

# **The Potential of Territorial Communities as a Factor of Socio-Environmental Development of Territories**

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*Abstract:* - The aim of the article was to examine the potential of territorial communities as a factor in the socio-environmental development of territories. Comparison and observation were the main methodological tools.

The conducted research revealed that the potential of territories in the EU countries serves to increase the capacity of communities in the field of decentralization and socio-environmental development. A public energy system in Oberrospe, which is based on communal heating, is promising. The project of the city of Tartu which provides for the involvement of the population in the conservation and restoration of biodiversity is worth noting. The appropriateness and potential of using the integrated modification methodology (IMM) in the development of design for sustainable urban development were established. The design maximizes the use of the potential of territorial communities, social and environmental levers. The Porto di Mare eco-project in Milan, which provides for the transformation of a polluted and degraded area into a self-sufficient ecological and social territory with the involvement of territorial potential deserves consideration. Similar initiatives can be implemented in Ukraine in the context of sustainable development of the country in the course of post-war socio-environmental restoration of the affected territories.

*Key-Words:* - “green” economy, ecological potential, environment, social groups, sustainable development.

Received: September 4, 2022. Revised: January 13, 2023. Accepted: February 14, 2023. Published: March 7, 2023.

## 1 Introduction

Humanity's collective ecological footprint is growing under the influence of population growth and unsustainable consumption rates. The transformation has intensified over the past consequences. The changes include increasing CO<sup>2</sup> and global temperature, rapid loss, and degradation of nature. Increased erosion, reduction and pollution of natural resources, increased probability of floods and droughts, reduction of biodiversity, and loss of aesthetics and recreational functions are also negative markers. The COVID-19 pandemic, military conflicts, and a resultant sharp change in human activity become a clear impulse for the shift in anthropogenic disturbances. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and active hostilities aggravated the energy crisis, [1]. This modifies some of the persistent human impacts on land, water, and the atmosphere, [2]. Current shocks combined with unsustainable urban and rural development create challenges for settlements, exposing their vulnerability and inadequate governance paradigms, [3]. Recovery after the economic impacts of the pandemic and military conflicts and a simultaneous accelerated transition to a "green" economy requires collective efforts. This problem can be solved through high-quality state management and ecologically oriented activities of local authorities.

The potential of territorial communities is a factor in the socio-environmental development of their territories. Socio-environmental development is supposed to mean the implementation of environmental solutions, which use ecosystem processes to meet social needs, [4]. The issue of effective and rational use of the property of the territorial community is particularly relevant, [5]. There is a strong connection between social and environmental sustainability, which is especially necessary for social groups whose means of subsistence depend on environmental potential, [6]. Knowledge of governance and social innovation has become an integral part of the study of socio-environmental development, [7]. Socio-environmental development of territorial communities should be based on evolutionary and social aspects, consciously research human adaptation to the environment and human-induced changes in the environment, [8].

In view of the foregoing, the aim of the article is to consider the potential of territorial communities as a factor in the territories' socio-environmental development. The aim involved the following research objectives:

1) determine the modern trends in ensuring a sustainable ecological future required for the socio-environmental development of territories;

2) categorize in progress the state, problems, and prospects of the territorial communities' potential as a factor of socio-environmental development in the EU countries and Ukraine with the aim of further implementation of the relevant tools and practices for the post-war socio-environmental recovery of Ukraine.

## 2 Literature Review

The work, [5], became the main implement and the background for this research. The study was focused on the analysis of the peculiarities of decentralization in Ukraine. Special attention is paid to the research of the goals of the reform at different levels of public administration and the actual condition of legislative support for decentralization in Ukraine. The risks of forming united territorial communities and the main trends were identified in this research. The need to use a comprehensive approach to ensuring employment, effective management of territorial communities' property, spatial planning, and use of natural resource potential is emphasized. The problems of organizing the functioning of the social sector in territorial communities are considered.

The study, [7], had an influence on the author's attitude toward the issue under research. The authors held an all-round analysis of the aspects of territorial development and social sustainability. The problematic issues arising during the implementation of social, political, and cultural components of sustainability and socio-environmental development were considered. The findings of [9] on the essence of the united territorial community as a subject of managing socio-environmental development were taken into account in the course of the research. The strengths and weaknesses of local development were analysed. Proposals regarding the strategic plan for the development of the territories of united territorial communities were developed. The study, [10], deals with the state of the strategic vision, and compliance with regulatory documents that govern the development of united territorial communities. Certain features and additional tools that will contribute to the successful implementation of the strategy were also studied. It was concluded that it is necessary to find prerequisites for increasing investment attractiveness through the potential of united territorial communities.

