

УДК 745/.749:338.484:352(477.54)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.34142/27091805.2026.7.02.01>**Борисенко Денис** 

кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент кафедри  
креативного менеджменту і дизайну ХНЕУ  
імені С. Кузнеця,  
Харків, Україна

email: [denis.borysenko@hneu.net](mailto:denis.borysenko@hneu.net)

**Близнюк Тетяна** 

доктор економічних наук, професор, завідувач  
кафедри креативного менеджменту і дизайну  
ХНЕУ імені С. Кузнеця,  
Харків, Україна

email: [tetyana.blyznyuk@hneu.net](mailto:tetyana.blyznyuk@hneu.net)

**Denys Borysenko** 

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate  
Professor of Creative Management and Design  
Department, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National  
University of Economics,  
Kharkiv, Ukraine

email: [denis.borysenko@hneu.net](mailto:denis.borysenko@hneu.net)

**Tetyana Blyznyuk** 

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor, Head of  
Creative Management and Design Department,  
Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of  
Economics,  
Kharkiv, Ukraine

email: [tetyana.blyznyuk@hneu.net](mailto:tetyana.blyznyuk@hneu.net)

## ПАРТИСИПАТИВНИЙ ДИЗАЙН У ПРОЦЕСІ РОЗРОБКИ ФІРМОВОГО ЗНАКУ ДЛЯ ВІЗУАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИФІКАЦІЇ ТЕРИТОРІАЛЬНОЇ ГРОМАДИ

Візуалізація локальних ідентичностей у сучасному графічному дизайні вимагає переходу від директивного пошуку форми до впровадження методології партисипативного дизайну як унікального інструменту візуального моделювання.

**Об'єкт дослідження:** процес візуалізації локальних ідентичностей Слобожанщини та трансформації соціокультурних кодів у графічні константи за допомогою партисипативного дизайну.

**Мета дослідження** — виявити композиційні закономірності, пластичні властивості форми (зокрема, оптичну товщину ліній) та колористичне кодування територіальних знаків, створених за допомогою спільного проектування.

**Завдання дослідження:** обґрунтувати переваги методології co-design на передпроектному етапі, дослідити семіотику регіональних образів Слобожанщини та визначити параметри адаптації фірмових знаків до цифрових медіа.

**Методи дослідження** базуються на інструментах художньо-проектного аналізу: семіотичному декодуванні регіональних мотивів, компаративній оцінці геометричних форм, інтерактивному форескізуванні та експериментальному мудбордингу для верифікації графічних тригерів громади.

**Наукова значимість дослідження** полягає в розробці формально-композиційної моделі конвертації візуальних уявлень громади у лаконічний знак. Систематизовано прийоми стилізації та геометричної редукції історико-архітектурних символів Слобожанщини, а також обґрунтовано принципи побудови динамічних векторних систем на основі колективних візуальних метафор.

**Результати дослідження** довели, що інтерактивне моделювання форми за участю громади захищає знак від візуального кітчю та геральдичного перевантаження ще на етапі ідеї. Особливу цінність продемонстрували когнітивне мапування, вернакулярний типографічний пошук та аналіз ландшафту. Підходи успішно апробовано в освітньому середовищі через залучення здобувачів освіти до проектів із громадами. Сформований дизайн-фреймворк охоплює чотири етапи: аудит території, партисипативне ескізування з мешканцями, професійне рафінування знака за законами гармонії та його розгортання в адаптивну екосистему.

**Висновки.** Партисипативний підхід у графічному дизайні забезпечує створення життєздатного візуального продукту. Спільне з громадою очищення форми дозволяє отримати композиційно збалансований і семантично чистий фірмовий знак. Він стає ефективним маркером ідентифікації території в архітектурному середовищі, поліграфії та цифрових інтерфейсах.

**Ключові слова:** графічний дизайн; фірмовий знак; партисипативний дизайн; візуальна ідентифікація; композиція; геометрична редукція; освітнє середовище.

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESSES IN CREATING A VISUAL IDENTITY BRAND MARK FOR TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES

The visualization of local identities in contemporary graphic design requires shifting from top-down form-seeking approaches toward the implementation of participatory design methodology as a unique tool for visual modeling.

