



# The Cultural Identity of the Region as a Sign of Social Development

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**Abstract:** *The concept of culture is developed based on many customs, values, traditions, religious characteristics, language and linguistic differences, artifacts, and laws, through the preservation and practice of which the knowledge is transmitted to the population of a given territory, which helps in their rapid adaptation to the local environment and preservation of the local heritage. Cultural heritage is a part of the history of a given territory or region and is a source of social cohesion for the people who inhabit it. In this way, it is a prerequisite for determining the sense of identity of the people, as well as a vitally important factor for the sustainable development of a given territory and its positioning as competitive with other regions. Cultural heritage is specific to each region and is a set of features related to the language, customs, manners, traditions, folklore diversity, natural features, and architectural-historical wealth, typical for a given community or group of people, which build their cultural identity. The preservation of cultural identity is an important mark for distinguishing and understanding the other, the foreign culture. On one hand, through the knowledge of the foreign identity, a collective image of the region is created, and on the other, it emphasizes its characteristics, according to which a given community can define itself and which emphasizes the differences in communication with other cultures and communities.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity is part of a person's identity or his concept of development and is a way of perceiving his surroundings. It is related to an individual's nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation or locality, or a distinct type of social group that has its own distinct culture. Thus, cultural identity characterizes an individual or an identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity or upbringing. Cultural identity is a continuous process that has been changed, based on different social, cultural and historical experiences. *The more people change, the faster their cultural identity develops and the more stable it is.* This means that people have a dynamic but stable integration of their culture (Usborne & Sablonnière, 2014).

The purpose of this report is to highlight the essence of the concept of cultural identity in the context of cultural heritage, based on territorial identity, traditions and mentality, and its role and factors that influence identity as a system to support the social development of the region in the era of globalization.

## 2. CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

The question of cultural identity is relevant more than ever, given the political and economic situation in the age of globalization, as a result of which there have been many changes affecting genders, religions, language, ethnic characteristics, regional specifics in traditions and, above

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all, the value system of the population, which build the system of cultural identity. There are quite a few negative effects on culture as a result of globalization, which has given rise to popular culture, posing a threat to traditions, beliefs and values, which would lead to a loss of cultural richness and identity. The future of cultural identities under the influence of globalization is uncertain, as it depends on how global interactions proceed and how cultures interact with each other (Tuncer, 2023).

Another main purpose of this work is to conceptualize the phenomenon of cultural identity as a resource for social development and to reveal the features of the role of the cultural identity of the region based on cultural heritage and its role in the attitude of the local population for its preservation as a factor in the development of the sphere of culture and art in the region. This can be realized by formulating the following tasks:

- An analysis of the state of cultural heritage and its influence on the cultural characteristics of the population in the region is necessary;
- Analyzes the current state of studying the problems of IT of the population, its formation and its impact on people's livelihood;
- The cultural diversity of the region as a driving factor for its socioeconomic development;
- Maximum use of the population's potential for the preservation and development of cultural wealth by creating different approaches/models, and projects in the field of art and culture;
- Analysis of the geospatial characteristics of the region and their impact on the lifestyle of the population;
- Study the influence of all spheres related to the preservation of the cultural identity of the region;
- determine the leading guidelines for the further use of IT by the population for various purposes of the development of the territorial communities of people.

The tasks thus set are relevant to the role of resources and the overall potential of the region in the context of traditions in culture and art known as cultural heritage.

Identities, whether they are based on class, gender, religion, nationality or some other social/cultural marker – play a role in building social movements and 'framing contention' (Tarrow, 1998).

