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THE SYMBOLIC CAPITAL OF INHABITED PLACES AS A RESOURCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES¹



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Abstract. *This article analyzes the results of projects aimed at developing territories and attracting the attention of communities to local symbolic resources, implemented in Nizhny Novgorod and two rural municipal districts of the Nizhny Novgorod region. The diverse formats of involvement, group interaction for the transfer of skills, mastering techniques for working with territorial symbols by local communities through interdisciplinary educational and outreach programs, research expeditions and laboratories are discussed, in which symbolic capital serves as the basis for the design of business chains based on local identity and including local symbols in the heritage economy. The patterns of forming creative startups around the manifested symbols are generalized, the most popular types of entrepreneurial activities and initiatives in the field of creative industries are identified.*

Keywords: *symbolic resources; local communities; interdisciplinary research.*

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Introduction

Intangible, symbolic resources and objects of historical and cultural heritage remain a relevant research topic due to the increased public attention to creative economy. The Order of the Government of the Russian Federation of 20.09.2021 N 2613-r approved the «Concept for the development of creative industries of the Russian Federation and mechanisms for the implementation of their state support in large and largest urban agglomerations until 2030» (hereinafter referred to as the «Concept»). In accordance with the terminology adopted in it, «the creative economy is a type of economy based on the capitalization of intellectual property in all areas of human activity – scientific, technical, cultural and, in general, creative activity», and «creative industries are areas of activity in which companies, organizations, associations and individual entrepreneurs, in the process of creative and cultural activity, disposal of intellectual property, produce goods and services that have economic value, including ensuring the formation of a harmoniously developed personality and an increase in the quality of life of Russian society» [Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation ..., 2021].

Part of the creative economy is the «heritage economy», and «creative industries include, among others, industries based on the use of historical and cultural heritage (folk arts and crafts, museum activities)» [Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation ..., 2021]. To implement the Concept, a draft federal law «On the development of creative industries in the Russian Federation» was prepared in the first reading [Draft law N 474016-8 ..., 2023]. However, despite the regulatory documents adopted and prepared in the country, not all concepts valid in the context of the creative economy have received an unambiguous interpretation. The latter include terms such as «symbolic capital» and «symbolic resources».

It should be remembered that ideas about symbolic capital are discussed in detail in theory and are the subject of interdisciplinary discourse in professional scientific circles. However, there are no standard procedures to transfer symbolic capital from the subject of theoretical reasoning to the practical sphere of local communities, entrepreneurial initiatives and systemic support programs from public authorities. The question remains how to involve representatives of the sacramental triangle «business-power-society» in the process of the so-called «express professionalization» of heritage conservation and management.

This paper attempts to present both theoretical approaches to the concept of symbolic capital and symbolic resources, and the possibilities of their practical use for the socio-economic development of certain territories, using the example of projects implemented in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

Theoretical ideas about symbolic capital

The concept of a symbol is associated with the concept of an «image», which is used in the scientific sense within the framework of humanitarian geography, called imaginary or figurative [Zamyatin, 2005, p. 11]. «Mythogeography» stands the closest to this direction [Mitin, 2004].

In turn, the concept of «symbolic capital» is a subject of interdisciplinary scientific knowledge and is used in domestic literature in cultural, sociocultural, philosophical, urban, geographical, economic, managerial, marketing, and investment contexts. The latter are due to the emergence of a new competence – «heritage manager» – a skill to «package» and capitalize on meanings and symbols for a brand, development strategy, attracting investments to a specific territory. For instance. G.L. Tul'chinskii wrote that «an image forms the foundation for basic consumer motives» and connects local symbols with the branding of territories [Tul'chinskii, 2013, p. 279].

N.G. Fedotova defines the symbolic capital of a place as «an accumulation of significant elements (meanings) of a territory that offers recognition, fame, prestige, and trust from various social groups» [Fedotova, 2018, p. 142]. She points at difficulties at objectively measuring the symbolic capital of a territory «due to its symbolic nature» [Fedotova, 2018, p. 142].

In this context we could also use the term and methodology for analyzing «cultural and symbolic resources of the territory» [Zamyatin, 2010, p. 129]. Later, it was supplemented by practical cases in implementing programs and projects of the Business Club «Heritage Economics» in Yaroslavl and other cities of Russia [About the club, 2024].