The findings of [11] on a new approach to urban socio-environmental design are worth noting. Urban form, institutions, discourse, and accessibility design, which connect people with nature and each other and contribute to urban changes, are considered. The work, [8], was used when shaping the author's position. It emphasizes the environmental consequences of human influence on natural potential. The authors made a detailed analysis of approaches to modelling global biodiversity, which is focused on direct anthropogenic influence. A significant uncertainty regarding the consequences for the environment and the population, as well as the lack of recommendations on biodiversity conservation strategies, was noted.

The studies, [5], [12], covered the issues related to district-level integrated actions. The immixtures for the sustainable provision of services and the role of the potential of urban areas in initiating urban transformations are analysed.

The article, [13], on how rural communities are addressing each of the problems identified in the European Green Deal at the local level is worth noting. The author emphasized the importance of developing eco-villages. The author focused on the need to orient the rural community to inclusive development and joint planning of a sustainable future.

The work, [1], presents an analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine on the global economy. The importance of greater diversification of energy sources and reliance on local potentials in the development of renewable energy sources was noted.

The active research of the issues chosen in the article confirms that the potential of territorial communities as a factor of social and ecological development of territories requires special attention. The diversity of studies in this field is also stated. It is needful to conduct a study according to new research criteria.

### 3 Methods

The research results were obtained through a set of practical tools and scientific methods tested at each stage of the research.

Comparison and observation were the main practical methodological tools. A comparison was used to identify the variability of aspects of the involvement of economic entities and social groups by territorial communities in the socio-environmental development of territories. The

observation was applied to generalize the types of the potential of territorial communities in the context of achieving the declared sustainable development goals. Both of these practical methods were used for determining effective vectors of the post-war socio-environmental development of the territories of Ukraine in the context of territorial communities' effective practices in Europe. The practical methodological tools helped to predict the preliminary mechanisms of effective implementation of the EU practice in Ukraine.

The method of system analysis enabled achieving the aim and fulfilling the research objectives set in the article, as well as to differentiate elements of the studied subject, in particular when identifying the features, properties, and characteristics of the legal regulation of the interaction of the territorial communities' potential with the territories' development confirmation. The historical method was used during the study of step-by-step transformations of the territorial communities' influence in the context of the socio-environmental development of territories in the realities of property management. This method makes it possible to identify the modern tendencies in the transformational evolution of the territorial communities' potential.

The historical legal method was applied to identify the promising determinants of international cooperation in the field of post-war restoration of Ukraine.

The methodological tools listed below were used during the research: abstract logical analysis — for theoretical generalization and substantiation of research directions and results; dialectical method, theoretical generalization — for identifying regularities in the interpretation of basic concepts underlying theoretical aspects of legal regulation of territorial development programs and the involvement of territorial communities in these programs; system and statistical analysis — to analyse and evaluate the activities of territorial communities.

The regulatory acts and documents in the area under research were interpreted through the formal legal method. The functional method opened up the opportunity to describe the activities, tasks, and main prospects in the sphere of interstate partnership in view of the realities and transformations of approaches to the socio-environmental development of territories in the context of the impact of military operations on the territory of Ukraine on global socio-environmental processes. The dogmatic method was used to draw

conclusions in line with the aim of the research and the outlined objectives.

## 4 Results

Socio-environmental development of territories should be carried out by using the potential of territorial communities. The territorial potential is supposed to mean the capabilities of residents of territorial communities, which are related to work and life processes. This definition also includes the participation of local institutions in the configuration of development and day-to-day activities together with participation and inclusiveness plans. Knowledge, skills, relationships, values, motivation, and conditions allow individuals, organizations, and institutions to perform their functions and achieve the development goals there were made responsible. Development potentials are elements that make up the structure of a territory, based on issues ranging from physical characteristics to elements of identity. Figure 1 demonstrates examples of the potential of territorial communities.

