



ARTICLE



IMPACT OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CREATIVE SPACES AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MEGACITIES

IMPACTO DO ENVOLVIMENTO JUVENIL EM ESPAÇOS CRIATIVOS COMO FATOR DE DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL DE MEGACIDADES

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How to cite this article:

Minzaripov, R., Svechikhina, S., Dudochnikov, A., Volkova, N., & Khalilova, T. (2026). Impact of Youth Involvement in Creative Spaces as a Factor of Sustainable Development of Megacities. *Journal of Sustainable Competitive Intelligence*, 16, e0539. <https://doi.org/10.37497/eagleSustainable.v16i.539>

ABSTRACT

Purpose: to establish the influence of youth involvement in the activities of creative spaces and industries using the example of the city of Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan, Russia).

Methodology/approach: The empirical basis of the study was the results of a social survey. The study covered different age and gender groups of young people and aimed to determine the level of youth involvement in the activities of creative spaces and industries based on the example of Kazan. The survey involved 480 respondents aged 14 to 35, of whom 78% were female and 22% were male.

Originality/Relevance: Modern megacities experience continuous population growth, with a significant proportion of young people. The inclusion of this age group in urban life plays a key role in its sustainable development.

Key findings: The data allowed the authors to assess the level of youth involvement in the creative field and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of creative spaces and industries as tools for developing the megacity to achieve the principles of sustainable development.

Theoretical/methodological contributions: The study highlighted theoretical and methodological approaches to creative spaces and industries, clarifying the concepts of creative spaces and creative industries.

Keywords: Creative spaces. Creative industries. Digitalization. Youth. Modern megacity. Labor market.





RESUMO

Objetivo: estabelecer a influência do envolvimento dos jovens nas atividades de espaços e indústrias criativas, utilizando o exemplo da cidade de Kazan (República do Tartaristão, Rússia).

Metodologia/abordagem: A base empírica do estudo foram os resultados de uma pesquisa social. O estudo abrangeu diferentes faixas etárias e gêneros de jovens e teve como objetivo determinar o nível de envolvimento dos jovens nas atividades de espaços e indústrias criativas, com base no exemplo de Kazan. A pesquisa envolveu 480 entrevistados com idades entre 14 e 35 anos, dos quais 78% eram mulheres e 22% homens.

Originalidade/Relevância: As megacidades modernas vivenciam um crescimento populacional contínuo, com uma proporção significativa de jovens. A inclusão dessa faixa etária na vida urbana desempenha um papel fundamental em seu desenvolvimento sustentável.

Principais conclusões: Os dados permitiram aos autores avaliar o nível de envolvimento dos jovens no campo criativo e tirar conclusões sobre a eficácia dos espaços e indústrias criativas como ferramentas para o desenvolvimento da megacidade, visando alcançar os princípios do desenvolvimento sustentável.

Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas: O estudo destacou abordagens teóricas e metodológicas sobre espaços e indústrias criativas, esclarecendo os conceitos de espaços criativos e indústrias criativas.

Palavras-chave: Espaços criativos. Indústrias criativas. Digitalização. Juventude. Megacidade moderna. Mercado de trabalho.

1 INTRODUCTION

Creative industries do not have a single definition or universally accepted classification. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) uses the term "creative industries," the European Union speaks about "cultural and creative industries," and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) refers to "copyright industries." Several countries continue to refer to them as "cultural industries," while South Korea and Japan use the term "content industry." These terminological differences lead to heterogeneous approaches in assessing the social contribution of creative industries.



Based on classifications proposed by some countries and research conducted at the Institute of Statistical Research and Economics of Knowledge under the National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia) (Saltanova, 2021), we established 11 types of creative industries to investigate the research problem (Figure 1).

