

## PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AMIDST THE TRANSFORMATION OF AN OPEN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainable development and building an open society are critical imperatives for developing territorial communities today, and they tend to ensure a decent standard of living, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. The article aims to study theoretical and methodological approaches to determine the current state and ensure sustainable development of territorial communities in the context of open society transformation. The study used the following methods: analytical and research, integrated benchmarking method, economic diagnostics, generalisation, systematisation, synthesis, studying phenomena and processes in their development and interrelationships, comparison, analogy, classification, and grouping. Based on the results of the theoretical research, the essence and components of sustainable development of territorial communities in the context of the transformation of an open society were clarified, which allowed to group their strategic goals by vectors of economic, social development, environmental safety and the level of openness of society, as well as to identify indicators relevant at the community level. Using the principles of integrated benchmarking, the article proposes methodological approaches to assessing the sustainable development of communities and relevant mathematical tools that can be used to form a comparative profile of sustainable community development, assess the effectiveness of achieving sustainable development goals in the dynamics and monitor the effectiveness of changes. Ten territorial communities of the Zakarpattia region were selected as a study area, which is of different types (urban and rural) and has significant differences in resource, infrastructure, and human resources potential. The analysis has shown that, in general, the level of sustainable development is sufficient compared to the national average. Significantly higher indicators of economic and social development and openness of society have been achieved in the communities formed based on cities. Rural territorial communities, especially those that cover mainly mountainous settlements, require state support in infrastructure development, improving the quality of administrative management and enhancing strategic planning and project management skills.

**Keywords:** infrastructure, economic growth, territorial communities, administrative management, project management, community development, sustainable development, open society, territorial communities, governance, public authorities, public administration.

*JEL Classification:* O18, Q01, Q56, H41, R58

## INTRODUCTION

At the present stage of human development, there are fundamental changes in the social order and social relations under the influence of globalisation, the rapid growth of digital technologies, climate change and other challenges and opportunities. In the process of evolutionary transformations, it is proved that the openness of society is becoming a key feature and basic condition for further harmonious development and the formation of relations of mutual respect, justice and sustainable development at all levels of social interaction in the context of modern transformations. The processes of sustainable development of territorial communities and the formation of an open society in Ukraine at the current stage are significantly limited by the war waged by the Russian Federation, and its unprecedented destructive consequences for society, economy and environment have yet to be fully understood and measured. In the context of the needs of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine's regions, addressing key issues for the formation of effective models of sustainable development in the context of the transformation of an open society are crucial theoretical and applied tasks that will contribute to economic growth, environmental sustainability, social justice and inclusiveness in the processes of reconstruction and development of territories. It remains important to develop tools for assessing sustainable development and to form civil society at the level of territorial communities as a basis for developing strategies, projects, and programmes for community development. The article aims to study theoretical and methodological approaches to determining the current state and ensuring the sustainable development of territorial communities in the context of the transformation of an open society.

### Literature review

*Theoretical foundations of sustainable development of territorial communities in the context of modern challenges.*

Since the end of the 20th century, sustainable development has been the subject of active scientific research and practical initiatives. "Sustainable development" was first widely supported and defined in 1987 in the report "Our Common Future" by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development. According to this report, sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Butlin, 1989). This definition formed the basis of this concept and interpretations of sustainable development in subsequent scientific studies. The practical implementation of the concept of sustainable development took place at the UN summit in September 2015, which approved the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which were adopted by the vast majority of participating countries (United Nations, 2015).

The conceptual foundations of sustainable development in the context of modern challenges are thoroughly considered in the works of (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019; Enders, 2014). Scientists have systematised the principles and goals of sustainable development and the main directions of their implementation at the global and national levels. Ukrainian scholars have studied various aspects of the sustainable development of territorial systems. For example, the scientific work "Sustainable development of united territorial communities during the conflict: turning challenges into opportunities" systematises the problems of transforming territorial units to sustainable development and proposes the main ways to solve them (Shcherbak et al.; Mudrak et al., 2024), among which additional attention should be paid to the observance of democratic principles in governance and the effective distribution of powers.

