

**IT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN
INDEPENDENT UKRAINE:
AN ATTEMPT AT A SOCIO-HISTORICAL
PERIODIZATION**

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UDC 94(477)

DOI 10.15407/mics2026.SE.193



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Based on an analysis of academic studies, analytical reports, journalistic retrospectives, and regulatory documents, the article proposes a social-historical periodization of the development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine from 1991 to the early 2020s. The research is grounded in the approach of social history, which makes it possible to consider IT entrepreneurship not only as an economic or technological activity, but as part of broader social transformations. The focus is placed not merely on quantitative indicators of industry growth, but primarily on changes in the organization of labor, professional practices, forms of interaction, and social perceptions.

Within the proposed periodization, five main stages are identified, reflecting the sequential evolution of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine. These stages encompass the transition from isolated initiatives and the first IT firms of the 1990s, which operated under conditions of institutional uncertainty and limited access to markets, to the formation in the 2010s of a structured industry with established organizational models, a developed community infrastructure, and a growing product segment.

The study traces a shift in entrepreneurial logic—from service-oriented models to the emergence of companies that create their own technological products and integrate into global value chains.

The analytical focus of the article is concentrated on several interrelated dimensions: the evolution of organizational structures of IT companies, the transformation of professional roles and labor models, the formation of an internal culture of the IT sector, as well as the development of external perceptions of IT professionals as a distinct social group. It is shown that the development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine was uneven and largely determined by a combination of global market influences and internal social factors, in particular professional self-organization and horizontal ties within the community.

The proposed social-historical periodization does not claim to be definitive; however, it provides an analytical framework for further research on the history of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine and may be used for in-depth analysis of specific stages, practices, and social transformations associated with the development of the digital economy.

Keywords: IT entrepreneurship, periodization, Ukrainian IT industry, social history, professional community, IT professionals, social perceptions, organizational structures.

INTRODUCTION

Information Technology has become one of the key factors of Ukraine's economic and social development over the first three decades after the country regained its independence. From the first IT firms of the 1990s emerging amid post-Soviet transformations and minimal institutional support to the formation in 2010 of a structured industry with established product companies, integrated into global markets, Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship has come a long way, and its journey was not exactly smooth. Although today IT companies account for a major share of foreign-currency inflow and constitute one of the most dynamic sectors of the national economy¹, scientific research tends to overlook the history of Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship.

The industry made its first steps in the early 1990s. On December 19, 1990, Ukraine was first connected to the global internet owing to the efforts of Technosoft company², and as early as 1991, one of the country's first service IT companies—Infocom—was founded as a joint venture of the Ministry of Communications and a German partner³. In cooperation with international institutions, Infocom built the first national data network, connected Ukraine to the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) system. In the middle of the 1990s, the first venture funds emerged (e.g., WNISEF in 1994) and started investing in tech companies. By the end of the decade, the first Ukrainian web portals and online media were launched⁴. It was then that the foundation was laid for the infrastructure that would grow into our national segment of the internet and enable the operation of the nascent IT business in Ukraine. Over time, private companies and professionals established the first internet providers and IT companies, now considered the pioneers of IT entrepreneurship as we know it.

In the early 2000s, the Ukrainian IT sector experienced dynamic growth, driven primarily by providing outsourcing services to international customers. In the 2010s, the industry became an export leader, and Ukrainian companies gained a global reputation for supplying high-quality engineering solutions. By 2017, IT services were occupied the third-largest share in export services after processing and pipeline transportation, and in H1 2018, they overtook the latter in terms of volume, becoming the second-largest in exports⁵. Also telling is the estimate of Maria Shevchuk, CEO of IT Ukraine Association: “Ukrainian IT services exports continue to be an import-

1. DOU, «Які країни приносять найбільше виторгу українському ІТ. Аналітика ІТ-експорту за рік», 12 лютого 2025, <https://dou.ua/lenta/articles/it-export-in-2024/>.

