

Alternative Economic Visions from Ukrainian Culture

Introduction

This research reflects an interdisciplinary collaboration between an undergraduate student in Economics from Ukraine and a supervisor from the Faculty of Environment, combining distinct academic perspectives.

This research aims to identify aspects and behaviours from Ukrainian culture that challenge mainstream economic visions and aim for better social and environmental outcomes.

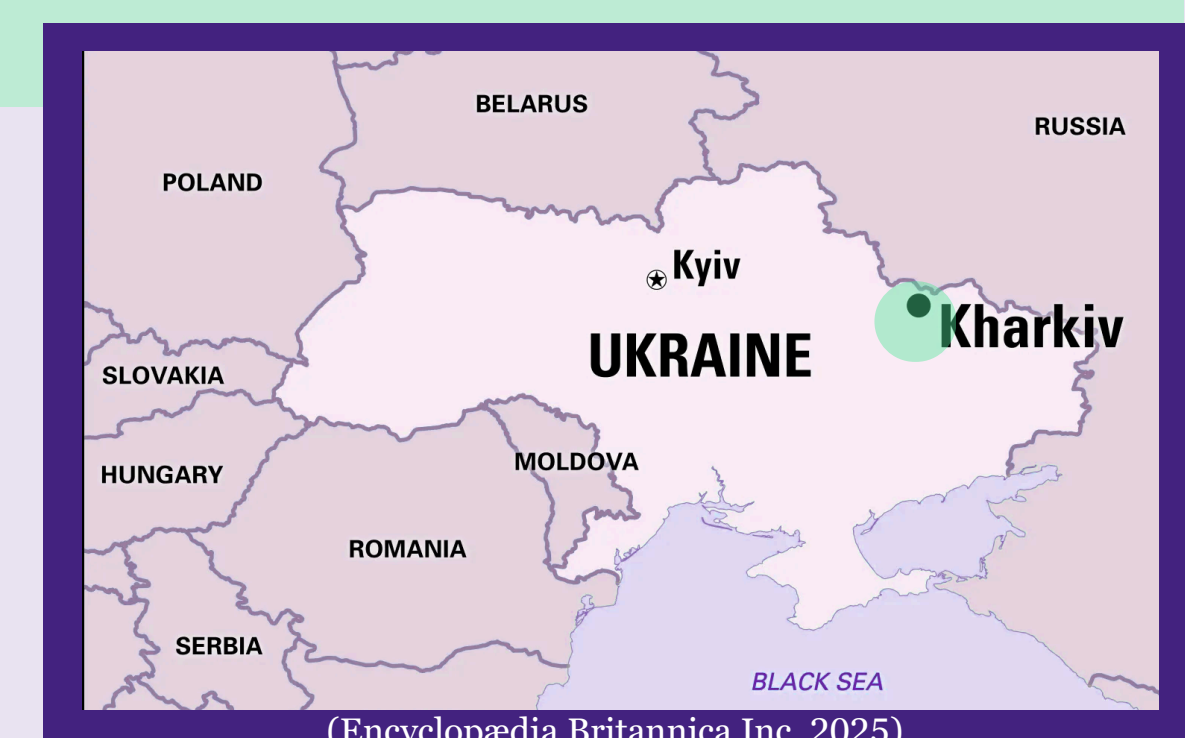
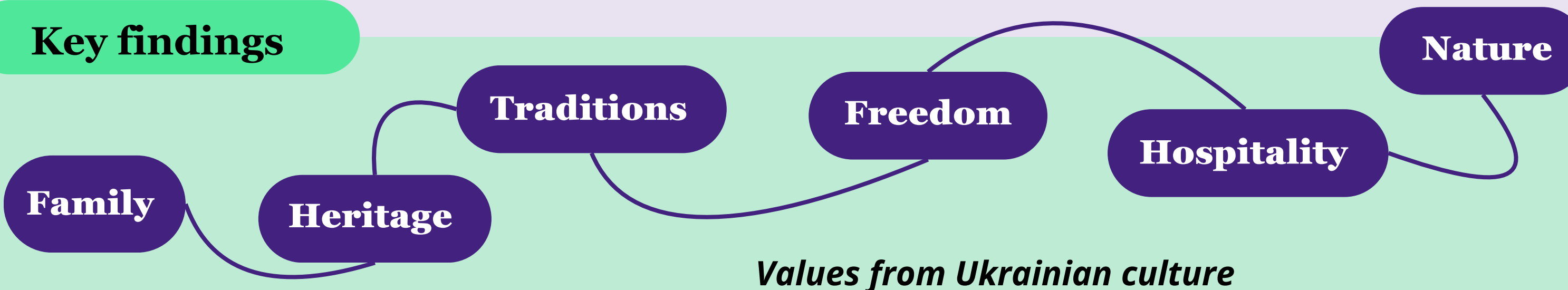
This is particularly important in this period of global environmental crisis (e.g., the decades-long climate change) and of international social and cultural tensions, also involving Ukraine.

