

# SERVICE-LEARNING, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN WARTIME UKRAINE: THE CASE OF ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO

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## Context and Problem Framing

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally transformed the role of higher education institutions. Universities are increasingly expected not only to provide academic instruction, but also to contribute directly to community resilience, recovery, and social cohesion. In this context, service-learning has gained particular significance as an educational approach capable of connecting academic knowledge with real societal needs.

At the same time, Ukrainian communities face the challenge of preserving cultural heritage under conditions of war, economic instability, migration, and demographic change. Small local cultural initiatives often become spaces of resilience, identity preservation, and social solidarity. However, many of these initiatives remain vulnerable due to financial, legal, reputational, and organizational risks.

This paper presents a reflective and analytical account of a service-learning project implemented within higher education in Ukraine using the case of ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO in the town of Hlyniany, Lviv region. The project focused on analyzing the socio-economic security of a creative industry initiative dedicated to

preserving the tradition of Hlyniany patterned textiles and carpet weaving.

The paper argues that service-learning can function not only as a pedagogical method but also as a mechanism for strengthening community resilience, developing security-oriented thinking, and supporting local recovery processes in wartime conditions.

### **Approach and Methodology**

The conceptual foundation of this study is grounded in interdisciplinary scholarship on service-learning, experiential education, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Existing research demonstrates that service-learning should be understood not merely as volunteer engagement, but as a structured pedagogical approach that integrates academic learning, community partnership, and reflective practice.

One of the foundational contributions to service-learning pedagogy is the work of Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, who emphasize the importance of systematic curricular integration of service-learning within higher education (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995). Their approach highlights that community engagement becomes educationally meaningful only when it is intentionally connected to clearly defined learning outcomes, reflective processes, and faculty support mechanisms. The authors argue that instructors require methodological preparation and institutional support in order to transform community interaction into a coherent educational experience rather than isolated volunteer activity. This perspective is especially relevant for wartime educational contexts, where universities increasingly engage with complex societal challenges requiring structured interdisciplinary responses.

A similarly important contribution is offered by Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles Jr., who investigate the mechanisms through which learning actually occurs in service-learning environments (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Their work shifts attention from service activity itself toward the pedagogical conditions that transform experience into learning. The authors identify reflection, meaningful interaction with community partners, and the integration of practical experience with academic knowledge as central components of effective service-learning. Importantly, they argue that educational outcomes do not emerge automatically through participation alone;

instead, learning must be intentionally designed through reflective and analytical processes. This approach directly informs the present study, where reflective analysis of cultural heritage, community resilience, and socio-economic security became an essential part of student engagement with the community partner.

The practical and organizational dimensions of service-learning are further developed in the work of Barbara Jacoby, whose framework conceptualizes service-learning as a systematic pedagogy with its own principles, quality standards, and evaluation criteria (Bingle, R. G., 2015). Jacoby pays particular attention to partnership-building, assessment practices, and the alignment between educational goals and community needs. Her work highlights the importance of reciprocity and sustainability within university-community collaboration. This perspective is especially valuable in the context of the present study because the project aimed not only to provide students with practical learning opportunities, but also to generate meaningful analytical and developmental contributions for the local community partner.

The cultural dimension of the project is strongly connected to the framework established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). The Convention defines intangible cultural heritage as a living cultural practice that requires active preservation, transmission, and community participation. It emphasizes that safeguarding heritage cannot rely exclusively on institutional protection mechanisms; rather, it requires collaboration with communities, awareness-building, and sustainable transmission practices. This framework is highly relevant for the case of ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO, where traditional weaving practices function not only as cultural artifacts, but also as mechanisms of local identity, social cohesion, and community resilience in wartime Ukraine.

Taken together, these sources provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding service-learning as a pedagogical, social, and community-oriented practice. They also support the broader argument of this paper that service-learning projects connected to cultural heritage preservation can contribute simultaneously to education, community resilience, and local recovery processes under conditions of war and societal uncertainty.

