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## WORLD EXPERIENCE OF FORMING PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT ZONES IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-CRISIS TRANSFORMATIONS

*The study actualized the problem of finding new non-standard instruments for regional growth for the post-war economy of Ukraine, since traditional mechanisms of direct subsidization and leveling of regional disparities have proven ineffective in the conditions of large-scale destruction, depopulation, and environmental degradation. The necessity of abandoning classical stimulation models in favor of introducing priority development zones (PDZs) based on innovations, human capital development, and principles of a circular economy is substantiated. To avoid the risks of forming infrastructurally inefficient projects and lowering socio-ecological standards of state regulation, a systematic conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological foundations of the functioning of «PDZs» was carried out. Based on a comparative analysis of the views of leading international institutions, the evolution of the essence of PDZs from simple territories with fiscal benefits to complex institutional engines of macroeconomic transformations was analyzed. The theoretical novelty of the work was formed by identifying and categorizing ten independent macroeconomic models of PDZs: «free trade zones», «export processing zones», the «anchor firm» model, «innovative development zones», «wide-format economic zones», «resource-oriented hubs», «eco-industrial parks», «agro-biotechnological zones», «privately managed zones» and «post-crisis transition zones». The global experience of implementing these models was carefully analyzed on the examples of successful transformations in Poland, Ireland, South Korea, China, Japan, and Gabon. Critically negative consequences of unsuccessful «PDZs» design were highlighted on the examples of Mexico, Tunisia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. The practical significance is presented in the creation of a regional model for adapting the global experience of «PDZs» to the realities of Ukraine's post-war recovery, which determines a strictly specified application of tools through the implementation of: the Polish model of post-crisis transition for Eastern Ukraine, the South Korean model of innovative development for northern and eastern agglomerations, the Gabonese resource model for seaports and eco-industrial parks for specific mined territories. It is proven that the application of such multi-level differentiated regional management will allow the creation of closed economic-regional zones and the integration of national industry into global high-tech value chains at the stage of post-war recovery.*

*Key words: priority development areas, post-crisis transformations, post-war recovery, regional growth, macroeconomic models, circular economy, differentiated regional management.*

### **Є. Л. Оніпко. Світовий досвід формування зон пріоритетного розвитку в умовах посткризових трансформацій**

*У дослідженні було актуалізовано проблематику пошуку новітніх нестандартних інструментів регіонального зростання для післявоєнної економіки України, оскільки традиційні механізми прямого субсидіювання та вирівнювання регіональних диспропорцій довели неефективність в умовах масштабних руйнувань, депопуляції та екологічної деградації. Обґрунтовано необхідність відходу від класичних моделей стимулювання, на користь впровадження зон пріоритетного розвитку, заснованих на інноваціях, розвитку людського капіталу та принципах циркулярної економіки. З метою уникнення ризиків формування інфраструктурно неефективних проектів та зниження соціально-екологічних стандартів державного регулювання, було здійснено системну концептуалізацію теоретико-методологічних засад функціонування ЗПР. На основі порівняльного аналізу поглядів провідних міжнародних інституцій, було проаналізовано еволюцію сутності ЗПР від простих територій із фіскальними пільгами до складних інституційних двигунів макроекономічних перетворень. Теоретичну новизну роботи було сформовано шляхом виділення та категоризації десяти самостійних макроекономічних моделей ЗПР: «зон вільної торгівлі», «експортно-виробничих зон», моделі «якірної фірми», «зон інноваційного розвитку», «широкоформатних економічних зон», «ресурсно-орієнтованих хабів», «еко-індустріальних парків», «агро-біотехнологічних зон», «приватно керованих зон» та «зон посткризового переходу». Ретельно проаналізовано світовий досвід імплементації цих моделей на прикладах успішних трансформацій у Польщі, Ірландії, Південній Кореї, Китаї та Японії, Габону. Виділено критично негативні наслідки невдалого проектування ЗПР на прикладі Мексики, Тунісу, В'єтнаму та Бангладеш. Практичну значущість представлено у створенні регіональної моделі адаптації світового досвіду ЗПР до реалій післявоєнного відновлення України, яка визначає суворо специфіковане застосування інструментарію шляхом імплементації: польської моделі посткризового переходу для Східної України, південнокорейської моделі інноваційного розвитку для північних і східних агломерацій, габонської ресурсної моделі для морських портів та еко-індустріальних парків для специфічних замінованих територій. Доведено, що застосування такого багаторівневого диференційованого регіонального управління дозволить створити закриті економічно-регіональні зони та інтегрувати національну індустрію в глобальні високотехнологічні ланцюги доданої вартості на етапі післявоєнного відновлення.*