In this paper, we will adhere to the definition of the symbolic capital of a city refers to symbolic resources, material objects and intangible symbols, including: dates, events, famous and interesting people, «genius loci», historical landmarks, events, markets, goods, legends and tales, gastronomic «brands», animals, plants, connections, smells, historical and cultural monuments, architecture, museums, myths and legends, music, oral memory, toponymy, craft traditions and trades, artistic practices, etc. The structure of symbolic capital can be divided into two parts [Fedotova, 2018, p. 144]:

a) territory recognition – identification potential that provides recognition and fame of a territory, association of a place with certain images (characters, monuments, nature, brands, etc.);

b) positive territory assessment – the potential for prestige and trust, providing territory with positive associations, values and increased ratings, a positive reputation (for example, an environmentally friendly city).

The symbolic capital of a city is important in developing projects related to local creative sectors, and symbolic resources give rise to unique competitive advantages (UCA), unique selling proposition (USP) and unique semantic chains in the Product-Service-System (PSS) that have proven themselves in classical business. By turning to symbolic capital, the tangible and intangible heritage are connected, and

the process of «extracting» or «unpacking» modern meanings takes place, in which emotions, experiences and impressions associated with a specific place are expressed.

Despite the fact that the symbolic capital of a territory «reflects the idea of its significance, the value of its inherent properties from the point of view of the value system of a particular community» [Zamyatina, 2016, p. 116], it is not always easy to articulate this value, evaluate it, and design the corresponding business chains. Even local communities that «look after» a particular symbol of a place, including professional representatives of cultural and educational institutions, as well as various territorial development agencies, not to mention representatives of public authorities and businesses, often have vague ideas about how to work with symbolic resources, why and in what to invest, when dealing with mythical symbols.

What are the obvious problems of involving symbolic capital in practical life:

- general lack of understanding of symbolic heritage's economic value and resource in society, business and government;
- low investment attractiveness of symbolic resources due to the lack of skills in working with images;
- poor awareness of potential participants about opportunities and measures to support such projects;
- multi-level tasks due to the interdisciplinary nature of the study of symbolic capital;
- difficulty synchronizing requests and actions of the main participants (representatives of business, government, society);
- lack of a clear model for launching a business chain based on a symbol.

In this context, a «chain» is understood as «a sequence of infrastructure and service elements that reveal an idea and that are based on one main symbol» [Oinas, 2023].

We should not forget that «using symbolic resources is a significant and at the same time low-cost marketing method for attracting guests to a region. Symbolic resources promoted to potential consumers are a genuine competitive advantage for a territory that is capable of creating an attractive image of a region even with modest financial capabilities» [Shirinkin, 2016, p. 72]. Therefore, the discourse on the need to train skilled personnel to work with symbolic heritage is very pragmatic.

How Nizhny Novgorod develops symbolic capital

In Nizhny Novgorod, the first step to systemic development and preservation of symbolic and historical-cultural heritage was made in 2016 as a result of the gradual familiarization of local activists with heritage management and the methodology of D.B. Oinas¹ at the venues of the «Future of the City» fo-

¹ Co-author of the famous Kolomna economic miracle «on marshmallow» for the capitalization of cultural heritage (for more details, see: [Kolomensky creative cluster ..., 2022]).

rum, as well as within the framework of the project session «Why do we need this Gorky?», dedicated to the role of Maxim Gorky as a symbol and local celebrity (was timed to coincide with the 150th anniversary of his birth and organized by the author on the basis of the Maxim Gorky Memorial Museum), with the participation of the interested local creative businesses, representatives of the city's Department of Culture and expert, local history communities. Each group worked with its own moderator and considered individual aspects: what exactly the symbol of Maxim Gorky can mean for the museum, for business and for the city. In particular, the following range of issues was outlined.

Tasks for the museum:

- how to turn the symbolic resource of Maxim Gorky into a relevant museum brand;
- how to turn a museum brand into an effective economic tool;
- what the industrial chain of a brand consists of;
- how to form a line of unique museum and commercial products, services, and goods for a brand;
- how to attract new categories of visitors, clients and retain old ones;
- how to build effective partnerships between commercial and non-profit sectors and jointly develop the symbolic and economic basis of a brand.