The study by Gavkalova and Akimova (Gavkalova et al., 2022) is devoted to the peculiarities of the functioning of amalgamated territorial communities and the identification of the main prerequisites for organisational support for local budget management, which is an important source of sustainable community development. We agree with the authors that one of the main prerequisites for sustainable community development is financial capacity and efficient allocation of budget funds. Modern innovative tools and models of sustainable development of administrative-territorial units on the example of SMART City are analysed by a team of scientists Gryshchenko et al. (2022). The authors have proved that digital technologies are becoming essential tools for managing the sustainable development of territories, and mechanisms for ensuring sustainable development in the context of the digitalisation of society have been developed. One key area of sustainable development in the context of resource scarcity and climate change is energy saving in the economies of countries and individual territories. To stimulate energy saving and the development of alternative energy sources, a system of effective financial and tax incentives must be created (Ivanova et al., 2021). Scientists Gryshchenko et al. (2024) draw attention to the problems of ensuring public control and combating crime in the context of the formation of an open society and sustainable development. To combat crime effectively, integrated approaches that include modern security technologies, methods of social integration, unemployment reduction, community engagement, and green infrastructure development are proposed.

An important factor in ensuring the sustainable development of territories is the transformation of public administration models, particularly using the principles of the project approach. (Chernov et al., 2023). Modern project management mechanisms, as one of the priority management tools of public administration using digital tools, aim to optimise community resources, efficiently and transparently allocate funds, and effectively manage regional and territorial development projects. The primary benchmark for sustainable development in Ukraine is the “Sustainable Development Goals: Ukraine” (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2015), which serve as a strategic guideline for the formation of state policy, strategies and programmes for the socio-economic development of the country, regions and administrative-territorial entities. According to the Presidential Decree, a monitoring system was developed to achieve the set goals, which included 86 tasks based on 17 objectives and 169 indicators. However, not all of these goals can be achieved at the level of individual communities.

Local governments, as independent institutions elected and accountable only to the territorial community, are one of the democratic foundations of society’s governance and a form of people’s power. It grants certain powers and, at the same time, increases the responsibility of local authorities for fulfilling their duties and ensuring the well-being of each administrative-territorial unit and its sustainable development. The decentralisation reform implemented in Ukraine in 2016–2020 has provided communities with broad opportunities for development and addressing key issues, including a certain degree of financial independence and the ability to attract funding from various sources. At the same time, there are still many obstacles to sustainable community development, including increased air pollution, water pollution and the territories in general; water shortages; low levels of infrastructure and business development; social inequality; an increase in the number of unemployed people and insufficient income; and the economic downturn of the national economy (Blishchuk, 2024). Ensuring sustainable development requires clearly systematising sustainable development goals for territorial communities, developing sustainable development strategies and projects that consider the territories’ unique capabilities and resources, and clarifying the tools for its implementation. As scientists Mudrak and Shvets (2024) noted, a study of 63 territorial communities in the Vinnytsia region found that most territorial communities have a developed sustainable development strategy as of 2021. However, most strategies are declarative, lacking clear strategic indicators of sustainable development and a system for their evaluation and monitoring. This is also confirmed by Transparency International Ukraine, which annually conducts a transparency rating of Ukrainian cities (Transparency International Ukraine, 2021). Experts note some progress in ensuring transparency and democratisation of local administration. However, budget allocation processes remain insufficiently open, and public participation in decision-making and discussion of strategies and programmes of local importance is low. Indicators of sustainable community development are a well-established set. However, the specifics of the territory determine their scope and significance and have no direct link to the actual management processes of the authorities. It is worth noting that sustainable community development has its own peculiarities that should be taken into account when formulating and implementing goals, strategies and programmes by public authorities and local self-government bodies, namely: direct impact on the economy, social situation and environment of the community; limited resources for the implementation of sustainable development goals; direct civic influence on the choice of community development priorities. Based on the research, it is possible to identify the main vectors of sustainable development and civil society of territorial communities:

- economic development and economic stability, which is determined by the growth of investment in the community, tax revenues, the increase in the number of small businesses, infrastructure development and innovation;
- social development involves ensuring access to healthcare, education, and social protection services for the community’s population, supporting vulnerable groups, reducing social and economic inequalities, improving the quality of life, and fighting poverty;
- environmental development is determined by the effectiveness of the community’s efforts to protect and rationally use natural resources, introduce modern waste recycling technologies, and develop alternative energy sources.

