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The Global City under Pressure: Kyiv's Transformation amid the Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract

This study contributes to ongoing academic debates on global city theory by examining the unique case of Kyiv during the ongoing Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While foundational scholarship, such as the research of the Globalisation and World Cities Research Network (GaWC), conceptualises global cities as stable command-and-control hubs in the international economy, the city of Kyiv presents a unique case. Despite the profound disruptions of a full-scale war, Kyiv has maintained and even actively developed its functions as a global city. This research explores the underlying mechanisms that enable a city to sustain its global role under such extreme circumstances. Through a mixed-methods approach, I analyse quantitative data from GaWC and official documents to situate Kyiv's pre-war and wartime global city profile. This is complemented by a qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and media materials to capture the lived experiences and motivations of representatives from international companies who are key to maintaining the city's global functions. By integrating macro-level theory with micro-level lived realities, this study argues that a global city's resilience is not merely a matter of structural-economic indicators, but is critically shaped by local actors, institutional adaptability, and extraordinary human agency. The research offers a novel contribution to urban theory, providing insights into how global cities can operate and adapt in times of armed conflict and political uncertainty, thereby refining existing frameworks on urban resilience and global networks.

Keywords: global city, urban resilience, human agency, Kyiv, wartime operations, transnational corporations, post-socialist context, global urban networks, geopolitical risk, mixed-methods research.

Abstrakt

Diese Studie leistet einen Beitrag zu den laufenden akademischen Debatten über die Theorie der globalen Städte, indem sie den einzigartigen Fall von Kyjiw während der andauernden umfassenden russischen Invasion in der Ukraine untersucht. Während die grundlegende Forschung, wie die des Globalisation and World Cities Research Network (GaWC), globale Städte als stabile Kommando- und Kontrollzentren in der internationalen Wirtschaft konzeptualisiert, stellt die Stadt Kyjiw einen einzigartigen Fall dar. Trotz der tiefgreifenden Zerstörungen eines umfassenden Krieges hat Kyjiw seine Funktionen als globale Stadt nicht nur aufrechterhalten, sondern sogar aktiv weiterentwickelt. Diese Forschung untersucht die zugrunde liegenden Mechanismen, die es einer Stadt ermöglichen, ihre globale Rolle unter solch extremen Umständen zu behaupten. Mithilfe eines Mixed-Methods-Ansatzes analysiere ich quantitative Daten von GaWC und aus offiziellen Dokumenten, um das Profil von Kyjiw als globale Stadt vor und während des Krieges zu verorten. Dies wird ergänzt durch eine qualitative thematische Analyse von halbstrukturierten Interviews und Medienmaterialien, um die gelebten Erfahrungen und Motivationen von Vertretern internationaler Unternehmen zu erfassen, die für die Aufrechterhaltung der globalen Funktionen der Stadt von entscheidender Bedeutung sind. Durch die Integration von Theorie auf Makroebene mit gelebten Realitäten auf Mikroebene argumentiert diese Studie, dass die Resilienz einer globalen Stadt nicht nur eine Frage von strukturell-ökonomischen Indikatoren ist, sondern entscheidend durch lokale Akteure, institutionelle Anpassungsfähigkeit und außergewöhnliche menschliche Handlungsfähigkeit geprägt wird. Die Forschung leistet einen neuartigen Beitrag zur urbanen Theorie, indem sie Einblicke gibt, wie globale Städte in Zeiten bewaffneter Konflikte und politischer Unsicherheit agieren und sich anpassen können, und somit bestehende Rahmenwerke zur urbanen Resilienz und zu globalen Netzwerken verfeinert.

Schlüsselwörter: global city, urbane Resilienz, menschliche Handlungsfähigkeit, Kyjiw, Kriegszeitoperationen, transnationale Unternehmen, post-sozialistischer Kontext, globale urbane Netzwerke, geopolitisches Risiko, Mixed-Methods-Forschung.

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Context

Before starting my research, it is essential to establish a brief historical and political backdrop, situating Kyiv within the rupture of colonial-era ties, the country's internal divides, and the harsh realities of everyday life for Ukrainians under sustained aggression.

Ukraine's historical emergence as a political entity can be traced back to Kyivan Rus', established around 882 AD by Prince Oleg of Novgorod, who proclaimed Kyiv as "the mother of Rus' cities", laying the foundations for a medieval polity that shaped Eastern Slavic identity. Despite this early formation, modern Ukraine's path to sovereignty unfolded much later. In July 1990, the Ukrainian SSR declared state sovereignty, asserting the primacy of Ukrainian laws, and the pursuit of economic and political independence (Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, 1990). In December 1991, a referendum saw 90 percent of voters endorse full independence, formally severing ties with the Soviet Union and affirming Ukraine's status as a sovereign nation-state (Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, 1990).

Ukraine's post-Soviet political landscape has long been characterised by a bifurcation between pro-Russian and pro-European constituencies. As Ishchenko (2023) argues, this East-West polarisation in Ukraine reflects not simply regional or cultural divisions but deeper class-based conflicts rooted in different visions for the country's trajectory. On one side, the lingering institutional and economic pull from Russia persisted; on the other, aspirations toward European integration signalled an alternative orientation toward democratic governance and economic modernisation. This dualism has shaped political tensions, electoral outcomes, and broader visions of statehood throughout Ukraine's independence (Ishchenko, 2023).

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 marked a definitive rupture from old imperial and colonial frameworks. Far from a peripheral event, this aggression underscored that Kyiv—and Ukraine as a whole—would no longer be subject to Moscow's political orbit. The invasion, aimed at forcibly reasserting Kyiv's subordination, instead catalysed a break in both symbolic and institutional terms, reinforcing Ukraine's European path and its claim to self-determination (Reuters, 2025a; The Guardian, 2025).

As of early 2025, Ukraine has endured over three and a half years of war—not as a historical chapter but as the current condition shaping daily existence. Life in Kyiv and across Ukraine is defined by disruptions: repeated attacks on energy infrastructure, multi-hour blackouts, and dwindling reliability of heating and water systems (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2024; United Nations, 2024). Between March and August 2024 alone, coordinated Russian strikes destroyed 9 GW of electricity generation capacity—roughly half of what Ukraine needs during winter for basic survival (IEA, 2024). In Kyiv, 95 percent of residents rely on centralized district

heating; the cascading impact of electricity outages has affected everything from water supply and education to online connectivity and domestic chores (Reuters, 2024).

The broader societal toll is staggering. According to the World Bank et al. (2025), reconstruction and recovery costs have already reached \$176 billion by the end of 2024, with estimated needs amounting to \$524 billion over the coming decade—far exceeding Ukraine’s annual GDP. These figures reflect not only physical destruction but the decline in public morale and resilience, as extended hardship takes a psychological toll (Reuters, 2025b; The Sun, 2025).

Crucially, this war is far from resolved. The conflict is entrenched, fluid, and politically charged. As European integration is contested, domestic political actors face unprecedented dilemmas—from debates over EU accession to protecting democratic institutions amid emergency governance (Leonard & Krastev, 2024). No actor—domestic or international—can forecast how this war will conclude or what socio-political arrangement will emerge (World Bank et al., 2025).

Introduction

The motivations for this research stem from a dual academic and personal interest in global city theory and the dynamics of global capitalism. My positionality as a Ukrainian and the extraordinary circumstances of my home country have shaped my desire to apply these theories to a unique and critical context. The result is a thesis that bridges established global urban scholarship with the lived realities of a city under duress.

The conceptualisation of the global city, as defined by scholars such as John Friedmann (1982) and Saskia Sassen (1991), emerged in the 1970s against a backdrop of intensified globalisation, increased information flows, and global mobility (Gunter & Hoeven, 2004; Le Galès, 2024). Despite earlier predictions of their decline, cities have consolidated their roles as command centres of the global economy, becoming central hubs for post-industrial economic activities. However, at the time of these conceptualisations, Ukraine and its cities remained behind the Iron Curtain, undergoing a transitional period of Perestroika and nascent, informal integration (Kuzio, 2000). Today, three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine is deeply integrated into global capitalist relations while still navigating a challenging transition from its colonial and socialist past (Åslund, 2009).

This complex trajectory was profoundly altered on 24th February 2022, when the Russian Federation launched a full-scale military invasion. Beyond being a humanitarian catastrophe with devastating consequences (Brookings, 2025), this event united a previously polarised Ukrainian society around a clear pro-Western geopolitical orientation (Leonard & Krastev, 2024). This unprecedented situation presents a significant opportunity to provide novel insights into urban scholarship.

This research sits at the intersection of two critical gaps in the literature. The first concerns the Eurocentric and Global North bias of foundational global city theories. While a growing body of work addresses their applicability to cities in the Global South, attention to Eastern Europe, and particularly a post-socialist country like Ukraine, remains limited. The second gap relates to the absence of studies on how global cities function under the direct pressures of large-scale military conflict. The assumption that a global city's rise occurs in a vacuum of relative stability overlooks the crucial role of entangled geopolitics and armed conflict in shaping urban dynamics.

To address these gaps, I have chosen Kyiv as a compelling case study for several reasons. First, the Globalisation and World Cities Research Network (GaWC), a leading authority in the field, includes Kyiv in its ranking, validating its status as a site of global urban processes (The World According to GaWC, 2024). Second, as the nation's capital, Kyiv is the undisputed centre of Ukraine's economic and political life. Third, as my hometown where I still occasionally reside, my unique positionality

provides invaluable insider knowledge and ethnographic insights, which will enrich the analysis.

Thus, this thesis is guided by the following research question:

How has the Russian invasion of Ukraine influenced the operations of international companies in Kyiv, and what implications does this have for understanding Kyiv as a global city?

To answer this question, I employ a critical realism methodology, which acknowledges that a structured reality exists independently of our perceptions, but our understanding of it is conditioned by social and historical contexts. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine both the objective realities and the subjective experiences that define Kyiv's urban life during wartime. My data sources will include quantitative data from GaWC and international statistics, as well as qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with representatives of international companies, social media analysis, and media materials. My proficiency in both Ukrainian and Russian provides a distinct advantage in accessing and interpreting this data.

The thesis is structured as follows. The literature review will present a comprehensive overview, tracing the evolution of global city theory from its conceptual foundations to more recent debates on conflict and urban resilience. The methodology will detail the research design. The findings will then be presented, which will be analysed in the discussion section, positioning the case of Kyiv within broader academic debates. The discussion and conclusion will summarise the key findings, contributions, and suggestions for future research.

This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of how global cities operate amidst political instability and war. It seeks to extend existing theoretical conceptualisations by incorporating the lived experiences of the people who are central to these global relations.

Literature Review

Search Strategy

For the purposes of my research, a combination of narrative literature review and problem identification review (Machi & McEvoy, 2016) will be conducted, covering topics relevant to my research question. It will both define the current state of knowledge about a topic and argue a thesis that defines a research problem. The main goal of this chapter is to establish key theoretical frameworks and debates, evaluate the strengths and limitations of previous studies, identify gaps in the existing research, and position my work within this academic landscape. In this process, the key themes to be covered have been identified in order to set up the background of my research.

This section begins by establishing the theoretical foundation of my study. To situate my research within broader academic debates, I will first discuss the concept of globalisation as both a new empirical and conceptual reality in which we live. This discussion will provide a basis for understanding the position and significance of global/world cities. A further relevant topic for this study is global geographical inequalities, which constitute the economic context within which the rise of global cities occurs. I will then review the concepts of global and world cities, providing an overview of the classical definitions developed by Sassen, Friedmann, and other key scholars; these will form the primary theoretical framework for my research. Given that my study explicitly addresses the political dimension, I will also examine the literature on the interconnections between global cities and politics. Since the geography of my research extends beyond the Global North—the context in which these foundational global/world city concepts were formulated—I will review critiques of these theories from peripheral and post-socialist perspectives. Finally, I will conclude this section by reviewing literature on global cities in Eastern Europe, with a specific focus on Kyiv. Three additional strands of debate to which my research contributes are the role of Advanced Producer Services (APS) firms, the intersection of cities and war, and the dynamics of business during conflict.

The search for literature will be conducted through wide-ranging databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, as well as more specialised databases like JSTOR, Taylor & Francis, Springer, Wiley, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate. The scope of articles I worked with was limited by availability and language restrictions, as I am proficient only in English, Ukrainian. For each thematic area, I identified and used key words in my search, which are listed in Appendix 1. Additionally, relevant literature was identified through snowball sampling, including references found in the bibliographies of other works and recommendations from colleagues.

At the end of the section, I will identify the research gap in the existing literature and position my study within the academic discussion.

Globalisation: Foundational Context

Globalisation became a central buzzword in academic and public debates beginning in the 1970s, prior to the emergence of global/world city theory. This chapter will first provide a broader academic and empirical context for further discussions about global cities. While the strong popularization of the concept happened over the last decades, the process of globalisation—understood as the “*extension, acceleration, and intensification of consequential worldwide interconnections*” (Sparke, 2013)—has a much longer history. Harvey (1989), in his work discussing the idea of “*compression of time and space*”, demonstrated how globalisation is not simply a neutral or inevitable phenomenon but a historically produced process, shaped by particular political and economic choices, with intellectual roots stretching back to the Enlightenment. This concept highlights how advancements in communication and transport, driven by capitalist imperatives, continually shrink the perceived distances between places, enabling faster flows of capital, goods, and information across the globe. Similarly, Pieterse (2012) distinguishes different waves or periods of globalisation, emphasising its uneven development and contingent character.

The 1970s marked a particularly transformative moment: major shifts in global political economy, technological innovation, and international institutions reshaped the world order. Some scholars interpret this as a profound intellectual turn beyond the modernist era. Tsing (2000), for instance, conceptualises globalisation as a “*world-making flow*” that entails “*the recurving of channels and the remapping of the possibilities of geographies*” (p. 330). Rather than imagining places as isolated, globalisation highlights that “*places are made through their connection with each other.*” The current stage of globalisation, then, is marked by the unprecedented density and speed of these networks, whether economic, political, or cultural. It is also characterised by the rise of transnational social movements, digital connectivity, and global infrastructures of finance and trade. Tsing notes that, for the first time in human history, political and cultural ties have become fully international, generating new kinds of global solidarities and frictions.

The shift towards contemporary globalisation was significantly spurred by the economic crises of the 1970s, notably the oil shocks and the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, which challenged established Keynesian economic policies. These crises paved the way for the rise of neoliberalism, promoting deregulation, liberalisation, and privatisation across national economies. As Peck and Tickell (2002) argue, this period saw states actively rolling back welfare provisions and rolling out market-oriented reforms, fostering an environment conducive to increased capital mobility and transnational corporate activity. Simultaneously, rapid advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and digital finance platforms, fundamentally reduced the friction of distance, enabling unprecedented speed and scale in global transactions (Castells, 1996; Friedman, 2005). These intertwined political, economic, and technological shifts laid the

essential groundwork for the intensified interconnectedness that defines our current global condition.

It is not only the processes of globalisation that matter but also how they are socially and politically perceived. Osterhammel (2011) argues that globalisation has become a new “*master concept*” of contemporary thought, capturing the unprecedented intensity of global interconnection. Importantly, he stresses that globalisation is not only a descriptive condition but also a discursive project: the debates surrounding globalisation actively shape how it is understood and enacted. In this sense, contemporary globalisation differs from earlier world-systems analyses (e.g., Wallerstein, 1974) because it does not simply rely on the historical continuity of global connections but rather identifies a distinct condition of the present. In today’s era, connections between nodes often matter more than the nodes themselves—an insight crucial for understanding the relational logics of global cities.

Finally, globalisation should not be seen merely as a neutral, naturalised process of integration. Sparke (2013) insists on its political character, framing globalisation as a political project promoted and institutionalised by powerful actors such as neoliberal governments (e.g., the Reagan and Thatcher administrations), international financial institutions, and global trade organisations. Globalisation, in this sense, has not been a universal or inevitable development, but rather one deeply shaped by ideological choices, policy frameworks, and uneven geographies of power.

This is the stage in which we live today: a global condition defined by interconnectedness, density, and speed, yet also contested, politicised, and uneven. Understanding this broader context is essential for situating the emergence of global cities and for examining the specific case of Kyiv.

Global Inequality

While globalisation has often been celebrated as a process of unprecedented interconnectedness, it is equally a process marked by profound unevenness. The world is globalising unequally, and global cities themselves reflect and reproduce these dynamics. Rather than emerging in a vacuum, global cities are rooted in historically sustained patterns of global economic hierarchy. In this sense, studying global cities inevitably requires situating them within broader debates on inequality and dependency.

Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory (1974) remains a foundational point of reference for understanding global economic inequality. He argues that the capitalist world-economy is structured around a tripartite division: the core, which concentrates wealth, advanced technologies, and political power; the semi-periphery, which maintains some industrial capacity but remains dependent on the core; and the periphery, which primarily supplies raw materials and cheap labour. Wallerstein’s

framework emphasises that these divisions are not temporary but historically sustained, producing systemic inequalities that shape both nations and cities. In building his theory, Wallerstein also draws upon Fernand Braudel's (1972) earlier conceptualisation of the "*world-economy*", which already highlighted the spatial division of labour as a defining feature of global capitalism.

More recent research underscores that these hierarchies have not only persisted but also deepened. Hamme and Pion (2012), for instance, show that spatial divisions of labour remain highly relevant in contemporary urban development, with North American and Western European cities maintaining their dominance. Similarly, Arrighi (1994) situates global urban hierarchies within the *longue durée* of capitalist development, where shifts in hegemonic power (from Genoa to the Netherlands, Britain, and the U.S.) have always been accompanied by changing configurations of global cities, but never by a fundamental flattening of inequality. This enduring inequality is further illuminated by Piketty (2014), who provides extensive historical data on capital accumulation, demonstrating how wealth concentration has intensified globally, contributing to widening income disparities both within and between nations. Although he does not discuss it as a spatial process, it still reflects general global tendencies.

Crucially, the unequal geography of globalisation is not limited to economic relations but extends into political and cultural dimensions. Massey (1994) points out that globalisation has a "*power-geometry*", where different places and populations experience globalisation in profoundly unequal ways: some are in positions to initiate and benefit from global flows, while others are primarily subjected to them. This perspective is reinforced by Milanovic (2016), whose work on global income distribution reveals complex patterns of rising inequality within countries despite some convergence between them, highlighting the uneven distribution of benefits from global integration. This framework helps explain why global cities in the Global North tend to dominate, while cities in semi-peripheral or peripheral regions struggle to assert themselves on the global stage despite increased connectivity.

Taken together, these debates underscore that global cities are not isolated actors but reflections of global inequalities. Their hierarchies mirror the structural divides of the capitalist world-economy, and any analysis of global urban networks must grapple with this reality.

Urbanisation: Global Trends and Significance

As globalisation intensifies economic, cultural, and informational flows across the world, human settlements are undergoing profound transformations. Urbanisation—the increasing concentration of populations in cities—has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary society, reflecting both demographic trends and broader structural changes. Cities are not only growing in size but also in significance,

functioning as hubs where economic activity, innovation, and social life intersect (Duranton & Puga, 2014). Understanding urbanisation is therefore crucial for contextualising how societies organise space, resources, and populations in the contemporary global era, and provides a foundation for analysing more specific processes such as the rise of global cities.

The contemporary prominence of cities is inseparable from the broader dynamics of globalisation and global economic integration. While globalisation has increasingly connected economies, cultures, and political systems, cities have emerged as pivotal nodes where these processes are concentrated, mediated, and experienced (Sassen, 1991; Brenner & Schmid, 2014). Understanding urbanisation is therefore essential for situating global cities within both empirical and conceptual frameworks, as urban growth not only reflects demographic shifts but also the organisation of economic, social, and political life at multiple scales.

The tendency of human societies to concentrate populations and economic activities in urban settlements has deep historical roots. From the early city-states of Mesopotamia to medieval European urban networks, cities functioned as hubs of trade, administration, culture, and security, acting as strategic nodes in broader systems of power and exchange (Mumford, 1961). Historically, urbanisation was shaped by practical imperatives—proximity to resources, trade routes, and administrative centres—but the scale and speed of contemporary urban growth represent a qualitatively new phenomenon. As such, cities are no longer only centres of local power; they are increasingly integrated into global flows of capital, knowledge, and influence (Brenner & Schmid, 2014).

