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INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ORGANIZING MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE DURING CRISES

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ЗАРУБІЖНИЙ ДОСВІД ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ МУНІЦИПАЛЬНОГО УПРАВЛІННЯ В КРИЗОВИХ
УМОВАХ

This article examines international experience in the organization of municipal governance, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of governance models in developed countries. It analyzes key models of local self-government and the experience of Poland, Estonia, Germany, and Israel. It identifies the advantages and disadvantages of the Polish and Estonian models and highlights opportunities for implementation in Ukraine, including systematic training of personnel in public administration, experience working with EU funds, electronic voting, and data exchange. Foreign experience has helped identify shortcomings in the development of municipal governance, namely: overlapping of powers, politicization of investment projects, high risk of cyberattacks, and a high level of public distrust regarding digital voting. It is emphasized that Ukraine can benefit from the experience of Israel, which also has experience with military operations on its territory.

Strategic directions for the development of municipal governance have been identified, drawing on the experience of EU countries and Israel, thereby creating a hybrid model. Strategic directions for the development of municipal governance in the context of post-war reconstruction have been formulated, including fiscal autonomy and the implementation of a "digital municipality" model. Strategic vectors have been identified based on the digital transformation of the community ecosystem through a decision-making system based on "big data," ensuring full compatibility of local registries with state platforms for transparent investment attraction and reconstruction, and bridging the "digital divide" by creating offline access points to online services, and staff training. Integrating climate policy into day-to-day city management as a tool for economic development is a strategic vector for national municipal governance. It was emphasized that an important vector in wartime conditions is the transformation of the municipality from an administrative body into an active center for security and civil protection through the development of clear algorithms for the community's transition from peacetime to emergency mode (based on the model of the Israeli Home Front Command).

У статті досліджено зарубіжний досвід організації муніципального управління, визначивши переваги та недоліки моделей управління розвинених країн. Проаналізовано ключові моделі місцевого самоврядування та досвід Польщі, Естонії, Німеччини та Ізраїлю. Визначено переваги та недоліки досвіду Польщі та Естонії, наголошено на можливості впровадження для України, серед основних є системність підготовки кадрів у сфері державного управління, досвід роботи з фондами ЄС, електронне голосування, обмін даними. Закордонний досвід дозволив визначити недосконалість розвитку муніципального управління, а саме: дублювання повноважень, політизація інвестиційних проєктів, високий ризик кібератак та високий рівень недовіри населення щодо цифрового голосування. Наголошено, що позитивним для України є використання досвіду Ізраїлю, який також має досвід військових дій на території.

Визначено стратегічні вектори розвитку муніципального управління, що базується на використанні досвіду країн ЄС та Ізраїлю, створивши при цьому гібридну модель. Сформульовано стратегічні вектори розвитку муніципального управління в контексті повоєнного відновлення, що включають фінансову автономію та впровадження моделі "цифрового муніципалітету". Визначено стратегічні вектори, що базуються на цифровій трансформації екосистеми громади через систему прийняття рішень на основі "великих даних", забезпечення повної сумісності місцевих реєстрів із державними платформами для прозорого залучення інвестицій та відновлення, подолання "цифрового розриву" через створення офлайн-точок доступу до онлайн-послуг та навчання персоналу. Інтеграція кліматичної політики у повсякденне управління містом як інструмент економічного розвитку є стратегічним вектором для національного муніципального управління. Наголошено, що важливим вектором в умовах війни є трансформація муніципалітету з адміністративного органу на активний центр безпеки та цивільного захисту через розробку чітких алгоритмів переходу громади з мирного у надзвичайний режим (за моделлю Командування тилу Ізраїлю).

Key words: municipal governance, decentralization, digital transformation, crisis conditions, international experience, financial autonomy, climate adaptation, municipal security, subsidiarity, post-war reconstruction.