**Object of the research:** the process of visualizing the local identities of Slobozhanshchyna and transforming sociocultural codes into visual constants through participatory design.

**The aim of the research** is to identify compositional patterns, formal-plastic properties (specifically, line optical weight), and color coding of territorial signs created through collaborative design.

**Research methods** are grounded in the tools of artistic and project analysis: semiotic decoding of regional motifs, comparative assessment of geometric forms, interactive pre-sketching, and experimental moodboarding to verify community graphic triggers.

**The scientific novelty** of the study lies in developing a formal-compositional model for converting unstructured community visual perceptions into a concise corporate sign. The study systematizes techniques for the stylization and geometric reduction of historical and architectural symbols of Slobozhanshchyna identified during participatory sessions, and substantiates the principles of constructing dynamic vector systems based on collectively approved visual metaphors.

**The research results** prove that interactive form modeling with community participation protects signs from visual kitsch and heraldic overload at the conceptual stage. Cognitive mapping, vernacular typographical search, and landscape silhouette analysis demonstrated particular value. These approaches were successfully tested in the educational environment by involving students in real-world community projects. The resulting design framework encompasses four stages: visual and textural site audit, participatory sketching with residents, professional graphic refinement according to the laws of harmony, and emblem deployment into an adaptive visual ecosystem.

**Conclusions.** The participatory approach in graphic design ensures the creation of a viable visual product. Collaborative form refinement with the community yields a compositionally balanced and semantically clear sign. It becomes an effective marker for territorial identification within architectural environments, printed ephemera, and digital interfaces.

**Keywords:** graphic design; corporate sign; participatory design; visual identification; composition; geometric reduction; educational environment.

**Problem statement and its connection with important scientific or practical tasks.** Contemporary branding is undergoing fundamental shifts, with a particular emphasis on the visual identification of local self-government. The implementation of the decentralization reform in Ukraine requires territorial communities to rethink their role in both national and global spaces. Rather than remaining purely administrative and geographical units, communities are transforming into independent socioeconomic entities forced to compete for material, investment, and human resources. Consequently, the

search for a unique face and the formation of a resilient local identity has evolved from a decorative task into a strategic priority of public administration. Territorial recognition directly correlates with investment attractiveness, domestic tourism development, the ability to attract international donor aid, and the level of internal social cohesion among residents.

This issue becomes highly acute for Slobozhanshchyna—a unique borderland historical and geographical region with a rich layer of Cossack traditions, specific architectural heritage, and a distinctive mental landscape. Today, however, a signif-

icant portion of the region's communities exhibits visual amorphousness. The utilization of Soviet remnants in symbolism or overloaded classical heraldic coats of arms creates a profound gap between the actual values of the community and its representation in contemporary marketing and digital environments.

For the frontline and affected areas of Slobozhanshchyna, developing an independent visual narrative becomes an element of humanitarian security and soft power capable of countering external destructive information influences by asserting local agency. The visual image of a community acts as a graphic equivalent of a new "social contract". However, the traditional expert-centric approach—where logo development is either commissioned to agencies detached from the local context or imposed "from above" through administrative decisions—increasingly fails due to the rejection of symbolism by the local population. The formation of a viable brand is only possible when residents perceive themselves as co-authors of the sign, which highlights the necessity of utilizing participatory design (co-design) methods at all stages of the project.

#### **The article goals and objectives formulation.**

The objective of this paper is to theoretically substantiate, develop, and verify a methodological model of participatory design for creating a corporate sign for a territorial community in Slobozhanshchyna, thereby balancing the region's historical and cultural authenticity with the requirements of universality, adaptability, and digital functionality. To achieve this goal, a series of interconnected research tasks are addressed. First, the theoretical foundations of the interdisciplinary discourse surrounding territorial branding are outlined, identifying the role of visual constants in strengthening the institutional agency of municipalities. The subsequent stage involves conducting a semiotic analysis and deconstruction of the visual codes of Slobozhanshchyna to isolate graphic invariants for contemporary design. Based on these findings, an empirical model of participatory design (co-design) is developed to facilitate the direct co-creation of the community sign by its residents. Finally, integral criteria and analytical metrics are proposed to evaluate the viability of municipal logos within a "screen-first" environment.