*Ключові слова: зони пріоритетного розвитку, посткризові трансформації, післявоєнне відновлення, регіональне зростання, макроекономічні моделі, циркулярна економіка, диференційоване регіональне управління.*



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**Formulation of the problem.** The modern global economy and the devastating consequences of the war require Ukraine to search for new, asymmetrical tools for regional growth. Large-scale infrastructure destruction, depopulation, and environmental degradation prove the complete inefficiency of traditional mechanisms for leveling regional disparities. Classical models of direct subsidization are no longer capable of generating internal growth and often cause the "leaking by linking" effect, where external players use state infrastructure to crowd out local business. Consequently, there is a need for innovative incentives based on human capital development, innovations, and the circular economy, rather than merely on basic fiscal benefits. At the same time, global experience proves that the unsystematic implementation of priority development zones (PDZs) creates risks of the emergence of extremely expensive but unviable infrastructure projects («white elephants») and a decline in socio-environmental standards of state regulation. Therefore, the focus of this research lies in bridging the gap between the global experience of «PDZ» functioning and the necessity of their safe adaptation to post-war Ukrainian realities. The state critically needs an effective architecture of «PDZs» that will create closed economic-regional zones and integrate the national industry into global high-tech value chains during the post-war recovery stage.

**Analysis of recent achievements and publications.** Despite the fundamental nature of existing academic approaches to defining the essence and functioning of «priority development zones» (PDZs) by leading international institutions and foreign scholars including UNCTAD [1], the World Bank (FIAS) [2], Farole T. [3, 6], Zeng D. Z. [4, 7], Chaisse J., Dimitropoulos G. [5], Aggarwal A. [8], Crescenzi R. [9], and Akinci G., Farole T. [10] most of these frameworks were developed based on relatively stable market conditions or to overcome classical economic crises. This creates significant limitations for their direct application under the extreme conditions of wartime, large-scale infrastructure destruction, depopulation, and environmental degradation. Therefore, the author set the objective to systematically conceptualize the theoretical and methodological foundations of «PDZ» functioning, expand the theoretical framework by categorizing ten distinct macroeconomic models, and develop an effective, differentiated regional model for adapting this advanced anti-crisis toolkit to the unique realities of Ukraine's post-war economy.

**The purpose of the article** is the systemic conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological foundations and the categorization of global models of priority development zones, followed by the development of an effective regional model for adapting this advanced anti-crisis toolkit to the unique realities of Ukraine's post-war economic recovery.

**Presentation of the main material.** In current academic discourse, the concept of priority development zones has undergone significant evolution, moving from a simple description of isolated territories with tax incentives to their perception as complex instruments for profound macroeconomic changes. To avoid past mistakes and correctly apply this anti-crisis toolkit in practice, it is necessary to analyze the views of leading researchers in detail. Given this, the first step will be an evolutionary systematization of the definitions of «priority development zones» by foreign scholars and specialists, the results of which are visually and structurally presented in Table 1

Table 1

**Evolution and systematization of definitions of the concept of «priority development zones» by foreign scientists and specialists**