Tasks for business:

- how today it is possible to capitalize on the symbolic resource of Maxim Gorky and how on its basis to create a unique selling proposition, develop lines of modern products, services, and goods;
- how a specific business can promote these lines and how it can interact with other commercial structures in a territory so that, by supporting each other, they form sustainable business chains and increase overall capitalization;
- how on this basis to attract new categories of clients and retain old ones;
- how to increase brand (trade) recognition by using the writer's legacy with local flavor;
- how to effectively build partnerships, interact on a mutually beneficial and long-term basis with non-profit organizations and budgetary cultural institutions to use the information they store and collect for marketing and other purposes.

Tasks for the city:

- how to make Maxim Gorky's legacy a significant resource for city development today;
- which target groups may be interested in this;
- how to use the resource of Gorky's anniversary to launch permanent partnership schemes between different participants;
- how to effectively promote the city at the Russian and international levels using Gorky as the symbol;
- what actions and by whom should be taken to create the most favorable conditions for initiatives associated with Maxim Gorky.

The decisions made at the session were implemented in the Gorky Museum, as well as in the activities of travel companies, excursion bureaus, local producers of souvenirs and restaurateurs; historical menus were also designed in restaurants and some historical recipes were restored, such a project as the «Gorky Christmas Tree» began to be held annually within the city, etc.

Summing up the results of this project session, the participants noted the following components of its success:

- a successful campaign to invite participants;
- an inspiring example and «toolkit», the presented methodology by the speakers;
- professional moderation of group work;
- a mixed composition of participants;
- high motivation and maximum involvement of everyone in joint activities, the desire to adopt first-hand techniques for working with symbolic resources.

However, one project seminar cannot attract the attention of local communities and creative businesses to symbolic resources. To systematically include symbolic capital in the heritage economy at the regional level, it is necessary to consider the territory as a socio-ecological-economic system with sustainable development, which unites the economic, socio-cultural and environmental points of view through interdependent and mutually subordinate areas of a single whole. The transition to the trajectory of sustainable development requires that all participants transform their activities, including:

- involving communities of both co-authors and beneficiaries in their design;
- searching for new ways and forms of unification and cooperation;
- awareness of the expanding boundaries of the territory and its role;
- understanding the goals of development of the territory and the needs of its residents;
- formation of new environmental and social standards;
- implementation of mechanisms of social communication and trust.

In this regard, it is important to involve and train representatives of different fields trades in using social capital. For this purpose, interdisciplinary research and special events or programs, various workshops, expeditions and laboratories can be used. Moreover, this a lengthy process. Three areas seem to be the most productive: cultural heritage sites (CHS) and their symbols; «local celebrities» – local heroes and symbols; landmarks of the territory as a whole and populated areas (municipal districts).

Chronologically, in Nizhny Novgorod, the symbolic capital of the city's historic quarter was developing as follows:

- communication platforms in the city from 2016 to 2019: heritage economics trainings for volunteers and activists for the author of the «Kolomna economic miracle» D.B. Oinas; setting up an active urban heritage conservation community;

- holding the Tom Sawyer Fest (TSF) festival of historical environment restoration since 2018 (at the initiative of the developer), popularization of Maxim Gorky theme and the «Historical Quarters» territory;
- formation of an open organizing committee, a request for year-round systematic activities outside the TSF and the institutionalization of private initiative (transition from the TSF project to the autonomous non-profit organization (ANCO) «Historical Quarters»), creating regional legislation and support measures to motivate investors – 2019 [Decree of the Government ..., 2022];
- involvement of experts, preparation of the concept of the partner ANCO and its successful promotion to the Government of the Nizhny Novgorod Region – 2020;
- establishment by the Government of the Nizhny Novgorod Region and the ANCO «Historical Quarters» of a joint ANCO «Agency for the Preservation and Development of the Historical Environment of the Nizhny Novgorod Region» (ANCO «ASIRIS»), hiring staff from the volunteer asset of the TSF and transfer of cultural heritage sites to it – 2021;
- development of the «single window» principle for investors and the model of recreational and tourism activities in ANCO «ASIRIS» – 2020. The latter is based on the economic model for the development of iconic (attractors) and ordinary objects of the historical environment based on the capitalization of local heritage. The working formula for the capitalization of local heritage is as follows: cultural heritage site + product or service with history = museum product (which creates a point of attraction and forms a tourist flow) and museum service;
- formation of a creative cluster in the «Historical Quarters» and the concept of the management company – 2022;
- incorporating the case in a network educational program with the participation of universities, scaling up the concept to ten municipalities of the Nizhny Novgorod Region – 2023–2024;
- organization of the club for owners of historical real estate in the Public Organization «Business Russia» – autumn 2023;
- setting up a community of graduates of the network program «Heritage Leaders», establishment of inter-municipal horizontal connections – May 2024;
- transformation of the territory and projects of the «Historical Quarters» into the most visited tourist locations in Nizhny Novgorod (along with the Kremlin and the Nizhny Novgorod Fair).