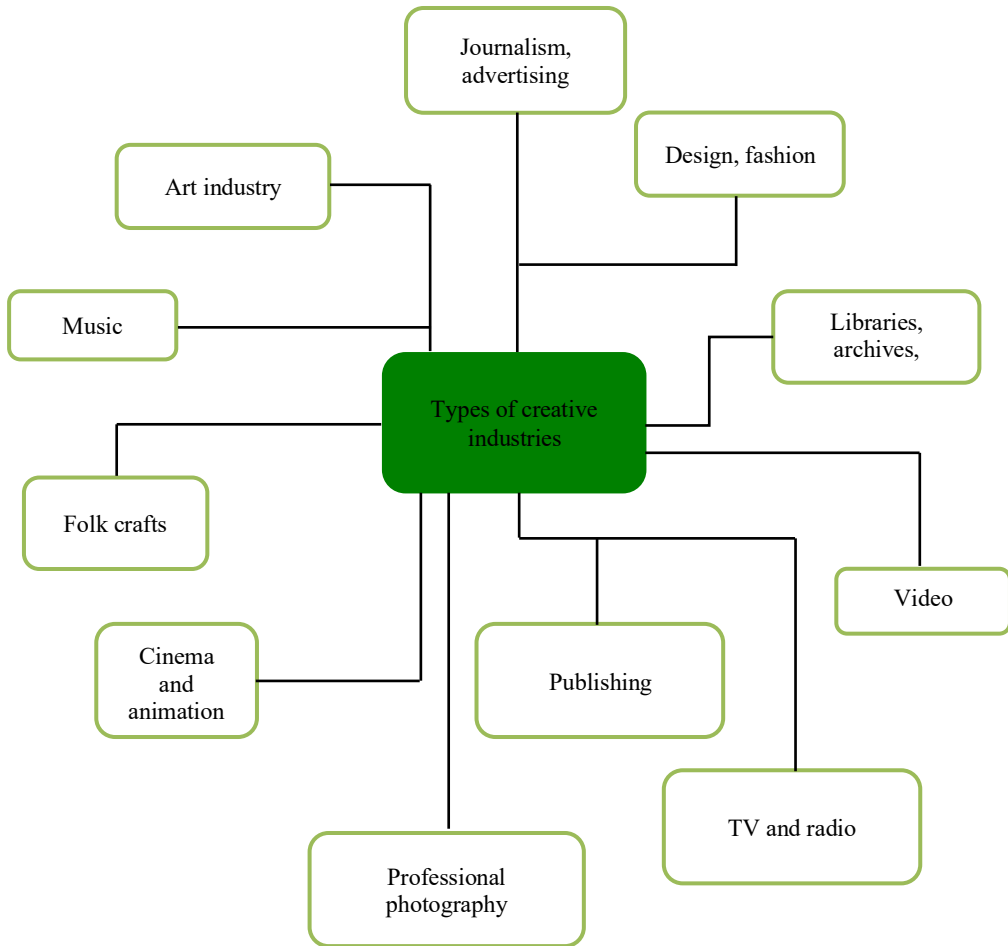


Figure 1: Types of creative industries

In the framework of creative industries, creative spaces should be considered a sub-area of this economic sector (Liu, Kou, 2024). The value of creative clusters for young people lies in the symbiosis of technical innovation, artistic creativity, and business entrepreneurship in a single space (Comunian, England, 2019; Rabelo Neto et al., 2024). To understand the phenomenon of creative spaces, the first step is to give a clear definition. However, researchers often face terminological uncertainty, since current scientific literature mentions several concepts interconnected in meaning and function: creative spaces, creative clusters, and art spaces. The common element bringing all these terms together is the concept of creativity.



Relying on Richard Florida's book "The Creative Class" (2005), we identified seven types of creative spaces to study the phenomenon of creative clusters (Figure 2).