Authors / Organizations	Definition
UNCTAD (WIR) [1]	Geographically delimited areas within which national governments actively promote industrial activity through the provision of special fiscal and regulatory incentives, as well as comprehensive infrastructural support.
World Bank (FIAS) [2]	Geographically delimited zones administered by a single management body that offer specific incentives (duty-free import and simplified customs procedures) to enterprises physically located within their boundaries.
Farole T. [3]	Delimited geographical zones providing industrial infrastructure, non-fiscal and tax incentives, and a special regulatory regime, aimed at stimulating FDI, exports, and overcoming barriers to macroeconomic development.
Zeng D. Z. [4]	Geographically defined areas (ranging from industrial parks to entire cities) where more liberal economic laws apply than in the rest of the country, creating an environment for technology transfer, innovation, diversification, and overcoming market failures.
Chaisse J., Dimitropoulos G. [5]	Specific "carved-out jurisdictions" within the general jurisdiction of a state, created to introduce regulations more favorable to trade and investment, acting as an instrument of unilateral economic law.
Farole T. [6]	Instruments of spatial, trade, and investment policy that provide both static economic benefits (short-term export growth) and dynamic structural benefits (technology transfer).
Zeng D. Z. [7]	Institutional engines for rapid economic growth and enhancing national competitiveness, based on the synergy of geographic concentration and large-scale institutional innovations.
Aggarwal A. [8]	Modern mechanisms for stimulating deep structural changes, global competitiveness, and the creation of "more productive" jobs in the segmented labor markets of developing countries.
Crescenzi R., Harman O., Arnold D. [9]	Spatial tools of economic geography designed to attract international R&D and high-tech FDI, utilizing agglomeration forces to generate positive knowledge spillover effects into local markets.
Akinci G., Farole T. [10]	Special polygonal formations, ranging from individual buildings to entire cities, unified by single regulatory and policy regimes deliberately designed to entice business to invest within a designated space.

Source: formed by the author based on the following sources [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10]

The study of the global experience in forming «priority development zones» (PDZs) under conditions of post-crisis transformations requires a clear understanding of the very essence of this phenomenon. In modern science, approaches to this concept have evolved from a simple description of territories with benefits to their perception as complex instruments of profound economic change. To understand exactly how such zones help countries overcome difficulties, it is necessary to analyze in detail and compare the views of leading international institutions and scholars. Starting the analysis with a basic regional-economic approach, it is worth noting a clear consolidation among leading international institutions. "The World Bank (FIAS) [2] defines «priority development zones» as geographically delimited areas under the administration of a single body that offer specific incentives (duty-free import of foreign equipment for the rapid reconstruction of destroyed production facilities or simplified customs clearance) for enterprises physically located there. This view is closely intertwined with the position of «UNCTAD» [1], which also emphasizes territorial delimitation but significantly expands the understanding of the state's role, pointing out that governments actively promote industry through tax incentives and comprehensive infrastructure support (laying new logistics routes, bringing in railway lines and power grids entirely at the expense of the state budget).

In contrast to this purely financial and territorial vision, the second group of researchers primarily highlights the legal and managerial dimensions of this phenomenon. In particular, J. Chaisse and G. Dimitropoulos [5] offer a rather atypical definition, calling these zones specific «carved-out jurisdictions» within the general territory of the state, where more trade-friendly rules are created, acting as an instrument of economic law (introducing a special regime for protecting investor's rights or creating special commercial arbitration in a separate territory). This idea of legal freedom is successfully complemented by Zeng D. Z. [4], who notes that in such zones the size of which can range from individual industrial parks to huge cities significantly freer laws operate than in the rest of the country, creating a favorable environment for technology transfer and overcoming market failures. In turn, Farole T. [3] acts as a kind of bridge between these two approaches, combining in one definition both the provision of industrial infrastructure and the creation of a special managerial regime, which are jointly aimed at attracting foreign direct investment, increasing exports, and overcoming general obstacles to macroeconomic development. A deeper comparative analysis allows us to trace the evolution of academic thought from assessing the current state of the zones to analyzing their long-term consequences. Thus, considering the results of the creation of such territories over time, Farole T. [6] divides the benefits from them into two groups: static benefits that provide short-term export growth, and dynamic benefits consisting of long-term structural changes (when a region gradually transitions from simple assembly-line production using imported parts to a full cycle of developing and manufacturing its own products). Developing this dynamic perspective, Zeng D. Z. [7] describes priority development zones no longer merely as territories, but as powerful organizational engines for rapid growth, operating thanks to a unique combination of geographic clustering of companies and large-scale innovations in business rules. Fully supporting this view, Aggarwal A. [8] considers them as modern mechanisms for stimulating deep structural changes and creating more productive jobs in developing countries, thereby emphasizing their key socio-economic mission. Ultimately, the highest level of conceptualization is demonstrated by the innovative approach, where Crescenzi R., Harman O., and Arnold D. [9] interpret these spatial tools as a magnet for attracting international research, utilizing the power of business concentration to spread new knowledge into local markets (when small local companies and startups gradually adopt advanced digital management technologies and environmental quality standards from international corporations located nearby). Summarizing this extraordinary diversity of scales, goals, and legal forms, Akinci G. and Farole T. [10] draw a universal conclusion that these are special formations of various sizes, united by common rules and policies deliberately designed by the state to maximally entice business to invest money in a designated space to successfully overcome crisis phenomena.