2. С. Чапліч, «Історія українського інтернету», ProIT, 2 січня 2025, <https://proit.ua/istoriia-ukrayinskogho-intiernietu/>.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. BRDO і IT Ukraine Association, Розвиток української ІТ-індустрії. Аналітичний звіт (Київ, квітень 2017), https://brdo.com.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ukrainian_IT_Industry_Report_UKR.pdf.

ant component of the economy, primarily driven by the export of computer services”⁶. According to the Methodological Notes to Ukraine’s export sector statistics, export of IT services encompasses “telecommunication, computer, and information services, including the payments for communication, radio and television broadcasting; database processing; maintenance and repair of hardware; payments for software use, without copying or distribution rights; payments for information and news agencies’ services; and subscriptions to periodic publications”⁷.

Despite the overall decrease in service exports (10.9% down in H1 2025), the share of IT services (telecommunication, computer, and information) increased from 38.5% to 43%, the share of computer services specifically from 37.5% to 42.1%⁸. Besides, there were at least 1138 IT companies in Ukraine as of 2024⁹, a sign that the industry has highly matured in terms of structure.

The IT industry thus became the largest service exporter and one of the key sources of foreign currency inflow in the economy. It now encompasses thousands of companies and hundreds of thousands of professionals: 2150+ IT companies are currently active in Ukraine, employing over 300,000 specialists¹⁰. Ukrainian engineers have gained recognition in software development, cybersecurity, AI, and related fields. Even in the face of economic challenges and ongoing war, the Ukrainian IT sector remains relatively resilient and adaptable, generating a substantial export income for the country.

In light of the industry’s booming growth and substantial contributions, studying the timeline of the Ukrainian IT sector’s development gains importance. Analyzing the early steps of the Ukrainian IT sector provides a better understanding of the success factors and the challenges it faced.

Despite the growing body of publications on economic indicators, export potential, and the specific development stages of the IT industry, Ukrainian historiography has so far seen no attempts at a cohesive socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship as a distinct social phenomenon. This article makes the first attempt to establish a socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine since 1991.

6. Digital State UA, «ІТ-послуги стали головним драйвером експорту України у 2025 році», 25 серпня 2025, <https://digitalstate.gov.ua/uk/news/it-outsourcing/it-posluhy-staly-holovnym-drayverom-eksportu-ukrayiny-u-2025-rotsi>.
7. National Bank of Ukraine, Balance of Payments: Methodological Notes, accessed December 5, 2025, https://bank.gov.ua/admin_uploads/article/BoP_methodological_notes.pdf.
8. National Bank of Ukraine, External Sector Statistics: Trade in Services, accessed December 5, 2025, https://bank.gov.ua/files/ES/Trade_m.pdf.
9. DOU, «Найкращі ІТ-роботодавці 2024», 6 січня 2025, <https://dou.ua/lenta/articles/ratings-2024-summary/>.
10. Digital State UA, “Ukraine’s IT powerhouse: innovation without limits”, accessed December 5, 2025, <https://digitalstate.gov.ua/news/it-outsourcing/ukraines-it-powerhouse-innovation-without-limits>.

STATE OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

The earliest attempts to document the history of information technology in Ukraine date back to the early 2000s. The *Known and the Unknown in the History of Information Technology in Ukraine* (2004) by B. Malynovskyi provides an in-depth review of computational equipment's evolution in the Soviet and early post-Soviet periods¹¹. The book covers the creation of Ukraine's first computers, the role of the Institute of Cybernetics and other scientific institutions, and the independent Ukraine's first steps in the field of IT. Malynovskyi's research scientifically conceptualized the main historical milestones—from the first ECMs to the dawn of the internet.

However, the development of IT entrepreneurship in 2000–2010 is covered much less thoroughly in scientific literature. Only recently have some studies started analyzing the current state and trends in this field. E.g., economists O. Karyi, L. Halkiv, and A. Tsapulych proposed their own periodization of the IT industry's formation, distinguishing five stages in its development¹². Their research also examines the state policy factors and mechanisms that influenced the IT market and analyzes the specifics of entrepreneurial activity in the field. Another recent publication worth attention is the 2025 article by L. Shimanovska-Dianych and R. Lakhyzha that analyzes the evolution of the IT business in Ukraine with a focus on corporate culture¹³. While showing that academic circles take increasing interest in the history of IT, this kind of research only outlines the general trends, without going into detail when it comes to the industry's historical evolution. So far, there has been a marked shortage of historical analytical works comprehensively describing the development of Ukrainian IT from 1990 to 2020.