A unifying slogan for members of the urban conservation community, volunteers of the TCF movement in the urban context was «our city rights». In Russia, residents have the right to participate in the processes of choosing and improving public spaces, in initiative budgeting. According to the author, the actual content of the «our city rights» is broader and more complex – these are different forms of self-organization and participation of residents in city development at the partner level, participation in the

development, implementation and control of such decisions on the principle «Nothing for us – without us!».

Thus, as a result of the joint activities of ANCO «ASIRIS» of entrepreneurial, local lore, expert, urban protection and other local communities in the Nizhny Novgorod region, a request is formed to «unpack» historical, natural symbols and meanings, give them new functions and involve them in economic activities through the use in creative projects and startups. In response to these requests, the legal field is developing, including the development of a regional regulatory framework to support businesses working with cultural heritage sites and the organization of public-private partnerships in this area [Decree of the Government ..., 2022].

In this process, ANCO «ASIRIS» plays the role of a management company for humanitarian reasons. With the support of universities and the Corporate University of the Government of the Nizhny Novgorod Region (CUGNN), it was possible to form a program of advanced training in the field of heritage economics in the form of a special educational intensive – the network project «Heritage Leaders». The latter was also used to scale and transfer the successful experience of the pilot project – the development of the historical quarter around the church of the «Three Saints» in Nizhny Novgorod, in ten municipal districts of the Nizhny Novgorod region (from 2023 to the present [Work status ..., 2023]). After completing the training, its graduates can keep in touch and discuss the possibility of joint actions or projects (including applying for a grant for a network project that unites several territories). It has already been noted in the literature that awareness, the need and willingness to unite are considered as a manifestation of solidarity in society [Guzhavina, 2018, p. 261]. Graduates of the Heritage Leaders program are distinguished not only by their responsibility for the local project they have undertaken, but also by their initiative, desire for innovation and readiness to unite to achieve great goals, thus demonstrating a high level of readiness for solidarity.

Methodological approaches to utilizing symbolic capital in the Nizhny Novgorod region

The growing involvement of symbolic capital involvement in the Nizhny Novgorod region's economy needed an approved approach and methodology which are described below.

The purpose of the presented interdisciplinary study is to prove that when applying interpretation methods and associative links, as well as with a certain motivation of project participants, symbolic capital can serve as a universal resource and a means of transforming the territory. Already there are successful cases of studying, teaching, and using symbolic capital in the Vachsky and Voskresensky municipal districts of the Nizhny Novgorod region.

The geography of the study is related to the author's personal participation in the following urban expeditions, educational and research projects: a) expeditions of employees and students of the Faculty of Geography of Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov in the Voskresensky district of the

Nizhny Novgorod region in February and June 2023 [Research by young geographers, 2023, p. 151]; b) the network educational program «Heritage Leaders», implemented by ANCO «ASIRIS»; c) in the formation of the creative cluster «Filigree Kingdom» in the Vachsky municipal district of the Nizhny Novgorod region in May 2023 and in the further support of this project in the field of heritage economy at present [Chesnokov, 2024].

The study focused on interdisciplinary aspects of creating teams and startups in the heritage economy and creative industries based on local symbols (identified during research expeditions, laboratories, educational projects, and awareness-raising activities in the above territories). The working hypotheses of the study assumed the following.

1. The tasks of territorial development require a high degree of participation of residents in the development and implementation of projects related to local identity and unique symbolic resources.
2. Local entrepreneurs and activists, local communities (if any) and municipal administrations usually lack the skills to capitalize on symbolic heritage and develop a creative economy on its basis.
3. Most often, local communities remain unaware of the opportunities offered by symbolic resources and additionally need not only technology for working with heritage, but also an outside view of this heritage from experts with professional training.
4. The locality-bound and «parochial» view on opportunities offered by the symbolic capital among local activists predetermine the implementation of projects, as a rule, within the boundaries of a specific settlement or municipality and rarely extending beyond them.
5. In joint project activities and research work, local representatives of business, government and the local community can get acquainted with heritage management and experts (having experience in territorial development through the implementation of creative projects, an interdisciplinary approach to symbolic capital, skills in moderation and facilitation in group work), which allows to formulate project ideas and create teams, as well as to build horizontal relationships between them within each territory and between projects and teams from different territories.