Understanding how differently scholars interpret priority development zones (PDZs) logically leads us to the necessity of examining their practical application. Global experience shows that such spatial policy instruments are divided into a whole range of independent models, each with its own clear management system, architecture, and specific strategic goals. Let us perform a detailed classification of the models and types of priority development zones (PDZs) in Fig. 1.

Analyzing Fig. 1, the first type of «PDZ» is the «free trade zone», which represents state logistics enclaves near key transport hubs (near large seaports or cross-border highways), created to maximize transit, re-export, and radically reduce customs barriers [1, 3]. Their architecture implies significant operational independence of administrations for the overall simplification of international logistics chains. In contrast, the second type, known as «export-processing zones», focuses on mobile and labor-intensive manufacturing [7, 8]. Through public-private partnerships, such entities intensively stimulate export foreign exchange earnings and generate mass entry-level jobs, guaranteeing customs preferences exclusively for enterprises that supply products to foreign markets (electronics assembly or garment factories) [10]. Moving to more complex formats, it is worth highlighting the third type in the form of the «anchor firm» model, which forms a specialized regional hub around one or more industrial giants [11]. A special private or quasi-public administrator manages it based on long-term contracts to build local value-added chains and scale innovation penetration from a global corporation to local suppliers (the production of auto components around a main automobile plant) [14]. Developing the technological vector, the fourth model, the «innovation development zone», concentrates research and development centers and IT infrastructure under the management of complex public-private syndicates [9]. Its main goal is the deep structural modernization of the economy and a focus on attracting global reserves of highly qualified professionals through deep cooperation between business, universities, and venture capital (creation of technology parks or silicon valleys) [12].



Fig. 1. Categorization of models and types of priority development zones (PDZs)

Source: formed by the author based on the following sources [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18]

The fifth type concludes the analysis of this group of priority development zones (PDZs) and acts as a «broad-format economic zone», which can cover the territory of entire megacities [4]. The central government directly manages them, using these spaces as closed testing grounds for safely testing radical tax, customs, or labor reforms before their subsequent scaling to the entire economy of the country (special macroeconomic zones in Asian countries) [17].

The next group of models offers targeted and highly specialized solutions for specific regional development challenges. In particular, the sixth type of «PDZ», «resource-oriented hubs», is created directly near mineral deposits under strict specialized state control [6, 18]. Their task is to form industries for the deep processing of raw materials, limit the export of unprocessed resources, and maximize added value within the country (petrochemical clusters next to oil or gas extraction sites). Addressing environmental problems, the seventh model in the form of «eco-industrial parks»

introduces strict principles of a circular economy and relies exclusively on renewable energy [1]. Specialized management companies strictly control the radical reduction of emissions and high-tech waste disposal here, having the full right to block the operation of enterprises in case of violations of environmental standards (complexes for the waste-free processing of industrial garbage). The eighth type, represented by «agro-biotechnological zones», is decentrally managed by powerful agricultural holdings under the strategic supervision of state funds. Their key goal is the development of smart farming, deep processing of agricultural products, and exponential growth in agricultural sector productivity to ensure the comprehensive biological and food security of the nation («innovative agricultural parks with breeding laboratories») [10]. The ninth type in the status of «privately managed zones» allows the state to radically minimize budget expenditures by fully transferring all infrastructure risks to a private developer [5]. The operating company independently maintains security services, establishes its own internal regulations, and forms lease conditions for business, which provides extreme acceleration for the deployment of new production facilities (turnkey private industrial parks) [14]. The last and tenth model under consideration is the «post-crisis transition zone», which plays a critically important role in rebuilding territories that have suffered from war or experienced a deep decline in single-industry economic complexes. Multilevel special committees combine direct social grants here with a broad package of economic incentives to implement the concept of a just transition, compensate for lost assets, halt depopulation, and force green reindustrialization (the transformation of ruined industrial areas into modern ecological clusters) [12, 13].