In the modern era, urbanisation is driven by multiple interrelated factors. Industrialisation historically drew populations into urban centres through the concentration of factories and wage labour (Harvey, 1989). Today, however, the restructuring of global economies toward post-industrial and service-oriented sectors reinforces the role of cities as centres of finance, technology, and innovation (Sassen, 1991; Glaeser, 2011). Technological advancements in communication and transportation further compress space and time, enabling cities to act as focal points in transnational networks and supporting the rise of interlinked global urban hierarchies (Sparke, 2013).

Migration also remains a central driver of urban growth. In many parts of the Global South, rural-to-urban migration continues to fuel rapid city expansion, while global migration flows increasingly shape the social and cultural composition of urban spaces (Castles et al., 2014). Cities thus function not only as demographic agglomerations but as transnational nodes, connecting diverse populations and producing multi-scalar social and cultural networks. These dynamics underscore that urbanisation is simultaneously a spatial and social process, linking local experiences to global patterns.

Recent empirical data further illustrate the unprecedented pace of urbanisation. According to UN-Habitat (2022), over 56% of the world's population currently resides in urban areas, with projections suggesting this will rise to nearly 70% by 2050. Africa and Asia are expected to account for most of this growth, and by 2030, more than 40 cities will host populations exceeding 10 million (UN World Urbanisation Prospects, 2018). While megacities attract scholarly attention, medium-sized and smaller cities play a critical role as they absorb the majority of new urban residents and frequently experience faster growth than established global metropolises.

These dynamics highlight the centrality of urbanisation as both a demographic and socio-economic transformation. Cities are no longer merely local settlements; they constitute the dominant form of human organisation in the contemporary world. Their growth, connectivity, and embeddedness in global networks provide a necessary backdrop for understanding global city hierarchies, the uneven distribution of economic power, and the spatial dimensions of contemporary global inequalities.

Global (World) Cities: Primary Theoretical Framework

The study of global cities has become a crucial area within urban scholarship, especially now that cities have emerged as key players in the interconnected world economy. The concept of a “*global city*” is not just about how cities function economically and socially; it also delves into the very networks and flows that define today's globalisation. To really grasp what a global city is, we need to place them within their historical and structural contexts, recognizing their importance is not some accident or a given. This chapter aims to systematically trace the intellectual journey of global city theory, mapping out how it evolved and who shaped its core ideas.

Peter Hall (1998) provides an essential starting point for this discussion. From the perspective of urban theory and history, Hall emphasises that cities must be understood not as isolated entities, but as evolving centres of economic, social, and political development shaped by broader structural transformations. He situates the emergence of contemporary global cities within the acceleration of global interconnections that began in the late twentieth century, noting that technological, economic, and political changes fundamentally reconfigured the role of cities in the 1970s and 1980s (Fu-chen & Yue-man, 1998). Hall demonstrates that contemporary global urbanism is a continuation of longer patterns of urban evolution, where cities have long served as command centres and hubs of trade, information, and culture (Braudel, 1975; Pirenne, 1925; Subrahmanyam, 1996). Yet, the structural transformations of the late twentieth century conferred unprecedented planetary significance to certain cities, giving rise to what Hall terms a “*new globality*”.

The acceleration of global capital flows, communications technologies, and deregulation in the 1970s produced a series of profound urban changes. Gunter and

Hoeven (2004) categorise these drivers as technological innovation, market liberalisation, and policy shifts favouring cross-border economic integration. Rather than diminishing the role of cities, these processes heightened urban concentration, enabling specific metropolitan regions to attract disproportionate investment and talent, effectively transforming them into nodal points within the global economy (Chakravarty et al., 2021). These dynamics set the stage for the conceptualisation of global cities as nodes within complex international networks, reflecting both economic hierarchies and social transformations.

David Harvey's work further deepens this analysis. In *Limits to Capital* (1982), Harvey theorises the "*spatial fix*", the tendency of capitalism to resolve crises of overaccumulation through geographical reorganisation. This framework links the emergence of global cities to the inherent logics of capital accumulation, illustrating that cities are not merely passive spaces but active sites where global economic forces are materialised and contested. Similarly, Arrighi (1994) situates capitalism itself as a historically unique system with truly global reach, underscoring the interplay between economic structures and urban development. These perspectives laid the groundwork for Friedmann and Wolff's (1982) formulation of world cities as hierarchical, interconnected urban systems shaped by global economic integration. Their seven theses highlight the concentration of corporate command functions, contradictions between city and nation-state interests, and social polarisation, framing cities as spatialised socio-economic systems rather than mere political units (Friedmann, 1995).

Saskia Sassen (1992, 2005) extended these insights, introducing the term "global city" to capture urban centres that operate beyond national confines. Through comparative analyses of New York, London, and Tokyo, Sassen demonstrates that global cities function as hubs for advanced producer services (APS), hosting corporate headquarters and highly specialised labour markets while simultaneously generating local social inequalities. She identifies three core characteristics of global cities: the concentration of APS employment, the centrality of top-tier global cities in the international urban hierarchy, and socio-economic polarisation. Sassen also notes that the emergence of global cities is intertwined with the weakening of welfare provision, as urban policy shifts toward entrepreneurialism prioritise global competitiveness over local social investment (Harvey, 1989).

Castells (1989) complements Sassen's work by framing contemporary urbanisation within the rise of the network society. He distinguishes between industrial and informational cities, arguing that today's metropolises are defined less by industrial production than by flows of information, capital, and people. In this view, cities are nodes within transnational networks, structured by circulation and connectivity rather than purely territorial or political authority. Taylor & Derudder (2015) operationalises these concepts through network analysis, identifying cities as nodes, APS firms as subnodes, and the global economy as the supranodal system. Importantly, he

emphasises that multinational corporations, rather than municipal authorities, often serve as the primary decision-makers in the placement of offices and the structuring of global networks.

Beyond the classical theorists, contemporary research has expanded methodological approaches to study global cities. The Globalisation and World Cities (GaWC) research network, based at Loughborough University, offers one of the most widely used frameworks for assessing city connectivity. GaWC ranks cities using APS presence and infrastructure indicators, highlighting how urban nodes are embedded in global flows (Le Galès, 2024; Chakravarty et al., 2021). These rankings reinforce the notion that global cities reproduce inequalities, echoing the core-periphery logic described by Wallerstein (1974) and others, where cities in economically dominant regions exert disproportionate influence over global networks.

Allen J. Scott (2001) extends this discussion by emphasising the regional dimensions of global cities. He argues that global urban centres shape regional economies, creating dynamic interactions between local and global scales. Scott highlights the adaptive strategies that cities employ to remain competitive, including the clustering of APS firms, infrastructure development, and labour market specialisation. In contrast, Neil Brenner (2004) focuses on the territorial restructuring of states, illustrating how globalisation has transformed the governance capacities and regulatory frameworks within which global cities operate. His work draws attention to the political and administrative dimensions of urban integration into global networks.

Beaverstock & Smith (1999), contribute nuanced perspectives by analysing networks, actor-relational processes, and poststructural approaches to global cities. They emphasise intercity networks, showing how cities interact and exchange resources internationally. Smith's research applies actor-network theory, topological analyses, and poststructural critiques, challenging conventional understandings of command and control and the simplification of urban hierarchies (Smith & Doel, 2010; Smith, 2013). Together, these contributions demonstrate that global cities are multifaceted phenomena, simultaneously shaped by economic, political, social, and technological processes.

Summing things up, the literature on global cities consistently highlights a few key themes. First, these cities act as central command and control hubs in the international economy, pulling in advanced producer services, corporate headquarters, and capital. Second, they're part of hierarchical networks that keep reproducing global and regional inequalities. Third, social polarisation, migration, and stratified labour markets are simply built into their structure. Fourth, you cannot separate the rise of global cities from bigger globalisation processes like new technologies, deregulation, and the rise of transnational networks. Lastly, today's scholars keep pushing the boundaries with new ways to study these cities, from network analysis to actor-network theory, helping us better grasp how global urban systems really work.

This body of work clearly shows that we cannot understand global cities just by looking at them locally or nationally; they both create and are shaped by global flows, hierarchies, and networks. This idea is important when we look at how conflict, geopolitics, and regional dynamics impact emerging global cities in places like the periphery. Kyiv, sitting right where these global forces meet local changes, demonstrates the complex dance between global economic ties, urban development, and daily socio-political realities.

Global Cities and Political Influences

The study of global cities cannot be separated from questions of politics and governance. As cities have grown in economic, social, and symbolic significance, they have also become active political actors, influencing not only local and national policies but also international relations. Understanding the political dimensions of global cities is essential for situating cities like Kyiv within global networks, as well as for analysing the broader implications of urbanisation, globalisation, and economic restructuring. In this chapter, I review the literature on how global cities interact with political structures at multiple scales, exploring how these interactions shape both urban and broader global dynamics.

The emergence of global cities reflects profound changes in the organisation of political authority. Sassen (2005) observes that while national states historically mediated economic participation in international markets, globalisation has led to a weakening of the state as the primary spatial unit, with cities increasingly operating independently within the global economy. Brenner (2004) conceptualises this shift as a process of state reterritorialisation, in which governments restructure territorial governance to enhance competitiveness, often positioning global cities as sites of accumulation within post-Fordist economic systems. Together, these perspectives highlight the multi-scalar nature of political authority in a globalised world and point to the ways cities have come to occupy increasingly strategic roles.

Building on this foundation, the literature identifies the growing autonomy of cities in international relations through the phenomenon often described as “*city diplomacy*”. Kübler and Heinelt (2005) define city diplomacy as a strategy whereby urban governments actively engage in international networks and establish foreign offices to pursue political, economic, and cultural objectives. This approach challenges traditional state-centric views, recognizing cities as key nodes in transnational networks. Smith & Doel (2010) and further Smith (2013) develop this idea using actor-network theory, showing how cities can participate in international networks independently of national governments. Similarly, Keating (1998) explores how cities leverage political networks to influence both policy and perception, effectively acting as intermediaries in global governance processes. Prominent examples include London and New York, whose municipal governments maintain offices abroad and

participate in global forums, demonstrating that cities can shape agendas traditionally dominated by nation-states. These cases illustrate how city diplomacy is not merely symbolic but a substantive form of political engagement.

Closely related to city diplomacy is the development of transnational city networks. Global cities increasingly cooperate in formal and informal networks, such as C40 Cities and the Global Covenant of Mayors, to address shared challenges and exert influence on international policy. Taylor (2004) conceptualises world-city networks, emphasising how cities interact across borders to form dynamic webs of economic and political influence. Sassen (1991) also frames global cities as nodes in both economic and political networks, underscoring their capacity to influence international flows of capital, labour, and information. More recent studies, such as Bulkeley and Betsill (2005), demonstrate how these networks enable coordinated policy initiatives—for example, in climate governance—allowing cities to collectively pressure international institutions. Through such collaboration, urban networks emerge as alternative governance structures capable of shaping global agendas and contributing to policymaking beyond national borders.

At the same time, global cities influence national policy by acting as laboratories for innovative political and economic practices. Short (2013) notes that cities frequently pioneer reforms in areas such as social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and urban planning, which are later scaled to the national level. Pierre (2005) further emphasises that policy innovations originating in cities can affect state priorities and institutional frameworks, redefining the role of national governments in urban governance. Municipal climate initiatives, social housing programmes, and other local reforms illustrate how urban experimentation can shape broader policy trajectories, reflecting the strategic relevance of cities within national systems.

Finally, cities are increasingly positioned as frontline actors in addressing global challenges, including climate change, migration, and public health crises. Brenner and Schmid (2014) argue that urbanisation itself is a crucial factor in global politics, as cities concentrate populations, resources, and infrastructures, enabling rapid responses to global pressures. Aalbers (2016) highlights the financialisation of cities and their role in global economic governance, showing how urban economic strategies can reverberate internationally. These insights underscore that cities are not passive recipients of globalisation but active participants in problem-solving and standard setting on the international stage.

The literature reviewed in this chapter illustrates that global cities are both subjects and objects of political processes at multiple scales. Through city diplomacy, transnational networks, policy experimentation, and engagement with global challenges, cities increasingly shape the political landscape beyond national boundaries. At the same time, they operate within complex national and institutional frameworks that continue to constrain and influence their actions. By integrating these

perspectives, my research situates Kyiv not only as a city with growing global visibility but also as an actor negotiating power, influence, and policy in both local and international arenas. This multi-scalar lens provides a crucial foundation for understanding how cities function as strategic actors in contemporary global governance.

Global (World) Cities: Critiques, Extensions, and Views from the Periphery

In examining the concept of global cities, it is crucial to recognise that much of the foundational literature focuses on urban experiences in the Global North. However, my research engages with a city located outside this core, making it essential to critically reflect on the applicability of existing frameworks. By considering critiques, extensions, and perspectives from the periphery, this chapter situates global city theory within a broader and more inclusive urban landscape, allowing for a nuanced understanding of cities like Kyiv in global networks.

A central critique of traditional global city theory concerns its Eurocentric and Northern bias. Pioneering works by Sassen (1991, 2005) and Friedmann and Wolff (1982) often emphasise cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo, portraying them as archetypal command and control centres of global capitalism. Scholars have highlighted that this focus risks overlooking the dynamics of cities in the Global South, where historical legacies, socio-political conditions, and economic structures differ substantially (Ren, 2021). Such critiques stress that cities outside the traditional core may participate in global networks without conforming to the hierarchical models derived from Northern examples.

Closely linked to this critique is the argument that global city theory often overemphasises economic functions, particularly finance and advanced services, while underestimating cultural, governance, and social dimensions (Chakravarty, 2021). While these economic functions remain important, scholars increasingly advocate for a more holistic understanding of urban roles, recognizing that cities operate simultaneously as political, social, and symbolic actors (Larkham & Short, 1986). This broader lens is particularly relevant for cities outside the established global core, which often demonstrate hybrid economic structures and diverse pathways to international integration.

Extensions of global city theory seek to address these limitations by introducing perspectives that better account for peripheral urban experiences. The concept of peripheral urbanism, as discussed by Ren (2021), emphasises the significance of cities that are connected to global networks yet remain outside the central economic hierarchies. Similarly, Schwarz & Streule (2016) advocates for decolonising urban studies, arguing that perspectives from the Global South—incorporating local

histories, governance structures, and socio-economic realities—are essential for developing a truly comprehensive understanding of global urbanisation.

Empirical studies of peripheral cities provide concrete illustrations of these theoretical expansions. Kleibert's (2016) research on Manila demonstrates that while the city participates in global service networks, it does not fully conform to traditional "command and control" models. Instead, Manila functions primarily as a cost-effective hub for English-speaking service employees, catering to international markets without exercising dominant control over global flows. This finding challenges the assumption that global city integration automatically equates to centralised economic power and underscores the need to examine how local policies, histories, and institutional arrangements shape urban roles.

Robinson (2002) further expands the conceptual landscape by introducing the notion of "*ordinary cities*", highlighting urban settlements often excluded from global city discourse. She emphasises that millions of people reside in cities that do not fit traditional models, and that these cities can be vibrant, innovative, and globally connected in ways that differ from Northern metropolises. Integrating these perspectives encourages researchers to consider alternative urban forms and recognise the diversity of global urbanisation

The literature also introduces the idea of "*gateway cities*" as transitional nodes linking global and national economies (Short et al., 2000). Scholars such as Scholvin et al. (2019) and Revilla Diez et al. (2017) highlight how cities in the Global South often serve as logistics, transport, industrial processing, corporate control, and knowledge hubs, facilitating regional and global integration. These studies illustrate that peripheral cities may engage with global networks through functions adapted to their local conditions, rather than replicating the patterns observed in the Global North.

However, critiques extend beyond geographical representation to concerns regarding economic concentration and inequality. Martin (2008), employing the framework of New Economic Geography, warns that the agglomeration of resources in core cities often exacerbates spatial inequality within national economies. Floerkemeier et al. (2021) reinforce this argument, showing that investment returns in highly developed regions rarely benefit peripheral areas, highlighting a persistent equity-efficiency trade-off. Such insights are particularly relevant for cities outside established global hierarchies, where integration into global networks may produce uneven economic and social outcomes.

Finally, critiques also caution against an overly deterministic view of globalisation. Robinson (2005) and Douglass (2005) argue that local and national politics, institutional arrangements, and historical trajectories continue to shape urban development, even as cities gain global visibility. Beaverstock, Smith, and Taylor (2000) similarly note that cities remain embedded in national structures,

underscoring the hybrid nature of global cities as entities simultaneously influenced by international networks and local contexts.

Taken together, these critiques and extensions illuminate the diversity and complexity of global urbanisation. They emphasise that cities cannot be understood solely through the lens of economic command and control, and that peripheral perspectives provide essential insights into the ways globalisation interacts with local realities. This chapter, therefore, situates global city theory within a more inclusive framework, enabling an analysis of Kyiv not merely as an aspiring global city, but as a site where global processes, local politics, and historical legacies intersect. By integrating these perspectives, my research acknowledges both the opportunities and limitations of peripheral urban integration into global networks, offering a foundation for exploring how cities outside the traditional core navigate the challenges of contemporary globalisation.

Eastern and Central Europe & Post-Socialist Cities in Global City Debates

The cities of Eastern and Central Europe, particularly post-socialist urban centres, provide a distinctive perspective within the global city literature due to their unique historical, political, and economic trajectories. Unlike cities in the Global North, these cities carry the legacies of centrally planned industrialisation, state-directed urbanisation, and the transition to market-based economies, all of which continue to influence their position within global networks. At the same time, when conceptualised as cities of the Global South, post-socialist cities exhibit unique characteristics that differentiate them from cities in other regions, leading to distinct patterns of globalisation. Given that this study focuses on a city outside the traditional core, these perspectives are particularly relevant for situating Kyiv within both regional and global contexts, as they illuminate the hybrid position of cities negotiating between local constraints and international opportunities.

Post-socialist cities are characterised by socio-economic and political conditions that shape their global integration in specific ways. Sýkora and Bouzarovski (2012) describe the processes of urban transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, emphasising the structural legacies of socialism and the uneven nature of economic and institutional reforms. Stanilov (2007) further underscores the challenges faced by these cities, including fragile fiscal systems, weak corporate governance, and the social consequences of rapid industrial decline. The closure of unproductive state enterprises led to high unemployment and persistent urban poverty, which continue to affect social and economic development. At the same time, foreign direct investment has played a key role in enabling some capital cities to modernise and integrate into global economic circuits, although these processes often remain limited to particular sectors or locales (Tsenkova, 2003, 2006).

While post-socialist cities gradually engage with global networks, this integration is frequently slower and more uneven than in Northern counterparts. Beaverstock et al. (1999) discuss how world-city networks expand to incorporate new participants, highlighting the selective inclusion of cities that can fulfil specific roles in the global economy. Kovács and Wiest (2013) examine how post-socialist cities navigate global economic processes, illustrating the tension between global integration and domestic structural constraints. Empirical studies of cities such as Budapest, Warsaw, and Kyiv show that capital cities tend to emerge as the primary nodes within national and regional networks, while medium-sized and smaller cities remain largely peripheral. Zdanowska (2021) demonstrates that even in cases where post-communist cities participate in spatial innovation and capital linkages, most interactions are intra-regional rather than truly global, reflecting both historical legacies and continuing structural limitations. Mezentsev and Klyujko (2013) provide a crucial pre-war profile of Kyiv's urban development, highlighting a hybrid of global trends and post-Soviet legacies. Their study outlines the city's deindustrialisation and tertiarisation, as well as the significant transformation of public spaces, which laid the groundwork for Kyiv's integration into global networks.