The research has confirmed that sustainable community development is a comprehensive strategy-oriented approach based on modern public administration tools and considering the population’s needs while balancing economic benefits and environmental responsibility. Ensuring sustainable community development requires a thorough assessment of natural, human and financial resources to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the territory, the use of innovative management methods (digital technologies and e-governance) to ensure transparency and efficiency of decisions and their implementation processes, alignment of local measures with national goals for support at the state level, active implementation of environmental practices to preserve the environment, and ensuring a decent standard of living through access to education, healthcare, housing and employment.

***The modern paradigm of open society transformation and its impact on the sustainable development of territorial communities.***

The analysis of scientific works confirms that one of the important factors in ensuring sustainable development is forming an open society. Various aspects of the manifestation and problems of forming an open society are currently the subject of research by many scientists, scientific institutions and international organisations. The formation of an open society encompasses both theoretical concepts and practical aspects aimed at creating conditions for the existence of democratic, pluralistic and transparent systems. In practice, certain aspects of the concept are implemented in the social policy of states and real social and administrative reforms.

The famous French philosopher Henri Bergson was one of the first scholars to formulate the features of an open society and its differences from a closed society in 1932. By “open society”, the author means a society aimed at continuous development, transformation and adaptation to new conditions. The morality of such a society is dynamic and based on universal values, such as love for humanity, compassion, and solidarity, which makes it open to change and progress (Bergson, 2008). A significant theoretical basis for the formation of the theory of open society development can be attributed to the collection of reports by well-known scholars in the field of critical study of the laws and patterns of human and social development based on the results of an international conference held under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation. The collection of papers published in 1974 under the title “Open Society: Theory and Practice” illustrates diverse and, in some sense, opposing opinions on the formation and open society, the preconditions, consequences and goals of this process (Germino & Beyme, 1974). Methodological approaches and tools for assessing the development of an open society and democracy are proposed in the scientific works of Lane. The author identifies the following key criteria: the level of citizen participation in decision-making through the mechanisms of elections, referendums and other civil society instruments, transparency and accountability of public authorities and local governments, guarantee of human rights and the rule of law (Lane, J., 2020). The Open Society Foundation (n. d.), founded by Soros in 1984, plays a vital role in forming and developing an open society. The foundation’s primary goal is to support open, transparent and inclusive societies where human rights and democratic institutions are respected. The organisation provides financial and institutional support to projects that promote social justice, access to education, independent media and the fight against corruption.

The main features of open public administration in communities include transparency and openness in the activities and intentions of local authorities and officials, accessibility of local governments to citizens’ appeals and effective feedback, resistance to corruption, and active use of direct democracy and public consultation mechanisms at the local level. Thus, building an open society is an important indicator and component of the sustainable development of territorial communities, as it involves the active participation of community residents in decision-making, transparency and control over the use of budgetary resources and the effectiveness of local projects, the development of local initiatives, volunteering, and the growth of public trust in public administration and local self-government. Thus, the development of an open society can be distinguished as a separate vector with its own goals, criteria and impact on the transformational processes of sustainable community development.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study uses the analytical and research methods to analyse the theoretical and methodological foundations of the problem under study; the method of integrated benchmarking to assess the sustainable development of territorial communities; the method of analysis and grouping in the distribution of indicators by the vectors of sustainable development and the formation of an open society; the method of economic diagnostics to assess indicators. In addition, the study used the methods of generalisation, systematisation, synthesis, study of phenomena and processes in their development and interrelationships, comparison, analogy, classification, and grouping. The objective of the analysis is to identify the indicators and processes of sustainable development of territorial communities in the context of forming an open society, using the example of territorial communities in the Zakarpattia region. In the first section of our study, it is established that sustainable development of territorial communities involves ensuring the harmonious development of three vectors (economy, society and environment), which ensures the most efficient use of community resources for its development and decent living of citizens. An important element of ensuring the sustainable development of territorial communities is the formation of a system for analysing and monitoring such development to determine the starting point from which to start moving, as well as the existing strengths of the community and its shortcomings in each area. Since 2015, Ukraine has established a system for monitoring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, conducted annually by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine in