The theoretical classification of priority development zone models requires further confirmation through the context of real global experience regarding their implementation under conditions of deep structural and macroeconomic crises, which is detailed in Fig. 2.

Analyzing the data in Fig. 2, Poland, within the framework of the «Katowice SEZ» project, applied the «post-crisis transition zone» model to strategically compensate for the shock from the mass closure of coal mines in Upper Silesia [12]. Thanks to the regulatory linking of tax incentives directly to the volume of investments and new jobs, the region made an unprecedented structural transition to modern mechanical engineering [13]. A similar evolutionary leap is demonstrated by Ireland with the example of the «Shannon Free Zone» project, where the «free trade zone» format was initially used exclusively to save Shannon Airport from bankruptcy [1, 7]. A reduction in corporate taxes in synergy with government grants made it possible to form a global research hub, turning a once agrarian country into a global center of innovation [2, 9]. At the same time, South Korea, in response to the Asian crisis, built the «Incheon FEZ» project in the format of an innovation development zone from scratch on artificial reclaimed lands, creating a magnet for the development of microprocessors thanks to a unique combination of digital infrastructure and tax holidays [15]. No less indicative is the experience of China, whose government purposefully used the «Shenzhen SEZ» project in the status of a broad-format macrozone as an isolated testing ground for the safe testing of liberal tax policies before deploying them to the rest of the planned economy [4, 7, 17].

This step ensured the evolution of the space from an assembly line to a global development center. Japan complements this context through the introduction of the «Abenomics SEZs» project as a «specialized high-innovation zone», which successfully localized the painful liberalization of labor legislation [20]. Such a maneuver effectively attracted high-tech business and helped overcome economic stagnation while maintaining the usual level of social stability. An in-depth analysis of global experience also clearly demonstrates the critical risks and institutional traps of the faulty design of regional development instruments [4, 11, 21]. A vivid anti-example of a priority development zone (PDZ) is Mexico's attempt to overcome poverty in the south through the «Lázaro Cárdenas» and «Isthmus of Tehuantepec» projects using the «anchor firm model» format. Instead of the expected breakthrough, the initiative resulted in the emergence of non-functioning facilities due to a basic lack of logistical routes, definitively proving the complete ineffectiveness of fiscal incentives without prior, large-scale state capital investments [2, 11]. A similar spatial asymmetry is illustrated by the experience of Tunisia, where the creation of the «Coastal Priority Zones» project intended as zones for post-crisis spatial balancing without comprehensive incentives for inland territories led to capital settling exclusively on the wealthy coasts [19]. Consequently, geographically isolated provinces remained in a state of deep stagnation [6]. Special attention should be paid to the negative consequences of the blind pursuit of cheap labor in export manufacturing zones in Vietnam, under the «SEZs Strategy», and in Bangladesh, under the name «EPZs» [8, 20]. By granting preferences to global corporations solely to generate mass, low-skilled employment, these countries fell into the trap of primitive «screwdriver assembly», never creating effective pathways for national innovation [10]. In contrast, the African experience of Gabon, using the example of the «Nkok SEZ» project, shows a completely unconventional path for the institutional development of a resource zone [10]. Under conditions of extremely weak local institutions, attracting foreign Singaporean management made it possible to successfully introduce a single electronic window system, radically minimize corruption, and dramatically increase the profit margins of timber and mineral exports [6, 22].