The research strategy logically derived from the interdisciplinary approach demanded to study symbolic capital and combined quantitative, qualitative and comparative analyses. The interdisciplinary logic, in turn, was directly linked to the object under study – «the epistemology of this knowledge is based on its «environmental» model: contextual research, i.e. included in the dynamic context of culture, time and circumstances... The conflict of development and preservation, production and reproduction, global and local, unifying «flow» and unique culture of a «place» are the key problems of IDR (interdisciplinary) research» [Yanitskii, 2018, p. 126]. The research may include mapping the symbolic resources of territories, extracting meanings from them and interpreting them for use in business chains (for which the so-called «Chamomile of Meanings» is applicable – the method by D.B. Oinas [Oinas, 2022]).

The information data base was collected by different ways: analysis of statistical data from open sources, media, documents and information provided by municipal administrations; work in archives; data from expert, group and individual express and in-depth interviews; included and unsystematic observation; personal participation of the author in the development of goals, technical assignments and working hypotheses of expeditions, strategic sessions, workshops; results of questionnaires of participants of training programs and open local public events. It is necessary to note the combination of research methods with various options of educational and enlightening (open public lectures, film screenings) and interactive formats (round tables, moderated discussions, strategic sessions, work in groups), as well as public events – open holidays (art festival, free market, psycho-picnic, impromptu concert, daytime disco).

Some results of the conducted research, during which the development opportunities of the Nizhny Novgorod region using symbolic resources, creative potential and local identity were elicited, are presented in earlier publications of the author [Kruze, 2023] and other participants of the listed projects. This paper presents the results of the study and use of symbolic resources in two municipal districts of the region (obtained during the expedition of the Faculty of Geography of Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov and the formation of the creative industries cluster «Filigree Kingdom»).

The objectives of the urban studies and implemented projects included the search for additional symbols that can unite an initiative community or project team around themselves, and increase the symbolic capital of the territories. In addition to the actual analysis of symbolic resources, an inventory of local communities was conducted, their commitment to symbolic resources and cultural heritage sites was studied, as well as the influence of natural objects and historical, cultural, and architectural heritage on creative entrepreneurial projects and initiatives in gastro-branding, folk art and crafts (FAC), decorative and applied arts (DAA), visual arts and new media.

The study of social resources and prospects of individual territories in the Nizhny Novgorod region

Not to over-complicate the article with the description of detailed economic and geographical position of each of the territories under study, we note the relatively low popularity of the municipal districts of the Nizhny Novgorod region as tourist locations and the presence in each of them of at least one symbol with which the district can be stably associated: Voskresensky municipal district – Lake Svetloyar, Vachsky municipal district – Kazakovskaya filigree. Below we briefly outline the results obtained.

The study of factors and prospects for creative industries in rural areas in the Voskresensky municipal district of the Nizhny Novgorod region began with a study of documents in the public domain – the website of the municipal district administration [Website of the administration..., 2024], as well as an encyclopedia about the district, published before the municipal reform of 2014 [Encyclopedia ..., 2014].

Voskresensky municipal district in the Nizhny Novgorod region. The expedition of the Department of Economic and Social Geography of Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov to Nizhny

Novgorod region planned to focus on urbanism and development of territories, education, enlightenment and civic science, social sphere and social capital of the territory, symbolic resources, cultural and historical heritage and their capitalization through creative projects and businesses. The program was flexible and capable of helping with requests from local authorities and business and public groups, was free in selecting research methods, ready to incorporate new impressions and experience of participants, various cultural and educational events.

The expedition, formed to study the socio-economic resources of the territory, was aimed at: a) searching for new non-standard directions for rural development; b) identifying the prerequisites for the formation of a more diverse labor market in the district; c) studying «growth points» capable of increasing the investment potential and attractiveness of the district, primarily Lake Svetloyar (a natural monument of federal significance located on the territory of the district), as well as other cultural, historical and natural resources; d) determining the main directions in developing the district, increasing its competitiveness, taking into account the balance between innovations and traditional way of life.