Critiques of classical global city theory highlight the limitations of applying frameworks derived from Northern cities to post-socialist contexts. Kovács et al. (2012) argue that Eurocentric models, including those by Sassen and Friedmann, often overlook the political, economic, and infrastructural specificities of Central and Eastern Europe. The dominant indicators of global city status—such as command-and-control functions, concentration of producer services, or integration into global financial networks—may not accurately reflect the strategic importance or developmental trajectory of post-socialist cities. Podkorytova et al. (2023) examine the former Soviet Union and show that while networks of global service firms have grown, the efficiency of intercity connections remains uneven. Moscow, as the most connected node, does not perform optimally, while other regional capitals experience limited integration. These patterns are shaped by the historical legacies of Soviet central planning, low urban density, and hierarchical top-down decision-making, which reinforce inequalities both within and between cities.

Despite these challenges, post-socialist cities, particularly capital cities, continue to play pivotal roles as intermediate actors within regional and global networks. Tsenkova (2003, 2006) notes that they often serve as laboratories for policy experimentation, infrastructure modernisation, and selective economic innovation, providing insights into how cities can leverage local agency to engage with globalisation. Zdanowska (2021) and Podkorytova et al. (2023) emphasise that these cities act as both recipients and facilitators of global flows, illustrating the complex interplay between historical legacies, national governance, and international connectivity. In their comprehensive study on the integration of the Eastern Bloc into the global city network, Bassens et al. (2010) confirmed an intensified period of integration from 2000 to 2008. Their research also identified a tendency toward

regionalism within former Soviet Union cities, alongside inclinations towards the European Union, which collectively serve as proof of Euro-integration. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analysing Kyiv as a global city in formation, highlighting how post-socialist cities navigate structural constraints while participating in global networks and shaping local, national, and regional policies.

In sum, the literature on Eastern and Central European and post-socialist cities underscores the semi-peripheral position of these urban centres within global networks. Capital cities often dominate regional hierarchies, yet inequalities in governance, infrastructure, and economic capacity shape their capacity to function as fully integrated global nodes. By examining these cities, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of how global forces are mediated through local histories, institutional frameworks, and political contexts, offering a vital lens for situating Kyiv as a city negotiating influence and visibility within both regional and global urban hierarchies.

Kyiv as a Global City: A Review of Existing Research

Kyiv represents a compelling case for examining global city dynamics in a post-socialist, semi-peripheral context. Unlike traditional studies of global cities that focus on Northern metropolises, understanding Kyiv requires attention to the country's political transformations, economic restructuring, and the ongoing challenges posed by conflict and instability. Studying Kyiv's global integration offers insights into how cities outside the Global North navigate international networks while contending with local and national constraints, making this perspective particularly relevant for extending the global city literature beyond Euro-American cores.

The Ukrainian context presents distinct economic and political characteristics that shape Kyiv's role as a global city. Kuzio (1999) emphasises the challenges of transitional economies, highlighting how post-Soviet reforms, market liberalisation, and institutional restructuring influence urban development and the integration of cities into international economic processes. Huk & Zeynalov (2022) further note Ukraine's contemporary engagement with global markets, observing that Kyiv functions as a focal point for both political and economic connections, while the rest of the country experiences uneven development. Grigoriev et al. (2017) underline this disparity, showing that Kyiv's per capita GDP is roughly twice that of other Ukrainian cities. Historically, the eastern Ukrainian industrial complex faced difficulties partly because resource flows were concentrated in Kyiv, reinforcing the capital's primacy in national economic networks. Kozyreva et al. (2017) corroborate this by analysing regional indicators, including unemployment and income per capita, demonstrating the city's relative economic advantage.

Demchuk and Zelenyuk (2009) emphasise Kyiv's dominance in economic efficiency, noting its attraction of foreign direct investment and its role as the headquarters for

most Ukrainian firms. This centralisation of economic activity has positioned Kyiv as the primary gateway for Ukraine's interactions with global capital and international institutions, reinforcing its symbolic and functional significance within the country. The city's first inclusion in the 2020 Global Cities Report, titled *Global Cities: New Priorities for a New World*, marked its entry into the Global Cities Index (GCI) and Global Cities Outlook (GCO), where it ranked 89th and 94th, respectively, among 151 cities worldwide (Department of Economics and Investments, Kyiv City State Administration, 2021).

Despite these developments, existing research on Kyiv as a global city remains limited. While much of the literature focuses on its national role and regional prominence, analyses of Kyiv's position within global networks—its capacity to influence international political, economic, or cultural processes—are still scarce. This gap underscores the importance of situating Kyiv within multi-scalar frameworks of global urban studies, drawing on both post-socialist and peripheral city perspectives. By integrating insights from transitional political economy, regional inequality, and urban economic specialisation, future research can better capture how Kyiv navigates the interplay between local conditions, national structures, and international pressures.

In conclusion, Kyiv exemplifies the complexities of a semi-peripheral, post-socialist city attempting to assert itself on the global stage. Its economic concentration, political significance, and emerging integration into international networks demonstrate both opportunities and constraints typical of cities in similar contexts. Understanding Kyiv's trajectory not only enriches the global city literature but also provides a foundation for analysing how non-Northern metropolises engage with global governance, economic flows, and policy innovation, offering critical lessons for comparable urban centres in Eastern Europe and beyond.

The Role of Transnational Corporations in Urban Globalisation

During the era of widespread neoliberal policies and market liberalisation, transnational corporations (TNCs) have emerged as central actors not only in global economic flows but also in shaping the very structure and function of cities. Their decisions regarding where to locate offices, regional headquarters, and service centres influence urban governance, labour markets, and social hierarchies, making them essential components of global city studies. Understanding these corporate drivers is therefore critical for analysing how cities, including Kyiv, integrate into international networks and assert their presence in the global economy.

Chakravarty et al. (2021) provide a comprehensive review of the determinants that attract multinational enterprises to particular urban locations. Their work highlights two broad categories of factors: economic and institutional. Economic determinants include market size and growth, availability of human capital, labour costs, tax

policies, and the concentration of existing businesses, particularly advanced producer service (APS) firms. Cities with affluent consumer bases, significant inflows of tourists and expatriates, and high business density are more likely to become hubs for transnational activity. Connectivity is another critical factor: well-developed transportation networks, international airports, and digital infrastructure reduce transaction and travel costs, making cities more attractive for corporate investment.

Institutional and socio-cultural factors also play a defining role. The literature introduces the concept of the “*liability of foreignness*”, which refers to the additional costs and risks associated with operating in unfamiliar markets. A cosmopolitan urban environment—characterised by linguistic, ethnic, and national diversity, religious pluralism, liberal political tendencies, tolerance, and respect for differences—helps reduce these liabilities. Chakravarty et al. note that municipal governments often actively cultivate such cosmopolitan conditions to attract foreign direct investment, nurturing transnational elites who facilitate the city’s global integration.

Corporate motivations for investment in urban centres are multifaceted, including access to strategic resources and expertise, entry into domestic markets, cost efficiency, economies of scale, and availability of financial capital. Du and Colovic (2023), using data from 497 multinational corporations, find that knowledge-intensive firms derive greater benefits from locating in global cities compared to less knowledge-intensive companies. Their study also suggests that multinationalism—the geographical dispersion of operations—can moderate the relationship between a city’s global integration and corporate financial performance, highlighting the nuanced interactions between urban characteristics and corporate strategy.

Yeung (2009) provides a critical perspective on the role of transnational corporations (TNCs) in urban and regional development from an economic geography standpoint. The author argues that TNCs are not passive actors but rather dynamic agents that actively shape urban and regional growth, a role he claims is often underestimated in existing economic theories. Yeung introduces the concept of Global Production Networks (GPNs), arguing that transnational corporations (TNCs) act as their central orchestrators, profoundly influencing how cities and regions integrate into the global economy. To explain this process, he proposes the concept of “strategic coupling”, which describes the intentional, mutually beneficial relationship between TNCs and specific cities or regions, thereby driving local development. This insight provides a new perspective on inter-city relationships. Contributing to the post-colonial studies Franklin Obeng-Odoom (2018) critiques the mainstream economic view that transnational corporations (TNCs) are benign agents of urban growth. Instead, he argues that in Africa, TNCs function as a new form of neocolonialism, eroding the sovereignty of local governments, particularly in cities rich with natural resources.

In post-socialist cities, TNCs play a particularly transformative role in shaping local economies, labour markets, and social structures. Kovács (2010) highlights how post-

socialist cities integrate into global economic networks through corporate presence, while Malý et al. (2020) emphasise local economic transformations driven by TNC investments. Aalbers (2017) further underscores the role of global corporations in the financialisation of urban space, influencing real estate markets and infrastructure development. These studies collectively illustrate how cities like Kyiv, Warsaw, or Budapest experience changes in their economic and social fabric as a result of corporate activity, often extending beyond classical global city theory that focuses primarily on economic command functions.

Beyond economic influence, TNCs exert political and regulatory impact within global cities. Brenner and Schmid (2014) examine the interconnection between transnational corporations and urban policymaking, showing how corporate presence shapes governance strategies and regulatory frameworks. Clark (2016) also emphasises the political consequences of concentrating global corporate headquarters in urban centres, noting that city administrations often adjust policies, planning, and incentives to attract and retain these actors. In the context of cities like Kyiv, this interaction reflects the dual dynamics of global integration and local political adaptation, illustrating the broader implications of TNCs as both economic and political agents within urban environments.

Overall, TNCs are not merely passive occupants of global cities; they actively shape urban form, governance, and networks. By concentrating economic activity, defining labour and service markets, and influencing cultural, institutional, and regulatory practices, corporations play a pivotal role in the construction and reproduction of global cities. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analysing how Kyiv integrates into global economic and political circuits, while also revealing the local strategies cities employ to engage with powerful transnational actors.

Cities in War Conflict

Kyiv is forming as a global city not merely amid political instability but under the extraordinary conditions of an ongoing military conflict. These unique circumstances profoundly shape its development and position within global networks. War reshapes cities' economic, social, and infrastructural landscapes while simultaneously altering their global visibility. Graham (2011) explores how armed conflicts disrupt urban development, governance, and economic activity, emphasising the vulnerability of cities as both strategic and civilian spaces. Similarly, Sassen (2010) examines how war transforms the global status of cities, influencing their economic roles, including financial centres and the presence of transnational corporations. Brenner and Schmid (2014) highlight that urbanisation processes are deeply intertwined with crises, including wars, which act as catalysts for both destruction and transformation. Collectively, these studies show that conflict can significantly alter a city's position in global networks by disrupting trade, investment flows, and urban infrastructure, challenging classical global city models that assume stability and continuous growth.

The social and demographic consequences of war further reshape urban life. Davis (2006) provides insights into how crises intensify social inequalities and force population movements, which is relevant for understanding transformations in cities affected by war. Sassen (2001) emphasises that global cities, while hubs of capital and knowledge, are highly sensitive to social crises, with inequality and displacement influencing urban functionality. Wars precipitate internal displacement, depopulation in certain areas, and dramatic shifts in labour markets, all of which alter the social fabric and impact a city's capacity to function as a global node.

Cities under conflict also assume heightened strategic and symbolic significance. Graham (2011) argues that cities serve as both centres of governance and military objectives during conflicts, while Campanella and Vale (2004) highlight the importance of post-war reconstruction in reshaping urban identity and functionality. War transforms cities into political and media symbols, magnifying their visibility on global stages and emphasising their strategic importance. These symbolic functions often intersect with economic and infrastructural considerations, making conflict cities highly relevant in global political discourse.

The case of Kyiv exemplifies these dynamics. The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war has disrupted economic activity, strained infrastructure, and altered social patterns, while simultaneously elevating Kyiv's symbolic and strategic global significance. Wilson (2022) emphasises Ukraine's integration into global economic and political processes, highlighting how Kyiv functions as both an economic hub and a focal point of international attention. Kuzio (1999) underscores the transitional political processes in post-Soviet contexts, which interact with wartime transformations to shape the city's trajectory. Reports from UN agencies, the World Bank, and IOM document the socio-economic and demographic consequences of the conflict, including displacement, changes in labour markets, and uneven economic recovery. These combined pressures illustrate how war not only challenges Kyiv's operational capacity but also redefines its role within global urban networks, reinforcing the need to consider conflict as a key variable in global city studies.

The research by Mezentsev and Mezentsev (2022) on urbicide in Ukraine is of crucial relevance, as it demonstrates how war destroys cities not only physically but also through demographic and administrative mechanisms. The study highlights that the deliberate targeting of cities is aimed at annihilating their "heterogeneous urbanity" and halting their positive development. By distinguishing between direct urbicide (physical destruction) and indirect urbicide (decay and mismanagement in occupied cities), the article supports the notion that a city's resilience extends beyond simple economic indicators. The study by Soldak et al. (2024) on emergent urban resilience in Ukraine demonstrates how cities can spontaneously adapt to a "polycrisis" that combines military, economic, and social challenges. The article highlights that

resilience extends beyond formal planning, relying instead on the flexibility of communities and informal networks.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that war transforms cities along multiple axes—economic, social, infrastructural, political, and symbolic—affecting their capacity to operate within global networks. For Kyiv, these transformations highlight the city’s dual role as a site of vulnerability and as a symbolically powerful node in global urban discourse. Integrating insights from conflict studies into global city theory provides a more nuanced understanding of how crises interact with globalisation, urban governance, and socio-economic structures.

Business Operations in Wartime

In the context of my study, it is important to understand not only city life but also the operations of businesses, as these are deeply intertwined with urban development and global connectivity. In Ukraine, the interplay between cities, business, and war is particularly unique, providing a distinctive context for examining how conflict shapes economic activity and corporate strategies. Existing studies in this field provide insights into how crises affect both transnational corporations (TNCs) and local firms, which is essential for analysing Kyiv as a global city under conflict conditions.

War profoundly impacts urban economies and business operations. Scott (2001) emphasises the role of cities in global economic networks and highlights how crises disrupt business activity. Brenner and Schmid (2014) discuss how urbanisation processes interact with crises, including wars, which can destabilise local economies and corporate operations. Similarly, Graham (2011), in *Urban Theory and Global Conflict*, illustrates how armed conflicts alter the functioning of financial centres, multinational enterprises, and local businesses. Collectively, these studies show that war disrupts investment climates, operational infrastructures, and the continuity of both local and global companies.

Businesses also adapt strategically in response to conflict. Aalbers (2016) highlights how urban financialisation shapes business responses to crises, including restructuring, relocating assets, and modifying operational models. Gereffi (2018) analyses global production networks, showing that conflict and political instability force firms to reassess supply chains, labour allocation, and market entry strategies. These studies demonstrate that businesses in global cities under conflict often innovate survival strategies such as remote work, market diversification, and decentralisation of assets.

War can act both as a barrier and a catalyst for investment. Wilson (2022) examines economic transformations in Ukraine under external shocks, noting that while traditional investment may decline, new entrepreneurial initiatives and local startups emerge to fill gaps in the market. Kuzio (1999) emphasises that transitional economies

face heightened risks during conflict, yet these risks can also stimulate adaptive economic strategies. This dual effect underscores the complex role of war in shaping business landscapes, particularly in cities with growing global significance.

Relevant insights for my study are provided by Kostruba (2025), who conducted a study on the business operations of foreign firms in Ukraine during the war. His study includes a substantial critique of the Ukrainian government's lack of strategic initiatives necessary to attract foreign businesses. The wartime conditions pose significant economic challenges, and foreign direct investment is necessary to support the local economy and unlock present business opportunities in construction, agriculture, energy, IT, and tourism. Lim et al. (2022) conducted a prospective evaluation of the Ukraine and Russia conflict to provide a crucial analysis of the war's impact on business and society. They argue that the war created a range of challenges for citizens, including limited access to resources, rising unemployment, and a surge in asylum seekers. At the same time, for international companies, the war acts as a profound "test of ethics" and brand management. Overall, the study concludes that further research is needed to explore the complex relationship between war, business, and society.

Lakomaa's (2017) historical research on business during wartime provides a broader overview of the structural and operational implications for entrepreneurial endeavors. The article highlights, for instance, the increasing role of state power and nationalism, the necessity of rapid operational changes, and the demand for a highly mobilised workforce. Naseem et al. (2023) attempt to explore the impact of war on companies' profitability and identify different groups of literature that are not united by a single theoretical framework. It is important to note that this study contradicts the common assumption that war always causes losses for businesses.

Interesting insights can be drawn from the qualitative study by Katsos and AlKafaji (2016) on business operations during the active violent conflict in Iraq. The authors challenge the existing theoretical assumption that business cannot contribute to peace in intense conflict zones. Four categories of how businesses contribute to peace were identified: Capacity Building, where companies provide training for employees and subcontractors to help reduce social conflict; Rule of Law, where companies contribute to peace by refusing to engage in bribery and corruption, a major challenge for businesses in Iraq; Social Cohesion, where companies create workplaces that unite people from different groups by forbidding political or religious discussions; and Local Engagement, where companies hire local residents and reinvest profits in the local economy, a practice perceived as a patriotic duty. The article also highlights a complex moral dilemma for local business owners who continued to operate in occupied territories.

Kyiv provides a contemporary example of these dynamics. The Russian-Ukrainian war has altered the city's business environment, affecting the operations of TNCs, local

companies, and the broader economic infrastructure. Reports from the UN, World Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) document disruptions in trade, investment, and labour markets, while local analyses from the Kyiv School of Economics (2025) and Dragon Capital (2025) illustrate case studies of businesses navigating the wartime context. These combined insights highlight how conflict reshapes corporate decision-making, investment patterns, and the city's role in international economic networks, emphasising the necessity of integrating business considerations into global city studies.

Identifying the Research Gap and Defining the Problem

The literature review above has explored several themes relevant to understanding Kyiv as a global city: the theoretical foundations of global city research, the peripheral and post-socialist contexts of Eastern and Central Europe, the role of transnational corporations, and the impacts of war on urban economies, social structures, and strategic significance. Collectively, these studies highlight the complex interplay between global networks, local conditions, and external shocks in shaping urban trajectories.

Despite the extensive body of work on global cities in the Global North, Eastern Europe—and Ukraine in particular—remains significantly underexplored. The post-socialist context introduces unique historical, political, and economic conditions that influence how cities integrate into global networks. Moreover, while research on cities in conflict exists, few studies examine the intersection of armed conflict and global city operations, especially in terms of corporate strategies and local economic transformations. This gap is particularly evident for Kyiv, where ongoing military aggression interacts with post-socialist legacies and global economic dynamics in ways that existing theories and empirical studies have not fully captured.

Addressing this research gap is crucial not only empirically but also theoretically. Classical global city theory often assumes a degree of universality in how cities function within global networks, largely abstracting from the specificity of local historical, political, and socio-economic circumstances. By examining Kyiv under the combined pressures of post-socialist transformation and armed conflict, this study emphasises the importance of integrating context-specific conditions into global city analyses. Such an approach highlights that global cities are not merely nodes of capital and economic flows but are also shaped by local contingencies that influence their resilience, development, and global visibility.

Filling this gap will provide insights into how Kyiv's global city functions are evolving under extraordinary circumstances, offering both a localised empirical contribution and a theoretical refinement of global city frameworks. In the following methodology chapter, I will outline the approach taken to investigate these dynamics, focusing on

how Kyiv's unique political, historical, and conflict-related conditions influence corporate operations, urban governance, and its perception in global networks.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I draw on the conceptual framework developed by the Globalisation and World Cities Research Network (GaWC). GaWC (Globalisation and World Cities Research Network, 2025) was established in the late 1990s to study the increasing interconnectedness of cities within the global economy. It provides a systematic approach to identifying and ranking cities based on their roles as nodes in global networks of business, finance, and advanced producer services.

According to GaWC, a global city is defined not by size or population, but by its function as a command and control centre of the global economy. These cities concentrate headquarters and regional offices of transnational corporations, financial institutions, and service providers, making them central hubs for flows of capital, information, and professional labour. The network of global cities emerges from the interconnections between these hubs, forming a web through which the global economy is organised.

This framework, while widely recognised, has limitations. It tends to focus on economic and corporate indicators, often overlooking social, cultural, and political dimensions. Furthermore, it is sometimes static, providing a snapshot rather than capturing the dynamic responses of cities to crises or shocks.