Identity itself develops under the influence of one main factor, and that factor is culture. Culture is constructed in the process of social and material existence within which individuals construct their way of life. As a result, people also construct their way of self-expression by giving their meaning to themselves within the region they inhabit and identifying with its cultural characteristics. The creation of cultural characteristics that distinguish one region from another is a continuous process that is influenced by many factors - territory, nature, language, religion, history, traditions, and monuments that make up the cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage is a part of the history of a given territory or region and is a source of social cohesion for the people who inhabit it. In this way, it is a prerequisite for determining the sense of identity of the people, as well as a vitally important factor for the sustainable development of a given territory and its positioning as competitive with other regions. Cultural heritage is specific to each region and is a set of features related to the language, customs, manners, traditions, folklore diversity, natural features, and architectural-historical wealth, typical for a given community or group of people, which build their cultural identity.

Based on the above, it is worth noting the role of resources and potential in the field of culture and art, which are a means of improving the investment climate in the region and creating a positive financial and economic effect. A special role in this matter should be given to the consideration of geospatial components, which are of primary importance in the development and adoption of constructive and rational management decisions.

In this scientific study, under the sphere of culture and art of the region, we understand a system of interconnected enterprises, institutions, organizations and establishments of various forms of ownership, creative unions and public organizations, operating in the relevant regional geo-cultural space and directly involved in production, distribution, storage, the distribution and organization of consumption of goods and services for cultural, informational, artistic and decorative purposes. Therefore, the geospatial organization of the sphere of culture and art is the relative location of its elements, spatial connections (management, organizational, transport, informational, educational, scientific, creative, commercial) and territorial public entities (formations, combinations, systems, structures) and their functioning (Shablii, 2003).

Some authors define cultural heritage as an important factor in shaping identity, calling it a „historical reservoir“ (Ahmedova, 2023). Since one of the primary characteristics of a culture is its „historical reservoir,“ many, if not all, groups make revisions, consciously or unconsciously, to their historical records in order to strengthen the strength of their cultural identity or to forge one, which provides they are a precedent for actual reform or change.

Some critics of cultural identity argue that the preservation of cultural identity based on difference is a divisive force in society and that cosmopolitanism gives individuals a greater sense of shared citizenship (Chaim, 2003).

An element of the structure of any state is its constitution, which, apart from allowing it to be included in the international society to which it presents its culture, also provides it with a basis and opportunities for identification with other states. Each nation is characterized by its cultural identity, built on its internal culture, which identifies it with other nations and is thus influenced by external cultural realities. Nations provide the framework for cultural identities, called external cultural reality, which influences the unique internal cultural realities of individuals within the nation.

It is also noted that an individual's „cultural arena“ (Aristova, 2016), or the place where one lives, impacts the culture that person abides by. The surroundings, environment, and people in these places play a role in how one feels about the culture they wish to adopt.

A number of events such as many Western and Eastern influences, and the destruction of ethno-cultural boundaries, in the last century, known as the era of globalization, are a threat to the erasure of the cultural identity of society, as they affect changes in views, thinking, values, which, from in turn lead to changes in the way of life of the population. The high levels of technology have led to many transformations that give rise to crises and threats to the loss of authenticity, the results of which can lead to „cultural trauma“ (Danailova, 2004).

Cultural identity is the equivalent of authenticity. Different social groups are faced with the dilemma of whether to give up their traditional cultural values or to come to terms with the new changes (Ginder, 2010), which in many cases affect their civil liberties. It is the civil and

political liberties of the population that are necessary to create a favorable climate for maintaining unity between the population and security in the region, respectively the nation.

Historically, cultural heritage expresses the millennial cooperation between nature and the way of life of human society. At a time of constant new challenges, society must be responsible for its conservation and take advantage of the opportunities to realize its potential arising from its diversity and dynamism. At the core of the concept of preservation of cultural identity is the idea of preservation and respect for the land of the ancestors who inhabited a given region, the local language, cultural heritage, social ideals and values transmitted through generations to the inhabitants of the region. This causes cultural identity to become a large-scale direction that affects the preservation and change of the multicultural characteristics of the region and the population that lives in it.