Ключові слова: муніципальне управління, децентралізація, цифрова трансформація, кризові умови, зарубіжний досвід, фінансова автономія, кліматична адаптація, муніципальна безпека, субсидіарність, повоєнне відновлення.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONNECTION WITH IMPORTANT SCIENTIFIC OR PRACTICAL TASKS

In the context of European integration, studying international experiences in the development of public administration enables the formulation of strategic directions for development and implementation in Ukraine. Unfortunately, the conditions of war dictate their own strategic directions for the development of municipal administration. However, current trends characteristic of developed countries are driving the restructuring of municipal governance based on digital transformation and eco-friendly approaches grounded in security and sustainability. Studying international experience in the current context is highly relevant and

enables the formulation of strategic development directions for municipal governance based on best practices.

ANALYSIS OF RECENT STUDIES AND PUBLICATIONS

The issues of transforming municipal governance and strengthening the economic self-sufficiency of communities are the focus of many domestic and international scholars. Contemporary academic discourse has shifted from the theoretical justification of decentralization to addressing the practical challenges of digital transformation, climate adaptation, and ensuring resilience in the face of global and military threats.

Studies of Estonia's experience conducted by H. Margetts and A. Naumann, as well as V. I. Espinosa et al., confirm that digitalization is not merely a technical tool but a national development strategy. K. McBride et al. emphasize the critical importance of overcoming barriers to data sharing at the local level. In the Ukrainian academic sphere, I. S. Doskalov and I. Grynenko outline ways to adapt this experience for domestic municipalities, emphasizing the need to transition to integrated digital ecosystems.

The fundamental aspects of the Polish model of decentralization have been examined in the works of A. Levitas and T. Majcherkiewicz. However, recent publications, notably by B. Cielak, highlight the problem of "creeping centralization" and the need to build municipal resistance to protect the financial independence of local communities. The issue of local budget formation in Ukraine in the context of decentralization is analyzed in detail in the works of N. Popadynets et al., which emphasize the role of effective asset management, a perspective that also aligns with the theoretical contributions of O. N. Yevtushenko regarding the specifics of foreign municipal management.

The issue of integrating climate policy into municipal governance is viewed as a tool for economic development. E. Kochskemper, C. Altenburg, and J. Hasse argue that the energy autonomy of communities is key to successful climate protection. Of particular interest are the studies by C. V. Diezmartinez and P. Eckersley, which explore mechanisms for financing climate change adaptation in small and medium-sized cities — a topic of extreme relevance for Ukrainian territorial communities in the process of post-war reconstruction.

The concept of post-war reconstruction based on inclusivity and sustainable development is thoroughly examined in the works of I. O. Irtysheva, I. S. Kramarenko, and K. V. Zavgorodniy. The issue of public administration functioning under conditions of emergencies and military threats is raised by D. V. Kashchenko, which logically complements the OECD's international recommendations on maintaining the momentum of decentralization processes in Ukraine even during periods of crisis.

Despite a significant body of research, there remains a need for a comprehensive study of the synergy between digital, environmental, and security management tools at the community level. In particular, the issue of integrating local systems into national platforms (such as DREAM) as a tool for attracting foreign investment in the context of the "Estonian" and "German" development models warrants further examination.

FORMULATION OF THE ARTICLE'S OBJECTIVES (SETTING THE TASK)

The purpose of this article is to analyze and study international experiences in the development of municipal governance with the aim of adapting best practices for Ukraine and identifying strategic directions.

PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL

Studying international experience will help identify the key advantages of municipal governance in developed

countries. This is the view of O. N. Yevtushenko, who analyzes [1] the main global models of municipal governance (Anglo-Saxon, continental, and mixed), exploring their historical origins and institutional characteristics. O. N. Yevtushenko emphasizes that the effectiveness of foreign experience is based on a clear distinction between own and delegated powers, as well as on ensuring a high level of financial autonomy for local communities. Particular attention is paid to the mechanisms of interaction between municipalities and the central government and the role of public oversight in ensuring transparency in decision-making.

The study of international experience provides a methodological foundation for adapting best foreign practices to the context of Ukrainian decentralization, emphasizing the importance of local autonomy. That is why we propose analyzing the experiences of Poland, Germany, Estonia, and Israel.

