

Knowledge Management within Culture-Based Urban Regeneration Projects in Slovakia

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Abstract: The paper deals with the implementation of knowledge management within culture-based urban regeneration projects in Slovakia. Studies have shown that places with high concentration of cultural organizations and/or access to arts activities are more likely to undergo economic revitalization. The concept of culture-based urban regeneration describes a schema where culture is purposely employed as a vehicle for economic growth, cultural tourism development, local community enhancement and social inclusion leading to an overall urban and social revitalization. The aim of the study is to demonstrate how a creative and innovative approach enables overcoming barriers and obstacles in the revitalization of urban industrial and cultural heritage based on “bottom-up” initiatives and knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Knowledge management, culture, urban regeneration, case study

JEL Classification: R1, Z1

1 Introduction

Knowledge is considered to be the main source of economic and social progress in a nowadays society. It generates innovation, which enhances the creation of new socio-economic values and further development (Tajtáková, 2012). According to Besley (2010), the knowledge is now the dominant feature of the social transformations associated with globalization as the world-wide integration of economic activity. The key components of the knowledge economy include greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources (Powell and Snellman, 2004).

However, since there is a strong primary focus on technologies within the knowledge economy, we may question the role of humanities in general, and the role of culture in particular, in the knowledge era. On one hand, there is criticism of the techno-economic orientation of the current knowledge society neglecting many humanities and creative art disciplines (Bullen et al., 2004, p. 4). On the other hand, Florida (2002) advocates knowledge networks and highly skilled labor forces in creative industries as key factors driving economic and urban growth and highlights the birth of a new parallel socio-economic phenomenon – the “creative economy”.

The creative economy is based on creative industries, such as media, culture, arts, design, fashion, architecture, IT, marketing and research. It recognizes the creative labor as a vital force for the future development. Kloudová (2010, p. 117-118) highlights the creative economy as a new trend arising from the platform of completed industrialization, high technologies, advanced schooling and information gains in well-developed economies. According to Florida (2002), the sector of creative economy generates increasingly higher

revenue, involves a higher number of employees, leading to the emergence of a new labor class, a so-called creative class.

Yet, there is one thing in common for both knowledge and creative economy – the crucial role attributed to the innovation in economic and social development. In the first case, the innovation is understood as the transformative mode of knowledge transmission that could equally well be experienced in, or exemplified by, any field (Edelstein, 2010, p. 17). In the second case, Nivin and Plettner (2009, p. 33) argue that a creative environment drives innovation, which drives economic development. In addition, according to Stam et al. (2008, p. 119), creativity may also be particularly useful in knowledge-based economies, where creativity is required to convert scientific and technological knowledge into market value.

This paper presents findings based on five case studies analyzing culture-based urban regeneration projects in Slovakia. Our aim is to demonstrate how a creative and innovative approach enables overcoming barriers and obstacles in the revitalization of urban industrial and cultural heritage based on “bottom-up” initiatives and the knowledge creating-sharing cycle.

2 Culture-based Urban Regeneration and Knowledge Management

Studies have shown that places with high concentration of cultural organizations and/or access to arts activities are more likely to undergo economic revitalization and to overcome barriers relating to a class and ethnicity (Stern, 2000). It has been argued that the more concerns on culture/creative industry and cultural tourism, the more concrete interactions between culture, economy and development occur (Shang-Ying Chen, 2007).

The concept of *culture-based urban regeneration* or *culture-led urban regeneration* describes a schema where culture is deliberately employed as a vehicle for economic growth, cultural tourism development, local community enhancement and social inclusion, leading to overall urban and social revitalization. The perception of culture-based urban regeneration is basically twofold: On one hand, it is regarded as a means of improving the quality of life for local residents (e.g. Turok 1992; Jayne, 2004; Evans, 2005; Sagan and Grabkowska, 2012). On the other hand, it is seen as a way of enhancing the economic status and competitive position of cities (e.g. Florida, 2004; Temelova 2007; Pratt, 2008). However, Miles and Paddison (2005) argue that achieving social cohesion and economic competitiveness have been increasingly considered as parallel and interrelated goals.

Numerous successful stories of culture-based urban regeneration projects – including cities like Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Bilbao, Rotterdam, Dusseldorf, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, etc. – demonstrate positive synergic effects between culture and economics within urban development. However, as pointed out by Pastak and Kährlik (2016, p. 967), while in Western countries urban renewal has been on the political agenda for many decades, in Central and Eastern Europe, revitalization projects have been emerging only since the 2000s.

Nevertheless, the experience from Western Europe suggests that well-designed cultural projects may turn the image of grey post-industrial places with nothing to offer into new cultural venues attracting tourists and private investors and encouraging young people and entrepreneurs to stay or to return to create their own businesses. In addition, Pastak and Kährlik (2016, p. 965) highlight a substantial effect of the culture-based urban regeneration on improving the physical quality of public spaces by creating arenas for social interaction and educational activities.