The expedition had a comprehensive nature – as an educational fieldwork, during which the participants practiced the skills of conducting focus groups, sociological surveys, conducting in-depth interviews, organizing filming in the field, etc. – and a type of intellectual leisure, during which the participants received information about the history of Povetluzhye and Zavetluzhye, immersed themselves in the atmosphere of the taiga, lakes, estates, participated in meetings, round tables, discussions, immersive excursions and performances. It should be noted that the integrative model of leisure activity is fully described by the concept of «intellectual leisure» proposed by J. Kelly (cited in: [Andreeva, 2014, p. 13]). In turn, intellectual leisure involves both the consumption and creation of cultural goods.

Volunteers from the Nizhny Novgorod Region took an active part in the expedition – members of the expert community, representatives of creative industries, self-employed craftsmen, managers and employees of local governments, cultural institutions, education, NGOs and businesses. All participants in the expedition were excited about the opportunity to find new prospects for the development of the district. This was the goal of the study – an attempt to offer the forest area non-standard development path based on its rich historical and cultural heritage, unique natural sites, symbolic resources and investment potential, and the development of creative industries. Detailed information about the methodology and results of the expedition can be found in [Research by young geographers, 2023, p. 163]. The results of the study are structured in the following sequence.

1. Brief information on the resources of the research area: economic and geographical position and natural resources; transport and engineering infrastructure; social infrastructure; tourist infrastructure.

2. The population of the area as a resource for the development of creative industries: history of settlement; settlement system; human capital and labor resources; seasonal population and downshifting.

3. Classical economy as a basis for creative economy: structure of the local budget; the impact of agriculture, forestry and tourism on the economy of the area and the development of creative industries.

4. Symbolic resources and social capital of the district: social capital and self-organization of the population; symbolic resources of the territory – historical heritage and crafts, brands and images.

5. Territorial aspect in creative industries development: formation of creative clusters; analysis of promising territories.

Regarding creative projects based on symbolic resources, the expedition participants noted the following:

– prospects for gastronomic branding, which «provides opportunities for organizing and developing creative industries in the Voskresensky District. The main problem for gastronomic branding of the territory is to find and create unique and attractive recipes that can distinguish fish and berry dishes from similar ones that are ubiquitous throughout the Non-Black Earth Region» [The influence of creative industries ..., 2023, p. 161];

– development of folk crafts related to wood. «Historically, wickerwork, wood carving, flax weaving, matting production, Shadrinsk painting on spinning wheels, pottery, cooperage, tar-making, etc. developed. The once-existing chest craft with its center in the village of Raskat was considered unique. Active development of tourism in the region gave impetus to the revival of crafts. Development of original souvenir products and cultural education may help increase the tourist flow, related branches of business in the hospitality sector can develop» [The influence of creative industries ..., 2023, p. 161].

The expedition emphasized the role of the so-called «new rural settlers» influencing social capital in rural areas. «The influence of these factors on the territory is not direct, but indirect: first, a unique resource attracts people from outside, then stimulates them to fully or partially move to the territory of the district. The rural area of the district becomes not only and not so much a place of agricultural production, but a habitat and a place of consumption of recreational resources and symbolic capital» [The influence of creative industries ..., 2023, p. 163]. A positive result of the joint actions of local activists, representatives of government bodies and the business community was the replenishment of the regulatory framework of the region with the law «On the specifics of the development of ecological tourism and tourism in rural areas in the Nizhny Novgorod Region» [Decree of the Government of the Nizhny Novgorod Region ..., 2022].

Vachsky Municipal District, the Nizhny Novgorod Region. This territory has historically specialized in artistic metalworking. Its «genius loci» is the serf peasant D.I. Kondratov, the founder of an industrial dynasty in the mid-19th century, which left a powerful industrial, cultural and symbolic legacy. An analysis conducted by specialists in the region showed that creative industries can act as sources capable of ensuring the fastest and most sustainable growth of the local economy in a relatively short period of time (2024–2030).