Due to the lack of thorough scientific research, one has to rely on industry reports, media content, and specialized review projects as sources of research data. In this sense, they serve as a chronicle that documents the sector's transformations in real time.

Case in point, the analytical report *Development of Ukrainian IT Industry* (2018) by the IT Ukraine Association and BRDO¹⁴. In addition to export statistics and market structure, it outlines organizational changes within the field, e.g., the increasing importance of professional associations, emerging staffing practices, and the formation of mechanisms for self-regulation. The report recounts how the field transitioned in 2010 from informal structures to a formalized industry with signs of sectoral policy.

11. Б. Малиновський, *Відоме й невідоме в історії інформаційних технологій в Україні* (Київ: Інтерлінк, 2004).

12. О. Карий, Л. Гальків і А. Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України: чинники та напрями активізації», *Вісник Національного університету «Львівська політехніка». Серія «Проблеми економіки та управління»* 5, № 1 (2021): 42–55, <https://science.lpnu.ua/sites/default/files/journal-paper/2021/may/23587/210488verstka-44-57.pdf>.

13. Л. Шимановська-Діанич і Р. Лахижа, «Розвиток ІТ-бізнесу в Україні у фокусі становлення корпоративної культури», *Сталый розвиток економіки* 5 (56) (2025): 459–467, <https://economdevelopment.in.ua/index.php/journal/article/view/1538/1487>.

14. BRDO і IT Ukraine Association, *Розвиток української ІТ-індустрії. Аналітичний звіт*.

Another great example is Liga.Tech's special project 30 Years of IT in Ukraine: How It Was (2021)¹⁵, which chronologically recounts the key milestones in the development of Ukrainian IT. Drawing on media materials, entrepreneur interviews, and archival materials, the project reveals the internal logic of transformations within the industry, e.g., the shifts in team organization models, transition from the generalist engineer to the role-based structure, and emergence of the first IT clusters and professional associations, delineating the social and cultural aspects of the development of entrepreneurial practices in IT.

Published on the ProIT portal, the History of Ukrainian Internet (2025)¹⁶ tells the story of how Ukraine's internet infrastructure took shape in the 1990s. The work documents the emergence of the first internet nodes, the infancy of commercial internet access, the registration of the .ua domain, and the development of technical protocols. The work provides a better understanding of the institutional and technological conditions under which the first IT companies emerged, ready to operate in the new digital environments.

The article's **purpose** is to propose a socio-historical periodization of Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship's development since 1991, drawing on the analysis of social transformations, organizational changes, and professional practices within the industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We propose examining IT entrepreneurship as a component of broader social transformation in Ukrainian society after 1991, rather than merely an economic phenomenon. With this approach, we can focus specifically on the forms of self-organization, professional practices, social structure, and community culture that emerged alongside the development of information technologies, alongside institutional changes, statistical indicators, and state policy.

An important element of this analysis is the development of horizontal connections within this community: the emergence of IT clusters, platforms for inter-company interactions, a culture of shared learning, and experience-sharing institutes. In this sense, the Ukrainian IT industry is more than an economic sector; it is a social ecosystem that combines labor mobility, entrepreneurship, professional solidarity, and technological innovativeness.

Particular attention should be given to how IT professionals became a publicly visible and eventually symbolically important social group. While in the 1990s the "IT guy" was primarily a barely noticeable technical specialist, in the 2010s, he became part of the public perception of the new creative class, which embodies modernity, global integration, and digital competency.

15. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років IT в Україні. Як це було, дата звернення 5 грудня 2025, https://project.liga.net/projects/it_history/.

16. Чапліч, «Історія українського інтернету».

This study relies on the approaches of social history, which emerged in the late 20th century as an alternative to traditional politico-institutional history. Therefore, our historical analysis focuses primarily on everyday practices, forms of self-organization, and the experiences of participants in social processes, rather than on formal institutions or regulatory decisions. As demonstrated in E. P. Thompson's work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1964), historical transformations happen largely through the active participation of social actors themselves, actually involved in creating new social structure, professional identities, and collective action models¹⁷.

