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CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AS PLATFORM FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF MINSK URBAN SPACE

Creative industries do not make revolutions in city planning but transform the ways of thinking about and practicing urban space development. In the context of Minsk, Belarus, creative industries are a part of the contemporary urban infrastructure transformation that is reestablishing the former Soviet urban space. The aim of this article is to document and analyze the ways that creative industries turn the urban spaces of Minsk into participatory platforms for cultural transformations. The development of these creative industries in Belarus has played a crucial role in transforming urban spaces into new inclusive cities. The distinctive feature of Belarusian creative industries is their embeddedness in the spaces of Soviet cities. Empirically, this text is based on the findings of a qualitative empirical study in the framework of grounded theory. The research seeks to understand the self-narrative and self-identification of the new creative class in Minsk (spring and summer 2018). The respondents were people who are involved in the process of developing creative industries in Belarus.

Keywords: cultural identity, creative industries, participation, Belarus, urban culture, platform

The aim of this article is to document and analyze the ways that creative industries turn the urban spaces of Minsk, Belarus, into participatory platforms for cultural transformations. The article is based on an analysis of 30 semi-structured interviews that were conducted in spring and summer 2018 with various experts from companies within the Belarusian creative industry sector. The interview results were analyzed in the perspective of the grounded theory research method. These interviews were part of a research project on the cultural identity that is promoted by creative industries in Belarus. The key category for this research project is cultural identity, with subcategories of practice, time, and space. This article focuses on the sub-subcategory of [urban] space. Creative industries are a phenomenon of contemporary urban culture; by default, this phenomenon belongs to urban spaces and is actively involved in their rethinking. How do we describe the space within which the interaction takes place and

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the current Belarusian urban culture that is being created? To what extent is this connected to the revitalization of Soviet urban spaces? One of the themes of the interviews were the new places for creative industries in Minsk. The informants most often referred to Kastrychnitskaya and Zybitskaya Streets, the former production facilities of the "Horizont" plant, and others. Many interviews were conducted in these locations. The article traces the effects of the reuse of these specific locations in the city; it shows that a reinterpretation of physical space can be part of the construction of a new self-narrative and, thus, of the construction of a new identity. The challenge is that contemporary Belarusian cities are, by and large, Soviet cities. The Soviet past has a lot of faces and dimensions; it is about toponymy (the names of streets and places) that make it still Soviet. It can be seen in the transformation of private and public spaces and the creation of "third places" (Oldenburg, 1989) as something in between home and work. It is also about a newly emerging mode of power distribution in urban spaces (video surveillance, neighborhood watches, etc.). Creative industries have the potential to transform a Soviet urban space into a new inclusive city. They do not make a revolution in city planning but transform the way of thinking about and practicing urban space development.

IDENTITY-BASED CONSUMPTION: FROM CULTURAL TO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Having abandoned the search for a single totalizing identity, we continue to search for ourselves in many small differences from others while enjoying common views and values with representatives of the group of which we are a part. Even the most mobile creative class, the representatives of which think of themselves as kinds of nomads and cosmopolitans of the 21st century, is not free from the socio-cultural constraints that are present in society. Personification, individualization, customization – these are many names for one phenomenon of searching for one's own identity. It seems promising to deal with the performative nature of cultural identity given that there is more than one ideal object to which we aspire. Creative industries enable city dwellers to look differently at themselves and their surrounding socially determined space. They influence the transformation of post-Soviet urban spaces, shaping new cultural practices and participating in the creation of new aesthetics in everyday life.