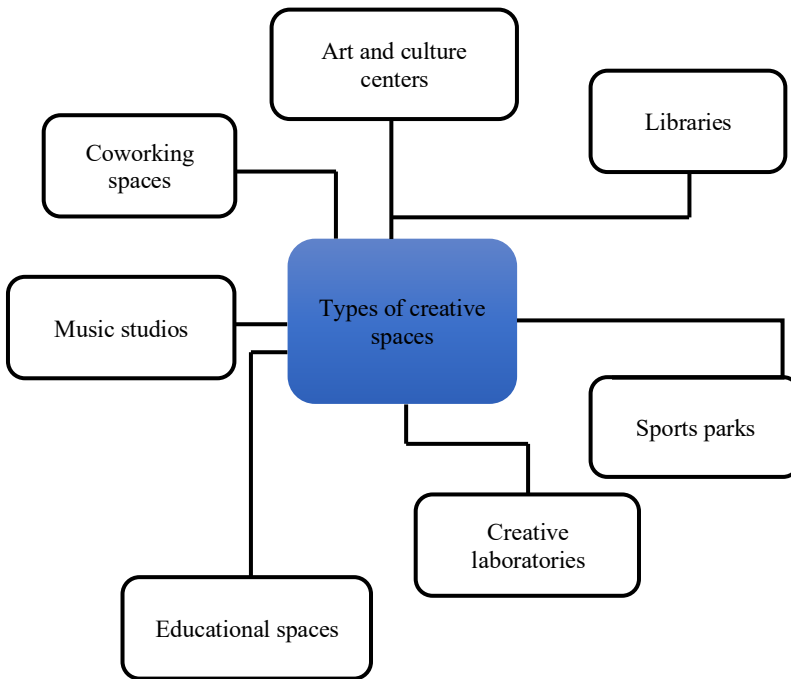


Figure 2: Types of creative spaces

Modern creative industries as a practice originated in 2004 with the establishment of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (2025b). This network of associations is built around seven creative fields that can be chosen by cities depending on what specific creative sector they would like to prioritize: literature, cinema, music, crafts and folk art, design, media art, and gastronomy. In 2019, Kazan joined the network of creative cities, choosing the creative direction of "music" (UNESCO Creative Cities Network, 2025a). Consequently, this large city can be described as a municipality that deliberately focuses on activities in creative industries and spaces.

Studies confirm that such sites are formally positioned as open to all city residents, including young people, and truly attract the representatives of local communities (Akbar, Edelenbos, 2021; Morales-Flores, Marmolejo-Duarte, 2025). Creative industries play a large role in unlocking the potential of young people in urban environments by offering opportunities for learning, self-realization, and professional growth. In these spaces, young people find not only a source of inspiration but also a platform to express their ideas, initiate social changes, and create innovative solutions to the problems of megacities (Mores, Pradipto, 2025; Cudny et al., 2025).



2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Youth leisure is recognized as an important element of socialization, reflecting value orientations and social trends. Studies of this phenomenon represent the following approaches:

- The sociocultural approach studies the influence of leisure on professional self-determination through the lens of social institutions and cultural norms. For example, P. Bourdieu (1995) proposed the theory of "cultural capital," which suggests that hobbies and leisure practices develop skills that will be useful in future professional work.

- The psycho-pedagogical approach emphasizes personal development and the methods of activating career choice. Within this approach, researcher E.A. Klimov (1996) developed a theory of professional self-determination where leisure as a phenomenon is viewed as a space for "testing" professional activities.

- The activity approach dates back to the theoretical developments of L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontyev, and S.L. Rubinstein. Within this approach, young people's leisure practices are considered as a space for advanced socialization, where proto-professional competencies are formed through interactive and project forms of activity.

- The digital and network approach explores the impact of online leisure activities on professional trajectories. For example, M. Castells (Serikina, 2019) explores the concept of network society, where career guidance for young people is carried out via digital platforms.

G.N. Larina (2022) proposed a three-level model of professional self-determination composed of the following interconnected components:

- the emotional-motivational component (characterizes the person's subjective attitude to the process of career choice);

- the cognitive-reflective component (reflects the informational-cognitive basis of self-determination);

- the practical-activity component (manifested in the ability to make career choices).

In his research on adolescence, J. Marcia pointed out differences in professional self-determination among adolescents, proposing four ego-identity statuses associated with career choice: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion.

E.L. Omelchenko in "Russian youth: from the 20th to the 21st century" (2007) describes the concept of the cultural dimension of youth marked by the oppositions of "ours"/"others" and "advanced"/"normal."

Citing "Recognizing and assisting multipotential youth" by R. Fredrickson and J. Rothney (1972), Forbes argues that this phenomenon is far from new. Back in the Renaissance, the term "polymath" was used to describe a well-rounded person whose versatile knowledge allowed them to make significant contributions to various fields. A striking example is Leonardo da Vinci, who proved himself as an artist, engineer, writer, and musician.

Modern psychology and pedagogy refer to such people with the term "multipotential," meaning a person who, under favorable conditions, can develop many high-level competencies. This points to the emergence of a fundamentally new approach to self-realization characteristic of young people with multidirectional talents and interests.



Synthesizing these approaches, youth involvement in creative spaces can be interpreted as a multi-level process linking leisure practices with the accumulation of cultural and social capital, the development of skills, and professional self-determination. In an urban context, these processes may generate broader effects, such as increased human capital quality, innovation capacity, and social cohesion, which are essential for sustainable urban development and competitiveness.

Within this framework, the study proceeds from the assumption that the functions of creative spaces (leisure, education, socialization) are indirectly connected with sustainability outcomes through the formation of youth competencies, networks, and professional orientations. On this basis, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Youth involvement in creative spaces is positively associated with perceptions of self-realization and personal growth.

H2: Educational and cultural creative spaces are more strongly associated with professional orientation than purely leisure-oriented spaces.