Despite these critiques, the GaWC framework offers important advantages for studying cities. It provides a systematic and comparable lens for examining the roles of cities in global networks. It shows the structural significance of cities in the global economy and offers a baseline for understanding how disruptions—like the Russian invasion of Ukraine—affect city functions. Most importantly, it allows for the integration of specific case studies, such as Kyiv, to explore how global cities operate in unique political and social conditions.

The framework builds on the theoretical foundations laid by earlier research. Saskia Sassen (1991) framed global cities as central command and control hubs of the world economy, emphasising the concentration of corporate headquarters, financial institutions, and advanced producer services. Friedmann (1986) conceptualised world cities as strategic nodes in the global economic system, while Beaverstock, Smith, and Taylor (1999) explored how cities operate within transnational networks of capital and services. GaWC takes these ideas and turns them into measurable criteria, allowing us to map and compare cities within global networks. In doing so, it provides a structured lens through which to understand the positioning of cities like Kyiv and how their roles are shaped in the broader global urban system.

In this thesis, I used the GaWC framework not as a rigid template, but as a lens to understand Kyiv's functioning during wartime. By examining the experiences of international company branches in Kyiv, I aimed to link the lived realities of people and organisations to broader theories of global cities, showing how a city's global role is maintained, reshaped, and challenged under extraordinary circumstances of full-scale war.

Research Nature

My research has an *exploratory nature*. The study is aimed at investigating a topic that is not yet well understood, identifying new patterns, connections, and factors, rather than testing predefined hypotheses. This choice can be explained by the novelty of the theme I am exploring—the topic of how a global city manages survival during a war conflict. I aim to uncover aspects of Kyiv's position in global networks and the local responses to extreme circumstances that are not yet fully documented. This exploratory approach kept the research flexible, allowing me to follow emerging insights as they appear, rather than being limited by existing models.

Paradigm

Among the existing research paradigms in the social sciences, I employ critical realism. Critical realism emerged in the late 20th century, primarily through the work of Roy Bhaskar (1975, 1979), as a response to the limitations of both positivism and interpretivism. It sought to reconcile the existence of a real, structured world with the recognition that our knowledge of it is socially mediated and fallible.

The core tenets of critical realism emphasise that reality exists independently of our perceptions, but our understanding of it is always conditioned by social, cultural, and historical contexts. It allows researchers to investigate underlying structures, mechanisms, and causal powers that generate observable phenomena, rather than just describing surface-level events. In this way, critical realism supports working with a “conditioned reality”, where what is observed reflects both material realities and human interpretations. It also encourages attention to causal explanations and how social, economic, and political structures shape actions and outcomes (Bhaskar, 1975; Archer et al., 2016).

This paradigm is particularly relevant to my study, as it enabled me to explore not only what happened to the operations of international companies in Kyiv during the war, but also the underlying mechanisms and structures that influenced their decisions and practices. By applying critical realism, I gave meaning to the data, linking individual experiences and organisational behaviours to broader urban and global processes.

Research Question

How has the Russian invasion of Ukraine influenced the operations of international companies in Kyiv, and what implications does this have for understanding Kyiv as a global city?

Aim

This study looks at how the war in Ukraine has affected the way international company branches in Kyiv operate, and it seeks to understand what these changes tell us about Kyiv as a global city. In exploring this, the research highlights how global cities function and adapt in times of conflict and political uncertainty, while also bringing attention to the human and organisational experiences that make urban resilience possible.

Objectives

To achieve the above-mentioned aims and answer my research question, I will follow these objectives:

1. To analyse Kyiv's pre-war and wartime global city profile using the GaWC framework and relevant quantitative data, identifying shifts in its economic connectivity and advanced producer service presence.
2. To investigate the operational changes and adaptive strategies implemented by selected international company branches in Kyiv in response to the full-scale war.
3. To explore the lived experiences and perceptions of representatives from international companies in Kyiv regarding the impact of the war on their operations and the city's overall functioning.
4. To synthesise findings from both quantitative and qualitative data to discuss the implications of wartime disruptions for Kyiv's role as a global city and its urban resilience.
5. To contribute to the broader theoretical understanding of how global cities function and adapt under extreme conditions of conflict and political uncertainty.

Cases

The primary focus of this study is on six branches of international companies in Kyiv, all classified within the GaWC global city network. These branches form the core of my

analysis, and the insights I gather come mainly from in-depth engagement with them. At the same time, I also draw on publicly available information from other companies to provide additional context and to illustrate broader patterns that may exist across similar organisations. This combination allows me to stay grounded in the experiences of these six companies, while also situating them within the wider landscape of Kyiv's global economic activity.

Research Approach

In line with my research paradigm, I find that a mixed methods approach the most suitable way to address my research question comprehensively. This involves combining qualitative and quantitative methods, which allowed me to capture both measurable patterns and the meanings attached to them. More details on the specific data sources and analytical methods will be provided in the following sections. This approach also allowed me to capture most of the complexity of the issue.

Data Collection

The majority of the data were gathered during the period of July–August, capturing the situation during this period. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative data, as outlined below.

Quantitative data

GaWC Data. To explore Kyiv's global city profile, GaWC data were used. These datasets provide information on the presence and ranking of advanced producer service firms in the city, including their sector, number of offices, and connectivity to other global cities. This allowed me systematically analyse Kyiv's position within global economic networks and helped identify patterns of integration, concentration, and influence.

Ukrainian Government and International Statistics. This category includes both national and international statistical sources. From Ukraine, *State Statistics Service of Ukraine (Derzhstat)* and *Kyiv City Statistics Office* provide data on population, employment, business activity, and economic indicators at the city level. These datasets helped track changes in demographics, labour markets, and sectoral economic activity. International sources such as *Eurostat*, *World Bank*, *IMF*, and *UN-Habitat* offer comparative data on economic performance, urbanisation, and investment trends.

Business Data. This includes data on firms, investments, and economic activity within Kyiv. Publicly available business registries (for example, *Open Data Kyiv*) provide information on the number of companies, sectors, and size of enterprises. Additionally, market research reports and business analyses from consulting firms or

industry associations gave me insights into foreign investment, corporate presence, and sectoral distribution.

Qualitative Data

Semi-structured Interviews. The primary source of data in my research consists of semi-structured interviews. For my sample, I selected representatives of Ukrainian branches of international companies. The list of companies was derived from GaWC, which identifies firms that significantly influence the global economy and help shape global cities.

In July, I filtered the GaWC list to 42 companies with branches in Ukraine and contacted them via corporate email. Out of these, 29 companies did not respond, 8 politely declined, and 5 interviews were successfully arranged, conducted, and recorded via video calls, as I was in Madrid at that time.

In addition, I used my personal network to reach potential respondents. This approach led to one more interview with a representative of a Ukrainian branch of a global APS company. Although this company is not included in the GaWC list, it is still internationally connected at the European level, and I considered their insights relevant to my study.

The final list of interviews, along with general information about the companies, is included in Appendix 2. All interviews were conducted anonymously.

Before each interview, I prepared a list of guiding questions to structure the conversation. However, I allowed the discussions to flow freely, which often revealed insights I had not anticipated. The themes of the interviews were based on global city theory, urban connectivity, wartime experiences, and opinions about Kyiv. The full interview guide is included in Appendix 3. The conversations were conducted and later transcribed in the Ukrainian language. The transcribed could be received upon the request.

The quotes used in the Findings chapter have been translated from Ukrainian into English for the readers' convenience.

When I later asked participants what motivated them to join the study, their main reason was to share their genuine lived experiences during the war with an international audience. I could not articulate this sentiment better than Participant №4:

“I believe that everything, you know, just happens the way it does, it's not without reason, [...] But still, it's very important to me that the information you receive, you'll definitely publish it somewhere, so that it truly reflects things as they are. Just a

genuine record of the situation, the mood for a certain period of time [...] It happens differently for everyone, you know. For some, more, for others, less; some, let's say, felt this burden, others, perhaps, with the passage of time, still retain some positive memories they want to talk about, what they want to focus on. Of course, even now, as our colleagues say, there's this hope. It's so fickle. Sometimes there are moments of despair. Everything happens; these are different emotions. Both sorrow and regret, and when you receive this information, in principle, what can you tell our colleagues? As we used to say to our network, we said that perhaps one day we'll be able to help if someone needs to cope with this situation. Because countless books were read. We read Viktor Frankl, and The Choice, and we focused, searched to find the right behaviour, and to convey it, to spread it, to help our neighbour somehow. This is very important from a social point of view. Maybe even before, we didn't think about how important this is: mutual support, societal unity, focusing on certain achievements, certain tasks, communication. I also hope this will be your contribution”.

Media Materials. As a supporting qualitative source of information, I decided to include media materials. These consist of global companies' websites, social media platforms, press coverage, and employees' professional social media profiles, among others. Although online materials cannot provide the same depth as real conversations, they can reflect general sentiments, conflicts, prevailing narratives, and events. Therefore, they constitute a valuable source of information in the context of my research.

Official Documents. For the purposes of establishing a broader political scene of Kyiv's formation as a global city and its change under influence of war, I also explored different types of official and scholarly documents, including national and municipal programmes, regulatory acts, and reports from international organisations, reports from research centres and business associations, and analytical reviews. Analysing these materials helped to situate my study within the wider institutional context. They provide insight into the frameworks, strategies, and policies that shape the environment in which international companies operate in Kyiv.

Contextual Immersion. In the process of my research, I was not able to conduct direct, face-to-face ethnographic observation of the companies. However, I still consider my experience of spending time in Kyiv during the war to be valuable for my findings.

During the period of this research, the main battlefield was, and still is, in Eastern Ukraine (DeepStateMAP | Map of the war in Ukraine, 2025). Nevertheless, the capital and other regions were affected by regular bombings and broader challenges related to the military situation, such as economic decline and mobilisation. Spending time in the country and staying in contact with family and friends who permanently live and carry out their daily activities in Ukraine allowed me not only to understand the Ukrainian context factually, but also to experience it directly and perceive it with all

senses. This profound understanding of the context provides an important perspective that I bring into my research.

Data Analysis

The choice of methods for this research is guided by the types of data I have collected and the aims of the study—to present Kyiv as a case of a global city and to explore how its functioning as a global city has shifted during the war through changes in the operations of international company branches.

To address the first aim, which draws mainly on statistical information and official documents, I employed *descriptive statistics* and *document analysis*. For the part of the study focused on the war and its impact, qualitative methods are more suitable, and I applied *thematic analysis*.

Descriptive Statistics. It is a method widely used to summarise and present numerical data in a way that highlights patterns and tendencies (Baffoe-Djan & Smith, 2019). It allowed me to organise complex datasets into comprehensible summaries. In my research, descriptive statistics helped me demonstrate Kyiv's position as a global city by revealing patterns of concentration and distribution of advanced producer service firms, the scale and structure of economic activity, and the city's connectivity to other international urban centres.

Document Analysis. This method complements descriptive statistics by providing context and depth to the case. This method involves systematically reviewing and interpreting official materials to understand the institutional frameworks, policies, and strategies that shape urban development in the context of my research (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003). Examining national and municipal programmes, regulatory acts, as well as reports from international organisations, research centres, and business associations, helps illuminate the institutional landscape of Kyiv as a potential global city.

Thematic Analysis. This was the primary method I used to work with the qualitative part of my data. Its purpose is to identify and interpret recurring patterns in the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For my research, this meant examining how companies in Kyiv adjusted their work and their perceptions of the situation during the war. I coded interview transcripts, media publications, and my own observations to capture common themes such as operational changes, risk perceptions, or new strategies that appeared during this time.

To make the process more systematic, I worked with MAXQDA24 software, which helped me organise the codes and connect ideas across different sources. This made it easier to see not only small details in how companies described their experiences, but

also the larger tendencies in how global firms responded to the wartime environment in Kyiv.

How is this study urban?

My study is urban not merely because it focuses on Kyiv, but because it examines the city as a living, dynamic entity. Urban theory, especially from a GaWC perspective, often sees cities as just spatial nodes or hubs in a big global network. My work uses this idea but pushes it further. I do not just look at abstract structures; I dig into the human side of the city, inspired by scholars like Jane Jacobs (2016) and Henri Lefebvre (1974). These thinkers taught us that a city is really about social life, daily interactions, and the actions of its people. I connect Kyiv's abstract role as a global city to the real, lived experiences of its people and the companies they work for. Therefore, my study is urban because it explores how the city's key global functions are shaped by its day-to-day human life, particularly during a major crisis.

Limitations

My study to have three main limitations.

The first limitation concerns scope and generalisability. In my research, I focused on a relatively small number of international company branches in Kyiv. These cases gave me rich insights, but it's important to note that they may not fully reflect the experiences of all global companies operating in the city. Some firms might face very different challenges or take alternative approaches that my study simply did not capture.

The second limitation relates to time. The data collection was concentrated in July–August, which gives a snapshot of corporate operations and urban conditions at that particular moment. While it helps to understand how these companies functioned under wartime circumstances during that period, it may not fully represent the longer-term dynamics of Kyiv as a global city under the ongoing influence of the war.

The third limitation relates to the sectors in which the companies operate. For this research, I managed to negotiate interviews with representatives of the advertising, accounting, and banking fields. I hypothesise that if the scope of the covered industries were wider, the results would be more well-rounded and representative.

All three limitations could be addressed in further studies.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration in my study concerns my interaction with representatives of local branches of global companies operating in Kyiv.

A first important aspect is the context in which participants live. All interviewees were based in Ukraine during the ongoing war, which exposes them to traumatic events on a daily basis. Such experiences may have profound psychological and emotional impacts, which need to be acknowledged and treated with sensitivity throughout the research process.

One story from a participant illustrates the extreme circumstances in which people in Kyiv are living. A few days before our interview, there was a large-scale attack involving approximately 500 military units, drones, and missiles aimed at Ukraine during the night. During our meeting in her flat, she saw one of the rockets fly past her window. As she recalled during the interview, *“At that second I saw it and knew that something happened to me”*. The shock of simply seeing the military object had a severe impact on her: she partly lost her memory and experienced nervous system inflammation, bodily injuries, ataxia, and several other health complications. Despite her physical and mental condition, she continued going to work.

I am deeply appreciative that, in this difficult state, she still joined the meeting with me and shared her experience. However, I cannot stress enough the importance of awareness and respect when interacting with people who live under extreme stress and danger.

When conducting this type of research, there is always a risk of revealing sensitive information that could affect participants, their reputation, or the future of their company. To address this, all participants were provided with a consent form and a participant information sheet, which guaranteed their confidentiality and clarified my accountability for the information they shared. The documents are attached in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5.

Positionality and Reflexivity

In the social sciences, scholars have long moved away from the idea of a single “objective truth.” Authors such as Clifford and Marcus (1986) in *Writing Culture*, Haraway (1988) in her notion of “situated knowledges,” and Rose (1997) in feminist geography have all argued that knowledge is always partial, positioned, and influenced by the social and cultural standpoint of the researcher. This is because researchers are not neutral instruments: we carry with us our own histories, values, privileges, and vulnerabilities, which inevitably shape the way we ask questions, interpret data, and relate to participants. Acknowledging positionality is thus not a weakness, but an act of transparency and reflexivity that strengthens the credibility of research.

My profile as a researcher

I was born, raised, and lived in Kyiv until the age of 23. I am a heterosexual woman with two university degrees, coming from an upper-middle-class family. At the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, I was in Ukraine, working at CEO Club, which allowed me to remain immersed in the entrepreneurial environment from the onset of the war. At the same time, I was completing the final year of my undergraduate studies. During the war, I have continued to visit Kyiv regularly, at least once every six months, which has allowed me to observe and experience the changing states of Ukrainian society at different phases of the war. I remain in close and regular contact with my family and friends, and I am a fluent Ukrainian speaker, the primary language spoken by the majority of Ukrainians.

How my positionality may have shaped the research

Insider perspective: Because I am deeply embedded in the Ukrainian context, certain practices or conditions may appear “normal” to me and risk being overlooked. At the same time, this insider knowledge is a strength: it enabled me to know which nuances to explore in interviews and which unspoken dynamics to pay attention to.

Trust and solidarity: In times of war, feelings of solidarity and national belonging have intensified. My shared identity with participants may have facilitated openness, trust, and a sense of common mission, which can be both an advantage (richer, more honest narratives) and a limitation (the risk of over-identification).

Emotional involvement: As a Ukrainian, the war is not a distant research object but a lived reality. This emotional proximity may affect the way I interpret data—sometimes deepening my understanding but also posing the risk of bias or selective emphasis.

Access and networks: Although I had no personal contacts with the interviewees prior to the fieldwork, my Ukrainian nationality (which often fosters trust among Ukrainians) and the legitimacy provided by conducting research for a European university may have facilitated access to participants.

Language and interpretation: Conducting research in my native language reduces the risk of misinterpretation and allows for more nuanced communication. However, it also means I am responsible for translating not only words but cultural meanings for an international academic audience.

How I address these dynamics

To work with my positionality, I adopted a reflexive approach throughout the research process. I keep reflective notes after interviews to identify moments where my insider perspective might have influenced questions or interpretations. I remained attentive

to the dual risks of “over-familiarity” (taking things for granted) and “over-identification” (aligning too strongly with participants’ views). By making my standpoint explicit, I aim not to eliminate bias—which is impossible—but to make the conditions of knowledge production transparent and therefore more accountable.

Use of Artificial Intelligence in My Academic Research

The high-speed development of new technologies provides many instruments for increasing the productivity of the research process. In the recent couple of years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been the booming technology.

While discussions surrounding the ethical and practical applications of these technologies are ongoing, and clear guidelines for their use are still developing, within the scope of this work, the application of AI has been guided by suggestions about the ethical use of AI published by Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2023), along with the author's research principles. This approach aims to ensure the preservation of authorship and authenticity of this work.

My position stands from the work of Pritchard (2007), according to which the main task of the researcher is to produce new knowledge and ideas. For Pritchard, genuine knowledge is not merely justified true belief, but an “apt belief”—a true belief achieved through the knower's intellectual virtues and cognitive abilities, a form of understanding AI cannot replicate. This process of producing original intellectual contributions was not influenced by any technological assistance throughout the work.

However, in line with my work, AI helped me in a few ways:

Processing academic literature. This involved everything from discovering and analysing to summarizing relevant literature, ultimately enhancing my understanding and engagement with the academic discourse.

Brainstorming. AI facilitated the exploration of insights and diverse perspectives.

Improving academic writing. Assistance included grammar checks, correction of typos, and refinement of phrasing to ensure clarity, precision, and an academic tone.

Beyond these specific applications, this research remains my original contribution to the academic discussion.

Findings

The findings section of this study will be divided into two parts.

The first part will present the results of a mixed-methods analysis of policy documents and business reports, allowing for the construction of a general profile of Kyiv as a global city.

The second part will consist of a qualitative analysis of global companies' wartime adaptation.

Global City Profile: Kyiv

This section presents a profile of Kyiv as a global city, revealing its complex and multi-staged evolution. The analysis is structured to trace this development path, beginning with the historical context of post-Soviet collapse, which shaped the city's initial trajectory. We then examine Kyiv's nascent transformation in the 2000s, analysing the emergence of new economic sectors that laid the groundwork for its future. The final part of the profile is a deep dive into the period of full-scale war, which, despite its destructive nature, has accelerated the city's integration and redefined its role as a global hub. This chronological approach provides a holistic understanding of how Kyiv evolved from a semi-peripheral city into a centre of resilience and innovation on the world stage.

Economic Collapse and the “Shock Therapy” of the 1990s

To provide a deeper understanding of Kyiv's development, this study examined Ukraine's economic performance immediately following its independence in 1991. Data analysis showed a staggering and sustained economic contraction. From 1989 to 1998, Ukraine's official GDP fell by 53% (Åslund & de Ménil, 2000). This eight-year decline, which resulted in a 60% shrinkage of economic activity, was, as noted in the research, *“unprecedented for a country not ravaged by a major war”* (Åslund & de Ménil, 2000; IMF, 2002). The post-communist world was defined by this economic malaise, but Ukraine's performance was uniquely poor.