#### **Analysis of basic research and publications.**

The theoretical foundations of the interdisciplinary discourse surrounding territorial branding are ex-

plored in the works of Almeida (2023), where the author emphasizes the necessity of systematically integrating sociocultural and economic factors to capitalize on a region's intangible assets. The direct impact of a shaped destination image within the broader territorial brand on regional development is comprehensively analyzed by Almeida and Almeida (2023), substantiating the strategic importance of a location's graphic representation. Concurrently, the specificities of positioning low-urbanized territories based on the population's self-identification processes within contemporary Ukrainian society are investigated by Hlynskyi and Hirna (2022).

The challenges of the digital transformation of signs and the transgression of standard graphic solutions are raised by Adaku and Obi-Emeruwa (2026), who demonstrate how communication constructs, shapes, and transforms brand identity in the era of digitalization and screen-centric information perception. The consumer perception of sign morphology, particularly the so-called "visual thickness effect" of a logo and its direct correlation with strengthening personalized brand traits, was experimentally substantiated by Eyni et al. (2023). Current trends toward maximal geometric simplification, conciseness, and rationalization of forms in emblem design are highlighted in a fundamental study by Shilpa and Hareeth (2024), where the authors prove that a minimalist approach is non-alternative for ensuring the modern functionality of signs. Additionally, how the broader visual context of the environment directly structures and transforms the audience's primary response to corporate identity systems and logos is thoroughly examined by Wertz (2023).

The cultural and historical dimension of sign development requires the integration of local heritage. The mechanisms of tourism destination development through the utilization of Ukraine's intangible cultural heritage as a primary tool for creating a unique ethnocultural brand are analyzed in detail by Antonenko (2024). The spatial dimensions and modeling of the revitalization of industrial and specific local territories in Ukraine through cluster approaches are studied by Merylova (2024). The interconnectedness between city branding, regional identity, and public space through the prism of revealing historical and cultural symbols in the architectural landscape was thoroughly investigated by de Jong and Lu (2022). From the perspective of preserving the authentic component, the principles of cultural sus-

tainability and reflection on traditional crafts and sustainable development models are represented in the works of Brown and Vacca (2022).

The transition to participatory design necessitates a revision of interaction theories. The phenomenon of value co-creation within online communities and during service interactions is described in detail by Chapman and Dilmperi (2022). In turn, the current state of brand community research, literature systematization, and future research vectors in this domain were compiled into a large-scale matrix by Bhattacharjee et al. (2022). The issues of directly engaging the collective artistic creativity of residents, capacity building within the community, and community-based sustainable tourism are studied by Moayerian et al. (2022). The practical aspect of enhancing the marketing skills of local business communities through specialized training in logo development was demonstrated by Ranuharja et al. (2023).

The impact of specific geometric elements and logo shapes on city brand knowledge and awareness was empirically tested by Zhang et al. (2025). A comprehensive literature review on the specifics of how diverse logo shapes influence branding in non-governmental organizations and civil associations was conducted by Ting et al. (2025). Contemporary European experience in implementing emblems as key elements of municipal identity, using Budapest districts and Hungarian cities as case studies, was documented in detail by Papp-Váry and Gajáta (2025). Finally, the acute applied issues of substantiating the prospects for the physical and mental reconstruction of territorial communities, using the example of the Kharkiv region under constant pressure from security challenges, became the object of study for Dymchenko et al. (2025).

**Presentation of the main material.** In the contemporary paradigm of regional development, a community's corporate sign ceases to be a mere emblem or a property marking tool. Instead, it becomes a crucial mediator that translates complex sociocultural narratives into the language of visual imagery intelligible to every participant in communication. A structured symbolic space serves as a robust foundation for the collective identity of territorial communities. If a territory lacks a professionally developed graphic concept, it risks remaining an object of external stereotypes or becoming entirely "invisible" within the digital information field, where the absence of a distinctive style is equated with institu-

tional immaturity.