As an extension of this logic, the social history of technology fields emerged within technology studies, with researchers zooming in on the social processes that accompany the creation, introduction, and use of technology, rather than on internal technological evolution. Significant in this context is the approach that Claude S. Fischer used in his book *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (1992), which analyzes the technological changes through the lens of social practices, organizational forms, and interaction models brought about by the development of communications¹⁸. From this perspective, one can consider technology as a part of broader social processes, rather than as independent factor of historical change.

The next iteration of socio-historical analysis of information technology can be seen in the research on professional communities, e.g., Nathan Ensmenger's *The Computer Boys Take Over* (2010)¹⁹. The book looks at the genesis of computer industry through the lens of professionalization of programmers, evolution of their social status, their fight for expert legitimacy, and formation of their specific work culture. This approach demonstrates that IT development is defined by the internal social organization in the professional environment rather than by technical innovation or market stimuli alone.

By examining organizational change, professional practices, and the transformation of social perceptions, the socio-historical approach enables tracing the internal logic of Ukrainian IT entrepreneurship's development, from sporadic engineering initiatives and informal teams to a structured industry with a pronounced community infrastructure and public social presence. Such is the foundation for the proposed periodization.

With the above in mind, this research focuses on the following analytical planes:

- Evolution of IT company organizational structures, from informal teams of the early 1990s to sophisticated multilevel corporations
- Shifts in professional roles and labor models, from the generalist "tech guys" to distributed teams with product managers, designers, QA specialists, recruiters, and other specializations

17. E. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

18. C. Fischer, *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

19. N. Ensmenger, *The Computer Boys Take Over: Computers, Programmers, and the Politics of Technical Expertise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

- Emergence of an internal culture in the IT industry as a distinct professional environment
- Formation of external perceptions of IT specialists as a social stratum, with its peculiar view of success, mobility, flexibility, and informality

Therefore, the periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine, presented in this research, is rooted primarily in changes in the industry's social organization, community structure, and perceptions of IT specialists in society, rather than in formal economic or institutional disruptions. This approach lets us focus on the industry's intrinsic logic of development.

PERIODIZATION OF THE INDUSTRY'S DEVELOPMENT

The post-1991 development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine was hardly linear; rather, it involved a range of sequential stages, each with its own logic, predominant forms of organization, and characteristic social practices. Proposed below is a periodization based on a combination of the chronological approach and the analysis of changes in the industry's social organization, the IT community's professional structure, and external perceptions of IT entrepreneurship. Instead of formal economic/institutional disruptions, it is founded primarily on the modernization of business practices in IT, labor models, and self-organization mechanisms, which allows us to trace the field's evolution from sporadic entrepreneurial initiatives to a structured industry with a mature community and institutional infrastructure.

The years 1991–1996 saw the initial stage of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine. Information technologies gradually stopped being limited to scientific research institutions, state computing centers, and enterprise technical divisions and began to take on commercial features. Ukraine's first IT firms emerged amid deep post-Soviet socio-economic transformations. Also, no specialized legal framework existed for IT businesses, and the institutional support for high-tech entrepreneurial initiatives was nonexistent.

In the early 1990s, Ukrainian IT combined Soviet scientific and technical heritage with as yet unfamiliar market practices that started taking shape after the USSR had collapsed²⁰. It is in this context that Ukraine's first IT firms emerged, founded by engineers and technical specialists, who relied on their own expertise, personal relationships, and limited international contacts while tackling their first commercial orders²¹. The professional structure of workforce at this period included many generalists. More often than not, one "IT guy" could be simultaneously a programmer, sysadmin, consultant, and manager, as companies were small. Also, the IT sector lacked a specialized la-

20. Малиновський, Відоме й невідоме.

21. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років IT в Україні. Як це було.

bor market for talent sourcing²². This labor model fostered a professional culture rooted in autonomy, self-education, and practical orientation on tackling concrete technical tasks.

Among such pioneering IT businesses were ELEKS (est. 1991)²³ and SoftServe (est. 1993)²⁴, which started as small engineer collectives without a clear-cut corporate hierarchy, formalized business processes, or long-term scaling strategies. Their organizational structure was extremely flexible and informal, as expected given the unstable economic environment and the limited domestic market.