Culture is the shared characteristics of a group of people, which encompasses, place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviors, art, literature, and music. What constitutes cultural identity is culture, which is a shared characteristic of a group of people, such as place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behavior, art, literature, and music. Preserving cultural identity means preserving cultural heritage, tradition and race. Culture and its heritage reflect and shape values, beliefs and aspirations, thus defining the national identity of people. It is important to preserve our cultural heritage because it preserves our integrity as a people. Cultural identities are influenced by several different factors such as one's religion, ancestry, skin color, language, class, education, profession, skill, family and political attitudes. They are directly related to the cultural identity of the society because they also determine the perception of the main characteristics of its culture (Esquivel & Tafoya, n.d.).

Cultural identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular culture or group. This process involves learning and accepting the traditions, heritage, language, religion, origins, aesthetics, thought patterns and social structures of a culture (Lustig, 2013).

There are three pieces that make up a person's cultural identity: *cultural knowledge, category label, and social connections*. Cultural knowledge refers to a person's connection to their identity through understanding their culture's core characteristics (Wan & Chew, 2013).

The preservation of the cultural identity of a territory or a place can be done by researching and studying languages, restoring historic artifacts found that are significant to its culture or heritage and encouraging the preservation and use of languages or rituals symbolic to them. It is only possible through keeping close relations between the individuals and their own culture, developed by the origin, experience, the origin and protecting the family traditions, spread out among the population in the region.

Research in connection with the development of the sphere of culture and art in the region, through its cultural-historical potential, became the reason for N. Abalmasov and A. Pine to identify three models for constructing the cultural identity of the region or territory, through impact on culture and art. The primary means of construction is the so-called *token management*. Museums, monuments, manufactured goods, historical facts, heroes and real figures, local natural, geographical objects, buildings specially built for these purposes, etc. become symbols. The best model for the continuous influence of culture and art is various initiatives related to these symbols every year, annually. This model is characterized by good planning by the

stakeholders and becomes a focus on bringing the community together. It is characterized by a wide range of areas, consistency, duration and high enthusiasm for performance (Abalmasova & Pain, 2012).

For the development and offering of socio-cultural services to the population, it is necessary to thoroughly analyze the main factors for their formation and development in the region. Globalization has moved and strengthened the processes of regionalization, one of which is the process of building and preserving the territorial identity (TI) of the population - a factor that determines the foundations and specificity of the main trends in the development of territorial communities of people. This makes the question of researching this factor extremely relevant from the point of view of social sciences, especially social geography.

There are not a few definitions defining the concept of „territorial identity“. Some of the Ukrainian and Russian researchers identify this concept with regional identity. According to Krilov (2005), it is a systematic set of cultural relations related to the concept of „small homeland“. Turovski (1999) believes that this phenomenon is not so much cultural as cultural-political; it is directly related to the political organization (and self-organization) of the territory, where the cultural landscape can be counted as its primary basis.

According to the Anglo-Irish political scientist Anderson (2006), this is the individual's perception of himself as a representative of a certain „imagined community“, based on the unity of the territory of residence, as well as history and traditions, socio-cultural experience, value orientations and way of life inherent in the territorial community.

The Estonian scientist Raagmaa (2002) argues that it is identification with the social system of a particular region, with its people, culture, traditions, landscape, etc.

Oikonomopoulou et al. (2023) consider territorial identity in the context of the cultural landscape as a complex and integrating concept with both material-physical and immaterial substance. They also state that the protection of the natural and cultural wealth of the region will bring the achievement of balanced economic development and *social cohesion*, which ultimately leads to sustainable social development.