H3: Youth involved in creative industries and spaces demonstrate more positive perceptions of urban development and attractiveness.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research design

The study relied on a quantitative data collection method — a sociological survey. The survey provided an opportunity to cover a relatively large sample of respondents in a short time, which is especially valuable when studying large-scale phenomena, such as attendance of creative spaces or youth engagement with creative industries. An important advantage was the ability to identify patterns and associations (for example, between visiting creative spaces and the self-realization of young people) using statistical analysis of survey responses.

3.2 Data collection

This research was designed as a cross-sectional survey study. The consumption practices of young people in the creative sector were analyzed based on a survey of young people living in the city of Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan, Russia). Data collection was conducted in February–April 2025.

The total sample comprised 480 respondents, aged 18–35. The age distribution included 196 participants aged 18–23, 152 participants aged 24–29, and 132 participants aged 30–35. Young men made up 22% of the sample, and young women constituted 78%.

Participants were recruited using a non-probabilistic sampling approach (voluntary participation), which allowed access to diverse groups of urban youth within the study timeframe. The planned sample size was set at 480 respondents to ensure coverage of the key age groups and to support subgroup comparisons by age and gender. At the same time, the study does not claim statistical representativeness of all youth in Kazan, and this



limitation is considered in the interpretation of results.

Participation was voluntary. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the survey, the anonymous nature of participation, and the use of the data in aggregated form for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained prior to questionnaire completion. No personal identifiers were collected.

To reduce common method bias, the questionnaire was structured in separate thematic blocks and used neutral wording without “right/wrong” framing. The analysis was conducted using aggregated patterns rather than single-item interpretations.

3.3 Instrument and measures

A semi-structured questionnaire was used. The questionnaire included:

- (1) socio-demographic items (age, gender);
- (2) items measuring engagement with creative spaces (types of spaces visited and frequency/participation patterns);
- (3) items measuring involvement in creative industries (types of industries consumed/engaged with);
- (4) items capturing respondents’ perceptions of the functions of creative spaces (leisure, socialization, educational role, entrepreneurship potential);
- (5) items reflecting perceived links between creative spaces/industries and self-realization/personal growth and urban attractiveness/development.

Most perception-based items were measured using Likert-type response options (agreement format). Prior to data collection, the questionnaire wording was checked for clarity and content relevance to the study objectives. Internal consistency of the key multi-item blocks was evaluated after data collection using Cronbach’s alpha. Where relevant, the structure of the perception items may be additionally assessed in further work using exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis.

3.4 Analytical plan

The analysis included descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) to characterize youth engagement with creative spaces and industries. In addition, to examine relationships between involvement and perceptions (e.g., involvement → self-realization; involvement → perceived urban attractiveness), the study applied association testing using correlation analysis and group comparisons across age and gender. Where applicable, effect sizes and confidence intervals were considered alongside statistical significance.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The majority of the surveyed young people (53.3%) reported that they most often visit art and cultural centers. Music studios turned out to be less in demand, as only 11.7% expressed interest in this type of creative space. Considering the ideas of Kazan youth about the functions of creative spaces (Figure 3), most respondents (53.3%) completely agreed



that creative spaces perform a leisure function and a socialization function (51.7%). Notably, the educational function received "somewhat agree" answers from over half of the surveyed youth (52.5%). The statement that "creative spaces play a big role in the development of entrepreneurship" received the greatest number of "not sure" answers (10%). Thus, the respondents' consumption practices in the creative sector are mostly limited to the classic cluster platforms in the urban space. This indicates that creative spaces are primarily perceived by young people as environments for leisure and social interaction, while their potential role in entrepreneurship and economic activity remains less clearly articulated. Such perceptions may reflect the current institutional positioning of creative spaces in the city, where cultural and social functions dominate over business-oriented ones.