In this period's public perception, IT specialists did not yet constitute a separate social stratum. They were a barely visible group of technical specialists who handle computerization, information system maintenance, and specialized engineering tasks. The first perceptions of IT as a potentially promising field for professional fulfillment and entrepreneurship did not appear until the latter part of the period, and they were anything but widespread²⁵.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine transitioned from its initial experimental forms to a more established market logic, focusing primarily on rendering services to customers abroad. It was this period that gave rise to the service and outsourcing model that would define the structure of the Ukrainian IT industry for a long while. The change was driven primarily by regular exports of software and IT services, which gradually turned select IT firms into persistent business structures.

During this period, Ukrainian IT companies began systematically integrating into international production processes within an outsourcing model, taking on jobs for international customers²⁶. This integration required those companies to change their organizational approaches, transitioning from informal engineering teams to more structured organizations with project management, finance, and customer relations.

During this period, companies specializing in software development as a service emerged and quickly grew, e.g., Ciklum²⁷ and N-iX²⁸ (both est. 2002). Their growth highlighted the gradual transition from individual or small-group entrepreneurship to scaling business models, based on long-term contracts and team scaling. Meanwhile, the domestic market for IT services remained limited, strengthening the industry's export orientation.

The professional composition of IT labor became noticeably differentiated during this period. Besides programmers, roles such as project managers, testers, support,

22. Ibid.

23. ELEKS, "ELEKS for Ukraine," accessed December 5, 2025, <https://careers.eleks.com/ua/eleks-for-ukraine/>.

24. SoftServe, «SoftServe: про компанію», дата звернення 5 грудня 2025, <https://career.softserveinc.com/uk-ua/about>.

25. Малиновський, *Відоме й невідоме*.

26. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

27. IT Ukraine Association / Ciklum, "Ciklum. Member profile," accessed December 5, 2025, <https://itukraine.org.ua/members/ciklum/>.

28. IT Ukraine Association / N-iX, "N-iX. Member profile," accessed December 5, 2025, <https://itukraine.org.ua/members/n-ix>.

and sales appeared. A rudimentary IT labor market emerged, and the English language proficiency and adherence to international quality standards became important²⁹. The model of the generalist “techie” gave way to a functional division of labor.

The IT industry’s internal culture shifted under the influence of Western managerial practices and corporate norms. Customer orientation, adherence to deadlines, contract discipline, and process transparency became crucial elements in the professional environment. However, some traits from the previous period persisted, e.g., relative autonomy of specialists and informal internal communication³⁰.

During this period, IT began to be perceived as a flourishing field of employment offering steady income and international career opportunities. However, IT specialists had not yet become a publicly visible social stratum. Their activity remained barely noticeable to society at large, and the industry itself is primarily associated with the “export of intellectual labor” rather than with domestic economic development.

The period from the end of the 2000s onward marked a new stage in the development of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine, as the field began to evolve from a collection of separate companies into an institutionally formed industry with distinct mechanisms of self-organization, representation, and internal communication. The disruption was marked by the creation of the IT Ukraine Association³¹ in 2004, which attested to the need for collective representation of IT businesses’ interests and for articulating the industry as a distinct economic and social actor. Here, the Ukrainian IT industry started to become self-aware as a community with shared problems, standards, and long-term development goals. Meanwhile, the number of mid-size IT companies increased, the export model stabilized, and entrepreneurial experience was accumulated, laying the foundation for the industry’s internal institutions.

A crucial part of this process was the emergence of professional platforms and media for horizontal communication within the community. The 2005 launch of the DOU platform helped shape a public space for the IT labor market, experience sharing, and informal adjustment of professional standards. The community used it (and similar platforms) for internal communication as well as for establishing its public image that gradually expanded beyond the professional environment³².

Organizational structures kept getting increasingly complex during this period. They transitioned from purely service models to combining the service and product logic, as excellently illustrated by the product companies that emerged and developed at the time, e.g., Readdle³³ (est. 2007), MacPaw³⁴ (est. 2008), and Grammarly³⁵ (est. 2009). These

29. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

30. Шимановська-Діанич і Лахижа, «Розвиток ІТ-бізнесу в Україні».