cooperation with UNICEF and the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021). According to the monitoring conducted in 2021, many of Ukraine’s sustainable development indicators, as in most other countries, have deteriorated. This is primarily due to the Covid 19 epidemic, which significantly negatively impacted the economy, public health, and restrictions on certain rights and freedoms of citizens.

The optimisation of sustainable development at the level of territorial communities as a basic component of the administrative-territorial structure of Ukraine requires improvement of the administrative systems of this process. In particular, the inclusion of sustainable development goals in the community development strategy, the development of clear strategic and operational goals and criteria for their implementation, the formation of targeted projects and sustainable development programmes, the optimisation of statistical accounting of economic, social and environmental indicators for quality monitoring, and the digitalisation of data and analytics. To select the sustainable development goals to be analysed, the focus should be on those for which statistical information is available at the level of territorial communities. The indicators should also consider the type of community (urban, rural), size and population, and economic and resource potential. One of the basic conditions for ensuring the sustainable development of territorial communities is the formation and support of an open society that promotes sustainable development through inclusiveness, social justice and environmental responsibility, which are key principles of both concepts. That is why the level of openness of society, despite its integration into certain sustainable development goals, should be defined at the level of territorial communities as a separate complementary vector. Given the limited statistical measurement of sustainable development indicators at the level of territorial communities and taking into account the National Sustainable Development Goals and Indicators (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021), indicators of open society (Picciotto, 2023), indicators of the Democracy index (Our World in Data, 2023) and indicators of governance transparency (Nechayeva, 2020), it is proposed to identify four vectors for assessing the sustainable development of territorial communities in the context of the formation of an open society, each of which includes a corresponding set of indicators (Table 1).

Table 1. Vectors and Indicators of Sustainable Development of Territorial Communities in the Formation of an Open Society.

<b>X</b>	<b>Economic vector</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Social vector</b>
$x_1$	Own income of TCs per capita, UAH thousand	$y_1$	Share of the population whose average per capita equivalent total expenditures are lower than the actual (estimated) subsistence minimum, %
$x_2$	Share of profitable businesses in the TC, %	$y_2$	Share of TC citizens covered by state social assistance %
$x_3$	Employment rate in the Group, %	$y_3$	Level of immunisation coverage by the National Vaccination Schedule (according to medical indications), %
$x_4$	Capital investments per capita, UAH	$y_4$	Net enrolment rate of children aged 5 years by preschool educational institutions, %
$x_5$	The number of small enterprises in TC per capita	$y_5$	Net school enrolment rate for children from vulnerable groups, %
$x_6$	Development of transport infrastructure, % of the needs of the TC	$y_6$	Accessibility of healthcare services, % of the needs of the population of TC
<b>E</b>	<b>Environmental vector</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>The vector of openness of society</b>
$e_1$	Share of the population with access to centralised water supply systems, %.	$o_1$	The level of coverage of information on the procedure and decisions taken at the community’s local council sessions, %.
$e_2$	Share of the population with access to centralised sewage systems, %.	$o_2$	Transparency of the use of the TC budget funds
$e_3$	Share of renewable energy sources in total energy consumption, %.	$o_3$	Percentage of administrative services available at the TC level, %.
$e_4$	Share of population covered by household waste collection services, %.	$o_4$	Share of the population that participated in local elections, %.
$e_5$	Amount of household waste per capita	$o_5$	Percentage of citizens’ electronic petitions resolved in the community, %.