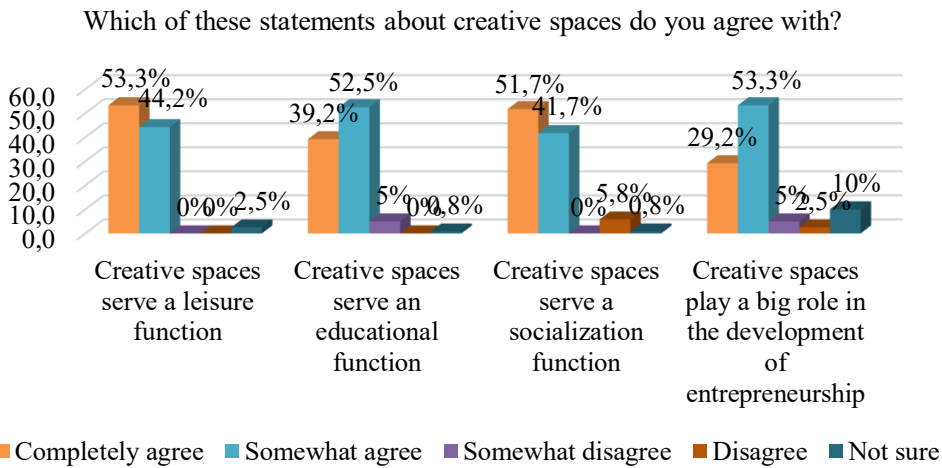


Figure 3: Ideas about the functions of creative spaces

The majority of informants (30.8%) gave positive assessments of the effect of creative industries and spaces on the attractiveness of their place of residence for permanent residence and tourism (Figure 4). Intriguing answers were given to the question about readiness to tie one's professional activities with creative industries. The majority of young people (37.5%) would prefer to interact with creative industries in their work, although 31.7% of respondents would rather not. Similar perceptions of creative spaces as predominantly cultural and social environments rather than entrepreneurial platforms have been documented in studies of urban creative clusters in European cities (Comunian & England, 2019).

This distribution of responses suggests a differentiated perception of creative industries among youth: while a substantial group associates them with future professional opportunities, a comparable share continues to view them mainly as a sphere of consumption rather than employment. This ambivalence is important for understanding the limits of creative industries as a source of mass employment for young people. Comparable patterns of selective professionalization within creative industries, where interest in creative work coexists with uncertainty about employment stability, are noted in recent urban



studies (Pham et al., 2024).

The typical consumption practices in creative industries among the urban youth of Kazan included cinema and animation (75%), music (74.2%), libraries, archives, and museums (46.7%), design and fashion (32.5%), professional photography (28.3%), journalism and advertising (26.7%), publishing (25%), the art industry (25%), video games (23.3%), broadcasting (14.2%), and folk crafts (9.2%). Notably, several respondents added their own creative industries: choreography and theater. Ultimately, Kazan youth were the most familiar with the creative industries and spaces present in the city.

Socialization was highlighted by respondents as the main function of creative industries. In turn, the top five most promising types of creative spaces according to the informants were art and culture centers (53.3%), educational spaces (43.3%), libraries (40.8%), sports parks (29.2%), and coworking spaces (20%). It is also worth noting that 15% of respondents said that they did not visit creative spaces at all. Previous research suggests that such non-participation may persist even in cities with a developed creative infrastructure, reflecting differences in access, motivation, or perceived relevance of creative spaces among youth (Alsayel et al., 2022; Jurkevičienė, Budrytė, 2025).

The predominance of cultural and educational formats, alongside the relatively lower importance of coworking spaces, indicates that youth involvement is currently more closely linked to cultural participation than to entrepreneurial or innovation-driven activities. This finding partly explains the cautious attitudes toward the economic role of creative spaces observed earlier.

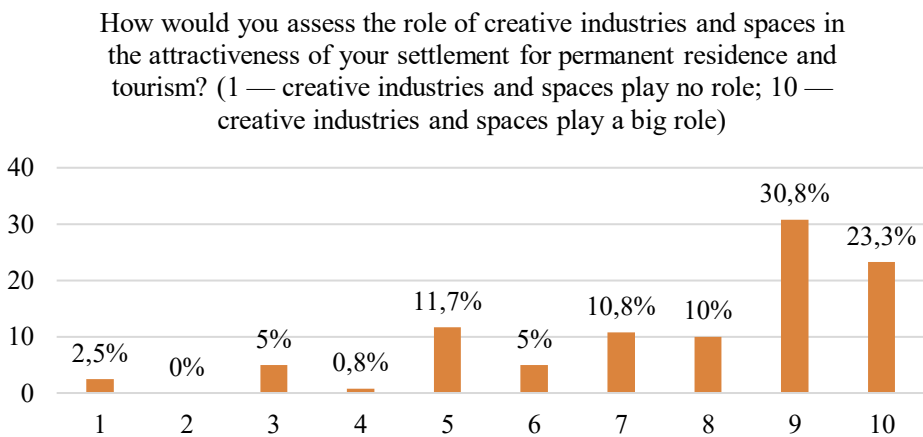


Figure 4: Assessment of the role of creative industries and spaces in the attractiveness of the settlement