From 1994, the government under Leonid Kuchma began economic reforms with support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These reforms aimed to liberalise prices, currency markets, and trade, and to initiate privatisation. However, instead of a free market, these policies led to the formation of a corrupt, *“insider-dominated”* market where the economy fell into the hands of a small circle of oligarchs. This situation is a classic example of *“hybrid spatialities of transition”*, where capitalist processes subsume and distort socialist legacies instead of completely replacing them (Golubchikov et al., 2014).

Privatisation was slow and lacked quality, as its goal was often not to create efficient owners, but to quickly redistribute state assets. This created a stagnant business environment and failed to attract the foreign investment needed for economic modernisation. The neoliberal policies promoted by the IMF and the World Bank did not produce the desired results, sometimes creating new social problems, such as significant increases in household gas prices, which fuelled public discontent. These policies required a strong state to implement market-based reforms, but in Ukraine, the state was weak and corrupt, allowing a narrow elite to co-opt the reforms for their own gain (Rutland, 2013). This period established the foundation for deep inequality. While Kyiv remained the largest and wealthiest city in Ukraine, its former armament-dependent industrial economy suffered a decline, and the emergence of new sectors was a weak signal of future transformation, not yet its full realisation.

Institutional Instability and Corruption as Obstacles

Kyiv's path to global city status was severely hampered by a pervasive institutional instability and endemic corruption, which effectively became a dominant, albeit informal, governing institution. The political landscape of the 1990s and 2000s was defined by continuous power struggles between the president and parliament, which hindered any consistent progress in institutional reform (Minakov, Rojansky et al., 2021). This was not merely political friction; it was a systemic failure that undermined the rule of law and discouraged foreign investment. Reports from U.S. diplomats were examined that described Ukraine under Presidents Kuchma (1994–2005) and Yushchenko (2005–2010) as a “kleptocracy”, indicating the deep-seated nature of the problem (Zhdanov, 2002). Research highlighted several specific manifestations of this corruption:

Electoral fraud: Widespread election fraud, often using “administrative resources”, was common (Zhdanov, 2002). The 2004 presidential election, for example, had to be overturned by the Supreme Court due to the sheer scale of the fraud.

Privatisation corruption: Findings confirmed that the privatisation of state-owned enterprises was frequently rigged to favour political allies, with corruption also rampant in regional land allocation (Кушнарьов, 2017).

Legislative corruption: Politicians were allegedly paid to switch parliamentary factions, receiving a monthly salary for their loyalty, which underscored the systemic nature of the problem within the legislative body (Zabzaliuk, 2012).

This environment of institutional weakness made Ukraine an unattractive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI), as investors require a predictable and transparent legal framework to commit capital (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Using Wallerstein's framework (Wallerstein, 1974), the analysis concluded that Kyiv operated firmly within the global “semi-periphery” during this period. The city lacked the strong, transparent state institutions characteristic of global “core” cities, which

are essential for attracting sustainable, long-term capital and talent. Corruption was not just a problem; it was a systemic counterforce that actively undermined the very foundations of global city development.

Kyiv on the Cusp of Transformation (2000–2013)

Despite institutional and economic challenges, signs of Kyiv's readiness for global integration began to emerge in the late 2000s. After a long decline, the Ukrainian economy rebounded in 2000, and its recovery accelerated in 2001. Before the 2008 financial crisis, Kyiv's economy outperformed the national average, growing annually by 11.5%. New sectors, such as services and finance, replaced the old armament-dependent industrial output as the key drivers of growth. The city became the undisputed centre of business and commerce, home to the country's largest companies (Економічна правда, 2021).

During this period, Kyiv began to appear in global city rankings. For instance, the GaWC (Globalisation and World Cities Research Network) classified it as a “Beta” city in 2018. This indicated its growing importance as a node in the global network, supporting the theory that cities are instrumental in linking their regions to the world economy (GaWC, 2018). The growth of Kyiv was a result of long-term processes, and even before the Revolution of Dignity, the foundations for a global city were in place: a skilled workforce, a developing market economy, and initial integration into global networks. Although the 2008 crisis hit Kyiv hard, with a 13.5% contraction in gross regional product, this decline was less severe than the national average, demonstrating a degree of resilience that would become critical later (Slovo i Dilo, 2016).

This section explores how the Revolution of Dignity shifted Ukraine's development trajectory, initiating institutional reforms that fostered Kyiv's global integration, particularly in the burgeoning IT sector.

The Revolution of Dignity as a Political Watershed

The Euromaidan protests of 2013-2014 marked a decisive shift, rejecting post-Soviet politics and establishing a new, pro-Western course for Ukraine. The protests were not merely a reaction to the government's rejection of an EU association agreement but a rejection of endemic corruption and injustice as a way of life. After President Yanukovich fled, the parliament reinstated the 2004 constitution, which strengthened its authority and created a “*window of opportunity*” for fundamental reforms. The subsequent Russian aggression in 2014 further solidified Ukraine's move towards Euro-Atlantic integration (Open Society Foundations, 2014; Snelbecker, 1995).

This analysis reveals that for Kyiv and Ukraine, globalisation was not a passive economic process but a political project that demanded an active choice and ultimately led to conflict. This supports Sparke's (2013) argument that globalisation is a politically shaped project, formed by geopolitical and geo-economic infrastructure.

The Revolution of Dignity was an institutional attempt to break free from the “semi-periphery” and become part of the global “core”. This political choice catalysed the reforms needed to create the conditions for a true global city: transparency, predictability, and the rule of law.

Decentralisation and Urban Policy

The decentralisation reform, initiated in 2014, proved to be one of Ukraine's most successful reforms, significantly empowering Kyiv and other cities with the tools for self-governance. The reform devolved power, responsibilities, and substantial financial resources from the national to the local level. A key mechanism was the creation of “amalgamated territorial communities” (ATCs), which gained the right to collect taxes (e.g., 60% of personal income tax) and receive direct transfers from the central budget. This fiscal decentralisation established a new “social contract” between local businesses, citizens, and local governments, incentivising cities to attract and retain businesses to expand their tax base (Romanova & Umland (2019); U.S. Department of State, 2024). As the capital, Kyiv gained significant autonomy and resources, enabling it to manage its own development and urban policies more effectively.

Effective decentralisation is not just an internal policy but a critical factor in a city's global integration. When a city has financial and administrative autonomy, it can invest in infrastructure, create a more attractive business climate, and respond to local needs, all of which are crucial for attracting TNCs and a skilled workforce. This transforms the city from a mere administrative unit into an independent player in global networks.

Kyiv as a Regional Global Hub

By 2022, Kyiv was not merely a capital but a dynamic regional hub rapidly integrating into the world economy. The city's GaWC rankings reflected this upward trajectory: classified as a “Beta” city in 2018 and again in 2022 as a “Beta+” city, Kyiv was an important world city instrumental in linking its region to the world economy. The IT industry became the main engine of Kyiv's economic growth. In 2021, IT service exports grew by a staggering 36% and made up 37% of all service exports from Ukraine. More than 52% of all IT companies were registered in Kyiv, generating approximately 67% of the industry's total net income (Kyiv GovTech Centre, 2024). This sector, fuelled by a skilled and educated workforce, became a key exporter of services and contributed significantly to the country's GDP.

Kyiv's status as a “Beta” city indicates that it had moved beyond being a simple regional centre. It was a crucial node connecting moderate economic regions to the global economy. The rise of the IT sector is a powerful example of Sassen's theory in action: the city became a hub for specialised services vital for corporate globalisation. This concentration of skilled labour and knowledge created what economists call

“knowledge spillovers”, which foster innovation and productivity. The fluctuating GaWC rankings (Beta in 2018, Gamma+ in 2020, Beta+ in 2022) suggest that Kyiv's path was not linear but dynamic and subject to ongoing re-evaluation, reflecting its unique and often unstable geopolitical context.

Table №1. Kyiv's GaWC Global City Classification (2016–2022)

Year	GaWC Classification	Notes/Context	Sources
2016	Beta	Ranked 61st in Global Network Connectivity (GNC), with an absolute GNC score of 43042 and a relative GNC of 37.88%.	Derudder & Taylor, 2016
2018	Beta	Important world city linking its region/state into the world economy.	GaWC, 2018
2020	Gamma+	Links smaller regions/states or has major global capacity not in advanced producer services.	GaWC, 2020
2022	Beta+	Important world city instrumental in linking its region/state into the world economy.	GaWC, 2022

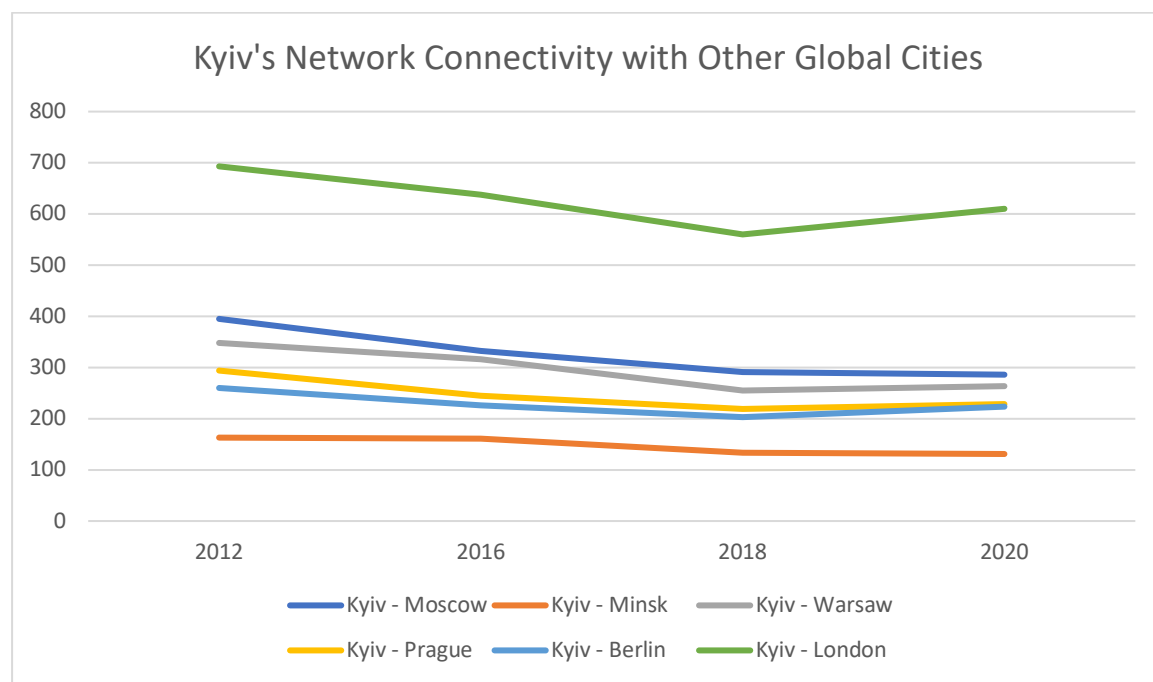
In the context of my study, it is also crucial to position Kyiv in relation to other cities. In the case of the Ukrainian capital, the key focus of this positioning is the geopolitical tension prevalent in this region. As a historical legacy, Ukraine was strongly connected economically with the countries of the post-Soviet region; however, the question of how these connections are persistent remains, especially considering the shift in Ukrainian foreign policy towards European integration. To test these assumptions using the GaWC data, the datasets from the years 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022 were used, and the connections between Moscow and Minsk on the one hand and London, Berlin, Warsaw and Prague on the other hand. Specifically, the values represent a calculation of network connectivity between Kyiv and the selected cities for each year, which is based on the co-presence of global Advanced Producer Services (APS) firms (Dataset 27, 2012; Dataset 28, 2016; Dataset 30, 2018; Dataset 31, 2020).

Table №2. Kyiv's Network Connectivity with Other Global Cities (2012-2020)

	Kyiv - Moscow	Kyiv - Minsk	Kyiv - Warsaw	Kyiv - Prague	Kyiv - Berlin	Kyiv - London
2012	395	163	348	294	260	693
2016	333	161	316	245	226	638
2018	291	133	255	219	203	560
2020	286	131	263	228	223	610

The data reveal that Kyiv's connectivity did not follow a simple, linear upward trajectory. Instead, its overall integration, as measured by the number of shared Advanced Producer Services (APS) firms, saw a notable decline from 2012 to 2018, with a modest recovery in 2020. More revealing than the absolute values, however, is the shifting geopolitical geography of these connections. The data clearly show a steady and substantial weakening of Kyiv's ties to the post-Soviet space, with its connections to Moscow and Minsk experiencing a pronounced and continuous decrease over the period. Simultaneously, while connections to key European hubs such as Berlin, Prague, and Warsaw also saw a reduction in absolute terms, their relative importance to Kyiv's network increased. London remained the most strongly connected global hub throughout this period, albeit with some fluctuation. This analysis demonstrates that even before the full-scale invasion, Kyiv's path was defined by a complex and dynamic process of geopolitical re-orientation. The city was actively, if unevenly, pivoting its network connections towards Western European capitals, a trend that underscores the political dimension of globalisation and sets the stage for the dramatic transformations that would follow.

Figure №1. A Graphic Representation of Kyiv's Network Connectivity with Other Global Cities (2012–2020)



A Global City at War: Economic Shock and Strategic Resilience

The full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 delivered a devastating blow to Ukraine's economy and Kyiv's infrastructure, but it also revealed the city's extraordinary resilience. By early 2025, direct damage to Ukraine's assets had reached \$176 billion, with an estimated recovery cost of \$524 billion over the next decade (World Bank & Government of Ukraine, 2025; World Bank, 2025). In 2022, Ukraine's GDP fell by

28.8%, while the central region, including Kyiv, experienced a 50% drop in sales and a 21% decline in employment compared to 2021 (UNDP, 2024). Russia's targeted attacks on energy infrastructure, beginning in late 2022, have destroyed a third of the country's generating capacity (Kyiv Post, 2025; ICRC, 2024).

Despite the destruction, the economy has shown a remarkable ability to recover, with GDP growing by 5.3% in 2023 and 2.9% in 2024. This resilience is a result of collaborative efforts between the government and businesses, rapid restoration of critical infrastructure, and consistent financial support from international partners (UNDP, 2024; EIB, 2025). The war has also amplified existing challenges, such as the “brain drain” and labour shortages caused by displacement and mobilisation. This makes human capital retention a new, critical factor in the city's development (ICRC, 2024; UNDP, 2024).

The Business Community: Adaptation and Operational Continuity

In the face of these high risks, both international and Ukrainian companies in Kyiv have demonstrated astonishing resilience and innovative adaptation. In contrast to the situation in Russia, where many TNCs withdrew, international companies in Ukraine have largely remained and adapted. (PONARS Eurasia, 2022). A May 2023 World Bank survey showed that less than 10% of TNCs had reduced their production capacity, and nearly half had expanded their investments, primarily in western regions (UNDP, 2024). International consulting firms, such as the “Big Four” (Deloitte, PwC, EY, KPMG), adapted by implementing flexible work arrangements, improving internal communication, and providing psychological support to staff, despite experiencing revenue and employee reductions in 2022.

The IT industry, a cornerstone of Kyiv's economy, has become a pillar of national support. Its flexibility and ability to switch to remote work allowed it to retain 95% of contracts and even grow by 5% in 2022. The relocation of specialists from Kharkiv and Kyiv contributed to the growth of new IT hubs in western regions like Lviv (Kyiv GovTech Centre, 2024). The war has also spurred the growth of the military technology sector (“mil-tech”), with defence tech accounting for 25% of all investment deals in 2024. These innovations and joint ventures with companies like Rheinmetall are modernizing Ukraine's defence industry and accelerating its integration with NATO standards. Business associations, such as the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) and the European Business Association (EBA), have played an active role by organizing delegations to Kyiv, lobbying for reforms, and facilitating engagement in reconstruction efforts, demonstrating that the city remains a viable business centre even in wartime (SIPRI, 2025).

Table №3. International Company Adaptation Strategies (2022–2024)

Company / Organisation	Sector	Adaptation Strategies	Sources
Nestlé	Food & Beverage	Built a new factory in wartime; maintained a fully functional business services centres in Lviv.	Savastieieva, 2025
Kyivstar	Telecom	Rapidly recovered telecom infrastructure; increased energy resilience; preparing for public listing.	Savastieieva, 2025
“Big Four” (Deloitte, PwC, EY, KPMG)	Consulting	Implemented flexible work arrangements; improved internal communication; provided psychological support to staff.	Economic Bulletin of KPI, 2024
American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham)	Business Association	Organised executive delegations to Kyiv; advocated for reforms and investments; lobbied for military and financial aid.	U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2024
European Business Association (EBA)	Business Association	Launched the Ukraine Recovery Committee; repurposed initiatives to support the army and population (e.g., “Second Chance Bank”); actively lobbied for reforms.	European Business Association, 2025

The New Role of International Policy and Reconstruction

The international community, governments, and financial institutions are playing a crucial role in shaping Kyiv's future trajectory, rethinking post-war reconstruction strategies. The World Bank estimates that Ukraine will need over \$524 billion for recovery and reconstruction over the next decade. International organisations like the World Bank, IMF, IFC, and MIGA are providing emergency support and creating frameworks for long-term recovery, including war risk insurance and dedicated trust funds (World Bank & Government of Ukraine, 2025).

The “Ukraine Economy of the Future” strategy, supported by the World Bank and the government, positions the private sector as the main driver of reconstruction, not just public funding. The IFC, for example, has shifted toward long-term financing in key sectors like agriculture, IT, and energy (World Bank, 2025). The war has accelerated Ukraine's path toward EU accession, transforming it from a political goal into an

existential necessity. The EU and its allies are demanding reforms focused on transparency and the rule of law to attract the private investment essential for EU membership.

Post-war reconstruction is not just about rebuilding but about building a new global city. International partners understand that recovery must involve a modernisation that integrates green technologies, digital infrastructure, and high governance standards. Kyiv, as the hub of this process, can turn its tragedy into an opportunity for a radical transformation (U.S. Department of State, 2024). The war has created a unique “geographical spillover” for the EU, the US, and Ukraine, forcing the EU to expand its policies to ensure stability and protect its own interests, which explains the unprecedented level of financial and military support.

Conclusion: Re-imagining the Global City

Kyiv has evolved from a post-Soviet city trapped by institutional instability and oligarchy into a dynamic regional hub that is now the centres of a new type of global city. The full-scale invasion did not derail this path but, in many ways, accelerated it, transforming the city into a global centre of innovation, resilience, and resistance.

Kyiv's experience demands an expansion of the criteria for evaluating a global city. It is no longer just about the concentration of finance and legal services, but about the ability to function under extreme threats, to adapt rapidly to destruction, to mobilize human capital, and to be a centre for technological innovation, including mil-tech. This new role makes Kyiv a unique case study in global urban studies.

By addressing these challenges, scholars can contribute to a more robust understanding of how global cities, particularly those in vulnerable geopolitical positions, navigate and are transformed by extreme conflict, offering crucial lessons for urban resilience and international business in an increasingly volatile world.

How Kyiv as a Global City Transformed under the Influence of War: Data from the Local Branches of Global Companies

“Any city and even a village in modern times, whether they want to or not, are all global” (Interviewee N°5).

This section of my findings focuses on the lived experiences of the employees of the Kyiv branches of global companies. It will be based on interviews, media materials, and my personal contextual immersion. However, the core of the chapter will be a thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews.

While the primary themes for discussion were guided by the interview protocol, which was designed to address the research question, the flexible nature of the interviews allowed for the emergence of unexpected topics. The resulting theses were therefore

not predefined assumptions but emerged inductively from the data collected during the conversations with participants.

The main result of this analysis consists of nine themes that ran through my conversations with participants. They also represent the core insights about the current conditions of running an international office in Ukraine.