Source: compiled by the authors.

The proposed indicators can be supplemented or replaced by others significant for developing territorial communities, given the peculiarities of their location in terms of resources and infrastructure, production specialisation, composition and structure. The assessment of individual indicators requires surveys of citizens and business community representatives in territorial communities, as they are currently not statistically recorded at this administrative level. To evaluate the effectiveness of sustainable development of territorial communities, the article proposes methodological approaches that allow determining the current stage at which the community is about the assessed vectors of sustainable development and the formation of civil society according to certain criteria, as well

as monitoring progress in this direction. This is important for developing sustainable community development strategies, projects and programmes at the local and regional level. Comparison with other countries can also be useful, as it will help determine the right direction for further action. The methodological approaches proposed by the authors are based on the principles of integrated benchmarking, the methodological foundations of which are set out by Bhutta and Huq (1999) in the scientific work “Benchmarking – Best Practices: An Integrated Approach. Benchmarking”, which allows for a comparative assessment of the objects of study by individual and aggregate indicators, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the objects of comparison and clustering them. The main stages of the assessment are shown in Figure 1.

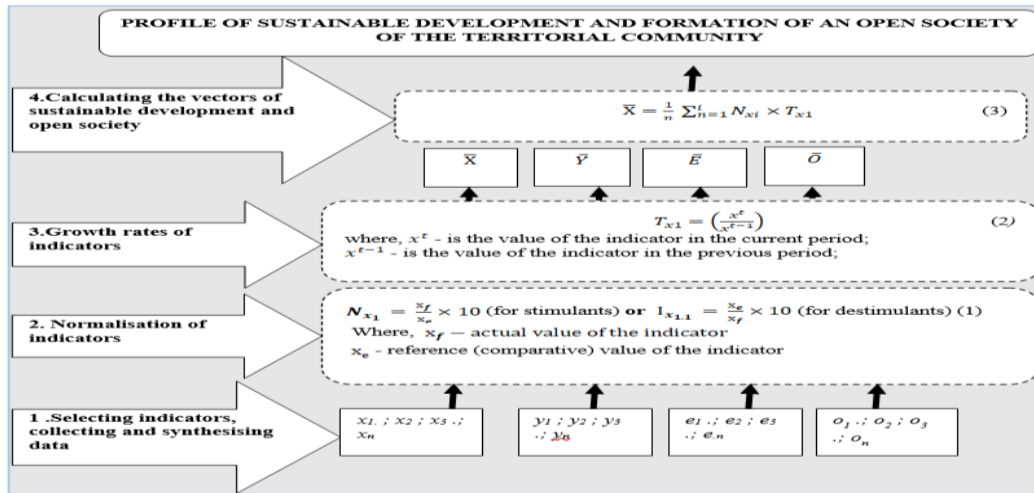


Figure 1. Algorithm for Assessing Sustainable Development in Forming an Open Society of Territorial Communities. *Source: provided by the author.*

The proposed algorithm allows assessing a community’s sustainable development compared to other communities in the region or other regions or by regulatory indicators, determining progress towards achieving sustainable development goals, ensuring transparency of local government activities, and identifying opportunities, threats, and main barriers to sustainable development. Based on the assessment results, it is possible to form a profile of the community’s sustainable development, which reflects its achievements in terms of the main vectors and considers progress or regression for each indicator. The advantages of these methodological approaches are: versatility (the possibility of applying them to assess the sustainable development of different types of territorial communities), adaptability (interchangeability of assessment indicators and the use of quantitative and qualitative parameters in a single assessment and monitoring system depending on the objectives of such assessment) and representativeness of the data obtained (the possibility of forming a profile of sustainable development of a territorial community on a 10-point scale and building a matrix of strategic measures, projects and programmes).