Borg and Russo (2005, p. 28-29) identified three main “impact areas” of culture on urban development, which they further integrated into the *Culture-Oriented Economic Development* (COED) model for the city (Figure 1). The model includes:

- Direct economic impact of employment and value generation in the cultural industries and indirect expenditure effects related to cultural professions.
- Induced effects of cultural activities on the quality of a place encompassing the tourist attractiveness, which leverages additional visitor expenditure, but also the location amenities for companies.
- “Creative inputs” accruing to the local networks of production (both to products and to processes of production or organizational models). These are “cultivated” in a lively and stimulating cultural environment, where a creative class develops, attracted by tolerance, openness, educational and social opportunities.

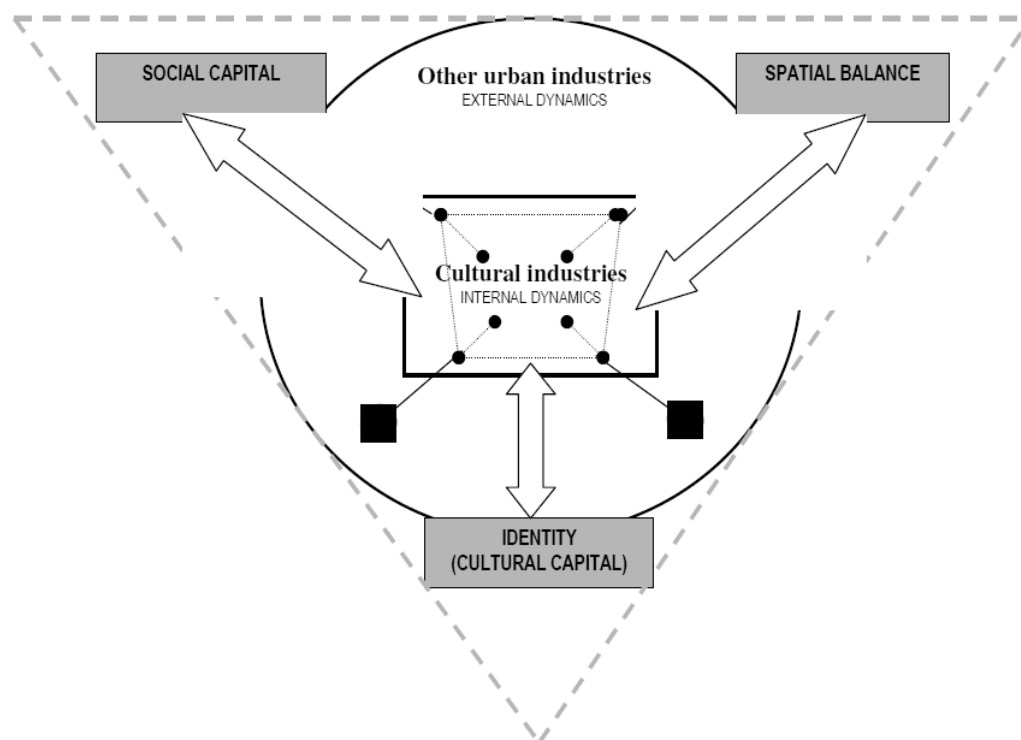


Fig. 1 *Culture-Oriented Economic Development (COED) model for the city*

Source: Borg and Russo, 2005, p. 32

The authors suggest to utilize the COED model as a reference framework to evaluate the role and effects of culture on the economic development of cities considering the “economic strength” of the cultural cluster, the “fertilization” of the local economic milieu by culture and creativity, and the “sustainability” of the process of economic growth determined by inclusive cultural activities and projects, their accessibility and spatial distribution in the urban area (Borg and Russo, 2005, p. 32-33).

We assume that the crucial factor determining the success of COED model within the context of culture-based urban development and the factor connecting all three areas is the effective knowledge management. Yet, only limited attention (e.g. Porumb and Ivanova,

2014; Olejárová, 2014, 2017) has been paid to the implementation of knowledge management into culture-based urban regeneration projects. The authors believe that the expected economic effects, community inclusion and cultural sustainability within urban development can only be achieved in the repeated cycles of knowledge creation, externalization, sharing, and critical assessment.

3 Methodology

3.1 In-depth Interviews

The focus of our study was on a qualitative research method, mainly on personal interviews carried out with the leading personalities of selected non-profit organizations. In order to search for similarities and/or differences identifying successful projects, it was crucial to use a set of identical questions with observed categories. Our intention was to analyze, compare and thus to identify successful practice based on knowledge tools and experience sharing. Moreover, the purpose of the used method was to obtain opinions of creative and innovative actors, recognize their know-how and collect sufficient amount of data for creating a learning model. Our interest was also concentrated on indicating internal and external factors, opportunities and barriers. The existence of creative and innovative elements distinguishing the observed leaders and their teams from the others and contributing to obvious success was a part of our research as well.