The implementation of participatory design fundamentally alters project logic: design acts as the graphic embodiment of a "social contract", wherein aesthetics becomes an instrument of democratization and transparency for municipal authorities. The participatory process ensures the legitimization of the community's agency in the eyes of its members, transforming a formal amalgamation of settlements (resulting from administrative reform) into a vibrant community united under a shared symbolic roof. Residents evolve from passive "inhabitants of a territory" into active "community brand ambassadors". Systemic development management, codified in a brand book developed on a participatory basis, guarantees the long-term stability of the destination image.

During participatory sessions with the residents of Slobozhanshchyna, three key layers of historical and cultural heritage were isolated as sources of graphic metaphors. The first is the military-heraldic layer of the Cossack era, where regional symbolism originates from the banners of the Sloboda Cossack regiments (Kharkiv, Okhtyrka, Sumy, Izium, and Ostrohozhsk), and the semiotic analysis of these emblems captures a palette and a set of figures dominated by images of weapons, celestial bodies, and protective elements. The second vital source is ornamentation and folk art, particularly Slobozhanshchyna embroidery and weaving, which are characterized by an "airy" and sparse quality of forms, the widespread use of the "white-on-white" technique interspersed with red dye, and the "tree of life" motif as the primary semantic core. The third component is defined by the architectural landscape of "Slobozhanshchyna Baroque", where the geometry of multi-tiered domes and the characteristic plasticity of the facades of local churches generate a unique silhouette rhythm based on vertical axes.

The specific nature of community corporate sign design requires a delicate combination of Cossack archetypes of security with a modern vision of investment openness. The path to harmony lies through geometric reduction and semiotic purification: the designer isolates the core compositional principle and transforms it into a concise vector form stripped of redundant decorativeness. The coloristic concept of Slobozhanshchyna gravitates toward light combinations, dominated by silver (white) combined with azure and gold. Regarding typographic culture, the lettering in the documents of the Cossack starshyna

(officers) dictates a rejection of standard system fonts in favor of customized display typography solutions.

Based on the synthesis of research experience, a three-level model of participation in the process of territorial sign creation has been developed. The first phase is the stage of diagnosis and meaning collection, during which open surveys of residents are conducted regarding their psychological perception of local identity to uncover internal archetypes (the image of an open steppe horizon, a cozy home, or Cossack resilience). This is followed by co-design workshops, which involve the collaborative work of designers, activists, and municipal representatives; here, residents create collages and formulate semantic maps of the territory, helping to dissolve communication barriers and neutralize conflicts between marketing and authenticity. The final phase is the stage of expert refinement and digital adaptation, where the designer translates the concepts developed by the community into professional graphic solutions; within this phase, the contemporary “screen-first” environment imposes rigorous demands, requiring the sign to maintain recognizability in a favicon format, scale correctly on smartphone screens, and be suitable for vector animation. To evaluate the viability of a corporate sign developed according to the participatory model, a system of integral criteria (based on the semantic differential) is proposed, which possesses a generalized variation of presentation:

$$\text{Logo Viability Index (LVI)} = (A + F + S + D)/4$$

Where A (Authenticity) represents the level of alignment with the region's historical codes (evaluated by local historians and residents); F (Functionality) denotes ergonomics, geometric clarity, and legibility at ultra-small scales (evaluated by the design community); S (Social Appropriation) indicates the degree of residents' willingness to utilize the sign as a marker of their “own” space (determined via sociological surveying); and D (Digital Adaptability) signifies the technological suitability for interface deployment (Favicon, UI/UX, and animation). The application of this model in the process of revitalizing the symbolic space of Slobozhanshchyna communities allows transforming a graphic sign into an effective instrument of social integration, which is highly essential for restoring and stabilizing the vital activity of the affected territories.

**Conclusions.** The role and strategic significance of visual identification in the process of building capa-

ble and self-sufficient municipalities within the context of the decentralization reform in Ukraine were analyzed, enabling the determination of the territorial community corporate sign's evolution from a static decorative emblem to a dynamic mediator of sociocultural narratives and the graphic equivalent of a new social contract. The investigation of European and domestic experiences demonstrated that a cohesive, professionally developed identity system is a fundamental component of humanitarian security, an instrument for protecting the symbolic space of frontier regions, and a critical factor in capitalizing on a territory's intangible assets within external and internal investment markets.