31. IT Ukraine Association, «Асоціація IT Ukraine відзначає 19 років», 18 серпня 2023, <https://itukraine.org.ua/asotsiatsiya-it-ukraine-vidznachaye-19-rokiv/>.

32. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років ІТ в Україні. Як це було.

33. Readdle, “About Readdle,” accessed July 14, 2025, <https://readdle.com/about>.

34. MacPaw, “Leadership,” accessed July 14, 2025, <https://macpaw.com/leadership>.

35. Grammarly, “About Grammarly,” accessed July 14, 2025, <https://www.grammarly.com/about>.

companies reflected a new trajectory in IT entrepreneurship, with their orientation on building their own products for the global market, which required a different approach to labor management, investment strategies, and corporate culture.

The professional structure of the IT labor market stabilized and became better differentiated. Besides technical roles, functions such as HR, recruiting, marketing, product management, and business development gained traction. The internal IT labor market emerged, with distinct mobility, professional growth, and competition norms³⁶. Meanwhile, corporate culture became increasingly important as an instrument for workforce retention and internal integration within companies.

The external perceptions of IT specialists drastically changed during this period. While previously IT was associated primarily with tech support or “invisible” export activity, in the late 2000s, IT specialists were seen as an embodiment of new professional standards and a high degree of mobility and integration in global processes³⁷.

In the 2010s, IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine structurally matured, as reflected in both the field’s internal organization and its social and public representation. In contrast to the previous stage, in which IT companies primarily served as export-oriented production units with limited social visibility, this period saw the formation of an integrated industry with developed professional standards, institutional infrastructure, and a distinct public voice.

Importantly, the IT industry finally established itself as one of the key economic growth drivers and foreign currency inflow sources, demonstrating relative resilience in the face of domestic crises and external shocks³⁸.

Meanwhile, IT entrepreneurship’s social organization changed. As companies scaled up, the average team size increased, management structures became increasingly complex, and functions specialized. While in the 2000s the relatively compact organizations with limited division of labor were predominant, in the 2010s, multilevel corporate models appeared, with their clearly defined roles in project management, quality control, finance, recruiting, and corporate communications³⁹.

Meanwhile, the internal culture of the IT industry was taking shape as a distinct professional environment. Professional communities, industry events, IT clusters, and educational initiatives that fostered the flow of knowledge and formation of a common identity all played a crucial role in this process⁴⁰.

While over the previous decades IT was primarily associated with “tech” or export activity, in the 2010s the IT profession was increasingly perceived as a symbol of successful integration into a global economy and upward mobility. Journalistic retrospec-

36. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

37. Ibid.

38. BRDO і IT Ukraine Association, Розвиток української ІТ-індустрії. Аналітичний звіт.

39. Карий, Гальків і Цапулич, «Розвиток ІТ-сфери України».

40. Liga.Tech (Liga.net), 30 років ІТ в Україні. Як це було».

tives and industry reviews noted that IT specialists began to be seen as a representatives of the new urban middle class, oriented toward international standards of labor and consumption⁴¹. Although this image was not yet consistent and did not encompass the entire community, that was the period when IT professionals began to be perceived as a distinct social stratum, publicly recognizable and symbolically significant.

The launch of state digital services at the end of the 2010s and the later adoption of the Diia.City's special legal framework in 2021 marked the transition to a new model of interaction between the IT industry and the state, in which IT entrepreneurship became increasingly seen as a strategic resource for national development⁴².

The Russian Federation's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine drastically changed the social, economic, and institutional environment in Ukrainian society, including the IT entrepreneurship. As in other industries, the war disrupted established models of labor organization, international cooperation, and entrepreneurial activity, giving rise to new forms of adaptation, mobility, and interaction among the state, businesses, and society.

Despite the challenges posed by the crisis, the IT industry has remained relatively stable during this period. On the one hand, professionals and companies have been relocating en masse, internal organizational processes are transforming, remote work is becoming increasingly crucial, and some businesses are reorienting toward supporting defense and volunteer initiatives. On the other hand, IT entrepreneurship maintains its global market integration and continues to fulfill export contracts, so the industry remains an essential source of foreign currency even during the war.