The project was implemented within a university course using a service-learning methodology that combined academic learning, field research, interdisciplinary teamwork, and community-oriented analytical work. Students worked directly with a real community partner – ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO – which combines cultural preservation, social entrepreneurship, museum activities, educational initiatives, and local tourism development.

The methodological framework was interdisciplinary and included elements of management studies, economic security, legal analysis, digital communication, cultural studies, and community development. Students conducted a field visit to Hlyniany, observed the work of the studio and museum, communicated with representatives of the organization, and analyzed available informational and digital materials.

The analytical structure of the project was built around six interconnected dimensions of socio-economic security: Social security; Financial security; Legal security; Economic security; Reputational security; Digital security.

The six dimensions are best interpreted here at the meso level of analysis: not as state security categories in the narrow political sense, but as interdependent conditions that make a cultural-heritage organization socially legitimate, economically viable, and resilient under disruption. The synthesis draws primarily on English-language frameworks from the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. In this reading, financial security concerns liquidity and solvency at the organizational level, while economic security refers more broadly to livelihoods, productive continuity, and local value creation; the other four dimensions describe the social, normative, relational, and infrastructural conditions that allow those material goals to endure.

In this framework, social security refers to the degree to which a heritage-based organization protects and reproduces the social conditions that allow people to participate, belong, and transmit culture across generations. The ILO defines social protection or social security as the provision of benefits against life-cycle risks,

poverty, and social exclusion, while UNESCO locates heritage safeguarding in respect for communities and in their active participation in identifying and maintaining living heritage. For a community-facing cultural enterprise, social security therefore includes inclusion, accessibility, intergenerational knowledge transfer, stakeholder care, and social cohesion rather than welfare provision alone. In wartime or displacement settings, it also covers the preservation of community ties and culturally grounded forms of support that help people remain socially connected and visible. (UNESCO, 2003).

Financial security means the organization's capacity to maintain operational continuity through adequate liquidity, stable cash flow, solvency, and access to affordable finance. The World Bank emphasizes that viable firms survive shocks when credit and working capital remain available, and the OECD treats payment delays, bankruptcies, and non-performing SME loans as meaningful indicators of financing stress and survival prospects. For a small cultural-heritage enterprise, financial security also includes the ability to build reserves, diversify income streams, and finance preservation, training, and outreach without entering chronic cash-flow distress. Unlike economic security, which concerns livelihoods and value creation more broadly, financial security is centered on the monetary architecture of continuity and shock absorption. (World Bank, 2021; OECD, 2026).

Legal security is the condition in which organizational activity is protected by clear, coherent, and enforceable rules, and by institutions capable of making those rules usable in practice. The World Bank's rule-of-law framework ties this to confidence in contract enforcement, property rights, courts, and protection from violence, while ILO and OECD work on formalization and the business environment emphasizes clear, coherent, enforceable rules and predictable, fair, and efficient contract enforcement. In a heritage-centered social enterprise, legal security includes lawful registration, labour and tax compliance, enforceable contracts, protection of intellectual and cultural property, and access to timely dispute resolution. Analytically, it is best understood as legal certainty plus enforceability at the enterprise-community interface. (World Bank, 2025; ILO, 2025; OECD, 2023).

Economic security should be distinguished from financial security: it refers not only to the organization's internal finances, but to

the stability of livelihoods, productive activity, and local value creation around it. Within the human-security tradition, economic security denotes an assured basic livelihood derived from work or reliable social safety nets, and it is visibly eroded when income and employment are lost. Applied to a cultural-heritage initiative, economic security therefore concerns the continuity of decent work, demand for goods and services, market access, supply reliability, and the enterprise's capacity to generate multiplier effects for the surrounding community. In wartime conditions, it also captures the ability to adapt production and exchange so that cultural work remains economically meaningful rather than symbolically valued but materially unsustainable. (UNDP, 2022; OECD, 2023).