Levitas A. [2] reinterprets Poland's decentralization reform not merely as a transfer of powers, but as a strategic tool for state-building that allowed the central government to focus on macro-policy issues while delegating day-to-day services to local communities. The study demonstrates that Poland's success was the result of a "technocratic revolution from above", rather than merely a grassroots initiative, in which the clear transfer of municipal property and financial resources to the municipalities played a key role.

It is important to emphasize that institutional capacity and legal certainty regarding property rights form the foundation for the transition from post-communist chaos to the effective self-governance characteristic of post-Soviet countries.

T. Majcherkiewicz study [3] summarizes 25 years of experience with Polish decentralization, viewing it as one of the most successful systemic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe. The author emphasizes that the reform's success was based on the "shock therapy" of the early 1990s, which, alongside political democratization, introduced genuine financial autonomy for gminas.

B. Cieslak examines [4] the phenomenon of resistance by Polish municipalities to the central government's systematic efforts to curtail their autonomy over the past decade. The author provides a detailed analysis of the mechanisms of "creeping centralization", such as fiscal pressure, the withdrawal of powers, and the politicization of the distribution of state subsidies, which force local authorities to develop new strategies for institutional survival.

E. Kochskemper and co-authors also argue [5] that municipalities are playing an increasingly important role as key actors in the global fight against climate change, identifying the local level as a space for innovative policy decisions. The study focuses on the multifaceted nature of municipal policy, where communities act simultaneously as regulators and as direct providers of energy services through public utilities. The authors emphasize that the success of local initiatives depends on the complex interplay between vertical governance (state directives) and horizontal cooperation (local networks and civic activism).

Poland's experience makes it possible to identify the main characteristics and shortcomings of municipal governance (Table 1).

Thus, the Polish experience in municipal governance demonstrates institutional continuity and the ability of municipalities to effectively utilize EU funds, which has been made possible by a clear division of responsibilities among the three levels of local government.

In the context of digital transformation, Estonia offers a unique example of municipal governance worth emulating. Margetts and A. Naumann [8] examine the phenomenon of Estonia's digital transformation through the concepts of the "mystical mission" and the "invisible hand", explaining how the country managed to create one of the most advanced e-governance ecosystems in the world. The study argues that the success of the reform depended not only on technology but also on the ability of political leaders to transform digitalization into a nationwide idea that united the state, business, and civil society.

V. I. Espinosa and co-authors [9] examine the evolution of e-government in Estonia as a key factor in socio-economic development and the modernization of public administration. The authors argue that the success of the

Estonian model is based on the synergy of digital infrastructure, high public trust in state institutions, and a radical simplification of bureaucratic procedures. Particular attention is paid to how the digitization of services breaks down geographical barriers, promoting inclusivity and transparency in relations between the state and citizens.

In his publication, I. Hrynenko [10] argues that the digital transformation of local self-government in Ukraine must be based on a comprehensive combination of technological innovations and far-reaching reform of the regulatory framework. The author argues for the need to implement a "people-centered" model of digital services, drawing on the experience of leading countries (in particular Estonia and Poland) to minimize bureaucratic barriers and increase the transparency of municipalities.

Let's summarize the strengths and weaknesses of Estonia's experience in municipal governance (Table 2).

Estonia's experience demonstrates that the country's digital transformation is built on trust, not on security systems. For Ukraine, this path is the only option for rapid recovery, but it requires robust protection of energy and digital infrastructure. The risks and challenges that accompanied the digitalization process, particularly the

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of the polish experience in municipal governance