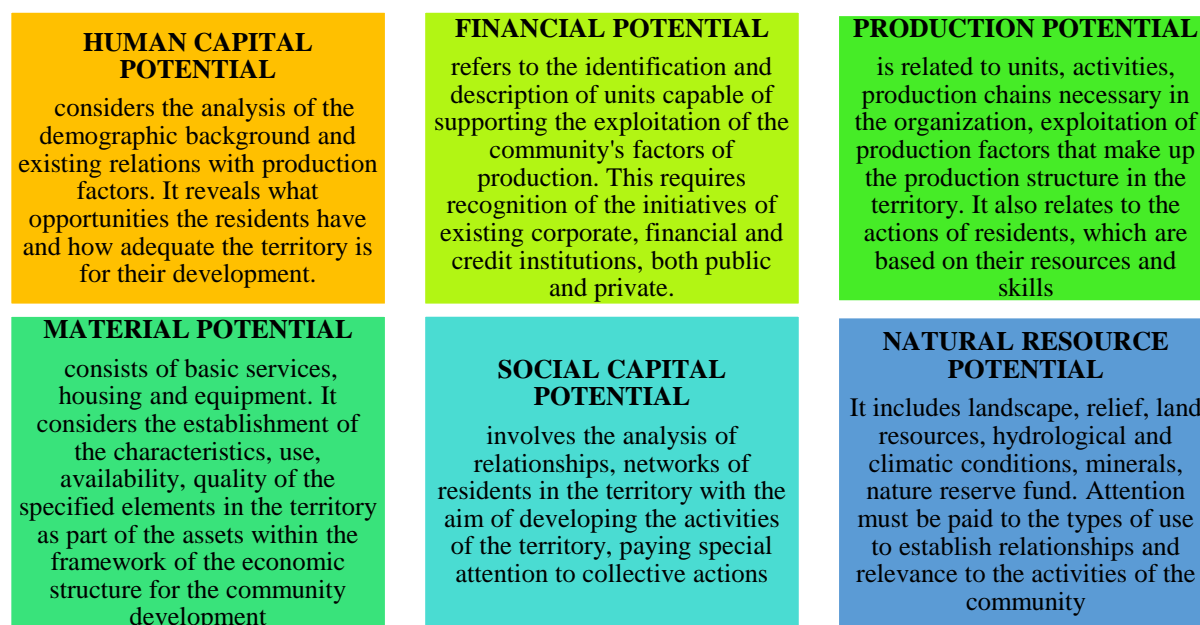


Fig. 1: Potentials of territorial communities

The European Union established the administrative, fiscal, and political independence of local authorities, [14]. Local and regional authorities (LRAs) are playing an important role in all policy spheres. Their actions have a major impact on supporting the European Green Deal and climate neutrality.

Policy instruments such as the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), the New Leipzig Charter, the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, and the New European Bauhaus are used. They help in the socio-environmental development of amalgamated territorial communities. The development and implementation of tools aim to achieve more

ecologically clean and more socially liveable cities. For example, the New Leipzig Charter, [15], provides a key political background for the sustainable development of European cities. The Charter determines three characteristics of ideal cities – green, fair, and productive. Digitization is a necessary component of implementation. An important factor in this process is the optimal practice of the potential of territorial communities. The EU will direct its efforts to support efficient and smart agriculture because of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, [16]. This is required to minimize or avoid repurposing land for food or energy production. This should be done both inside the country and in other developing countries. Besides, the EU can play an active role in assisting Ukraine in its increasingly dangerous environmental situation.

In November 2022, the European Commission approved funding of over €380 million for 168 new projects across Europe, [17]. The projects are aimed at supporting biodiversity, restoring nature, and circular economy. These initiatives will contribute to the transition to clean energy across the continent. Territorial potential should be used to the maximum possible extent. The priority tasks of local self-government bodies include the creation of nature conservation areas, and the increase of vegetation areas, which is a component of the planning of open spaces and microdistricts, [14]. The goal of the European project urbanLIFEcircles is to improve city-wide biodiversity management in Tartu (Estonia) by involving human potential, [18]. Tartu implements the project in cooperation with Aarhus and Riga. Planned activities include the involvement of the population in the work on conservation and restoration of biodiversity. Together with partners, the project will improve the diversity of green spaces and the functioning of green corridors, and also improve the accessibility of the rich natural environment of the city. Information about biodiversity will be disseminated among city residents. The project involves cooperation with private gardeners. The budget of the project is € 3.7 million, it is expected to be completed by 2027.

The European Green Deal requires a significant response from rural Europe. The agricultural sector is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions. It is directly related to the reduction of biodiversity and the threat to water quality in Europe. To promote a circular economy, one of the Spanish projects will promote hybrid tractors for use in vineyards and gardens. This will help to reduce fuel costs by 45% and lubricant use by 30%. Community heating initiatives often become the basis for public energy

developments in rural areas of the EU countries. For example, they have been successfully implemented in Germany. There are 240 families living in the village of Oberrospe in Hesse. By 2020, almost half of all households have agreed to receive energy from a district heating system which is based on the use of local energy, including wood. The heating cooperative began to get waste heat from the CHP plant, which provided about 50% of the heat demand. This resulted in an annual reduction of about 700 tons of carbon emissions. Community households connected to the heating system didn't need oil anymore, and there was no longer a need to pay for the maintenance of oil-fired boilers.