The critique of the mid-twentieth-century cultural industry theory on behalf of twenty-first-century scholars is describing the transition from a cultural industry to creative industries. Here, the reference to the classical text "Dialectic of Enlightenment" by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno is obvious (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972). The situation at the beginning of the 21st century differs from the conditions and the state of society that was analyzed by representatives of the Frankfurt School. The cultural industry in the original sense of the Frankfurt School was focused on the broad masses of people who were deprived of access to advanced levels of education. Creative industries focus on a different social configuration today. Here, not only property but also lifestyle are factors for social stratification. Thus, the transition from cultural to creative industries is not just a return to a long-proposed term. Let

us try to trace how this transformation has become possible and how it has affected media consumption. Cultural capital is the notion at the forefront of explaining the fragmentary nature of the consumption of online information where audiences are forced to navigate among the many news providers that are available online and make certain choices:

> The digital news landscape is increasingly choice-oriented. Choices in the market of cultural goods are never sociologically neutral, however, but rather a way for individuals to produce and reproduce their positions and status. Given its concentration among class factions that are rich in cultural capital, the consumption of 'quality' online news media may, thus, be seen as an act of cultural distinction (Ohlsson et al., 2017, p. 13).

Today, we can observe diagnoses of the crisis of public broadcasting when citizens abandon the consumption of traditional broadcast media in favor of much more individualized, interactive, networked, and personalized media. As a result of this convergence, the devices for media consumption have changed radically, becoming a variety of network devices as terminals for remote operation. Nicholas Garnham's key point about this transformation is that a society's information policy should be regarded as being a part of the creative industry process. "The choice of the term 'creative' rather than 'cultural' is a shorthand reference to the information society and that set of economic analyses and policy arguments to which that term now refers" (Garnham, 2005, p. 20). This may explain the popularity of creative industries in the creative environment of the lobbyists of cultural change. Another explanation of the transition from cultural to creative industries that is necessary to highlight is Stuart Cunningham's take on the examples of Australia and North America. "The concept of creative industries is trying to chart an historical shift from subsidized 'public arts' and broadcast-era media toward new and broader applications of creativity" (Cunningham, 2002, pp. 58–59). These observations allow us to see the political-economic trace in understanding the differences between cultural and creative industries. In creative industries, Andy Pratt sees a "political construct" and notes that "when the creative industries are articulated with the broader cultural field, the dualisms of economic/private of the non-economic/public arts are re-established" (Pratt, 2005, p. 6). This brings us to the definition of creative industries as copyright industries where the first priority is not the opportunity for creativity but the opportunity for copyrighting and the subsequent restrictions of use.

In his introductory chapter of "Creative Industries," John Hartley noted that "The drift from public culture to private life has been accompanied by a vigorous and extended struggle about identity" (Hartley, 2005, p. 17). This can be explained by a human's desire for freedom and comfort but not absolute freedom. Above all, this is the freedom to choose and have a comfortable existence in terms of consumption – not least, the comfort of media consumption. The individualization of the media has led to the fact that people have isolated themselves from others by means of personalized media consumption. This process goes hand in hand with the privatization of public spaces. As a result, the privatization of public life is connected to the blurring of boundaries between a citizen and a consumer. "It is in this dynamic context that the notion of creative identities needs to be seen and where it begins to connect with the creative industries" (Hartley, 2005, p. 108). Virtual space can be the same new public space

where users can create themselves. While "the creative industries are enterprises that monetize (creative) ideas in a consumer economy […], they exploit the commercialization of identity and citizenship" (Hartley, 2005, p. 114). The construction of identity is only possible in the process of conspicuous consumption. In this context, social networks are the same virtual space where we create ourselves.

There is range of critical arguments by urban scholars regarding the instrumentalization of creative industries in urban development. Constructing special creative neighborhoods in city spaces was to become a part of cultural policy – and the vision of meaning of their existence went far beyond economic feasibility. In such a policy, a local place was recognized as a cultural product. This culture-led place was to extract and produce not geographically-based senses but also socio-cultural meanings and values.

> Place-based cultural identity aiding in development is the way in which place reputation can act as an attractor of even more of the same inputs that initially established its cultural identity and competitive advantage in the first place: firms, capital, and skilled labor (Currid, 2009, p. 375).