The development of creative industries and spaces is inextricably linked with a change in the socio-cultural environment of the city and the self-realization of young people. Thus, our respondents did not give strictly negative answers to the question "Do you agree that creative industries and spaces promote self-realization and personal growth?" (Figure 5). The overwhelming majority of young people (53.3%) fully agreed that creative industries and spaces contribute to self-realization and personal growth; the answer

"somewhat agree" was chosen by 37.5% of respondents, and "somewhat disagree" was picked by 9.2%. The answers of our respondents support the concept of "slash people" by N.A. Lapidus (2020). The survey data clearly show that most young people are ready to employ creative spaces and industries as a tool for self-realization and personal growth. At the same time, the emphasis on personal development rather than economic outcomes suggests that the contribution of creative spaces to urban development is mediated primarily through human capital formation rather than direct economic effects. This may be attributed to the fact that several types of such activities are well developed in the city and are socially accessible to young people. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary research emphasizing the indirect role of creative activities in urban development through human capital, social ties, and cultural engagement rather than immediate economic returns (Eakin et al., 2022).

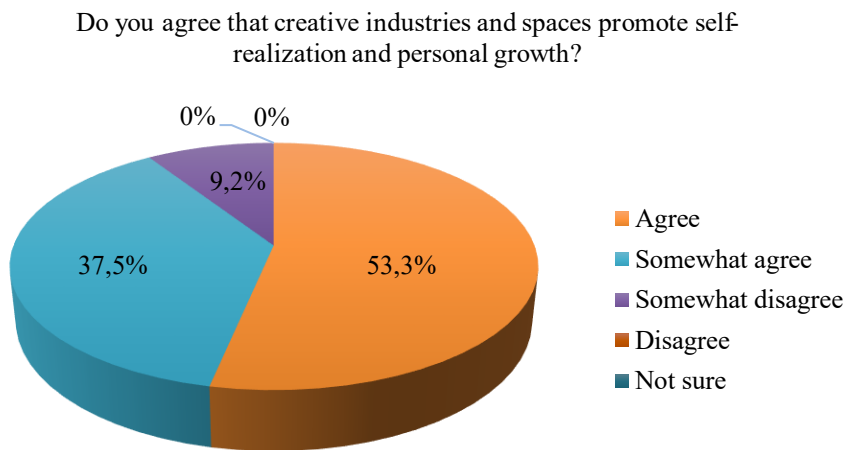


Figure 5: Attitudes towards creative industries and spaces as a means for self-realization and personal growth

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Theoretical implications

Most young people know about the creative spaces present in their place of residence. An important factor is that each respondent had several people in their circle involved in creative industries. This demonstrates how widespread this sector of the economy is and the importance of its development in megacities. From a theoretical perspective, this confirms the role of creative spaces as a stable element of the urban social environment rather than a marginal cultural phenomenon. Creative industries and spaces can therefore be interpreted as part of the intangible resources of the metropolis, linked to youth socialization and self-determination.



5.2. Practical implications

We found that most young people engage with creative industries and spaces, and a third of respondents would prefer to have their work associated with creative industries. Thus, this age group sees this economic sector as attractive for personal self-determination. This suggests that creative spaces may serve not only leisure functions but also act as entry points into future professional trajectories for young people.

The types of creative industries preferred by youth are cinema and animation, music, and the library sphere. Among the different types of creative spaces, art and culture centers, educational spaces, and libraries were highlighted by young people as the most promising. Notably, the library sector is at the top of consumption rankings both among creative industries and creative spaces. This testifies to the high level of culture of young people in Kazan and their interest in literature and education and highlights the continued relevance of libraries as multifunctional urban spaces.

5.3. Research agenda

The key finding of this study is the positive opinion of the majority of respondents that creative spaces and industries do affect the development of the metropolis. Furthermore, young people, being a potential personnel component of the economic sector, believe that these fields need to be developed. Importantly, most young people are satisfied with the representation of creative spaces and industries in Kazan. This indicates that urban creative spaces and industries in the city perform at a high level, serving as tools to involve young people in the development of the metropolis.

At the same time, further research should extend this analysis to other megacities in order to assess the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal and comparative designs could provide deeper insight into how youth involvement in creative spaces influences urban development dynamics over time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This article was prepared at the expense of the grant allocated to Kazan Federal University for the project No. FZSM-2023-0022 "Digital socialization and digital competence of youth in the conditions of global system changes: regulation technologies, risks, scenarios" as part of the state assignment.

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