Table №4. The List of Themes (Thesis)

Thesis №1	When establishing a branch in Ukraine, the natural choice is Kyiv
Thesis №2	The global city hierarchy is not truly hierarchical.
Thesis №3	Strong support was received from international colleagues.
Thesis №4	Connections with the Russian (and Belarusian) departments were broken by the entire transnational network.
Thesis №5	A shock at the beginning of the war was followed by a dynamic recovery in the next years.
Thesis №6.	Government support and predictable state legislation are necessary.
Thesis №7.	Supporting employees is a key challenge for firms in wartime.
Thesis №8.	Volunteering is a national duty in a time of societal crisis.
Thesis №9.	The general spirit is determination and hope to continue to stay and work in Ukraine.

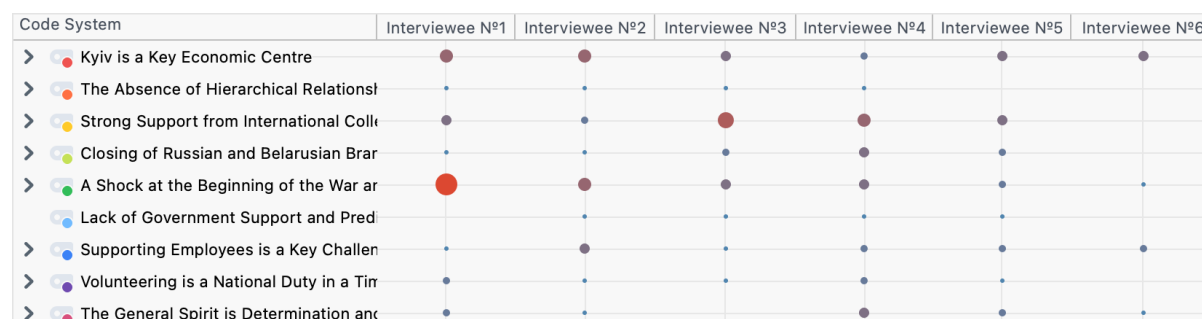
A schematic representation of the analysis, which shows the frequency of themes mentioned in each interview, is presented in the table below. If a theme was mentioned and supported by a participant, it is marked with a cross.

Table №5. Thematic Analysis of Participant Interviews

	Thesis №1	Thesis №2	Thesis №3	Thesis №4	Thesis №5	Thesis №6	Thesis №7	Thesis №8	Thesis №9
Interviewe №1	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Interviewe №2		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Interviewe №3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interviewe №4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interviewe №5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interviewe №6	X		X		X		X	X	X

The outcome of the interview coding process, using the MAXQDA24 software, is presented below. The more detailed report can be found in Appendix #6.

Figure №2. Interviews Coding



For the sake of convenience in the writing process and clarity of the text, I assigned a number to every interviewee. This same number will be used further in the text and will be associated with the company where the interviewee works.

In the next sections, I will explain and develop each of the above-mentioned theses.

Thesis №1. When establishing a branch in Ukraine, the natural choice is Kyiv.

“To me, a global city is one that shares a certain level of development with other major cities. In the specific context of globalisation, this means connections, growth, the speed of that growth, the blurring of boundaries, and so forth. I see globalisation, in the context of our city, as a closer, more practical interaction with other global cities in the world today” (Interviewee №1).

According to my interview guide, every conversation started with a question of how this office was set up and why in Kyiv. For me, as a Ukrainian and a Kyiv citizen, it was awkward asking this question, as the fact that Kyiv is the economic and political centre of Ukraine is common knowledge within Ukraine.

The participants seemed to feel this too. However, the research revealed the quite obvious reason for this: companies are trying to be based in large, economically developed cities. These cities represent and create business clusters where such companies thrive. Interviewee №1, Interviewee №3, and Interviewee №5 mentioned that it is easier to find clients here within their field. It is also easier to find additional partners in large cities with whom they can cooperate to provide the services to their clients.

Interviewee №4 mentioned that their company would like to expand their operations to other Ukrainian cities and open offices there; however, the war became a barrier to these plans. The key reason for those plans is that it is more convenient to work with

local clients when permanent workers are in the same country. Among the other interesting cities are Odesa, Kharkiv, and Dnipro. Interviewee N^o5 compares the level of Kyiv's development to Lviv's but recognises that Kyiv remains the leader in business. Company N^o3 is the only one within the scope of my research that had another Ukrainian office, located in Dnipro.

Given that the war has now lasted 3.5 years, a key consideration has become the relative safety of the city. While no location on Ukrainian territory can be considered entirely safe (UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, 2025), some places are viewed as more secure than others. The general rule is that the greater the distance from the frontline and the Russian border, the safer the location. In this context, Kyiv is widely considered secure enough to sustain ongoing business activities, although Interviewee N^o2 stated that for their advertising shoots, her company shifted its focus from the capital to the Western regions as well as some factory openings.

At the same time, it is recognised, the city does not have the planetary influence on the global economy. *“Of course, neither before the war nor during the war, did we become a city where fateful decisions are made... I mean, speaking in business terms, we never were the city where decisions are made, because our economy is smaller than the economies of Poland, Germany, or even Russia... And of course, we are not the city that concentrates decisions. But we do have an influence on those decisions, of course”* (Interviewee N^o5). However, the several participants mentioned Kyiv as a city that gained influence in the political dimension. Interviewee N^o2 admitted that *“I believe that with the start of the war, many people—even in Europe—discovered that a country like Ukraine exists, that it's a big country, and cool in its own way, because many smart, educated, and intelligent people work here, building great companies. I think because of the war, Ukraine and Kyiv have somehow become more popular in the world and more appealing to visit”*.

Thesis N^o2. The global city hierarchy is not truly hierarchical.

During three interview sessions, while I was outlining the research topic, I was stopped by the participants for them to make a remark:

“Our company is independent” (Interviewee N^o4; supported by Interviewee N^o2 and Interviewee N^o5)

Prior to going into the field, I equipped myself with the theoretical background of global city theory. While asking about relationships with other offices, I expected to hear about hierarchical relations.

However, Interviewee N^o4 and Interviewee N^o5 mentioned that they started their own companies and later joined their international brand network. Although other

companies described the process of opening an office in Kyiv as the global office deciding to set up their branch in this location.

“In our work, we are guided by common policies. We have uniform rules for conducting business in terms of complying with auditor standards, international financial reporting standards, and certain ethical and compliance policies, which are mandatory for our company's operations. But we are independent, and the X network, let's say, can influence us in what way... they conduct audits, they, of course, help us conduct our activities in accordance with the best principles, with the best practices. But the decision to stop or continue our operations is solely the decision of the company's owners and management” (Interviewee №4).

“We are not a franchise; we just buy the name. We're not structured as if it's their office. We are simply part of a single network, and our offices are all independent. We're all different, with different management, different budgets, and everything else. The only things that are similar are the first word, «X», and the similar branding” (Interviewee №2).

More revealing is the language with which participants describe their communication with other offices. While asking about changing relationships between foreign branches and Kyiv offices, no subordination relations were observed, as it is described by classical global city theories. Rather, it is framed in terms of belonging to the same company's network, where all branches operate equally. When the war began, the headquarters, in the case of the companies I interviewed, did not assume managerial functions or take responsibility. Instead, the situation was managed locally.

In addition, despite such a massive disruption happening on Ukrainian territory as the war conflict, the event itself did not change managerial connections between the offices of different countries. However, the network response was observed in the form of different kinds of humanitarian help, which will be discussed in the next section.

Thesis №3. Strong support was received from international colleagues.

The significant changes and intensification in the relationships between Kyiv offices and foreign offices of the same company were witnessed in the dimension of political support provided to Ukraine.

The truly critical moment was the beginning of the war, as it was a period of profound uncertainty. Interviewee №3 stated:

“When I was in Kyiv in February 2022, my colleagues from Cyprus, Germany, and Britain called me several times, and they were very concerned, especially when new media reports came out, such as the recognition of the LPR and DPR. It seemed as if, for them, everything was already clear. But here, on the inside, it still seemed—at

least there was a perception—that it would all blow over, that these were just provocations, and that a full-scale invasion could still be avoided". The same claim was supported by Interviewee N^o2.

However, when the Russian invasion happened, all respondents confirmed the strong verbal and material support from their international colleagues and gave extremely positive and warm feedback about this type of cooperation. *"The statement is clear and concise"* (Interviewee N^o4 about their network position regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war).

This support took different forms.

First its expression is positive messages.

"Such support, such unity in supporting Ukraine, personal support... in the first days of the war, so many people wrote to me—people I didn't even know existed in my holding—they wrote to me, and everyone expressed words of support, everyone tried to not just talk but to help somehow" (Interviewee N^o1).

"While I was on the road, driving from Kyiv to Western Ukraine, a manager from Italy—someone I had briefly worked with on a tender [...] — contacted me on Instagram. She told me that their office in Italy was ready to help. «If you need any assistance, just come», she wrote, «we will do our best». This support was really tangible. [...] You must understand, most of these people had never met us in person; we were just colleagues in the same company. The level of interaction between our office in Ukraine and those in Italy or Germany during regular times wasn't particularly deep" (Interviewee N^o5).

Interviewee N^o3, supporting this statement, recalled the logo change of their head office to the Ukrainian flag colours and the interest of foreign offices in their operations in the new realities: who among the employees went to the frontline, and who conducted volunteering work. This was especially visible in 2022, as later the realities of war became a part of the daily routine. Later, the company represented by Interviewee N^o4 was invited to Munich to share its experience of operating in wartime conditions.

Interviewee N^o1 emphasised the importance of internal and interpersonal communication among top management, as their Ukrainian colleagues were able to convey what was truly happening in Ukraine.

A second form of help was the relocation of employees from the Kyiv offices. In the case of company N^o4, the whole Ukrainian team was offered to move their office to Poland just to continue providing their services to clients in a safe place. For company N^o3 and company N^o5, the network provided the great support in the employment of

the Ukrainian workers abroad when those left the country. It leads us to the assumption that, in a time of crisis, global companies provide a wide range of networking resources across the globe for those working in them.

The third sort of help received is support to Kyiv offices directly. Interviewee №5 mentioned that as the conflict unfolded, the network provided the firm with additional international projects to work on and keep financial security. *“The company set up project teams of Ukrainian specialists to work on European market orders, and this was very helpful for us. Financially, of course. For instance, the number of our employees whose salaries were paid from these European—and even some American—projects was quite high in the first year of the full-scale invasion. It also provided a valuable exchange of expertise”*. Also, the network helped in the attracting the clients on the local market. A similar experience was noted in the case of company №4.

Company №3 received a direct donation from their worldwide colleagues as financial support at the beginning of the war. A similar, unexpected positive experience of receiving help from unknown colleagues from abroad was observed by Interviewee №3: *“For example, we didn't even know the people, and we still don't personally know the people in Japan. And Japan office donated... well, they were among the top donors, specifically the representative office in Japan. Also, among the top donors, we should note Denmark and Eastern European countries like Bulgaria and Romania. This is due to a personal factor there and many other factors, like the size of a particular office in that country”*.

When blackouts started in Ukraine due to Russia's bombing of power stations, Company №4 received a generator from the Czech office as a support measure. Similar support was received by Company №5 from their Polish colleagues.

The fourth type of support measure received from abroad was support for Ukraine's defence forces. While most foreign colleagues hesitated to contribute financially to anything directly related to military actions (Interviewee №4; Interviewee №5), they were more than willing to help in the humanitarian field. Most of this support was sent to the National Bank of Ukraine.

It must be noted that, according to Interviewee №6, not all global networks were able to provide such support. This could perhaps be explained by the specific nature of the banking industry or the firm's geography. However, Company №6 did not express the same strong emotional involvement, instead viewing the situation in pragmatic terms as a necessary decision to continue business operations.

Thesis №4. Connections with the Russian (and Belarusian) departments were broken by the entire transnational network.

The topic of communication between Ukrainian and Russian offices was included due to the need to explore the former colonial-metropolitan relationships that existed between the two countries. I would expect that such a crucial event as the Russian invasion of Ukraine could influence these relations.

As conversations about the Russian offices came up, they often involved the mention of Belarus (Interviewee №3; Interviewee №4). Although Ukraine and Belarus have not declared any conflict between them, it is quite apparent that Russia and Belarus remain in a strong alliance in the war against Ukraine (Belarus' involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: new EU restrictive measures target trade, services, transport, and anti-circumvention, 2024). Therefore, in the sphere of international business, this seems to be an important factor.

All participants in the research declared that their companies either did not have offices in Russia at all (Interviewee №6), had left Russia right before the invasion (Interviewee №3), or had left Russia after the invasion (Interviewee №1, Interviewee №2, Interviewee №4, and Interviewee №5). Interviewee №3 and Interviewee №4 also mentioned that their companies had left Belarus. The specific business operations made it unfeasible for the companies to continue their presence in those countries.

However, when I asked interviewees to elaborate on this topic, there was not much to discuss, as their firms had not cooperated with Russia for a long time (Interviewee №2, Interviewee №3, Interviewee №4, Interviewee №5, and Interviewee №6). As it was explained, the offices did not have common projects to work on. I hypothesise that either connections with their Eastern neighbour offices were never established, as their headquarters are located in the Global North and there was no business need for them, or that these relationships were severed at the beginning of the military conflict in 2014. These assumptions must be tested in further research.

Only in one interview, №1, were the relationships with former colleagues from Russia discussed. Although the specific circumstances under which the teams met were not mentioned, the post-invasion resentments about these relationships were expressed by the participant:

“As soon as the war started, they went very silent. I tried to write to my ex-colleagues. Publicly, in private messages, it didn't work at all. [...] Then I found it very unpleasant to hear and to know that my ex-colleagues, their agency, were involved in developing the well-known and now meme-worthy brand «Vkusno i Tochka». [...] I try to avoid communicating with those colleagues who were relocated after the start of the war; some of them left very quickly. I just don't have the moral resources to have any kind of conversation with them, so I avoid it”

For context, the “Vkusno i tochka” brand is a direct replacement for McDonald's in Russia that appeared after the famous fast-food restaurant chain left the country (Roth, 2022).

In general, every conversation about Russia and anything related to it was emotionally difficult for the participants.

Thesis №5. A shock at the beginning of the war was followed by a dynamic recovery in the next years.

Through the interview process, it was found that the period of the first few months after the full-scale invasion was the most unpredictable and challenging. During the first year, the companies experienced a downturn, which was followed by a dynamic recovery in the following years.

Interviewee №1 characterised this period this way: *“At the beginning of the war, as soon as it started, there was almost silence for two or three months, because no one understood what was happening in this chaos, what tomorrow would bring, and so on. It was then that the bravest ones started to stir a little, and it was actually really cool, because you were the first to wake up from that, you know, like from this daze, and you had an advantageous position, a competitive advantage. Everyone else was silent, and you were saying something—that's super cool”*. Interviewee №4 states that unlike their colleagues, they did not stop working due to the invasion, which was their competitive advantage.

The decline in companies' revenue in 2022 and recovery in 2023-2024 were noted by Interviewees №3 and №5. Interviewee №4 confirmed that this tendency existed across different industries, based on their experience with their clients.

One of the reasons for this process might be the disruption of business processes in Eastern Ukraine, where Russia has occupied the territory and where military actions were taking place. Interviewees №3 and №4 reported that their clients from this region lost their financial flows, which influenced their performance. Interviewee №2 mentioned that a lot of production companies relocated to Eastern Ukraine.

One of the challenges of the wartime period is communication with foreign clients. *“There's a tricky moment here, which is that even now, already in the fourth year of the war, some clients still have this picture in their heads that there's some kind of apocalypse happening here, like Mad Max. That is, everyone is scurrying around, doing something, a copywriter is sitting somewhere on their knees with a laptop under shelling, and things are flying at him while he works. Well, in reality, that's not the case»”* (Interviewee №1).

Indeed, the perception of life in a war zone can be profoundly skewed by media and other information sources for those who lack direct contact with the territory or its residents. Interviewee №1 highlighted that close communication, such as through video calls, is crucial in challenging this misconception, as it offers a personal connection that asynchronous communication, like email, tends to depersonalise. However, this experience with international companies differs drastically from the one with Ukrainian companies, as they live in these conditions and may show more understanding and awareness of the context.

Furthermore, a big drive to continue their work was observed throughout the interviews. Interviewee №1 and Interviewee №2 mentioned being in the middle of a project for foreign clients when the war started, and they were proud to say that despite the invasion, they managed to complete them within the set timeframe. The company represented by Interviewee №5 began to work on foreign projects even more actively.

Interviewees №6 supported the claim about the sense of responsibility of Ukrainian companies from the perspective of the banking sphere: *“Take, for example, our Greek shareholders. In the first year of the full-scale invasion, 2022, they were shocked—in a good way. They told us that during the Greek crisis of 2010, when unemployment was around 25%, loan repayments were at about 50% in arrears; essentially, no one was paying. Our bank's portfolio, however, was nearly ideal during the full-scale invasion. We had almost no problem debt. Of course, there were some nuances where we had to change payment schedules and postpone things, but the bottom line is, everyone was working”*.

A specific challenge of working during the war, as highlighted by Interviewee №1, is the lack of long-term planning across different businesses and the need to complete tasks 20–30% quicker than before the war. In this regard, the technology of artificial intelligence (AI), which became widely available a few months after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, proved to be a very useful assistant: *“We are integrating artificial intelligence skills for everyone, not just for creatives, designers, copywriters, and art directors, but for all managers. Everyone has to know artificial intelligence, because it helps in any area of our work”*. In their everyday activities the importance of artificial Intelligence also was emphasised by Interviewee №2. As professional photo shootings became more difficult and expensive to organise, sometimes generated content can substitute this whole process.

Interviewee №4 emphasised the importance of their work in a new realm. As the running business in the military attacked territory is accompanied by a high level of unpredictability, the accounting service becomes very relevant for the companies: *“Companies need to restart; they need to revise their information systems and financial systems for effective management. I am personally confident that with development, when the situation stabilizes, there will be competition and a need for consultants who can help establish organisational processes. That's because a lot in*

business depends on the efficiency of management. And it's precisely now that a very clear realisation of this has come: we cannot afford to be, let's say, without planning or without considering the effectiveness of our processes. Miracles don't happen in any field; time and effort are needed, preferably in the right direction”.

Interviewee №2, Interviewee №3, and Interviewee №5 stressed the importance of the COVID-19 experience in their adaptation efforts, as they had already practised remote work in the years leading up to the invasion. This was especially relevant given how chaotic the movement of people was, and in some cases remains, during the war.

We had a flexible schedule, we had remote work, all our processes were in a CRM system. So, we clearly knew how a client works, when they work, at what hours, all these payments, and so on, it was all online. Everything was remote for us, through electronic signatures and so on, and we automated this entire process. So, we didn't have any changes. Of course, many people went to war, we did a lot of charitable projects, but that didn't really affect our work. We were working as we were, and there were no such drastic changes (Interviewee №2).

Interviewee №3 highlighted that remote work became their competitive advantage on the job market, as employees prioritised mobility in this situation and sometimes preferred to stay in safer territories in Western Ukraine: *“There are definitely a few leading specialists who have joined us because, for example, they live in the west and don't want to move to Kyiv. Right now, we have people in Lviv, in Ivano-Frankivsk, in Odesa, in Kropyvnytskyi, and in Dnipro, as I already mentioned. It just so happened that we have physical offices there, and many people live and work there”.* However, coming to the office was also possible throughout the entire time, which was especially relevant during blackouts as the office had its own generator.

Interviewee №5 mentioned that their employees work remotely from abroad. As some employees left their technical equipment at home, the company provided them with new equipment once they settled in their new workplace.

However, Interviewee №1 stressed the importance of staying in Ukraine for company operations. He explained it was essential to remain in the context of the internal war to effectively create products for Ukrainian clients.

The good summary of this chapter is provided by Interviewee №2: *“The world will end, and we will continue to work as we always have”.* It highlights the ability of local companies to adapt to challenging circumstances.

Thesis №6. Government support and predictable state legislation are necessary.

The topic of interaction between companies and the government was mentioned several times throughout the interview process.

For context, it must be noted that despite the challenging conditions in which local businesses operate, the government did not provide strong support throughout the war period, and the support that was offered was not applicable to the type of companies this research is based on. (Добровольська & Будурова, 2024).