A detailed analysis of global experience and its critical mistakes creates a reliable foundation for developing our own regional model and strategy. The urgent need for post-war reconstruction requires not a simple copying of foreign models, but their meticulous adaptation to the unique regional characteristics of a ruined economy, which is clearly visualized in Fig. 3.

The proposed model for adapting global experience in Fig. 3 divides the state's territory into target macroregions with an appropriate set of management tools.

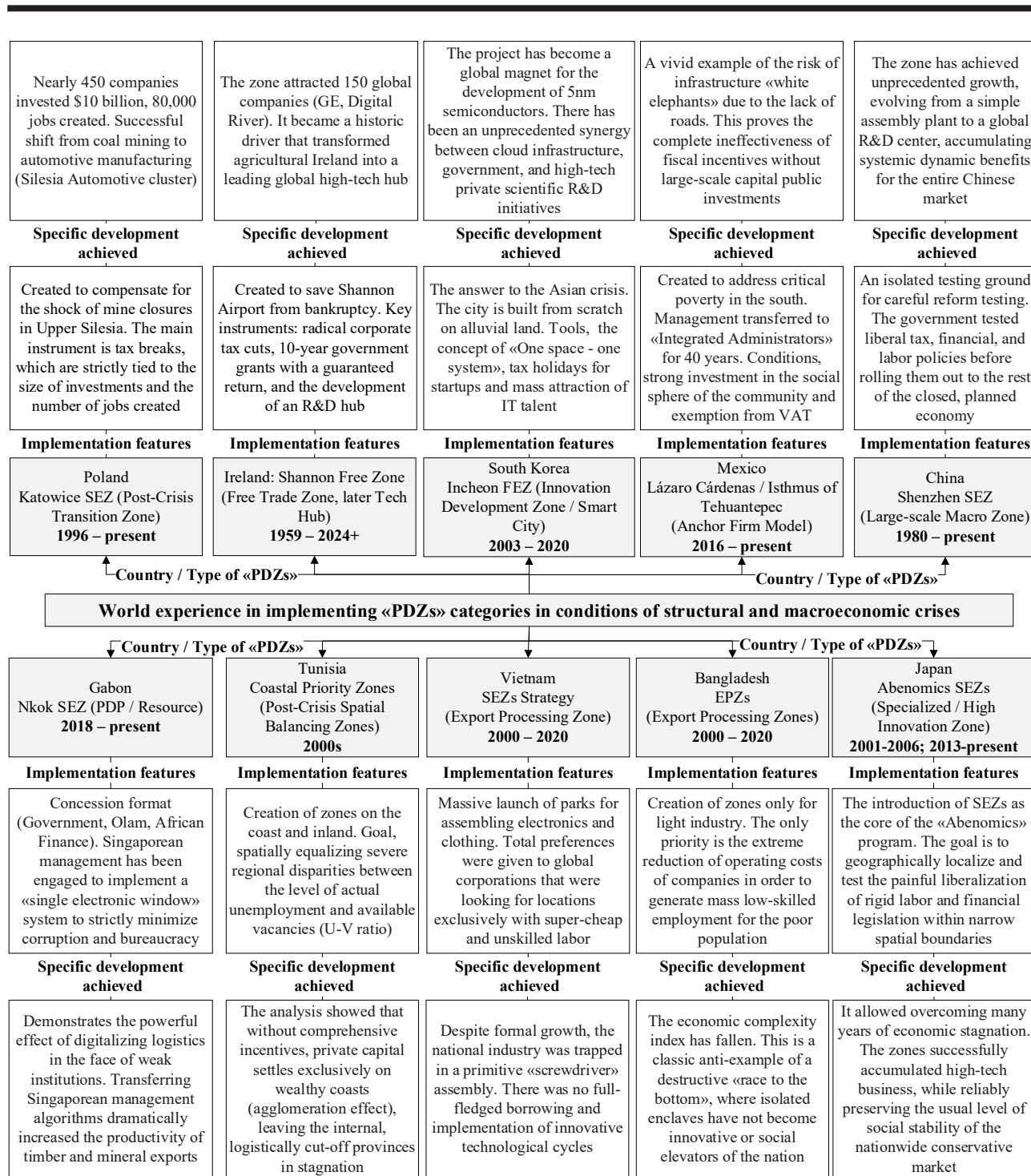


Fig. 2. World experience in implementing «PDZs» categories in conditions of structural and macroeconomic crises  
 Source: formed by the author based on the following sources [1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22]