In his article "Culture that works? Creative industries development in a working-class city," M. Jayne tried to analyze an attempted to revive the small industrial city of Stoke-on-Trent, which degraded after deindustrialization. For a 15-year period, attempts have been made to revitalize the city by creating favorable conditions for the development of creative industries; in reality, however, these creative industries had a minimal impact on rebuilding the city. Jayne explains this as

> the result of both a flawed creative industry strategy and the associated failings of the city to overcome its spatial and economic structural conditions so as to compete in an urban hierarchy dominated by post-industrial and middle-class consumption cultures (Jayne, 2004, p. 208).

In the article "Cultural Quarters as Mechanisms for Urban Regeneration," J. Montgomery considered using the opportunities of cultural industries to revitalize degraded cities. Cultural neighborhoods should not turn into ghettos or any enclosed spaces. In his opinion, "this means that cultural quarters, and indeed the wider notion of city creative economies, cannot be considered in isolation from the geography and characteristics of urban places. Places matter" (Montgomery, 2003, p. 302).

Neighborhoods for creative industries are not just physical locations of offices. "Arts clusters may seek out the broader attributes of certain types of cities but locally require different attributes in their production processes and 'work life,' so to speak" (Grodach et al., 2014, p. 2838). Clusters combine physical locations and conceptual unity for creative industries. Bas van Heur proposed the critical revision of a city space as a place for creative industries and the knowledge-based economy by studying the relationships among accumulation, regulation, and networks of creative industries in an urban context. This made it possible for him to develop a research approach "that takes seriously the cultural turn in social analysis while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of capital accumulation and state regulation" (van Heur, 2010, p. 191). Thus, the development of such clusters is even substantiated in political-economic discourse, as one of the consequences of stimulating the development of

creative industries may be changes in the social (one might say "class") compositions of the inhabitants of these renovated neighborhoods. Such a change in the social composition of a population is an integral part of the gentrification process; this phenomenon has long been included in the agenda of urban studies.

In this case, we can additionally talk about the consequences of the development of creative industries as the emergence of a new class or a new social group – the precariat. Guy Standing, the author of a book on the topic, devotes an entire section to describe those who may be transformed into the new class (Standing, 2011). The representatives of creative industries are at risk with their free schedules, temporary contracts, and part-time employment (and they are simultaneously politically active). Possible comparisons of the precariat in the 21st century with the proletariat in the 20th century highlight the socially vulnerable position of the representatives of creative industries and, as a consequence, a possible interest in changing the social order. The transformation of a society is often simulated in the process of constructing one's own identity. Why change the system if there is a belief in the possibility of changing one's place in it? Once faith disappears, however, transformation will become inevitable.

At the same time, the instrumentalization of cultural industries in urban development creates indirect, often unintended outcomes. Cultural industries can be seen as a constant generator of possible minor differences and variabilities in the forms of certain practices and objects; the consumption of this, in turn, allows us to expand the boundaries for possible identifications with the social environment. The process of constructing a cultural identity is indirect when many secondary and implicit factors affect it:

> Identity is a context-dependent action. Its real content is not consistent within different social settings. The individual will adjust which communicative actions are used according to the setting requirements (Gomez-Estern et al., 2010, p. 244).

This opens the possibility of regarding an urban space as a platform. The City-as-a-Platform concept is deeply connected with the idea that any kind of digital technology supports efforts to establish collaboration instead of competition.

> Platformization – platform urbanism in general, and City-as-a-Platform in particular – is conceptualized as a model of sociotechnical governance supported by digital architecture technologies with open and modular standards that provide the connection between government and society for the co-creation of services and policies of high public value (Repette et al., 2021, p. 2).

The digitization of cultural and social lives transforms imagination and cultural practices about the social dimension of a space. "As digital platforms are woven into urban life, produce urban space, and participate in urban governance, it is vital to interrogate the politics of these socio-technical systems" (Fields et al., 2020, p. 465).