At the same time, the territorial community in Ukraine fulfills tasks of local importance, [19]. It is a component of the local self-government system, the primary subject of local self-government, and the implementer of its functions and powers, [20]. In 2015, 159 amalgamated territorial communities (ATCs) were created. In 2020, those settlements that did not join any amalgamated territorial community were amalgamated according to the established criteria. This was a way to approve a new administrative-territorial system, territories of territorial communities, and determine administrative centers. As of January 10, 2022, 1,470 communities, 136 districts, 119 district councils, and 119 district state administrations were established in Ukraine, [21].

Local development of territorial communities of Ukraine should be based on the location and socio-economic development of territorial communities. These processes should be carried out through the use of endogenous potential. Territorial communities of Ukraine are elaborating development strategies for the purpose of sustainable development. There is a document that is based on the strategic planning of state regional policy, [22]. The strategy sets long-term strategic and operational goals and objectives for the sustainable economic, social, and environmental development of the territorial community. Such strategies are implemented on the basis of action plans for their implementation, which are approved by the relevant village, settlement, and city council. The system of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the development strategy of territorial communities is a special focus.

Ukraine has created the conditions for the implementation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), [23]. The main component of the vision of the progress of territorial communities of Ukraine is improving the state of the environment. Figure 2 presents the environmental

weaknesses identified in the course of SWOT analysis (strategic planning method) in cities and villages, [24].

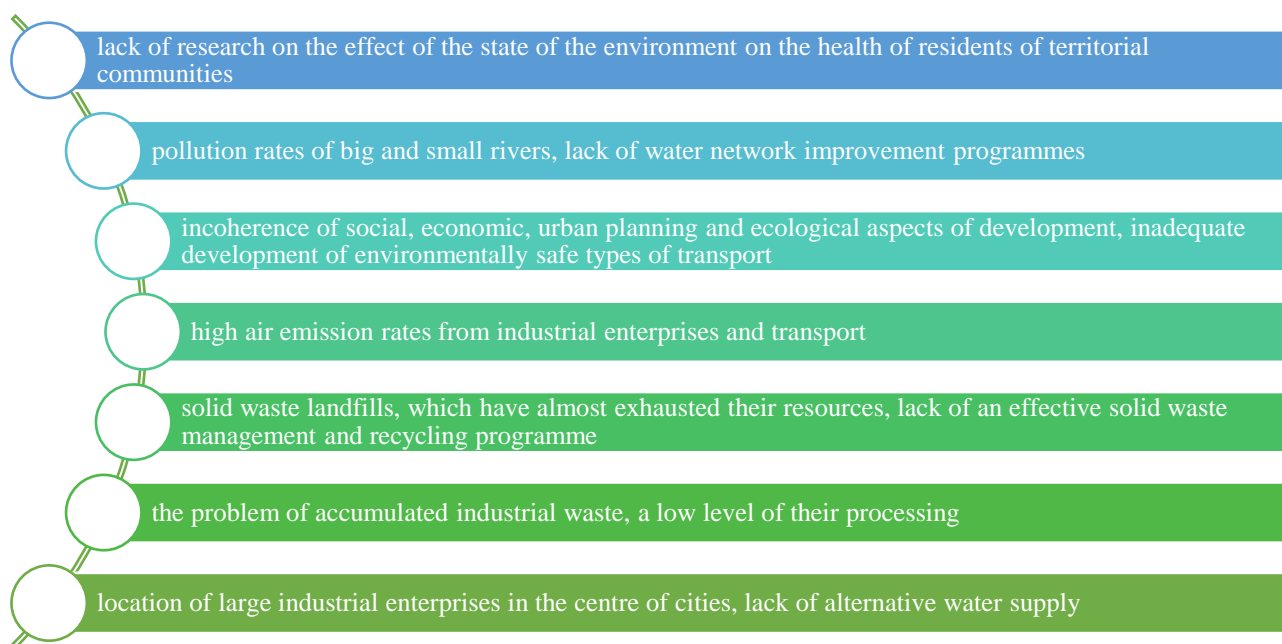


Fig: 2: Factors of the negative state of the environment of the territories of cities and towns of Ukraine