For Eastern Ukraine (areas of destroyed industrial and old mining cities), the implementation of the Polish experience of a post-crisis transition zone is proposed. The mechanism of fair transformation will replace destroyed enterprises with innovative ecological production facilities based on the principles of a circular economy, which will ensure overcoming structural unemployment and green reindustrialization (formation of scrap metal processing clusters). Instead, the de-occupied northern and eastern agglomerations (including Bucha, Irpin, and Kharkiv) require the implementation of the South Korean model of innovative development. The creation of smart cities from scratch requires cloud data security and tax holidays for research centers, which will allow for massive attraction of venture capital and the formation of powerful technological military hubs. In turn, Western Ukraine, in the status of a border logistics hub, should use the Irish experience of investment zones; attracting state grants for a period of ten years for transnational corporations under strict guarantees of returning funds in case of early closure will allow creating safe assembly centers with subsequent deep integration into European supply chains.

Considering the southern macroregions after full or partial de-occupation, it is advisable to apply the Chinese approach of broad-format macrozones, as a legislative sandbox for testing new tax and customs rules, which guarantees a safe check of liberal reforms without any financial risk for the national budget. In parallel, domestic sea and river ports (including Odesa and the Danube ports) are in dire need of the Gabonese resource model with an autonomous single electronic window under external management.

The involvement of foreign administrators will radically speed up the export of agricultural products and restore the trust of global insurers by undeniably overcoming customs corruption. For Central Ukraine as a regional center of deep agricultural processing and mechanical engineering, the Mexican anchor firm model is optimal. Severely affected rural territories require the introduction of agro-biotechnological zones through the systemic coordination



Fig. 3. Model of adaptation of world experience in formation «PDZs» to the regional structure of post-war Ukraine

Source: developed by the authors themselves

of the «International Renaissance Foundation», which will guarantee grant support to local farmers and a strategic transition from primitive raw material export to innovative processing. Specific territories with an extremely high level of mining and environmental damage from hostilities need the format of eco-industrial parks. A special stimulating regime for demining and military waste disposal companies will safely clean the lands and create the latest ammunition recycling industry. The largest million-plus cities and scientific centers (Kyiv, Dnipro, and Lviv) should adapt the Japanese experience of microgeographic deregulation, through targeted liberalization of service markets within specific technoparks, which will maximally stimulate innovation without the slightest violation of national financial stability. The final element of the regional model / strategy is the Tunisian model of balancing between high-risk frontline zones and a safe rear, by creating more powerful infrastructure incentives and insurance mechanisms specifically in frontline areas to prevent the settling of all capital exclusively in the West, which will allow leveling territorial disproportions and reliably preserving the demographic potential in the East.

**Conclusions.** Summarizing the results of the conducted research, an urgent scientific problem of adapting the global experience of priority development zones (PDZs) to the realities of the post-war economy of Ukraine was solved. The complete ineffectiveness and conceptual obsolescence of traditional grant subsidization of regions in the conditions of catastrophic depopulation and infrastructure destruction have been proven. The theoretical novelty lies in the conceptualization of «PDZs» in the form of ten independent macroeconomic models. It is proved that the use of universal templates leads to dangerous institutional traps resulting in the emergence of unviable «white elephant» infrastructure projects and a decrease in socio-ecological standards of state regulation. The defined practical significance of the work consists in the development of the author's regional model of «PDZ» adaptation for the macroregions of Ukraine. A strictly differentiated approach is substantiated, from the implementation of the Polish model of post-crisis transition for the East to the creation of eco-industrial parks in territories with a high level of mining. It is determined that in order to prevent the destructive effect of «money leaking through connections», the state is recommended to completely abandon the linear restoration of destroyed industry, and the alternative-free application of differentiated regional management, where each macroregion receives its unique set of institutional tools, will guaranteed ensure the ecosystem integration of the national industry into global high-tech value-added chains.

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