## RESULTS

### Case of the Zakarpattia region of Ukraine

The war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022, in addition to the catastrophic and destructive consequences for the population, economy and environment, has created significant obstacles to the formation of civil society and sustainable development. As noted by Kapinos and Larionova, the loss of human capital and the destruction of infrastructure, including energy infrastructure, as a result of Russian terrorist attacks and hostilities caused a deep economic decline in 2022 and 2024 and will hinder its recovery in the future. High levels of risk and uncertainty persist, making it difficult for businesses and the financial sector to operate, but macrofinancial stability is supported by significant international financial assistance (Kapinos & Larionova, 2023). The martial law imposed in the country significantly restricts the development of civil society due to the impossibility of holding elections at all levels and the need to ensure enhanced protection of public information. In this regard, since 2022, the state statistics authorities have

suspended the publication of many types of statistical reporting, and in some regions, it has become impossible to maintain it. Given these limitations, the article uses data for 2021 from available sources of information to assess the sustainable development of territorial communities. The study focuses on selected territorial communities of the Zakarpattia region. As one of the youngest regions of Ukraine, Zakarpattia has special conditions for sustainable development due to its unique geo-economic location and natural resources. Bordering on four EU countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania), the region has additional opportunities to develop cross-border cooperation in various sectors of the economy and implement environmental initiatives. As of 2024, there are 64 territorial communities in the Zakarpattia region. These communities were formed as part of the decentralisation reform aimed at improving local governance, empowering communities and increasing the financial independence of the regions (Main Department of Statistics in Transcarpathian region, 2021). To assess the sustainable development and open society of territorial communities in the Zakarpattia region, 10 territorial communities were selected, which differ in type (urban and rural), production, resource and human potential. Based on the collected data, using the formulas (Figure 1), the normalised indicators for assessing the sustainable development of territorial communities as of the end of 2021 were calculated in terms of vectors (economic development, social development, environmental development and the state of openness of the community’s society). The results of the calculations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Normalised Indicators of Sustainable Development of Selected Territorial Communities of the Zakarpattia Region, points

Names of territorial communities	Vector of economic development (X)				Social development vector (Y)				Environmental development vector (E)			
	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$	$x_4$	$y_1$	$y_2$	$y_3$	$y_4$	$e_1$	$e_2$	$e_3$	$e_4$
Reference value	16,3	78,3	64	5345	18	12	95	80	91	85	3	78
Uzhhorod City Territorial Community	5,2	10	9,7	8,1	9,2	9	10	10	9	9,7	10	9,6
Mukachevo City Territorial Community	6,3	9,6	10	9,2	8	10	10	10	10	10	8,6	10
Irshava City Territorial Community	6	9,2	9,1	3,2	7,8	9	10	9	9,9	9,4	6,6	9,7
Perehyn City Territorial Community	5,1	8,1	7	3,1	9	7	10	9	9,4	9	0,1	8,4
Beregovo City Territorial Community	4,4	9,4	6,8	10	9,2	8	10	10	7,1	9	-	9,7
Ust-Chorna Village Territorial Community	2	7	6,9	2,2	8,6	8	9	9	6,6	6,8	-	8,3
Vilkhivtsi Village Territorial Community	10	8	7,5	2,1	8	8	9	9	6,5	6,2	-	8,3
Velykyi Bereznyi Village Territorial Community	5,6	8,3	7	4,8	7,5	8	10	9	6,5	6,3	-	6,6
Chynadiiovo Village Territorial Community	1,8	6,8	7,4	5,1	8,3	9	10	9	6,6	6,3	0,2	10
Yasinia Village Territorial Community	8	7,9	5,1	7,3	7,2	9	9	10	5,8	6	-	8,4

Source: calculated by the author according to (Official website of the Transcarpathian Regional Military Administration, 2024; State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021; Transcarpathian region, n. d.; Main Department of Statistics in the Transcarpathian Region, 2021).