Advantages		Disadvantages	
A clear three-tier structure	The division into gminas (municipalities), powiats (counties), and voivodeships (regions) has made it possible to clearly delineate responsibilities. Each level has its own sources of revenue and areas of jurisdiction	Financial dependence on government subsidies	In recent years, there has been a shift in the structure of revenues. Instead of stable tax revenues, municipalities are increasingly receiving targeted state subsidies, which makes them politically dependent on the central government
Financial autonomy (at the outset)	Municipalities were granted the right to a significant share of tax revenues (including PIT – personal income tax), which encouraged local authorities to attract investment and create jobs	"Creeping decentralization"	The central government is gradually assuming authority in certain areas (such as water resource management or education), limiting the autonomy of local self-government
High capacity for absorbing EU Funds	Polish municipalities have become leaders in the effective use of European structural funds. It is precisely decentralization that has made it possible to channel funds toward the real needs of communities (roads, wastewater treatment plants, schools) rather than toward nationwide megaprojects	Political polarization	Large cities often find themselves in opposition to the central government. This leads to an unequal distribution of state funds, with communities loyal to the center receiving more resources than "rebellious" municipalities
The Emergence of Local Elites	The reform has produced a generation of professional municipal managers who are results-oriented and accountable directly to voters, rather than to governors appointed "from above"	Bureaucratic Burden	The delegation of new functions from the state to communities is not always accompanied by adequate funding, which strains local budgets and forces municipalities to cut back on development

Source: Compiled by the author.

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of Estonia's experience in municipal governance

Advantages		Disadvantages	
Radical transparency and zero corruption	Thanks to the X-Road system and electronic signatures, 99% of municipal services are available online. This minimizes the human factor and makes petty bribery impossible	The risk of a "digital divide"	Despite the high accessibility of services, older people or residents of remote regions without adequate digital skills may feel excluded from governance
The "once-only" principle	Citizens provide data to the government only once. Each municipal agency retrieves the information directly from the registries without requiring individuals to submit additional documents, which significantly saves time and reduces the community's budget	Dependence on critical infrastructure	Extreme digitalization makes municipal administration vulnerable to prolonged power or internet outages. In the event of a "blackout" traditional (paper-based) management mechanisms are virtually nonexistent
Digital resilience and cybersecurity	Estonia was the first country in the world to launch a "digital embassy" (a backup of government data stored abroad). This ensures that municipal administration remains resilient even in the event of physical destruction of servers or cyberattacks	The problem of the digital brain drain	Highly qualified IT specialists often prefer the private sector or jobs in Tallinn, creating a shortage of specialists to support complex digital systems in small communities
The effectiveness of small communities	Even the smallest municipalities have access to the same high-tech infrastructure as the capital. This levels the playing field in terms of geographical disparities and enables the effective management of sparsely populated areas	The complexity of data exchange at the local level	At the level of individual municipalities, difficulties arise with the integration of local databases due to different technical protocols and legal nuances

Source: Compiled by the author.

need to maintain high public trust in digital registries and identification systems. The Estonian model is a unique example of how institutional flexibility and strategic vision can compensate for the state's limited physical resources.

Doskalov I. S. [12] conducts a comparative analysis of Ukrainian and international experiences in implementing e-government tools in the context of global informatization. The study examines the impact of digital technologies on improving the quality of public service delivery, the transparency of government processes, and the level of citizen engagement in administrative decision-making. The author argues that the transition to an information society requires public authorities not only to upgrade their technical infrastructure but also to fundamentally change their organizational culture and management paradigm.

The study [13] analyzes the concept of "climate resilience" in medium-sized and small German cities, which often have fewer resources than megacities but play a crucial role in the national decarbonization strategy. The authors find that the successful implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures depends on a combination of internal factors (political will, availability of specialized staff) and external support through targeted grants. It has been demonstrated that the key barriers for small municipalities are "project fatigue" and the complexity of bureaucratic procedures for obtaining funding, which necessitates a shift toward stable intergovernmental transfers instead of short-term subsidies.

The authors analyze [14] the mechanisms and scale of funding for climate change adaptation measures in German municipalities, emphasizing the critical role of local governments' financial capacity. The authors identify significant inequality in the distribution of funds, with wealthier cities and districts demonstrating greater activity in attracting investments, while less affluent communities remain vulnerable due to a lack of their own resources and difficulties in accessing external grants. It has been demonstrated that effective climate risk management requires a shift from ad hoc funding of individual projects to the systematic integration of adaptation costs into municipal budgets.