In this regard, the investment policy pursued in the Nizhny Novgorod region prioritized the establishment of a cluster of creative industries «Filigree Kingdom» on the territory of the Vachsky municipal district. The dominant (supporting) object of the cluster, which acts as a creative incubator, is the Zagorye creative park, a complex of modern infrastructure for prototyping products of creative industries and their further commercialization (fashion industry, industrial design, architecture, gastronomic industry, data processing, virtual and augmented reality, digital content, animation production, blogging, advertising, printing industry, etc.). The Park is planned to be located within the boundaries of the Kazakovo village, where the famous «Kazakovskoe enterprise of artistic products» is located. Its products have the recognizable brand name «Kazakovskaya filigran». Two land plots with an area of 5,2 hectares and 14,7 hectares, respectively, have been allocated for the creation of a village and a creative estate [Chesnokov, 2024].

The competitive advantage of the project is its connection with the history and traditions of the place. The project aims to implement a new model of economic growth, change the structure of the local economy and increase its turnover through sources that have a multiplier potential and unite a wide range of businessmen around one idea. This will allow the creation of new business chains and the inclusion of the backbone enterprises of Trud JSC and Kazakovskoye Predpriyatie Khudozhestvennykh Izdeliy (KPKHI) JSC, the main taxpayers to local economy. Among other problems that need to be solved is the preservation of the school of artistic metalworking. The village of Kazakovo, like the entire Vachsky district, can be confidently attributed to the territories where creative activity exists. In addition to the backbone enterprises of Trud JSC and KPKHI JSC there is a significant number of individual enterprises that produce jewelry, artistic castings, souvenirs on individual orders and other artistic products. The project operator was the municipal project park for the development of the creative industries cluster «Filigree Kingdom», created in 2024 with the support from the administration of the Vachsky municipal district, entrepreneurs, heads of public associations, and local activists. A mixed team of specialists started work after completing training in 2023 as part of the «Heritage Leaders» project of the ANCO «ASIRIS» [Chesnokov, 2024].

The tasks of the project park include: managing sources of consumer demand, creating and promoting tourist products of the Vachsky district and adjacent territories, restoring cultural heritage sites, improving public spaces, and forming a favorable socio-cultural environment. The project team assists the anchor investor (the management company of the Zagorye creative park) in marketing the territory and building new business chains. The sales funnel and attention to the Zagorye Park are supposed to be carried out through promotions and public events that help attract first tourists to the Zemskaya School (a cultural and craft center in the historical building of the Zemskaya School, built by the Kondratov family in 1904), and then representatives of creative professions – participants of the art residence and creative laboratories «Filigranno» [Memory of heritage ..., 2023; Creative laboratory ..., 2024].

Conclusion

Studies conducted in the Nizhny Novgorod region confirm the high potential of symbolic resources and the possibility of creating modern successful creative projects based on them not only in the million-plus city – the regional center, but also in rural areas. Symbolic capital serves as the basis for designing business chains based on local identity and involving local symbols in the heritage economy. Analysis of creative startups around identified local symbols helps to establish the most promising types of entrepreneurial activity and initiatives in the field of creative industries.

However, the use of social capital requires certain skills and theoretical ideas, and the process of mastering them requires time and effort. The analysis of the progress and results of development projects implemented in the Nizhny Novgorod region attracted attention of communities to local symbolic resources and helped identify effective formats for involvement and group interaction for the transfer of skills in working with symbols of the territory: interdisciplinary educational and educational programs, research expeditions and laboratories. Summarizing the positive experience, the achieved results of systemic activity and the unification of efforts of various parties to include symbolic resources in the heritage economy, the following techniques and success factors can be distinguished:

- reflection and moderation in group work
- both economic and «cultural» analysis of the situation;
- multi-sensory approach in the spirit of the impression economy, as well as creative marketing;
- reliance on historical memory in restoring the lost history;
- active involvement of residents, communities and groups in these processes;
- creation of various types of partnerships between cultural organizations, business and government bodies;
- a cluster system of interaction between various organizations and communities;
- attention to natural, geographical features and symbols;
- implementation of an inventory and mapping of symbolic resources.

The experience of the Nizhny Novgorod region shows that a systemic approach to forming creative projects and clusters based on local symbols is the result of combining the resources of various organizations and lies beyond the scope of the activities of only professional museum and local history communities, legislators or entrepreneurs. The key to success lies in the joint efforts of business and government representatives, as well as scientific, expert and urban conservation communities, in searching for and developing solutions, relying on volunteer initiatives and active support from local residents.

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