Methodology

We have conducted 12 online interviews with Ukrainians, who work in cultural fields (for example, art, music, book publishing, food) to collect qualitative data and analyse it. This gave us rich answers with deep understanding of these professionals' opinions. We found and reached out to participants through social media platforms and personal connections. Selected participants came from Kharkiv (urban and rural areas) to ensure the most similar cultural background. Most of them are currently operating in Kharkiv, but some migrated due to the war to Kyiv or abroad.

We have complemented the research with secondary sources such as research papers in both English and Ukrainian languages to gain the knowledge on the position of culture in the economic debates. We have identified limited information and gaps on the topic. Therefore, our research was exploratory with no initial hypothesis.

Key findings



Significance of personal and economic motivations

Economic motivations play a role in participants' motivation; however, they are not seen as the most important ones.

☁️ "If my main motivation was money, I would have a different job" - phrase repeated by a few participants.

The financial aspect loses its importance after the needs of the person (and their family) are satisfied. Participants expressed the recognition that the balance between economic motivations and personal motivations needs to be found, but personal motivations played a more significant role for them. Among the personal motivations:

- Enjoyment from the work
- Self-expression
- Passing knowledge

Creating for society, not for profit

We could see the tendency to work and create "cultural products" without demand for it, because professionals view these products as important for society or that is the way to express themselves.

☁️ Book publisher: "Our publishing policy is guided not by reader demand, but by scholarly, social, and cultural necessity."

☁️ Content maker and band member: "When you produce stereotyped commercial music... It doesn't convey your thoughts, and it's not a product of culture."

This challenges the assumption of demand-driven supply, as supply of some "cultural products" does not come from market signals. Recognition of the need to support such initiatives would enhance culture and would strengthen communities.

Cultural work beyond economic incentives

Working for a low price or for free is the way to help others.

☁️ Restaurant founder: "If I set the economically appropriate price, there will be these people whom I do not want to feed at all, so I stay within the limits of affordability. Because most people who are representatives of Ukrainian culture, they are not economically secure. That's why they need help and support."

☁️ Artist: "Project entirely on a volunteer basis involved creating specific murals, which had been agreed upon with residents beforehand, to serve as a symbol of mourning and pain over the loss."

Interaction of community values and needs with market mechanisms should become more common across businesses and government policies, as well as the development of ethical partnerships.

Conclusion

Preliminary results suggest that in decision making a greater importance is given to values than to economic motives. Our work proposes alternative views in the field of economics and contributes to the integration in the economic field of intercultural perspectives coming from Ukrainian culture, contributing to the valorisation of this culture. We found that some behaviours are related to the mindset, influenced by cultural environment, shaped by history, rather than being explained by financial factors. For instance, people take into account their culture-specific values and meanings when they create a product and choose a product. Also, some interviewees stressed the importance of allocating more resources to the promotion of culture and ethical values.

The next steps for this project are the completion of the data analysis, publishing our findings and presenting them at conferences to spread awareness and ensure higher impact.