The concern about government actions was pointed out by Interviewee №2, Interviewee №3, Interviewee №4 and Interviewee №5. Company №2 was challenged by the frequent changes of the tax legislation: *“These changes are constant, and you're just trying to do more, put things aside for the future, invest somehow. You bought generators, then you bought something for the war, shot a charity ad at your own expense—these are all financial and various tax expenses. We really felt these tax changes this year when our taxes were raised because we had tied up a budget for development, for some courses, for training, for some trips abroad”*. Interviewee №2 highlighted the need for government support, advocating for either new assistance programmes or a moratorium on tax inspections. The need for transparent legislation was also expressed by Interviewee №4.

Interviewee №3 noted that the national government does not consider in its legislation that business currently operates in wartime conditions and does not consider blackouts, shelling, and other specifics of the state of war: *“Of course, the field of auditing is regulated for us by the Ministry of Finance in Ukraine. But this regulation, frankly, doesn't always account for the circumstances of our operations. Like any other regulatory body, it seems to assume that business is running under pre-war conditions, and it fails to consider things like lockdowns, shelling, conscription issues, or problems with client demand and solvency. These matters are often not reflected in the regulations. In other words, it sets requirements as if nothing is happening”*.

Interviewee №4 emphasised the importance of civil society in creating a transparent business environment, which she believed would lead to further investments in Kyiv. She claimed that anti-corruption initiatives are equally important both during and after the war. She supported her thesis with an instance where civil society recently stopped the implementation of a set of legislation that could have helped avoid punishment for corruption. The internal enemy, she argued, is supposed to be defeated just as thoroughly as the external one for the creation of friendly business conditions within the country.

Overall, firms emphasised that their operational success is deeply intertwined with the macroeconomic climate and the performance of their clients. This demonstrates that government legislation and regulatory stability are key factors influencing business continuity.

Thesis №7. Supporting employees is a key challenge for firms in wartime.

“You see, we don't have factories, plants, or production. Our entire potential is our people” (Interviewee №5).

The specificity of the service business, which I focus on in my research, is that their main resource is their staff. Thus, when during the interviews we discussed the changes in business operations or the risks of war, the conversations almost exclusively revolved around people.

The first measure Ukrainian companies took was to provide employees with 2-3 salaries in advance as the war started. This was to ensure that their staff had the financial means during this challenging time (Interviewee №4; Interviewee №5; Interviewee №6).

The second task that was at hand was to keep the team and avoid layoffs. Interviewee №5 proudly stated that despite the market falling by 95%, their company did not fire a single person. The financial responsibility of paying salaries was assumed by the Ukrainian shareholders.

The third challenge that companies faced was ensuring their employees' safety. Since February 24th, the entire Ukrainian territory has endured air attacks with different types of military weapons, including rockets and drones. These attacks often result in damage to critical infrastructure, military objects, housing, and the death of Ukrainian people (Adams, 2025).

In these conditions, the companies I interviewed seem to have limited control over the danger to their employees. However, some measures were taken.

For instance, Company №1, to prevent the risks of physical danger or operational disruption, created protocols of action that should be followed in various situations: *“The company has protocols in place, for instance, if something happens. You receive an SMS notification on your phone and you have to reply with a «1» or a «2» to confirm if you're safe or not. This ongoing check is a standard part of our protocols. All of this gives you a sense of security in your workplace, which, in turn, allows you to continue your work”*. Also, Interviewee №1 noted that everybody working in the companies is equipped with all the necessary technical equipment, such as a charging station, to work in extreme conditions. Similar actions are practiced by Company №2, which instructs its team on safety measures during bombings, creates informational newsletters, and offers courses on first aid.

Company №3, Company №4, and Company №6 provided their employees with a sense of security by allowing flexible working hours and remote work, which enabled them to decide on their locations and individual measures to stay safe. This freedom

allowed team members to relocate wherever they decided was best for them. Interviewee №4 reported that despite this, the majority of people stayed in Kyiv.

As previously mentioned, when the Russians started bombing power stations at the end of 2022, the critical question for continuing the work became stable access to electricity. At that time, companies offered to come to the offices. During the war, Company №2 moved to a new office, which was closer to a bomb shelter and bought a generator for an uninterrupted supply of electricity. Similarly, Company №3 and Company №4 reopened their offices after a period of remote work to provide access to electricity for employees.

However, despite these actions, two interviewees mentioned the damage that their Ukrainian colleagues experienced due to Russian attacks. In the case of Company №2, one employee's flat was hit by a Russian rocket, and this person lost their home. In turn, Interviewee №4 noted that communication with some of their colleagues was lost for some time while they were under occupation in Hostomel and Bucha. Another one of their colleagues' homes was badly damaged by a Russian attack. The material losses or even the death of relatives of employees happened within the team of Company №5. These instances are considered both a personal trauma and a rational business risk. When those situations happen to someone from the company, those people receive an additional donation from colleagues and management.

The fourth major factor that influenced the companies' operations during the war is the mobilisation of men into the Ukrainian army.

Mobilisation in Ukraine is based on the Presidential Decree “On General Mobilisation”, which was introduced at the start of the full-scale invasion and is in effect for the period of martial law. The process is carried out by Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centres (TRSCs), which issue draft notices to men aged 18 to 60 who are eligible for military service (Загальна мобілізація, 2022).

In practice, not all Ukrainian men are serving in the army. While some have made the decision to voluntarily protect their country, others were called to join the army through official summons. There are several categories of men who are legally entitled to a deferment from mobilisation. These include, for instance, individuals deemed unfit for service due to health conditions, those with three or more minor children, and guardians of people with disabilities (Бронювання та відстрочка, 2025). In addition, some employees of critical enterprises can receive a special exemption or “booking” from mobilisation, which allows them to continue their work.

This process has an application to the operations of Kyiv companies. To some extent, it is considered a risk to their operations

A few of the companies that I interviewed reported that their employees went to the battlefield (Interviewee №2, Interviewee №3, Interviewee №5). Interviewee №3 mentioned that some of them made this decision themselves at the beginning of the war, while others were called up by the government. As a result, around 10% of their staff is now protecting Ukrainian sovereignty. Understanding the importance of military service in the current reality, when the independence and security of Ukraine as a state are at stake in this military conflict, the companies keep the salaries of the mobilised employees as if they were continuing to work as usual. Also, when they need any financial help with military equipment, the company gathers donations.

Interviewee №3 also revealed how the process of booking employees for mobilisation is happening. Usually, these opportunities are granted to enterprises categorised as critical infrastructure, to which service companies do not belong. However, in the instance of Company №3, they can book 50% of their employees.

Interviewee №4 acknowledged that a significant uplifting factor in their operation after the full-scale invasion was mutual support between management and employees. In this situation, good relationships with coworkers and optimism possessed extreme value. The same blurring of corporate boundaries between people of the same company was recalled by Interviewee №5, as he told the story of his company's collective evacuation to his hometown in the west of Ukraine: *"We helped with moving in the first days of the war, with settling people in, with finding housing. I myself took 40 people to my small town and settled everyone with friends, relatives, and so on. We had our own headquarter in my small town in Western Ukraine"*. The determined, brave spirit regarding the invasion was expressed by Interviewee №1: *"Yes, a rocket could hit my home. But that doesn't mean I won't do my job"*.

Thesis №8. Volunteering is a national duty in a time of societal crisis.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, volunteering has seen a massive increase in popularity, and different forms of contribution to the army or other institutions working to resist the Russian occupation have become a social norm. As my research has shown, the local offices of global companies are fully integrated into this national movement.

Interviewee №1 expressed his position on this matter from the perspective of the advertising industry and stated that currently, for Ukrainians as consumers, it is extremely valuable to know how socially responsible a brand is. He also made an interesting note about global brands that remained in business both in Russia and Ukraine: *"If you're a global brand that hasn't left Russia and you have a presence in Ukraine, no matter how great and good your employees are—and 100% of Ukrainian employees are usually great—and it just so happens that their head office decided not to lose those multi-billion-dollar profits... so, when you haven't left the aggressor country, it turns out that literally any communication you release, no matter what it*

is, there will be haters who will say: «Oh, who cares what you write, your company, your brand is currently sponsoring all these rockets that fly at us every day»”.

All three advertising companies reported providing free services to government institutions and anything related to Ukraine's defence in the war with Russia. Interviewee №5 also described their own charity project aimed at supporting Ukraine. For example, one initiative involved providing free education to former soldiers in the creative field. Another was the collective creation of drones by their employees; as a result, around 200 drones were sent to the battlefield. The company also helped to complete fundraising campaigns for those in the army.

Two accounting firms and one bank participating in the research (Company №3, Company №4; Company №6) reported significant donations to the National Bank of Ukraine. Interviewee №4 also reported that they occasionally join various fundraising initiatives they see on social media. Furthermore, the company created its own fundraising account to gather funds from various companies for charity purposes.

Besides the support from companies in the military sphere, other types of charity initiatives are also present from their side. Interviewee №3 defined their sphere of social support as helping orphanages in the Mykolaiv oblast and donating different supplies to them: laptops, furniture, and toys during the holidays. Company №5 focused on deaf people, whom they help to learn a new profession that does not require communication and later employ. Company №4 organised special days devoted to helping vulnerable social groups or employees in need.

Thesis №9. The general spirit is determination and hope to continue to stay and work in Ukraine.

The question of a company's operations in Kyiv and the risks related to it lies not only in the business dimension as a rational decision but also in a political and emotional component. The continuation of working in Kyiv is not just a job performed daily. It also holds a symbolic meaning of resistance and refusal to give up under the pressure and danger caused by an external actor.

Interviewee №1 gives the meaning to their work in terms of the mission that their company would like to achieve: *“In our company, we don't just make money. Company X is about how, through our work, we can change people's behaviour for the better and make the world a better place. Now we have a huge problem in our home country, so we are definitely not going anywhere....to leave, to relocate. And there are so many Ukrainian businesses that are just starting out, that it would have been really great for them to succeed not only in Ukraine but also in international markets. So, it's part of our mission to help such businesses. This is very important right now, because there is an obvious cause-and-effect relationship here. We will help businesses, they will grow, they will pay more taxes. Our country will improve.*

So, for me, this logic is obvious, and I am sure that my position, the company's position, is 100% aligned”.

Interviewee №2 and Interviewee №4 stated that after the events of February 24th, there is a low probability that a foreigner will confuse Kyiv with a Polish or Russian city, as it could have happened before the invasion. In this sense, Kyiv developed its international image on the global map and became much more famous and recognisable. Interviewee №4 acknowledged the rising political influence of the Ukrainian capital, as many key decisions in international policy are influenced by Ukraine.

The future plans for investing in Kyiv are considered from a dual perspective: on the one hand, the inherent danger of operating there at present, and on the other, the potential for dynamic development after the war. Nonetheless, the companies that already have businesses in Kyiv are not planning to leave; rather, they believe in its future growth. Interviewee №5 points out that the current cost of entering the Ukrainian market is much lower due to the war, although this obviously poses a significant risk. This strong post-war growth is also expected by Company №6, which does not foresee any relocation in the near future. Interviewee №4 mentioned that the first to establish an office in Kyiv will be the winners in the future.

Interviewee №5 supported an earlier claim by Interviewee №1 about the rise of Ukrainian companies on the global stage, stating that the war facilitated the entry of diverse Ukrainian companies into foreign markets.

Interviewees №2 and №4 noted the increasing international interest in Kyiv as a place for both tourism and living. They observed that Kyiv now makes an impression of being a very clean and safe place, inhabited by welcoming people. Foreigners, they added, are choosing Kyiv for the high level of Ukrainian medicine and its nature.

However, all companies agreed that the key challenge now is safety, which stands as a significant obstacle to all future aspirations.

Conclusion

Based on the qualitative data, this section of the paper examines how the Kyiv branches of global companies have adapted to the conditions of war. Nine key themes were identified—ranging from Kyiv's dominant role as a business centre to the importance of staff support and the powerful volunteering movement. The research shows that these companies have not only endured but have also fundamentally changed their operational approaches, network relationships, and social roles.

In conclusion, the war has fundamentally altered the operations of international company branches in Kyiv. The conflict has not only been a source of unprecedented

challenges but also a catalyst for a new, resilient corporate identity. Businesses quickly adapted by leveraging their experience with remote work and new technologies like artificial intelligence. This ability to continue operating despite the danger became a key competitive advantage. Furthermore, corporate activities extended beyond purely commercial matters: volunteering and social responsibility became an integral part of their identity, and employee support a top priority. Thus, these companies are not merely surviving; they are transforming, demonstrating a new model of resilience where business is deeply intertwined with national identity and social purpose.

Discussion

This study embarked on a critical exploration of Kyiv's transformation as a global city, guided by a mixed-methods approach that bridged macro-level quantitative data with the micro-level realities of its local actors. The findings presented in the preceding chapter, which identified nine key themes from the lived experiences of international company representatives, serve as a unique lens through which to re-examine existing global city frameworks and contribute to wider academic debates. This discussion will, therefore, not merely summarise the findings but interpret their significance, positioning them in relation to the primary research gaps identified in the introduction: the Eurocentric bias of global city theory and the absence of scholarly work on cities under the direct pressure of armed conflict.

The findings from the initial "Global City Profile: Kyiv" section established a crucial baseline: Kyiv's pre-war status as a dynamic, albeit semi-peripheral, hub with a robust economic foundation built on a skilled workforce and a burgeoning IT sector. Its fluctuating GaWC rankings and the impact of the 2014 Revolution of Dignity on institutional reforms and decentralisation demonstrated a city already in a state of flux and actively forging its own geopolitical path. This profile is not just a historical prelude. It suggests that Kyiv's extraordinary resilience under war was not a spontaneous event but was built on pre-existing capabilities—a strong IT sector that enabled a rapid shift to remote work and a society already unified by a political choice for a pro-Western, anti-corruption future. This finding underscores the importance of a diachronic approach to urban resilience, where a city's capacity to withstand shocks is a product of its historical, political, and economic trajectory, not just its present-day characteristics.

A central insight of this research is the challenge it presents to the classical hierarchical model of global cities, particularly as articulated by foundational scholars such as Friedmann & Woffl (1982) and Sassen (1991), and operationalised by the Globalisation and World Cities (GaWC) research network. These frameworks often conceptualise the global city as a command-and-control hub, where power and decision-making are concentrated in the Global North and flow outwards to peripheral and semi-peripheral urban centres. However, the qualitative data from the interviews reveal a different dynamic. The finding that the "Global City hierarchy is not truly hierarchical" (Thesis №2) directly challenges this notion. Instead, what emerged was a more networked, decentralised, and even relational model of corporate governance. The Kyiv offices of international firms demonstrated significant autonomy and local agency in managing the crisis, with headquarters not assuming managerial functions but rather offering support and trust. This suggests that belonging to a global network is not solely about subordination but also about mutual bonds and solidarity, a dimension that classical theories, with their emphasis on economic dominance, have largely underestimated.

Furthermore, the data reveal that the resilience of a global city is not simply a function of its structural-economic indicators, as traditional theories might imply. While Kyiv's quantitative profile (as a "Beta+" city) provided a baseline, it was the extraordinary human agency and institutional adaptability of its local actors that truly explained the city's continuity. This finding aligns with more recent critiques from the periphery (e.g., Ren, 2021; Robinson, 2002), which advocate for a more nuanced and holistic view of urban life. The experience of Kyiv shows that a global city's ability to survive a major external shock is critically dependent on the people who inhabit it, their motivations (Thesis №9), and the internal support systems they build (Thesis №7). The emotional, social, and political commitments of the interviewees—their deep sense of responsibility and determination to stay and work in Ukraine—go beyond purely rational economic calculations. As one participant poignantly noted, "The world will end, and we will continue to work as we always have" (Interviewee №2). This sentiment is not found in the cold data of corporate revenues or GaWC rankings; it is a human variable that must be integrated into any robust theory of urban resilience.

These insights resonate strongly with the emerging body of literature on the intersection of business and war. The experiences of Kyiv's international firms reflect the findings of Naseem et al. (2023), who contradict the assumption that war is always detrimental to business by noting that its impact can be neutral or even positive for certain sectors, a perspective evident in the dynamic recovery observed in Kyiv (Thesis №5). Furthermore, the findings align closely with the qualitative study by Katsos and AlKafaji (2016), who challenged the idea that businesses cannot contribute to peace in conflict zones. The four categories of "Business for Peace" identified in their work—Capacity Building, Rule of Law, Social Cohesion, and Local Engagement—find direct parallels in this study. The extensive employee support and training (Thesis №7) mirrors the concept of Capacity Building, while the commitment to volunteering (Thesis №8) and a shared sense of national duty (Thesis №9) directly corresponds to Local Engagement and Social Cohesion. Additionally, the interviews' emphasis on the necessity of predictable government legislation (Thesis №6) echoes Kostruba's (2025) critique of a lack of strategic government initiatives and highlights the historical observation by Lakomaa (2017) regarding the increasing, and often complex, role of the state in wartime. This demonstrates that the challenges and adaptive strategies observed in Kyiv are not isolated but are part of a broader, documented phenomenon of businesses adapting to wartime conditions.

The study also provides a new lens on the role of transnational corporations (TNCs) as political actors. While TNCs are often studied for their economic and regulatory impact (Clark, 2016), the findings show their active engagement in social and political spheres through corporate social responsibility (CSR). The widespread commitment to volunteering (Thesis №8), with firms providing everything from free services for government campaigns to direct donations and the collective creation of drones, demonstrates a profound integration of the corporate sector into the national effort.

This is not a top-down decision from a distant headquarters, but a ground-up initiative driven by local employees. This dynamic, driven by a national sense of duty, challenges the traditional view of TNCs as purely profit-driven entities and suggests a new dimension of CSR, one that is deeply intertwined with national and societal causes.

A further critical insight relates to the geopolitical context and its influence on global networks. The finding that “Connections with the Russian (and Belarusian) departments were broken by the whole transnational network” (Thesis №4) is particularly revealing. While my research hypothesised that this severance may have been a long-standing process, the interviews confirmed that the break was swift and complete. This illustrates how geopolitical events can decisively reshape global corporate networks and, in turn, a city’s place within them. In this sense, the war did not just disrupt business; it redefined the very geography of corporate relations, reinforcing Ukraine’s pro-Western orientation and solidifying its position within a different global network from its former colonial power.

Finally, the study’s findings on government legislation (Thesis №6) raise important questions about the interplay between local business, national governance, and global integration. While companies showed remarkable resilience, they expressed deep frustration with the lack of government support and the unpredictability of state policies. This highlights a crucial point: while local actors are central to urban resilience, their efforts can be constrained by national-level institutional instability. This underscores the need for a multi-scalar approach to urban studies, which recognises that a city’s global functions are shaped by a complex interplay of human agency, corporate networks, and the regulatory environment of the nation-state.

In conclusion, this discussion has demonstrated that the case of Kyiv does not simply fit into existing global city theories but challenges and extends them. It argues that a global city’s resilience is not a static property, but a dynamic process shaped by local actors and their extraordinary capacity for adaptation. It re-imagines the concept of a global network as one of shared solidarity rather than purely hierarchical control, and it positions TNCs as not just economic but also as deeply social and political actors. By bringing these lived realities into conversation with macro-level theory, this study offers a novel contribution to urban scholarship and provides a new perspective on how cities and their people persevere and transform in the face of profound adversity.

Conclusion

This study set out to answer a central research question: How has the Russian invasion of Ukraine influenced the operations of international companies in Kyiv, and what implications does this have for understanding Kyiv as a global city? To address this, the thesis integrated a historical analysis of Kyiv's pre-war and wartime profile with a deep dive into the lived experiences of employees at local branches of global firms. The findings reveal that while the war has posed an existential threat, it has not derailed Kyiv's trajectory as a global city. Instead, it has been a catalyst for a profound and enduring transformation, giving rise to a new, more resilient model of urban functionality.

The research first confirmed Kyiv's status as an emerging global city prior to the full-scale invasion. Quantitative data from GaWC and national statistics showed a city with a growing economic profile, a booming IT sector, and increasing integration into global networks. The Revolution of Dignity and subsequent decentralisation reforms had created a political and economic environment conducive to this development, setting the stage for Kyiv to become a significant regional hub.