The calculations were made using 2021 data without considering the indicators’ growth rate. This is because the territorial communities of Zakarpattia were formed in 2020, and for this period, the statistics were grouped according to the principle of the previous administrative-territorial structure. Based on the calculations, it is possible to determine the overall profile of sustainable development of communities. In particular, urban territorial communities are characterised by higher scores in each sustainable development area on average. This is primarily due to a more developed administrative management system in cities and the infrastructure and production potential that had been formed before the decentralisation reform. Rural territorial communities, especially those that cover predominantly mountainous settlements, require state support in infrastructure development, improving the quality of administrative management and enhancing strategic planning and project management skills. The benchmarks achieved by the sample generally correspond to the level set by the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine. This indicates that, as of the end of 2021, sustainable development processes in communities were carried out quite effectively. The study of public information available on official community websites and local administration officials’ surveys also assessed civil society’s openness at the level of the communities under study. The results of the research are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Normalised Indicators of Civil Society Development in Territorial Communities of Zakarpattia Region, points.

Names of territorial communities	$o_1$	$o_2$	$o_3$	$o_4$
Reference value	95	90	95	56
Uzhhorod City Territorial Community	10	8,7	10	8,9

Mukachevo City Territorial Community	10	7,7	10	9
Irshava City Territorial Community	9,4	6,7	9,5	8,4
Perechyn City Territorial Community	9,3	7,7	9,1	8,5
Beregovo City Territorial Community	8,9	10	9,1	9,1
Ust-Chorna Village Territorial Community	8,9	6,7	7,8	8,5
Vilkhivtsi Village Territorial Community	9	6,2	7,8	9,2
Velykyi Bereznyi Village Territorial Community	6,8	6,7	7,4	9,6
Chynadiiovo Village Territorial Community	6,8	6,2	9,1	10
Yasinia Village Territorial Community	7,4	7,7	7,4	9,8

Source: calculated by the author based on data from the official websites of amalgamated territorial communities (Transcarpathian region, n. d.)

The assessment results showed that the territorial communities of Uzhhorod and Mukachevo are leaders in two out of four indicators in the region (the level of information coverage on the community's official website and accessibility of administrative services for the population and businesses). This also indicates the presence of a more developed digital infrastructure in the cities and professional administrative staff. Using Formula 4 (Figure 1), we calculated the vectors of sustainable development and the formation of an open society in the studied territorial communities. The results of the calculation are presented in Figure 2.

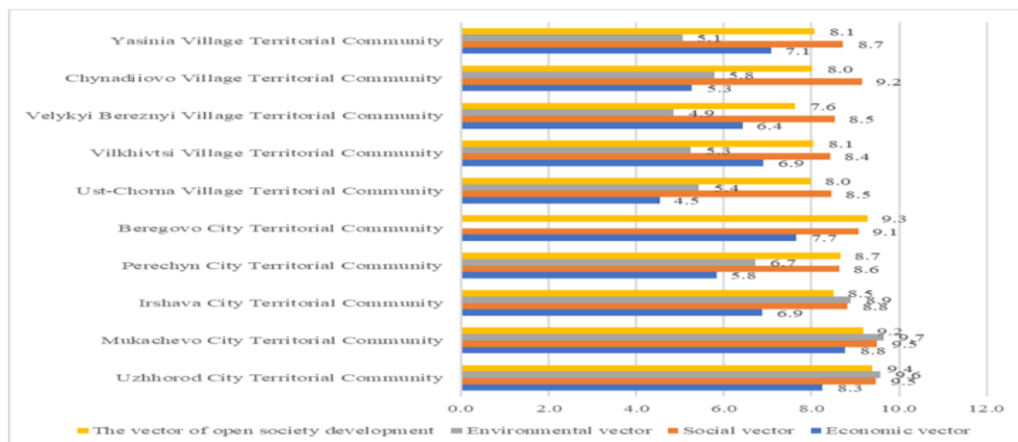


Figure 2. Profile of Sustainable Development of Territorial Communities in Zakarpattia Region.