Settlement initiatives, especially in the context of effective use of property, are an example of successful practices of socio-environmental development through the use of community potential. The powers of territorial communities in the field of the communal property include ownership and disposal in their own interests of property that belongs to them both directly and through local self-government bodies, [20]. In 2022, four communities of the Poltava region signed a contract on cooperation in the establishment of a joint utility company for the development of the waste management system, [25]. The financial potential of the territorial community can be involved in joint financing (maintenance) of communal enterprises. In 2022, the Polianska Village Community of the Zakarpattia region signed inter-municipal cooperation agreements with 16 nearby communities on the creation of a waste sorting plant for 80 jobs. The volume of investment in construction is €12 million. The future plant will process about 60,000 tons of waste per year. Moreover, one hundred percent processing is expected. The plant should produce about 3 thousand tons of fuel for industrial furnaces every year from plastic, [25].

Territorial communities can also direct the funds of local budgets for the implementation of innovative projects, by allocating, for example, a

share of the land potential of the community. The Piadytska Village Community of the Ivano-Frankivsk region receives about 30% of the funds from special technology for growing blueberries on an allocated plot of 16 hectares. The drip irrigation system was purchased through the USAID DOBRE program. In 2022, the community will use its equipment to repair the road, make drainage, and widen riverbeds having used €20 million from the local budget. The problem of flooding was also solved. The Prylisnenska Community in Volyn united the community's natural resources and human potential for socio-ecological development, [26]. Besides, it was able to successfully lease a share of land and attract investors. More than 65% of the territory of the community is under forests, which are most suitable for growing berries. Currently, almost 20% of the population of the community is engaged in berry cultivation. Human potential is increased because young people who worked abroad began to return to the community. There are also investors who lease land and invest in berry cultivation in the community. The utility company also earns by helping the investor with the cultivation of the land. As a result, the community began to receive revenues that finance kindergartens and leisure centers. One of the main goals of the development strategy of the Prylisnenska community is the creation of a berry cluster, which

was developed in cooperation with U-LEAD. Another, larger-scale goal of the community is the creation of profitable production of an alternative source of energy — wood chips — financed from the local budget of the community.

Strengthening the role of business in solving social and environmental problems is an example of expanding the socio-environmental orientation of using a municipal property. Zaporizhzhia uses waste heat from PJSC “Zaporizhstal” to provide a hot water supply to the city’s districts. This initiative also contributed to solving environmental problems in addition to helping the population in solving social needs. In 2018, the volume of natural gas replacement amounted to 15.559 MCUM, a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions into the environment — 5.0%. In 2019, respectively, 10,820 MCUM (4.1%), and in 2020 — 2,670 MCUM (1.7%), [27].

Current interconnected crises seriously threaten the implementation of the SDGs by 2030, [26]. Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine led to the large-scale destruction of energy infrastructure and the infrastructure of populated areas of Ukraine. The war caused damage to Ukraine’s environment of over \$1.35 trillion, [26]. The number of pollutants in the atmospheric air exceeded 67 million tons. 3 million hectares of forests were affected, and about a third of the territory of Ukraine will require demining. The currently mined dam of the Kakhovska HPP and the nuclear threat at the occupied Zaporizhzhia NPP is one of the biggest dangers at the moment.

The restoration of the affected territories becomes a necessary direction in Ukraine in view of Russia’s military aggression. A set of priority organizational, financial, social, environmental, and other measures are being developed in the country. They are aimed at the accelerated restoration of critical and social infrastructure, and residential and public facilities. These facilities should become ready for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the region, and favourable conditions should be created for the activities of business entities. Special functional types of territories are determined accordingly, [22], [28]. They include restoration areas. These are territorial communities on the territory in which hostilities took place. These are also territories that are characterized by a sharp deterioration in the level of socio-economic development.

Territorial communities with significantly better geographical, demographic, and socio-economic indicators of development compared to other similar territories of the region are regional poles of growth.

The level of socio-economic development is low in territories with special conditions for development. Or there are natural, demographic, international, security, or other objective restrictions on using the potential of the territory for development. Self-sufficient territorial communities with existing socio-economic potential are territories of sustainable development. They are capable of balanced economic, social, and environmental development. In July 2022, in Ukraine, the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the War, [29], developed the Draft Ukraine Recovery Plan. The Environmental Safety working group was created to deal with ecological restoration issues. The post-war recovery of cities, rural areas, and their communities must take into account all current social, economic, and environmental factors.