Reputational security is the organization's capacity to preserve a credible, trusted, and legitimate standing among key stakeholders over time. Seminal reputation research defines reputation as a collective or perceptual representation of an organization's past actions and future prospects, while OECD trust research shows that trust affects the value of intangible assets and organizational resilience, and OECD stakeholder-engagement guidance links early engagement to lower reputational risk and a stronger "social licence to operate." In a heritage-based community project, reputational security therefore depends on perceived authenticity, fairness, transparency, quality, and responsiveness to community concerns. This dimension matters because reputation mediates access to partners, donors, clients, volunteers, and public legitimacy. (Barnett et al., 2006; OECD, 2017).

Digital security is the coordinated management of risks arising from the use, development, and dependence on the digital environment. OECD defines digital security risk as a category of risk that can undermine economic and social objectives by disrupting the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of activities and systems, and it stresses that such risk should be integrated into overall organizational decision-making rather than treated as a purely technical issue. NIST operationalizes this logic through the functions Govern, Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, and Recover, which frame digital security as a continuous governance and resilience process. In a heritage-and-community context, this dimension covers not only IT hygiene, but also the protection of

digital archives, communication channels, online transactions, educational content, and any digital tools used to extend cultural access. (OECD, 2015; NIST, 2024).

Students worked in teams and prepared analytical recommendations regarding risks, opportunities, sustainability mechanisms, and possible development strategies for the community partner. The project also incorporated elements of reflective learning. Students were encouraged to analyze not only the organization itself, but also the broader relationship between cultural heritage, local economic development, social cohesion, and wartime resilience.

### **Analysis and Reflective Evidence**

The case of ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO demonstrates how a local cultural initiative can become a multidimensional platform for community resilience. The studio functions simultaneously as: a cultural institution preserving traditional weaving practices; a creative business; a museum and educational environment; a community gathering space; a local tourism actor; a mechanism of intergenerational knowledge transfer. One of the most important findings of the project was the recognition that cultural heritage in wartime should not be viewed exclusively as a symbolic or historical category. In the Ukrainian context, cultural heritage increasingly performs economic, social, psychological, and security-related functions.

Students identified several key dimensions of community impact.

First, the project revealed the economic significance of local creative industries. The revitalization of Hlyniany carpet weaving contributes to local employment, stimulates tourism, supports small entrepreneurship, and creates new forms of economic activity. Students emphasized that even small-scale cultural initiatives may generate broader economic effects through interconnected local services such as food businesses, tourism, transportation, and educational events.

Second, the project highlighted the importance of social cohesion. The studio creates opportunities for intergenerational cooperation, engagement of vulnerable groups, and community interaction. Students paid particular attention to the role of educational workshops, cooperation with children and youth, and the inclusion

of internally displaced persons, veterans, and families affected by war.

Third, students identified legal and reputational vulnerabilities connected to cultural heritage preservation. One of the most important concerns involved insufficient legal protection of traditional designs, digital materials, and intellectual property. Students reflected on the risks of copying, commercialization without attribution, and the appropriation of Ukrainian cultural elements in international contexts. These discussions became especially important in wartime conditions, where cultural identity itself becomes part of broader societal resilience.

Another important dimension was digital visibility and communication. Students observed that social media and digital storytelling play a critical role in shaping public trust, attracting visitors, and strengthening the symbolic value of local heritage. At the same time, digital openness also creates cybersecurity and copyright risks, particularly when cultural content is distributed online without legal safeguards.

The project additionally demonstrated the educational value of service-learning for students themselves. Rather than working with hypothetical cases, students engaged with a real organization facing real challenges. This significantly changed the quality of student learning and reflection.

Students developed analytical, managerial, and communication competencies while also strengthening civic responsibility and empathy. Many participants reflected on the fact that the project allowed them to perceive cultural heritage not as an abstract museum concept but as a living ecosystem connected to people, local identity, and economic survival.

An especially important aspect of the project was the implicit development of security-oriented thinking. Although the course was not formally framed as a “security studies” course, students continuously analyzed vulnerability, sustainability, adaptation, and resilience. This demonstrates the potential of service-learning projects to contribute to broader security literacy and responsible decision-making in conditions of uncertainty and crisis.