State support and the development of transparent financial instruments that would enable communities to

plan for the long-term resilience of infrastructure against extreme weather events are of paramount importance. Additionally, creating a comprehensive data management ecosystem that would enable municipalities to make data-driven decisions to improve the quality of public services is a key advantage today.

In their article, K. McBride and co-authors [15] examine the critical barriers hindering effective data exchange between local governments, using Estonia and other European countries as examples. The authors found that despite a high level of nationwide digitalization, significant technical, organizational, and legal obstacles still exist at the municipal level, limiting the integration of information systems. The study demonstrates that the main problems stem not so much from a lack of technology as from a shortage of digital skills among staff, ambiguous security protocols, and the complexity of harmonizing data formats across different agencies.

D. V. Kashchenko [16] emphasizes that the Israeli model (in particular, the concept of Home Front Command) is based not on the army operating in isolation, but on the deep integration of municipalities into the overall defense system. In the Ukrainian context, this means transforming communities into autonomous units capable of functioning in the absence of vertical ties. The key is the transition from volunteering as a "spontaneous phenomenon" to volunteering as an "institutionalized reserve" with clear protocols for interaction with local authorities.

K. Altenburg and J. Hasse [17] argue that municipalities are a key link in achieving national climate protection goals, since it is at the local level that projects for energy modernization, the transformation of urban mobility, and the transition to renewable energy sources are implemented. The success of environmental initiatives directly depends on financial support and staffing for communities, which often face a lack of resources to implement complex climate strategies.

The report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [18] provides a comprehensive analysis of the interim stage of Ukraine's decentralization reform, assessing its impact on regional development and the quality of public services. The amalgamation of territorial communities (OTGs) has created a critical mass for

economic growth; however, institutional capacity at the local level must be strengthened to maintain the pace of reform. The report emphasizes the importance of transitioning from a simple merger of territories to strategic asset management, improving the system of intergovernmental fiscal relations, and expanding the tools for local economic development. Coordination between different levels of government (multilevel governance) to avoid duplication of functions and ensure transparency in the use of resources is a prerequisite for a successful integration process.

Therefore, the adoption of successful foreign practices must take into account the specific features of domestic legislation and the institutional environment in order to ensure the sustainable modernization of the governance system through the creation of a hybrid model of municipal governance.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN THIS AREA

An analysis of international experience in the development of municipal governance was conducted. The study was based on the experiences of Poland, Estonia, Germany, and Israel. The analysis identified the strengths and weaknesses of the experiences in Poland and Estonia and determined their applicability to Ukraine, including: systematic training of personnel in the field of public administration, experience working with EU funds, electronic voting, and data exchange. International experience highlights the shortcomings in the development of municipal governance, namely: overlapping authorities, the politicization of investment projects, a high risk of cyberattacks, and a high level of public distrust regarding digital voting. A positive aspect for Ukraine is the use of Israel's experience, as Israel also has experience with military operations on its territory. The study conducted allowed for the identification of strategic vectors for the development of municipal governance based on the experience of EU countries and Israel, thereby creating a hybrid model.

Strategic priorities have been identified, based on the digital transformation of the community ecosystem through a "big data"-driven decision-making system, ensuring full compatibility of local registries with national platforms to facilitate transparent investment and recovery, and bridging the "digital divide" by establishing offline access points to online services, and staff training. Integrating climate policy into day-to-day city management as a tool for economic development is a strategic vector for national municipal governance. This vector is implemented through communities' transition to renewable energy sources and the modernization of utility companies based on the "municipal energy strategies" model, the creation of separate financial mechanisms to protect infrastructure from extreme weather events, and the pooling of resources from small communities to implement large-scale environmental projects for which their individual budgets are insufficient. An important vector in wartime is the transformation of the municipality from an administrative body into an active center for security and civil protection through the development of clear algorithms for the community's transition from peacetime to emergency mode (based on the model of the Israeli Home Front Command). The transition from chaotic aid to the creation of registered

municipal reserves, integrated into the Civil Protection and Emergency Services system, will ensure the sustainability of municipal governance. Systematic training of residents in response protocols for military threats will form the foundation of national resilience.

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