In the book "Instagram and the modern image," Lev Manovich considered the possibility of using Instagram to construct cultural identity. According to him, identity is built with the help of Instagram today; i.e., not only directly on Instagram but also far beyond this social network. In this respect, one can talk about the intersection of creative industries and cultural

identity. From the point of view of Manovich, today's cultural identity is determined by many variations and small differences as well as by the hybridization of already occupied positions. Everything in one's surroundings can be used to make sense of one's own uniqueness, otherness, and difference from others.

> 'Subcultures,' food preferences, and fashion styles give people basic tools to establish and perform their cultural identities. However, digital cameras and editing and publishing tools as exemplified by Instagram provide the crucial mechanism to further refine and 'individualize' these basic identities (Manovich, 2016, p. 20).

Previously, lifestyle choices were important steps toward building one's own identity; however, this is not enough nowadays. Even basic forms of the identity need further customization and personification. As Manovich aptly noted, "lifestyle is not about always doing things. […] To use the term from narratology, lifestyle is often more about »description« than »narration«" (Manovich, 2016, p. 24), because it is also how and what not to do, what not to have. A simple example with one's own selfie against the background of someone else's car does not indicate the ownership of the car but fits perfectly into a certain lifestyle (just like the fact of taking a selfie, by the way).

> And this is why, today, Instagrammism is the style of global design class. […] It is also defined by its visual voice – which is about subtle differences, the power of empty space, visual intelligence, and visual pleasure (Manovich, 2016, p. 25).

The global design class that was mentioned by Manovich can be attributed to creative industries, as this class will not be able to exist outside of them. As a global narrative of creative self-description, Instagrammisms are not only actively used by professionals but also by young aspiring photographers, designers, and other future creatives. For them, the use of Instagram is an obvious mechanism for building their own portfolios and being included in their professions. In this case, Instagram is not so much a mirror as a selfie for the creative class. The metaphor of a mirror refers to reflection and representation, and selfies – to the active development of the space around oneself and the mobile privatization of objects that fall into the frame. Chaotic photo sets, which are aggregated by tags and form unexpected selections, can be metaphorically compared to yeast (which, being in a favorable nutrient medium, starts to grow exponentially). In this case, yeast can be seen as a metaphor for the activities of creative industries today. In contrast to the idea of stationary yeast, it is not only alive but also mobile; i.e., it does not exist simply for the transmission of information or the coexistence on a plane (surface), but it can become the "engine" for the beginning of movement in society under certain conditions. In order to start the fermentation, a nutrient medium is required; the process itself is accompanied by the release of energy. This chemical-biological explanation of this process can be a metaphorical illustration of how creative industries and the cultural identity of its representatives can be linked among each other and linked to the process of urban space re-establishment.

The conducted interviews suggest that, in Minsk, Belarus, we can find a lot of evidence that creative industries act not merely like businesses but also work on the creation of a cultural

infrastructure or an independent cultural nutrient medium. When occupied and transformed by creative industries, places establish new rules for participation. This is especially active participation when "citizens as platform users are not simply passive consumers of data; their sites of complex entanglements are not simply reduced to data points in an abstracted system view of acity" (Barns, 2020, pp. 6–7). This is the case when everyday urban culture transforms citizens' behavior and their ways of thinking.

> As global platforms have evolved from spaces of connection and socialization to become major infrastructures upon which much of modern life depends, their dominance has provoked myriad calls to "think infrastructurally" about how platform intermediation actually works (Barns, 2019, p. 2).

The development of creative industries in Belarus has played a crucial role in the transformations of urban space. The first of these places were recognized as "ghettos" for members of the creative class, but this new way of life soon became more popular and ventured to start a new urban sociality.