Meanwhile, the social history of wartime IT entrepreneurship has yet to be fully reconstructed. Many processes are ongoing, and access to detailed statistical data, internal corporate decisions, and everyday practices is limited due to security concerns or are incomplete time-wise. Therefore, this stage is worth further research, especially once the war is over and opportunities arise for a more in-depth analysis of the long-term social, professional, and institutional consequences of wartime transformations in IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine.

The summary periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine is provided in Table 1.

41. Ibid.

42. Верховна Рада України, Закон України «Про стимулювання розвитку цифрової економіки в Україні», Закон України від 15.07.2021 № 1667-IX, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1667-20>.

Table 1.

Socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine from 1991 to the early 2020s (summarized by the author)

Summary period name	Period, years	Key events	Primary traits
The dawn of IT entrepreneurship and emergence of first IT firms	1991–1996	1991–ELEKS is founded 1991–Infocom is founded 1992–the .ua ccTLD is delegated 1993–SoftServe is founded 1994–first venture investments in the technology sector	- Small, flexible IT firms without a formalized hierarchy - Generalist IT professionals, combining technical and managerial functions - Informal teams - IT professionals are not perceived as a distinct social stratum
Service and outsourcing IT entrepreneurship model formation	1996–2004	1996–Ukrainian IT companies begin their first regular export activity 1998–2003–computer services grow as a distinct article of exports 2002–Ciklum is founded 2002–N-iX is founded	- Export-oriented service and outsourcing companies emerge - Project managers and testers appear as distinct functions, and the division of work within teams begins - Early stages of customer orientation's broad adoption - IT is perceived as a promising but less visible social sector
Institutionalization of the IT industry, formation of the IT community	2004–2010	2004–IT Ukraine Association is created 2005–DOU platform is launched 2007–Readdle is founded 2008–MacPaw is founded 2009–Grammarly is founded	- The industry institutionalizes, first associations and product companies emerge - Roles stabilize and expand, non-technical roles appear - Corporate cultures and professional standards take shape - The image of IT specialists as a distinct social group emerges

Product segment growth, IT community's public visibility	2010–2022	2012—regional IT clusters form 2015–2016—IT clusters become active in Lviv, Kharkiv, and Kyiv 2017—IT services become the third-largest exported services in Ukraine 2019—Ukrainian government launches the Diia digital platform 2021—Diia.City legal framework is adopted	- Companies scale up, introduce multilevel management, and formalize processes - Specialized positions (e.g., PM, QA, HR, designer) gain traction, and career tracks develop - Corporate practices are combined with informality and flexibility, and industry identity takes shape - The image of IT as a prestigious and globally integrated profession is established - IT community gains public visibility
IT entrepreneurship's wartime transformation	2022–...	2022—Russia launches its full-scale invasion of Ukraine	- IT professionals and companies relocate en masse, internal processes and management models are reorganized in the face of wartime challenges - Remote work further gains importance as a basic mode of IT businesses' operation - IT companies and professionals become increasingly involved in defense and volunteer initiatives as part of corporate and professional culture.

CONCLUSION

This article attempts to provide a socio-historical periodization of IT entrepreneurship's development in Ukraine, based primarily on changes in the industry's social organization, professional practices, and perceptions of IT professionals as a social group.

The proposed periods reflect a gradual transition from isolated IT firms and informal engineering initiatives of the 1990s to a fully-fledged industry with a developed community infrastructure, public visibility, and institutional interaction with the state in the 2010s.

Special attention is given to external and internal perceptions of IT professionals. The IT community evolved from a nearly invisible group of tech specialists in the 1990s into a publicly recognizable social stratum, associated with mobility, global integration, and new professional standards.

The wartime period, which began in 2022, is outlined as a distinct stage that significantly alters the conditions of IT entrepreneurship while raising new research questions. Given the ongoing nature of the processes and the limited availability of data, the IT industry's wartime social history needs further conceptualization after the war, when a more comprehensive array of sources becomes available.

The periodization proposed here is anything but final. Still, it provides an analytical framework for further research into the history of IT entrepreneurship in Ukraine. It may be used as a basis for in-depth studies of specific periods, regional specifics, corporate practices, or the economy's social dimensions, as well as comparative studies in a broader international context.

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