However, it was the qualitative analysis of corporate adaptation that truly illuminated the city's wartime transformation. The nine key themes identified from the interviews demonstrate that the war did not merely halt progress; it reshaped the very fabric of how a global city operates. The findings revealed that the classical hierarchical "command and control" model of global city theory gave way to a more horizontal and supportive transnational network. Rather than receiving orders from foreign headquarters, Kyiv's offices acted with remarkable autonomy, managed the crisis locally, and, in turn, received overwhelming financial, logistical, and moral support from their international colleagues.

Moreover, the research identified the human dimension as the critical factor in Kyiv's resilience. The unwavering determination of employees, their proactive volunteering, and the mutual support within companies proved to be far more significant than traditional economic indicators. These acts of human agency, driven by a national sense of duty and a collective spirit of hope, are what enabled businesses to not only continue operations but to innovate and recover dynamically from the initial shock of the invasion. The shift to remote work and the embrace of new technologies like AI were not just strategic decisions but vital adaptive tools that allowed companies to continue functioning despite physical danger and infrastructural disruption.

The study concludes that Kyiv's experience demands a re-evaluation of the criteria for defining a global city. The city's resilience is not simply a matter of structural-economic indicators, such as the concentration of financial services. Instead, it is critically shaped by local actors, institutional adaptability, and extraordinary human agency in the face of extreme adversity. The war has elevated Kyiv's global standing,

transforming it into a political leader on the world stage and a symbol of resistance and innovative spirit. Its ability to function and thrive under the pressures of armed conflict offers a novel contribution to urban theory, providing insights into a type of urban resilience that existing frameworks have not previously captured. Kyiv has become a testament to the idea that a city's global role is not solely a matter of economic power but also of courage, purpose, and the collective will of its people.

Prospects for Future Research

This thesis, while offering a novel contribution to urban scholarship, is a single-case study that inevitably raises more questions than it answers. The unique circumstances of Kyiv's transformation under the pressure of war create a fertile ground for future research, which can build upon the findings and address the limitations outlined in this work. By extending the theoretical and empirical boundaries of this study, scholars can contribute to a more robust understanding of urban resilience, human agency, and global networks in an increasingly volatile world.

The first and most immediate area for future research is a comparative analysis of other cities in conflict. While the literature has, to some extent, addressed post-conflict reconstruction, a direct comparison of cities operating during armed conflict remains a critical gap. A comparative study of Kyiv with other cities that have faced similar pressures, such as Beirut, Sarajevo, or even cities in the Global South, could provide invaluable insights. This research could explore whether the findings on decentralised networks, the rise of human agency, and the pivot to volunteering are unique to the post-socialist context of Ukraine or if they are universal features of urban resilience in wartime. A comparative approach would also allow for a more nuanced understanding of how different geopolitical, historical, and economic conditions shape corporate and human responses to conflict.

Secondly, a promising avenue for research is to investigate the long-term, post-war effects of Kyiv's transformation. My study provides a snapshot of the first three and a half years of the full-scale invasion. However, the long-term sustainability of the adaptive strategies identified—such as the reliance on remote work, the rise of mil-tech, and the culture of volunteering—remains to be seen. Post-war research could explore whether the new, non-hierarchical network model will persist or if it will revert to a more traditional command-and-control structure. Scholars could also examine how the trauma of war affects long-term human capital retention and whether the "brain drain" and internal displacement will pose a lasting challenge to the city's future. The city's post-war trajectory will reveal whether the human-centric model of resilience forged in wartime is sustainable in peacetime.

A third area for exploration is to investigate the perspective of corporate headquarters and foreign investors. My research focused on the local branches, but a key question remains: what were the internal deliberations at the global headquarters that led to the decision to stay in Ukraine? Did they view the risk differently from traditional geopolitical models? What factors—beyond the financial—were at play? A study that interviews senior executives at headquarters in the Global North could provide a crucial counter-narrative to the findings from the Kyiv offices. This would offer a more complete picture of the "network" relationship and help refine the theoretical understanding of how global firms manage risk in times of extreme geopolitical uncertainty.

Finally, future research should delve deeper into the interplay between the private sector and government policy in wartime. As my findings indicated, there was a clear disconnect between the resilience of businesses and the perceived institutional instability of the state. A more focused study could analyse whether the government's approach to legislation and support was a help or a hindrance to corporate continuity. This could explore topics such as the effectiveness of tax reforms, the role of decentralisation, and the impact of anti-corruption initiatives on foreign investment in a war-torn environment. Such research would contribute to the policy-making literature by offering concrete recommendations on how governments can foster urban resilience and encourage private sector-led reconstruction.

In conclusion, this thesis has only scratched the surface of a rich and complex topic. The case of Kyiv provides a powerful starting point for re-imagining urban theory beyond its traditional boundaries. By pursuing these new lines of inquiry, future researchers can contribute to a more dynamic, contextual, and ultimately more human understanding of global cities.

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Context

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Methodology

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Appendix

Appendix #1. Literature Review Key Words

Theme	Key words (in English)	Key words (in Ukrainian)
Globalisation: Foundational Context	“globalisation theory”, “time-space compression”, “neoliberalism”, “global flows”, “world-systems analysis”, “uneven globalisation”	“теорія глобалізації”, “стиснення часу і простору”, “неолібералізм”, “глобальні потоки”
Global Inequality	“global inequality”, “uneven development”, “core-periphery model”, “power geometry”, “spatial inequality”, “North-South divide”	“глобальна нерівність”, “нерівномірний розвиток”, “модель ядро-периферія”, “геометрія влади”, “просторова нерівність”, “розкол Північ-Південь”
Urbanisation: Global Trends and Significance	“urbanisation trends”, “planetary urbanisation”, “urban growth”, “megacities”, “urban demography”, “post-industrial cities”	“тенденції урбанізації”, “планетарна урбанізація”, “зростання міст”, “мегаполіси”, “міська демографія”, “постіндустріальні міста”
Global (World) Cities Concept: Theoretical Framework	“global city” or “world city”, “global city theory” or “world city theory”, “global city concept”	“глобальне місто” “світове місто” “концепція глобального міста” “теорія глобальних міст”
Global Cities and Political Influences	“global city politics”, “political role of global cities”, “cities and international relations”, “global cities” and “foreign policy”, “urban diplomacy”, “global city governance”, “political dimension of global cities”	“глобальне місто і політика” “політична роль глобальних міст” “глобальні міста і міжнародні відносини” “урбаністична дипломатія” “глобальне місто і врядування”
Global (World) Cities: Critiques, Extensions, and Views from the Periphery	“global city critique” or “world city critique”, “global city” and “periphery”, “global cities” and “global south”, “peripheral global cities”	“критика концепції глобального міста” “глобальні міста периферії” “периферійні глобальні міста” “глобальне місто і периферія”

Eastern and Central Europe & Post-Socialist Cities in Global City Debates	“eastern european global cities”, “post-socialist global cities”, “global cities in eastern europe”, “post-soviet global cities”	“глобальні міста східної Європи” “постсоціалістичні глобальні міста” “глобальні міста пострадянського простору”
Kyiv as a Global City: A Review of Existing Research	“kyiv” and “global city”, “kyiv” and “world city”, “kyiv urban studies”, “kyiv in global city network”	“київ глобальне місто” “київ світове місто” “урбаністичні дослідження Києва” “глобальність Києва”
The Role of Transnational Corporations in Urban Globalisation	“transnational corporations (TNCs)”, “multinational enterprises (MNEs)”, “foreign direct investment (FDI)”, “corporate strategy”	“транснаціональні корпорації (ТНК)”, “багатонаціональні підприємства (БНП)”, “прямі іноземні інвестиції (ПІІ)”, “корпоративна стратегія”, “корпоративна присутність у містах”
Cities in War Conflict	“cities in war”, “urban warfare”, “cities in conflict”, “urban conflict”, “global cities in war”	“міста під час війни” “урбаністика війни” “міста у зоні конфлікту” “міські простори і війна”
Business Operations in Wartime	“business continuity”, “corporate adaptation”, “wartime business strategy”, “business in conflict zones”	“безперервність бізнесу”, “корпоративна адаптація”, “бізнес-стратегія у воєнний час”, “бізнес у зонах конфлікту”, “людський капітал у війні”

Appendix #2. List of Conducted Interviews

Interview ID	Sector	Date	Mode	Duration	Recorded
Interviewee №1	Advertising	11/07/2025	Zoom Meeting	22 minutes	Yes
Interviewee №2	Advertising	11/07/2025	Zoom Meeting	29 minutes	Yes
Interviewee №3	Accountancy	14/07/2025	Zoom Meeting	28 minutes	Yes
Interviewee №4	Accountancy	15/07/2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting	37 minutes	Yes
Interviewee №5	Advertising	25/07/2025	Microsoft Teams Meeting	57 minutes	Yes

Interviewee №6	Financial services	29/07/2025	Zoom Meeting	33 minutes	Yes
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Appendix #3. Semi-Structures Interviews Guide

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom in July 2025. Each conversation lasted 20–60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis. Interviews were conducted in Ukrainian.

Interviews Guide

1. Company Presence in Kyiv | Присутність компанії в Києві

(If you know) Why did your company choose to open or maintain a branch in Kyiv? Tell us the story of how the company was established in Kyiv.

(Якщо вам відомо) Чому ваша компанія вирішила відкрити філію в Києві? Розкажіть історію започаткування компанії в Києві.

Which markets does your branch cover? What is its internal hierarchy, and how is operational activity organised?

Які ринки покриває ваша філія? Яка її внутрішня ієрархія та як організовано операційну діяльність?

How was the interaction between the Kyiv office of your company and other offices organised? What was its position within the company structure? How did collaboration with other offices take place?

Як відбувалася взаємодія київського офісу вашої компанії з іншими офісами? Яка була його позиція у структурі компанії? Як відбувалася співпраця з іншими офісами?

2. Perceptions and Strategic Positioning | Сприйняття та стратегічне позиціонування

How do you perceive Kyiv as a potential location for an international headquarters? How do you think Kyiv is perceived by people in your company or by Kyiv citizens in this context?

Як ви сприймаєте Київ як потенційне місце для міжнародної штаб-квартири? Як, на вашу думку, Київ сприймається працівниками вашої компанії або жителями Києва в цьому контексті?

Would you describe Kyiv as a “global city” from your company’s perspective? Why or why not?

Чи охарактеризували б ви Київ як «глобальне місто» з точки зору вашої компанії? Чому так або чому ні?

Has it influenced how Kyiv is perceived inside your company — either as a place to invest in or withdraw from?

Чи вплинуло це на те, як Київ сприймається всередині вашої компанії — як місце для інвестування чи, навпаки, виходу?

How has Kyiv’s international image changed in recent years, in your opinion?

На вашу думку, як змінився міжнародний імідж Києва в останні роки?

3. Impact of the War | Вплив війни

How did your company experience the start of the full-scale invasion? Were there any immediate changes in the company’s work after February 24, 2022?

Як ваша компанія зустріла повномасштабне вторгнення? Чи відбулися якісь зміни в роботі компанії одразу після 24 лютого 2022 року?

How has the interaction between the Kyiv office and other offices changed since the war began? What new challenges or structural changes have arisen?

Як змінилася взаємодія київського офісу з іншими офісами після початку війни? Які нові виклики або зміни в структурі виникли?

What changed in your operations after February 24, 2022? How has your company’s internal operational activity changed since the start of the war?

Що змінилося у вашій роботі після 24 лютого 2022 року? Як змінилася внутрішня операційна діяльність вашої компанії з початку війни?

How has your client base changed since the war began? Are there new types of clients or sectors emerging as important for your company? Have you lost or gained any clients due to the war? Have project priorities or deadlines shifted in response to the war?

Як змінилася клієнтська база вашої компанії з початку війни? Чи з'явилися нові типи клієнтів або сектори, які стали важливими для вашої компанії? Чи втрачали або набували ви клієнтів через війну? Чи стали клієнти запитувати інші види послуг або підтримки?

How does your company assess the risks associated with operating in Ukraine — before the war and during it?

Як ваша компанія оцінює ризики, пов'язані з діяльністю в Україні — до війни та під час війни?

Has the political situation in Ukraine influenced relocation, scaling down, or expansion decisions?

Чи вплинула політична ситуація в Україні на рішення щодо релокації, скорочення або розширення діяльності?

**4. Interaction with Russian offices and strategic shifts towards Europe |
Взаємодія з російськими офісами та стратегічна переорієнтація на Європу**

Does your company currently have any branches or operations in Russia? If yes, how do these relate to the office or operations in Kyiv?

Чи має ваша компанія наразі філії або діяльність у Росії? Якщо так, як це пов'язано з офісом або операціями в Києві?

5. Civic engagement | Суспільна діяльність

Did your company provide any specific support to Ukrainian employees, partners, or society (e.g. relocation, financial aid, infrastructure, volunteering)?

Чи надавала ваша компанія якусь конкретну підтримку українським працівникам, партнерам або суспільству (наприклад, релокація, фінансова допомога, інфраструктура, волонтерство)?

Were there any internal policy shifts or public statements made by the company in response to the invasion?

Чи були якісь зміни у внутрішній політиці або публічні заяви компанії у відповідь на вторгнення?

6. Future Outlook and Investment Potential | Майбутні перспективи та інвестиційний потенціал

What are your company's future plans regarding its presence in Kyiv? How did the invasion change your company's short- or long-term strategy in Ukraine?

Які плани вашої компанії щодо подальшої присутності в Києві? Як вторгнення змінило коротко- або довгострокову стратегію вашої компанії щодо України?

What developments (economic, political, infrastructural) would encourage further investment or growth? What challenges has your company faced and continues to face in developing its business in Ukraine? What challenges do you anticipate going forward?

Які зміни (економічні, політичні, інфраструктурні) могли б стимулювати подальші інвестиції або розвиток? З якими викликами ваша компанія стикалася і стикається у розвитку бізнесу в Україні? Які виклики ви передбачаєте у майбутньому?

In your view, is Kyiv still considered a valuable or attractive city for international companies? Do you perhaps see relocations to other cities?

На вашу думку, чи вважається Київ досі цінним або привабливим містом для міжнародних компаній? Чи, можливо, ви спостерігаєте релокації до інших міст?

Appendix #4. Participant Information Sheet

Title of the Study

Kyiv's Evolution in the Global City Network

Before you decide whether to take part in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the research team using the details provided at the end of this document.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the impact of the war in Ukraine on Kyiv's role in global urban networks and its position as a global city. Specifically, the research will look at how the presence and operations of global organisations in Kyiv have changed due to the war and how this shift affects the city's global significance. The study will be completed by 31.08.2025.

Why Have I Been Chosen?

You have been chosen to participate because of your role in a global organisation with a presence in Kyiv or your knowledge of this subject area. Your insight will be invaluable in understanding how the war has impacted global companies and their networks in the region.

Do I Have to Take Part?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part, and if you do, you may withdraw at any time without consequence or penalty, both now or in the future.

What Will Happen to Me if I Take Part?

If you choose to take part, you will be invited to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted in-person or online. You will be asked questions regarding the impact of the war on your

organisation's operations in Kyiv and the city's position within global networks. Your responsibilities will include answering the questions honestly and to the best of your ability.

What Do I Have to Do?

There is no lifestyle restrictions involved in participating in this study. However, you should be aware that the interview will be audio-recorded, and the recording will be transcribed for analysis. The data collected will be stored securely on my password-protected personal device and will be destroyed within four months of the interview.

What Are the Possible Benefits of Taking Part?

The main benefit of participating in this study is the opportunity to contribute to important research that explores how global cities, like Kyiv, adapt to major geopolitical changes. While there may not be direct personal benefits, your contribution will help shape a better understanding of Kyiv's role in global networks during and after the war.

Will My Taking Part in This Project Be Kept Confidential?

All information you provide will be treated as confidential. Your identity, function, or any other personal information that could identify you will not be disclosed. The data will be stored securely on my password-protected personal computer and will be anonymized during analysis. The data will be kept for a maximum of four months and will be securely deleted after that time.

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What Will Happen to the Results of the Research Project?

The results of this research will be presented in my master's thesis and may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences. The data will be presented in aggregated form, and no individual data will be identifiable. You will not be personally identified in any publications or presentations. The findings may also be used for further research related to global urban networks, with your consent.

Who Is Organising and Funding the Research?

This study is being conducted as part of my master's thesis in the 4CITIES Erasmus Mundus Programme. The research is self-funded, with no external financial sponsorship.

Ethical Review of the Study

This study has been reviewed and approved by the respective Ethics Committees of the participating institutions.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions or require further details about this research or your participation, please contact:

Primary Investigator:

Yevheniia Kotiakhova

Email: Yevheniia.kotiakhova@ulb.be

Appendix #5. Form of Consent

FORM OF CONSENT

I, _____, consent to take part to the research project entitled “*Kyiv's Evolution in the Global City Network*”, carried out by *Yevheniia Kotiakhova* under the supervision of *Pr. David Bassens*, whose email is David.Bassens@vub.be.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that:

1. I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
2. I voluntarily take part to this project.
3. The researcher has informed me in writing of the goals of the research project, its development, and of its possible advantages and downsides.
4. I will be given no payment for taking part to the research project.
5. I can refuse to answer certain questions.
6. The interview will be digitally recorded. I can ask the recording to be stopped at any time, be it temporarily or for good.
7. The audio recording and its corresponding transcript will be securely stored on the researcher's personal, password-protected device. No other individuals or institutions will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed within four months of the interview.
8. Quotations from the interview can be used in later written publications and oral presentations resulting from this project. Still, my identity, my function, or any other information that can help identifying me will be kept secret at all time. I will simply be presented *as a representative of an international organisation with a branch office in Kyiv*.
9. A copy of the final report will be sent to me at the following address: _____

10. I can, at any moment, take back my consent without reasons and without being penalised.
11. I do not abjure any of my legal rights.

Done in duplicate.

Name of the participant	Signature of the participant
Name of the researcher	Signature of the researcher

Appendix #6. Detailed Report on Interviews Coding

Code System	Interviewee №1	Interviewee №2	Interviewee №3	Interviewee №4	Interviewee №5	Interviewee №6
- Kyiv is a Key Economic Centre - Setting up the Office in Kyiv (Interr - West of Ukraine is Safer then Kyiv - Working on Projects for Other Mark - Entering the Ukrainian Market along - Mentioning other Economically Dev - Danger of Staying in Kyiv - Importance for Business to be Base - Understanding of Global City Conc - Setting up the Office in Kyiv (Exter - The Absence of Hierarchical Relationsl - Independence from Foreign Offices - Strong Support from International Colle - Financial Charity Contribution from - Assistance with the Search of Clier - Donations to the Ukrainian Branches - Relocations of Ukrainian Employee - The Perception of Russian Invasion - Importance of Interpersonal Comm - Support from Unknown Colleagues / - Closing of Russian and Belarusian Brar - Leaving Belarus by Global Compan - Leaving Russia by Global Company - Absence of Connections with Russ - Negative Experience of Communici - A Shock at the Beginning of the War ar - Loss of Clients in Eastern Ukraine c - Experience of COVID-19 Helped to - Importance of Staying in Ukraine in - Need to Perform Work Quickly - The Benefits of Applying AI during - Absence of Long-Term Planning - Those who Started Working First ai - Distorted External Perception of th - Importance of Interpersonal Comm - Suspension of Work Processes at t - Sense of Responsibility and Willing - Lack of Government Support and Pred - Supporting Employees is a Key Challen - Payment of Salary in Advance at th - Losses of Companies' Employees E - New Safer Office with a Generator - Support to Employees in the Armed - Protocols to Ensure Safety of Emlo - Volunteering is a National Duty in a Tim - Non-Military Charity Initiatives of L - The Low Reputation of Brands with - Importance of Social Responsibility - The General Spirit is Determination and - Increased International Reputation - Interest in Ukrainian Companies Gr - Motivation to Stay in Ukraine and V						