EMPIRICAL DATA DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHOD

This text is based on the findings of a qualitative empirical study; the research sought to understand the self-narrative and self-identification of the new creative class in Minsk. In the spring and summer of 2018, I performed a large empirical survey in Belarus and conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 experts in different types of companies in the Belarusian creative industries sector. I adhered to the grounded theory methodology. There was a broad spectrum of problems discussed; one was about the potential of creative industries for contemporary cities in Belarus. I used a "snowball sampling" method to collect interlocutors for interviews. Theoretical sampling was used instead of probability sampling. Upon completion of the interviewing, the respondents were asked to name people with whom they thought it would make sense to talk. If a person was named two times or more, he/she was asked to participate in an interview. The most famous person in this area was named eight times. My respondents were persons who were involved in the process of developing creative industries in Belarus; they were from the advertising sector, creative spaces, galleries, media, cafes, festivals, etc. All of them were owners of businesses in the sphere of creative industries, or they occupied top position in their companies.

The interviews were conducted in the Belarusian and Russian languages. The transcripts of the interviews were processed in the analytical program (MaxQDA, 2018) with a three-step coding process (open, selective, and axial). Analytical procedures that were methodologically based on selective and axial coding were already carried out – taking the results of open coding into account. The open coding was applied to the transcribed texts; this made it possible to break down the monolithic statements of the experts into meaningful units. Then, I proceeded to two other coding practices: axial, and selective. These are two multi-directional strategies that allowed me to get a multidimensional result of the whole work. Key category and subcategories were also formulated during the coding process. Under theoretical saturation,

it was necessary to understand the absence of fundamentally new information and a significant number of repetitions of what was articulated during the previous interviews. The result of the study made it possible to create a framework for substantiating the proposed theory of the mode that creative industries influence the construction of cultural identity. The text provides excerpts from the interviews; references to them are as follows: "*Words of the expert*" <152.19.46: 20>. In quotation marks was a fragment of an expert's speech, and the numbers in […] were coded (the duration, the language and date of the interview, and the paragraph number in the transcribed text of the conversation). The direct speech of the respondents is provided to guarantee the anthropological authenticity and presentation of the narrative of the self-description by people who were involved in creative industries in Belarus.

LOGIC OF PLATFORMIZATION IN CULTURE-LED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

This article emphasizes the cultural dimension of creative industries, not an economic one. As a global phenomenon with local outputs, creative industries are related to urban culture by default in this view and can be recognized as a platform for citizen cooperation and identity formation. In the political-economic approach, thinking about creative industries is very much related to the functioning of various kinds of economic institutions (van Heur, 2010); we can assume that this is the reason that they work. Creative projects that have emerged in Belarus in recent decades could remain purely creative endeavors, but some of them have been transformed into businesses. And "*it is a completely normal proper sustainable ecosystem that feeds itself. It is just borrowing the right literate business practices. We will still say that this is a business,* […] *even implementing non-profit projects, we work one way or another according to the rules of business. No one excludes the rent and taxes that we pay on an equal footing with any of our other business colleagues, regardless of whether we present a cultural project (almost free of charge) or sell sausages*" <192.58.58: 18>. Despite the fact that some people in creative industries do not see themselves as part of the sector but simply as part of a business, creative industries can have second function: "*entertainment or service (and you can be a creator and develop in what unites around this place of people) creates communication platforms and begins to influence the city through the fact that the creative core is emerging*" <290.19.97: 46>. The commercial component of creative industries is successfully fitting into an urban space and the new forms of cultural consumption that are described above. It does not have to happen on a gigantic scale. "*In order to have a culture of consumption, you need shopping malls. If you go to some not very large Belarusian city where these malls were built, then there are people hanging out. But it is not urban culture. Urban culture, in my opinion, is the streets of the city center where you can just walk without consuming and feel very, very comfortable. Social space, continuity of the environment, active interaction of people*" <162.58.62: 8>. The respondents mentioned various city festivals as new forms of social interaction. Such festivals have become very popular and demanded among city dwellers: "*Festivals are just a direct hit for the Belarusian*

consumer. The Belarusian consumer is a cultural consumer; he or she first of all wants to get something in return […] *The Belarusian consumer, literally and figuratively, has not yet eaten this urban culture.* […] *The city just becomes more owned by the people who live here, they just become the crossroads between work and home, from parents to friends.* […] *It is clear that all of these initiatives are of a commercial nature*" <185.58.78: 20>.