The project also revealed the importance of university-community partnerships during wartime. In contexts where communities face institutional fatigue, economic instability, and social fragmentation,

universities can act as facilitators of dialogue, analysis, visibility, and innovation.

Importantly, the relationship between the university and the community partner was not extractive. The community organization did not simply become an object of observation. Instead, the project aimed to create mutual benefit. Students produced recommendations, analytical materials, and development ideas that could potentially support future institutional growth and visibility of the studio.

### **Implications for Education, Policy, and Recovery**

The case of ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO provides important implications for higher education, community resilience, and post-war recovery processes in Ukraine. The project demonstrates that service-learning may function not merely as a pedagogical technique, but as a strategic educational approach capable of strengthening the social role of universities during periods of crisis and reconstruction. In wartime conditions, such educational practices enable higher education institutions to move beyond predominantly theoretical instruction and participate directly in local recovery, civic engagement, and community resilience building.

The project also confirms the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches in analyzing and addressing contemporary societal challenges. Community resilience in wartime cannot be adequately interpreted exclusively through economic, managerial, or cultural perspectives. Instead, it requires the simultaneous integration of legal, financial, social, digital, reputational, and managerial dimensions. Such multidimensional analysis allows students to better understand the complexity of recovery processes and the interconnected nature of modern security challenges.

An additional implication concerns the growing role of cultural heritage as an active resource for recovery and development rather than solely as a historical or symbolic artifact. In the Ukrainian context, cultural heritage increasingly performs strategic social and economic functions. It contributes to the preservation of identity, strengthens psychological resilience within communities affected by war, supports local economic initiatives, and enhances international visibility and solidarity. Consequently, cultural

heritage projects may become important platforms for sustainable local development and community cohesion under conditions of prolonged instability.

The experience further illustrates the educational value of service-learning for the development of civic agency among students. Under conditions of war, uncertainty, and social transformation, students require learning environments that encourage active participation in societal processes. Community-engaged education enables them to perceive themselves not as passive recipients of knowledge, but as actors capable of contributing to recovery, resilience, and social change. Such experiences are particularly important for the formation of socially responsible and security-oriented thinking.

The project additionally highlights the increasing significance of university–community collaboration within the framework of the university’s third mission. Ukrainian universities are progressively transforming into institutions that perform not only educational and research functions, but also broader social roles associated with local development, democratic participation, social cohesion, and resilience building. In this regard, service-learning may serve as an effective mechanism for strengthening sustainable partnerships between universities and communities.

The case of ZENA-HLYNIANY-ART-STUDIO also demonstrates the transformative potential of community-engaged education in wartime Ukraine. Through the combination of interdisciplinary analysis, field engagement, cultural heritage preservation, and reflective learning, the project generated practical and educational value both for students and for the local community. The experience confirms that service-learning can contribute simultaneously to community resilience, local recovery processes, and the development of socially responsible managerial competencies.

Importantly, the project illustrates that the different dimensions of security within cultural-heritage service-learning are mutually reinforcing rather than isolated or additive. Social security and civic participation create the relational trust upon which reputational security depends; legal security stabilizes rights, responsibilities, and institutional interactions; financial and economic security support continuity and local livelihoods; while digital security protects communication, documentation, learning, and commercial

infrastructures that increasingly shape community sustainability. In this context, cultural heritage becomes not only a symbolic value, but also an operational resource for resilience and recovery.

These conclusions correspond with UNESCO's principles concerning the safeguarding of living heritage in conditions of armed conflict and social disruption. Communities directly affected by war, displacement, and crisis should play a central role in identifying, preserving, and activating cultural heritage as a resource for resilience, trust-building, recovery, and peaceful coexistence. Therefore, the six interconnected dimensions of security identified within the project may be interpreted as an analytical framework demonstrating how heritage-oriented service-learning can evolve from cultural preservation initiatives into mechanisms of community resilience and post-war recovery.

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