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SMALL TOWNS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR

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Small towns in Ukraine serve as local centres for the reproduction of human capital, cultural identity and economic activity. In wartime, their role is amplified, as they become key areas for humanitarian support, business relocation, reception of internally displaced persons and preservation of critical regional infrastructure. The socio-economic transformations caused by the war place new demands on the management of small town development and highlight the need to rethink their strategic potential.

The resilience of small towns is determined by their ability to adapt the local economy, maintain the functioning of the service sector and ensure the safety of the population in conditions of constant risk. Small towns with developed administrative functions ensure the viability of surrounding areas. For example, after de-occupation, the town of Trostyanets quickly restored critical infrastructure and reopened medical and educational institutions, making it a centre of regional stability for neighbouring areas. The war has caused large-scale internal displacement, much of which has occurred in small towns in the western and central regions. On the one hand, this leads to an increased burden on social infrastructure. On the other hand, it increases the labour potential, stimulates the development of small and medium-sized businesses, and contributes to the formation of a multicultural environment. The change in the demographic

structure requires the development of new tools for the integration of internally displaced persons and the resolution of housing problems [2]. The city of Slavuta has accepted a significant influx of displaced persons, organised a network of temporary housing and systematic integration of internally displaced persons into the labour market, while Boguslav has provided accommodation for several support centres for internally displaced persons, which has strengthened the social infrastructure and stimulated the development of the service sector.

Small towns are becoming platforms for relocating businesses from areas of active combat. For example, Khmilnyk has accepted a number of displaced light industry enterprises, which has contributed to the creation of new jobs, while Bashtanka is actively developing its agricultural sector and processing industry, demonstrating resilience even in conditions of proximity to the front line.

Martial law conditions are stimulating the reorientation of local budgets towards critical infrastructure: water supply, energy security, shelters, and modernisation of the housing stock. Decisions related to decentralised energy (solar stations for municipal facilities), digitisation of services, and reconstruction based on the principles of 'build back better' energy efficiency, environmental friendliness, and sustainability are becoming increasingly relevant [1]. For example, the city of Dolyzna is implementing decentralised energy projects, including municipal solar power stations for hospitals and schools. Trostyanets is introducing digital management of municipal infrastructure. Small towns can become key drivers of innovative transformation in regions and new centres of growth.

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