actions (2022).** In cooperation with the Ukrainian organization Centre of United Actions and its '*Communities of War*' research program, **200 community resilience actions** were systematized and categorized. The selection of local initiatives was designed to ensure broad geographical coverage across Ukraine, reflecting the diverse realities and wartime conditions experienced from the western to the eastern regions of the country. This baseline enabled us to study the emergence of local initiatives since 2022 in terms of their objectives, activities, structure and initiating actors.
- 3. Monitoring the development of local initiatives (2023–2026).** Data collection on the development of the initiatives registered in 2022, particularly regarding changes to their structures, capacities and cooperative relationships with other actors. This phase was structured into two sub-phases of work: i) online research into local initiatives in 2025 led by the Centre of United Actions via a comprehensive online questionnaire. Twenty-six local initiatives from various regions of the country completed this questionnaire; ii) field research based on several trips to the country in March, April, June and October 2025 and June 2026. During this process, 64 in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted — with 79 civil society organizations, 20 representatives of public authorities and 6 members of the academic sector — in Kyiv, Chernivtsi, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Kherson, as well as other interviews carried out online.
- 4. Data systematization.** The data collected were integrated with the baseline into a single database for comparative analysis [see Annex 1]. This included indicators such as the type of community resilience action, date, location, organizing body, initial status, current situation and sources of verification, amongst others. Community resilience initiatives were classified based on an interpretation of their predominant characteristics. In some cases, a single initiative could fit into more than one category [for example, social capital and community competence]; therefore, the final classification was based on the dimension considered most representative. In addition, a qualitative database was compiled containing the testimonies and information obtained from the individual interviews.
- 5. Data analysis.** The statistical findings were then extracted and analysed [see Chapter 4]. The interpretation and discussion of the data were informed by the trends identified in the qualitative database [see Chapter 5].

About the project

This report has been produced as part of NOVACT's long-term commitment in Ukraine and its work to understand and strengthen the role of civil society in responding to the consequences of Russia's full-scale invasion.

The report builds on NOVACT's previous research into civil resistance in Ukraine, which documented hundreds of nonviolent actions carried out by Ukrainian citizens and communities in response to the invasion. This study goes a step further by analysing how some of the initiatives and civic capacities mobilized since 2022 have evolved over time, as well as the interplay between civil resistance, community resilience, democratic governance and civic participation in the context of a protracted war.

This report is part of NOVACT's work in Ukraine, which seeks to support Ukrainian civil society, strengthen civil resistance, community resilience and democratic governance, and foster cooperation between civil society organizations, local authorities and communities. Particular attention is given to the capacities and forms of civic infrastructure that can contribute not only to addressing the immediate consequences of the war, but also to Ukraine's long-term democratic recovery and reconstruction.

This publication is conceived as part of a broader and ongoing process of research and learning within the framework of the strategy known as **ODR2 – Observatory of Democratic Resilience & Resistance**. ODR2 promotes and systematizes publications, testimonies and data through which NOVACT seeks to document the transformation of Ukrainian civil society and communities during the war, identify lessons learnt from their experience, and contribute evidence to the wider European debate on civil preparedness, democratic resilience and locally-led responses to complex crises.

WWW.ODR2.ORG