At the same time, the respondents were attracted not by the commercial nature but by the possibility of inclusion and involvement: "*There are several stages of interest in consumption* […]. *If you decide to buy coffee and it is important for you to be involved in the process, then the service is important*" <192.58.54: 74>. For other respondents, the possibility of the new consumer practices that become possible in specific spaces is crucial. This fits into Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" (Foucault, 1986), as it is normative behavior in heterotopic spaces that may explain the appeal of the new practices that are offered by creative industries: "*They cultivate new practices as we come into these spaces, as we create them, as we interact with others*" <162.58.61: 3>. The frivolous character of the consumer's attitude toward culture does not deny the seriousness of the creative industries' impact; sometimes playing around and just imagining possible options for the future can make them real. This is like trying to formulate the same attractive project of the future when, in addition to abstract fantasies, implementation attempts are needed to find out its viability. Through the creation of diverse communities that are formally distant from social-political life, creative industries contribute to the creation of new actors with their aims. These actors can be called public activists, concerned citizens, and creative entrepreneurs. When "*no one wanted to be a leader in some areas and issues to fight for something*" <185.58.58: 62>, creative entrepreneurs understand that they will not be able to become the "government" and radically change the field of activity. This is because, unlike others, their activities are localized in the city space. The active use of digital technologies as intermediaries for the transformation of urban space creates a "new digital version of a theatrocratic society […] with the possibility to imitate professional or quasi-professional statuses" (Liubimau, 2014).

Among the respondents of the interviews, the activities of creative industries as platforms for civic participation and the opportunities that they offer are sometimes perceived as practices that create 'cultural ghettos.' These are the places of otherness that can be attractive. In such places, formally forbidden activities are possible; in this sense, it repeats the mechanism of cultural hegemony. Despite the potentially mass nature of their products' consumption, Minsk creative industries are creating a distinctive audience that strives for hegemony in imposing taste and style as well as in shaping consumption practices. The changes thus occurring in the creative industries' locations in Minsk are inevitably noticeable to everyone who can observe these spaces. On the one hand, it is possible to talk about the intangible nature of the results of the activities of creative industries, and on the other hand, the results of their activities affect the daily practices of people who can be completely unrelated to this sphere; then, we could recognize the tendency of the expansion of 'cultural ghettos.' If our space is tied to a certain mode of communication and is expanded as much as possible throughout Belarus, then the whole of Belarus becomes such a 'cultural ghetto.' Then, it is not a ghetto anymore but a new condition of culture and society.

IMPACTS OF URBAN CULTURE-LED DEVELOPMENT IN FORMER SOVIET CITY

One of the tasks for creative industries in Belarus is to create an attractive project for the future through consumption (in opposition to the Soviet past). According to the respondents, it is not a triumphant march of the Enlightenment project, as everything rests on rather blurred ideals and axiological guidelines: "*There is a huge number of people who have some values, simple enough – the value of a comfortable and relatively free life. There is no task to create, to change the world – it is not their value. There is a value of a nice and good contemporary life*" <192.58.78: 22>. Reflections on contemporary Belarusian cities are impossible in isolation from the pasts of these cities. The well-known Khrushchev's panels that are typical of the past create the illusory unity and uniformity of former Soviet cities when "*the only thing that unites – is Soviet buildings*" <179.19.35: 20>. At the same time, it is not a new research problem. Almost a hundred years ago (1924), Vladimir Picheta wrote the following when studying the state of the Belarusian urban culture of the early twentieth century:

> Belarusian cities have lost their Belarusian character. The cities had a large Polish, Jewish, and Russian population. The urban intelligentsia was either Polish or Russian. Educated in traditions far from Belarusian culture, the urban intelligentsia not only did not want to accept this desire for national and cultural revival but treated it with the usual disrespect, looking at this movement as something artificial, unnecessary in modern culture (Picheta, 1924, p. 19).