The semantic structure and specific features of the graphic codes belonging to the historical and geographical space of Slobozhanshchyna were revealed through a profound deconstruction of its sociocultural heritage; as a result, three foundational layers of graphic invariants were isolated: the military-heraldic signs of the Sloboda Cossack regiments, the delicate and sparse compositional rhythms of traditional folk art featuring the tree of life motif, and the vertical silhouette axes of Slobozhanshchyna Baroque architecture. Through the application of semiotic reduction and geometric modeling tools, the study demonstrated a mechanism for purifying these historical markers of redundant decorative-ness, thereby enabling the successful conversion of multilayered ethnocultural metaphors into concise, recognizable, and modern vector forms.

A conceptual three-level model of participatory municipal sign design was substantiated, integrating the collaborative activities of three key stakeholder groups: local residents, local self-government representatives, and expert designers, wherein the model's logic entails sequentially passing through the stages of primary diagnosis of sociocultural meanings via mental mapping tools, collaborative generation of visual metaphors during co-creation workshops, and final professional refinement of the sign. Furthermore, a system of analytical evaluation metrics—the Logo Viability Index—was substantiated based on the integral calculation of four interconnected parameters, including the authenticity, functionality, social appropriation, and digital adaptability of the graphic form.

It was proven that utilizing participatory design methods during corporate sign development is an obligatory and non-alternative condition for overcoming local identity crises and preventing the so-

ciocultural rejection of symbolism, since the direct engagement of community members in co-creation processes transforms passive inhabitants into active ambassadors of the territorial brand and ensures the emotional appropriation of the territory's symbolic capital. The practical implementation of this model within the framework of postwar reconstruction and revitalization of the Sloboda region allows for the creation of a resilient, flexible, and technologically adaptive visual communication system oriented toward digital interfaces, which will serve as an effective tool for social integration and the sustainable socioeconomic development of territories.

**Prospects for future research.** Prospects for future research in this direction are associated with expanding the scope of the proposed participatory model and adapting it to the conditions of the dynamic, cross-media, and inclusive environment of contemporary communities. Further scientific inquiry should focus on examining the specifics of de-

ploying digital ecosystems for territorial branding by incorporating generative artificial intelligence tools, which will allow for the automation of the initial stages of semantic coding of local meanings without losing their unique cultural authenticity. Another crucial vector for future investigation involves developing applied solutions for creating a dynamic (generative) community identity capable of flexibly altering its visual parameters depending on the current communication context, socioeconomic priorities, or security factors. In addition, expanding the proposed metrics system (LVI) by integrating cognitive analysis methods and neuromarketing tools (specifically, eye-tracking and emotional response analysis) will hold significant scientific and practical value; this will enable a more precise prediction of the long-term perception level of the new symbolic capital by both external investors and immediate members of territorial communities within the context of global digital competition.

#### Авторські внески згідно з CRediT

Борисенко Денис – концептуалізація; методологія; проведення партисипативних сесій та курація даних; візуалізація; написання початкового варіанту статті.

Близнюк Тетяна – наукове керівництво; формальний аналіз; валідація результатів; огляд, редагування та доопрацювання тексту.

#### Фінансування / Funding

Дослідження виконано без фінансової підтримки.

#### Використання Штучного Інтелекту / Use of Artificial Intelligence

Автори стверджують, що при створенні цієї статті вони не використовували технології штучного інтелекту.

#### Конфлікт інтересів / Conflict of Interest

Автори заявляють про відсутність конфлікту інтересів щодо цього дослідження, включаючи фінансові, особисті, авторські чи будь-які інші, які могли б вплинути на дослідження, а також на результати, представлені в цій статті.

Надійшла до редакції / Received: 02.07.2026

Прорецензовано / Peer-reviewed: 10.07.2026

Рекомендовано до публікації / Accepted for publication: 19.07.2026

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