## 5 Discussion

It can be concluded that world integration and globalization processes require the implementation of the idea of sustainable development. Sustainable development is supposed to mean an equilibrium between the reception of the needs of mankind and protecting the needs of future generations, [10]. The sustainability of the territorial community reflects its ability to accumulate and effectively use the existing potential. The territorial community identifies and uses the reserves to meet the current needs, and ensure the development of the territory and the competitiveness of the community in the short and long run, [9].

It can be stated that the understanding and assessment of interdependencies and feedback links between social and environmental systems is an important link in advancing the necessary social transformations. The concept of sustainable development emphasizes the need to ensure the existence of social and environmental systems to support human life, [6]. These relationships must be recognized both locally and globally. This enables the development and implementation of effective management systems and institutions, [30]. According to researchers, a completely new look at territorial planning and the use of territorial potential based on awareness of the value of nature is required. A clearer understanding and awareness of the benefits of nature for people and the ecosystem, in general, is becoming important.

It can be stated that an important link in advancing the necessary social transformations is the understanding and assessment of interdependencies, and feedback links between social and ecological systems. The concept of

sustainable development emphasizes the need to ensure the existence of social and ecological systems to support human life, [6]. These relationships must be understood and recognized both locally and globally. Only then will it be possible to develop and implement effective management systems and institutions, [30]. According to the researchers, a completely new look at territorial planning and the use of territorial potential is needed, based on awareness of the value of nature. It was established that a socio-environmental focus is necessary to regulate the sustainability of the ecosystem, which returns to the human system through ecosystem services, [2]. The socio-environmental treatment to the development of a sustainable development strategy of territorial communities becomes an important innovative mechanism. It will help communities to realize their potential based on the sustainable development concept. A policy discourse sensitive to climate change, the ongoing global loss of biodiversity is required to increase the sustainability of urban socio-environmental systems, [11]. It should also be sensitive to the social potential that the urban framework can provide.

It can be concluded that the main component of the vision of the city's development is the improvement of the environment. The Porto di Mare eco-district is a possibility to show the potential results of the sustainable recovery for territorial low-carbon energy planning strategies, [12]. According to the researchers, significant socio-environmental development will affect most of the city.

The example of Oberrospe village in Hesse (Germany) demonstrates the use of the territory's potential, and the diverse nature of initiatives and institutional forms. It paves the way for Green Deal results in rural Europe, [13].

It can be stated that military conflicts cause the devastation of territories and communities, and the destruction of territorial potential. This results in a deteriorated quality of life in view of instability. In this case, the responsibility for ensuring socio-environmental sustainability should be a nationwide consensus, [31]. The framework of a prosperous solution to the socio-environmental objective is strengthening the principles of equal international cooperation. It is closely related to many worldwide matters of the progress of civilization, and above all to the problem of war and peace, [32].

## 6 Conclusions

Ensuring the growth of citizens' well-being is the primary right direction of the evolution of democratic states. This aim can be reached through high-quality public administration. The interaction of society with the surrounding natural environment is changing in order to ensure a sustainable future. Strategies for the sustainable development of territorial communities are implemented in the context of socio-environmental growth.

The main component of the vision of the development of EU cities and towns is improving the state of the environment and the social sphere. In this context, the reuse of old territories takes on a new significance for cities. The regeneration of these spaces with the intensification and mixing of their uses can create sustainable urban spaces that improve the excellence of existence. The application of an integrated modification methodology (IMM) is becoming mandatory in the elaboration of sustainable urban development design. The main goal of IMM design is the enhancement of the environmental characteristics of complex adaptive city systems by modifying their components and optimizing architecture. The social lever of IMM design depends on services, assistance, healthier lifestyles, solidarity, and sharing. The Porto di Mare eco-district project in Milan is an example of combining economic, social, and environmental aspects in the course of sustainable urban regeneration.

Ukraine's territorial communities are elaborating on sustainable development strategies. One of the strategic courses of the progress of territorial communities in Ukraine is a healthy environment and resource conservation. International projects and programs provide assistance in achieving the socio-environmental progress of territorial communities. Urban and rural communities of Ukraine implement successful practices of socio-environmental development through the use of community potential. Russia's military aggression continues to damage the environment, infrastructure, housing, energy, and other facilities. The restoration of the affected territories is the necessary direction of socio-environmental development in Ukraine.

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### **Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)**

The authors equally contributed in the present research, at all stages from the formulation of the problem to the final findings and solution.

### **Sources of Funding for Research Presented in a Scientific Article or Scientific Article Itself**

No funding was received for conducting this study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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