A century later, these remarks are still relevant. Belarusian uniqueness outside the cities is clear and meaningful: "*Belarusian landscapes can calm people, and this national Zen is really present: in nature, architecture, art, people*" <060.58.44: 48>. However it is more complicated with urban spaces. "*It's like machines brought some new ones to an enterprise and they bury them because they do not know what to do with them and work on*" <179.19.35: 20>. At the same time, "*creative industries originally is an urban phenomenon, it is about the city*" <192.58.78: 62>. Yet, what is a contemporary Belarusian city? According to which vision of the world is this particular urban space formed?

With nearly a thousand years of history, today's Minsk exists in a space that was created as a model example of the Soviet understanding of social space: "*Minsk is a Soviet city, and even what is happening now with the restoration of the city center – it is all a Stalinist prism. It is the thinking we were taught in the 30s and 50s of the 20th century* […] *We don't have village houses, we have a Soviet city, with a Soviet rethinking at the moment, and we just need to understand what we are doing wrong now*" <162.58.62: 30>. Nowadays, this context of the Soviet city is confronted with a post-industrial understanding of the city. To understand today's context, it is necessary to look at the way the city has changed and developed. "*For a long time, Minsk lagged behind other Soviet cities in the number of public functions. Then, of course, it caught up.* […] *And the water-green diameter – this project failed because we simply do not have enough people to actively use this public space; i.e., it is possible to design 80 cinemas, but if there are only 2, the remaining 78 will not be able to exist*" <162.58.62: 4>. According to one of the respondents, this specific development of Minsk was perfectly described by German researcher Thomas Bohn in the book "Minsk

Phenomenon" (Bohn, 2013). "*Minsk was one of the fastest growing cities in the world.* […] *And the Minsk phenomenon is not so much in the speed of city growth as in the process of the assimilation of rural residents by the city. There was what he called 'the proclamation of the city.' Minsk has been under pressure from rural culture for a very long time, especially since the mid-1960s and 1970s.* […] *And this continued until the 80s, when Malinovka was inhabited after the Chernobyl disaster.* […] *The movement of the rural culture into the city is well described at the level of academic research*" <162.58.62: 14>. The transition of the village to the city is culturally described and conceptualized by Mikhas' Stral'tsows "hay on asphalt" metaphor (Stral'tsow, 2015, p. 147).

Today, consumption practices are gradually affecting the value mechanisms in the field of Minsk urban culture. The activities of creative industries are focused on the city and its inhabitants. In this respect, it is not the buildings but the social and cultural dimension in the urban spaces that require research attention. How and with whom will communication take place in urban spaces? In this regard, one should look at the city as a space where individuals act as agents of social transformation. My interview partners are aware of the international context: "*Bilbao phenomenon – a famous Spanish city in crisis, businesses did not work. How to live on? Are we closing the factories, moving to other cities? And here, the representatives of the future creative industry came and realized that it was possible to work with abandoned factories*" <151.58.82: 13>. In the interviews, Minsk is repeatedly compared with the other Belarusian cities from a regional context. "*Minsk has not started to develop as a multinational city, like Moscow, gathering visiting migrant workers, it is not a rich city, it is a city with more features of a province, more a provincial town than a capital*" <184.58.80: 12>. Here, one can recognize the difference between the provincialism of the Soviet era and the provincialism in the European context (the European cultural space of creative industries). The evidence of this entry can be an assessment of the quality of the cultural events that are taking place in Belarus. An example of this is as follows: "*People say that Minsk has become more interesting than Vilnius – this is also such an important indicator*" <162.58.62: 2>.