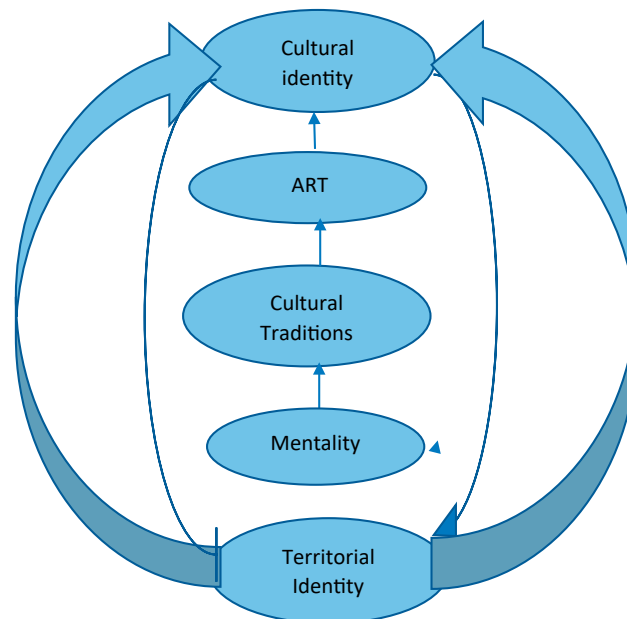
According to Zadvornii (2014), the main reasons and conditions for the formation of the cultural identity of the population are:

- natural geographical conditions and resources of the territory;
- features of historical development;
- historical and cultural heritage and local traditions;
- ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics;
- the economic specialization of the region and the quality of life of the population;
- political and administrative structure.

According to Ivanova (2002), the development of culture and art in the region is influenced by the mentality of the population, the basis of which is its individual identity. She defines mentality as an expression of group consciousness in different historical periods and geographical spaces, which means that culture is also mentality and has its components: group consciousness (creation of cultural values), historical time (culture is inseparable from history), and geographical space (cultural traditions are tied to a certain territory). Art is also linked to mentality

through the concept of culture. Just as culture is the most important and best thing that has evolved in mentality, so art is the main and best thing that defines a particular culture.

Based on this, it can be argued that the identity of the region is one of the initial prerequisites for the process of production of mentality, culture, and art, as well as their joint influence on the characteristics of the very sphere of culture and art in the region, which is represented as a circle of 4 levels, as it is shown on Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The levels that form the identity of a region

**Source:** Author based on [Zadvornii, 2014](#)

Depending on the degree of integration of tradition in social structures, the image of the society and its future are determined in a certain sense.

On the other hand, tradition is one of the ways of ordering and structuring culture, which consolidates both the phenomena of the cultural space and the various spheres of the social system into a completely integrated complex. The invariance, stability and sustainability of sociodynamics, as well as the continuity of translation of sociocultural codes, which ensure the reproduction of meanings in historically changing conditions, largely depend on the status and role of cultural tradition in society.

Frequent economic instability in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century caused the emergence of a new type of society with a new type of cultural behavior and cultural potential in terms of traditions. The idea of tradition, in terms of values, which is a source of social order, in an era of global cultural changes, already has other characteristics, dictates new socio-cultural conditions and norms, but continues to be a prerequisite for sustainable development. The strategy of sustainable development as a priority of civilizational dynamics in the conditions of global instability can only be realized if tradition, realizing its bifunctionality, acts as a measure of identity and development orientation. At the same time, it is important to remember that cultural tradition is not so much a specific mechanism for stabilizing development, but rather „an integral feature of sociocultural dynamics, the nature of which is the establishment of value-semantic relations between social states of time divisions public life” ([Anochina, n.d.](#)).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage is a mixture of natural, material and spiritual development and is the property of society and as such helps to define cultural identity. It is a conscious memory and respect for society's past and a connection to the present. The maintenance of cultural identity can be accomplished by strengthening the individual's ties to the local culture and his identification with it. This identification is a process that develops based on learning and experience, interest and knowledge of the individual's background, getting to know and continuing the family traditions and sharing them with the community in the region.

Cultural heritage is specific to each region and is a set of features related to the language, customs, manners, traditions, folklore diversity, natural features, and architectural-historical wealth, typical for a given community or group of people, which build their cultural identity. Cultural identity is the main driving force of the socio-economic development of any region in the conditions of modern dynamic transformational changes in society. Considerable efforts are needed in all branches of the economy, especially in the sphere of culture and art, to motivate society to implement creative and economic activities for the preservation of cultural identity. The results of these efforts can be seen based on continuous analyses and studies of cultural identity, which will inform the development of strategies for the development of the regions.

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