The calculated indicators generally characterise the position of each territorial community in the region in terms of achievements in sustainable development and the development of an open society. The research has shown that, in general, the region has made some progress in the sustainable development of its territories, especially urban communities, which is, among other things, a consequence of active cross-border cooperation in the region and significant investments during the period of the free economic zone. Communities formed around cities demonstrate higher indicators of sustainable development. This is primarily due to a higher level of infrastructure development, a more developed labour market, and established institutions and infrastructure. It is worth noting that an important component of the social vector of sustainable development in the context of the war and the needs of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine is inclusive development, which includes the creation of a comfortable environment and equal access to education, work and social integration for people with disabilities. Indicators for assessing the inclusive component were not considered in assessing sustainable development due to the lack of statistical data on community activities in this area. It is essential to develop targeted programmes of inclusive development at the level of territorial communities that consider all possible measures to ensure the comfortable life of such persons, including war veterans, and to define clear target indicators for their implementation. We agree with the opinion of scientists that sustainable development and the formation of an open society in rural communities are slow due to the lack of quality infrastructure, low incomes, and lack of investment and entrepreneurship development, which hinder the implementation of social and infrastructure projects. The challenging demographic situation, including declining birth rates and youth migration, threatens communities' sustainable development and social potential. Different levels of access to resources between communities increase social inequality, leading to conflicts and increased social tension (Kondratenko & Velychko, 2024).



Territorial communities in Ukraine are gradually transforming and must develop effective, sustainable development strategies considering their resource potential and specialisation. An additional problem that needs to be addressed is the low involvement of citizens in local self-government and local issues. Low awareness of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the lack of mechanisms for active participation, lead to the alienation of communities from decision-making and development planning processes (Hlazov, 2022).

Thus, ensuring the sustainable development of territorial communities requires comprehensive, innovative approaches, including the formation of appropriate strategies, the search for appropriate resources for their implementation, and the introduction of effective public administration tools and modern information technologies. A key factor in the development of territorial communities is management personnel. The ability of local self-government and public administration employees and officials to understand and be aware of the strategic objectives in territorial community development can contribute to implementing a system for assessing their performance through sustainable development strategies.

## CONCLUSION

Building an open society and developing a competitive economy based on democratic values is possible only if each territory develops effectively and sustainably. At the present stage, sustainable development is recognised as a key concept that defines the guidelines for policies and reforms aimed at the comprehensive development of countries and regions through the formation of their own national strategies, including the rational use of resources, reduction of social and economic inequalities, improvement of the quality of education and healthcare, and support for environmental sustainability. After the victory, Ukraine will face a crucial and long-term task of reconstruction. This will involve the physical restoration of destroyed towns and villages and the creation of a new, effective governance system that will promote an open society at all levels, increase public trust in government institutions and sustainable development of territories. Optimisation of sustainable development at the level of territorial communities as a basic component of Ukraine's administrative and territorial structure requires improvement of the systems of administration of this process at the community level. In particular, the inclusion of sustainable development goals in the community development strategy, the development of clear strategic and operational criteria for their implementation, the formation of targeted projects and sustainable development programmes, the optimisation of statistical accounting of economic, social and environmental indicators for quality monitoring, and the digitalisation of data and analytics. The proposed approaches to assessing the status and progress of sustainable development in territorial communities can be used to improve the strategic and current management systems of community development and the development of an open society. In order to optimise the processes of ensuring the sustainable development of territorial communities, the goals of sustainable development and the main indicators for their assessment are clarified, grouped by the main vectors (economic development, social development, environmental safety and development of an open society). The mathematical tools for calculating the vectors of sustainable development of communities based on the principles of integrated benchmarking are substantiated.

The obtained integrated vectors make it possible to assess the state of economic, social, and environmental development of the territorial community and the level of openness of civil society about the objects or parameters being compared on a ten-point scale, as well as the progress made by the community on the path to sustainable development, to form a profile of "sustainable community development" that can be used in making strategic and tactical decisions on community development and improving public administration processes. Further research will focus on forming effective mechanisms and developing public administration tools to ensure the sustainable development of territorial communities.

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