The interview partners also pointed to local features: "*Many people noticed that, when the event ended, it was almost perfectly clean*" <089.19.55: 6>. To avoid the restrictions of the Soviet urban space, "*one should not directly apply to any folk houses there. If they write books about Belarusian housing, they run into this contradiction again: urban culture versus rural culture, Belarusian culture or non-Belarusian, and this must also be overcome*" <162.58.62: 28>. One of the possible options for overcoming this division can be found in the unique urban culture. "*These are urban values, this is communication in public space, this is the ability to spend money in public spaces for one's own pleasure. Virtually all people of my parents' generation do not understand how you can go to town and spend ten times more money for a cup of coffee than it actually costs. Among young people, however, there are many more people who think differently, and people are gradually mastering this urban culture – the city is growing. It is very good.* […] *It requires money and culture*" <162.58.62: 6>. The mechanism of enjoying conspicuous consumption can be seen as an opportunity to build one's own identity and distinctiveness as compared to others. This can be interpreted as the process when Soviet monotonous urban space is diversified by the practice of conspicuous

consumption: "*The effect of a big city, many social classes, and these classes compete with each other for some of their features, some signs of fashion, there is already a movement toward symbolic capital*" <184.58.80: 10>.

Sometimes, there is misunderstanding about those consumption practices that are supposed to be imitated and adapted to Belarusian conditions: "*in a European city, this is considered normal, and it is cool to live in the center of an oasis, surrounded by people.*" <162.58.62: 42>. Perhaps it is also explained by the fact that "*we think about the interior and very often do not think about the rights, about the city, about the public spaces they should be. It should be interactive for communication, etc. The creative industries, without even thinking about it, are already changing this space. By holding a festival where people of different ages, different statuses, and different cultures gather, they create conditions, a platform for interaction, mutual understanding, multiculturalism, and something else that will not exist under normal conditions*" <151.58.82: 15>. Creative value can be developed only where representatives of different social groups meet. "*If I used to be interested in preserving my identity, made me strong so I didn't change. Everyone longed for strength and tried to remain themselves. But it is self-deception and deception on the part of the seller.* […] *Now, we openly say we are selling change, you will not remain yourself, you will acquire a new identity or complete it in some way. I believe that I am free to build my own identity*" <192.58.78: 66>. The constant activity of creative industries against the background of the Soviet urban space actually leads to the fact that "*we are re-creating the urban Belarusian culture*" <290.19.97: 78>. However, this is not created in a vacuum but in the "interiors" of former Soviet urban spaces, which are not always conducive to experimentation: "*for the creative industries have a very high need for investment to be done; but at the same time, the investment potential is very small*" <192.58.78: 72>.

CONCLUSION

Creative industries can be understood as representing a platform for cooperation. In the Minsk context, they are a part of the contemporary urban infrastructure that re-establishes the former Soviet urban space. This article presents an analysis of the role of creative industries in the process of transforming Minsk's urban space. Starting as an attempt to rethink Soviet heritage, this leads to the creation of "new third places" that not only fulfill their utilitarian functions but also act as heterotopias for new cultural practices. Then, they are transformed into 'cultural ghettos' that are not stigmatized; according to the logic of cultural hegemony, they instead offer new options for civic participation. This study can be viewed in a historical perspective as an example of the potential of creative industries in the transformation of the process of social becoming. This empirical study (which was conducted in 2018) offers a key to find the roots of massive civic activization that took place in Belarus in 2020. This is not a prediction of the future, but it allows for talking about creative industries as yeast for the "fermentation" of cultural identity. Initially, creative industries in Belarus existed on the margin. In fact, overcoming the situation of a ghetto and the transition to the mainstream

in the late 2010s can be considered to be their greatest achievement. When the opportunity arises, the representatives of online communities go offline and continue their own activities far beyond the Internet.

The global project of creative industries necessarily has local boundaries. It is the search for that unique and inimitable combination of the global and the local that offers its own vision of globalization to the world. An indirect result of reflecting on the global project may be a rethinking of the phenomenon of borders: cultural, ethnic, and social. Invisible social boundaries can both divide urban space and create opportunities for the shared use of urban infrastructure and for a better understanding and implementation of 'the right to the city' concept. Creative industries directly belong to urban culture. The distinctive feature of Belarusian creative industries is the space of a Soviet city. Here, one can recognize a symbiosis of the capitalist logic of the development of creative industries and of physical and symbolic space of the former Soviet city.

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