3.2 The Studied Sample

The studied subjects were selected projects the revitalization of which either has been accomplished or is still in a creative process.

Tab. 1 *The Studied Sample*

	Subject	City	Original vs. Present Purpose	Reconstruction date
1.	KC Dunaj	Bratislava	Department Store Independent Cultural Center	summer 2010
2.	Stará tržnica	Bratislava	Market Hall Cultural Center, Market Hall	fall 2013-2015, ongoing
3.	Stanica Záriečie	Žilina	Local Train Station Independent Cultural Center	spring 2003, ongoing
4.	Synagóga	Žilina	Jewish Synagogue Cultural & Community Centre	spring 2011, ongoing
5.	IC Culture Train	Košice	Suburb Community Centre Independent Cultural Centre	2005-2008
6.	Tabačka Kulturfabrik	Košice	Tobacco Factory Independent Cultural Centre & Creative Incubator	2009, ongoing

Source: Own processing

The observed subjects are located in three different regions of Slovakia: Kultúrne centrum (Center of Culture) Dunaj - Bratislava, Stará tržnica (Market City Hall) – Bratislava, Stanica (Local Train Station) Žilina-Záriečie – Žilina, Synagóga (New Synagogue) – Žilina,

IC Culture Train – Vyšné Opátske and Tabačka (Tobacco Factory) Kulturfabrik – Košice. The objects of our research were also three selected leading managers - founders/co-founders of civic organizations focusing on regeneration urban processes, who are creative and innovative knowledge workers representing so called "bottom-up" activities.

3.3 Case Studies

Using and evaluating significant amounts of data from different resources required systematic processing. Therefore, in the context of the case studies, it was necessary to define identical categories for all six studied subjects. The data we used in our research came from available printed and electronic resources, notes and audio-visual records from the events we visited as well as audio records from personal interviews with the observed leaders in the studied venues, while respecting all ethical principles.

Tab. 2 *The Structure of Case Studies*

	Studied categories	Focus of Study
1.	Actors & Activities	Presentation of the founders – leaders, their teams and realized activities
2.	History & Revitalization of the building	Identification of the original purpose of the buildings, their location and revitalization processes
3.	Purpose of the Venue	Transformation of the building purpose and its future usage after reconstruction
4.	Program Offer	Observation of the composition and frequency of the offered events in the revitalized venues
5.	Target Group(s)	Identification of the target group(s) in accordance with a program offer
6.	Responsible Team	Public presentation of the studied organizations, their leaders and team members (names, responsibilities)
7.	Financing Structure of the Project	Identification of the used financial and other resources with the focus on the multi-financing model
8.	Input of Stakeholders	Evaluation of opinions and reactions of different groups of stakeholders to the existence of revitalized urban venues

Source: Own processing

As mentioned before, a part of our research was focused on case studies, the selection of which was carefully carried out and specific conditions were taken into consideration. Our six case studies observed urban regenerations in three main Slovak regions and their capital cities under the leaders and teams of non-profit organizations. A large amount of information and demanding conversion processes required a complex and systematic approach in data selection, comparison and analysis of observed phenomena. Only the integrated framework and unified criteria could lead to designing the intended knowledge management model as an effective learning tool.

The outcomes were analyzed by using descriptions and comparisons of existing approaches and preferences of the research phenomena, including the internal and external environment of non-profit cultural organizations. Moreover, the SWOT analysis of innovative and creative approaches focusing on observed revitalization urban processes

enabled us to highlight effective tools and methods in order to formulate criteria and conclusions.

4 Results

The purpose of the analysis of the studied categories was the identification of similar and/or different characteristics which dominate particular subjects of our studied sample. The observed organizations in a frame of the selected categories show almost identical characteristics, the reason of which was prior effort to create centers of independent culture satisfying various communities. Moreover, such centers are not only expected to provide the visitors with multi-genres events and offer additional gastro services but also preserve the historical value of the regenerated buildings.

Another common sign of the studied organizations and the way they manage their venues is a transparent financing system guaranteed and supported by several resources, which enables sustainability of the projects. The permanent effort to monitor visitors feedback, together with open effective communication, productive cooperation with municipalities and the business sector, and following ethical and moral principles help fulfill the original visions of revitalization. Last but not least, it is necessary to mention the fact that the studied organizations are active members of several local and foreign platforms to share knowledge and experience related to similar regeneration urban projects, e.g. ANTENA, T.E.H., etc.

It is necessary to emphasize that out of eight studied categories in our case studies, we have selected those which contain knowledge attributes. The following Table 3 represents the summary of the outputs gained after the comparison of urban regeneration of the observed subjects.

Tab. 3 Comparison and Summary of the Studied Categories

	Studied categories	Comparison and Summary
1.	Actors & activities	In all the studied projects, there are creative and innovative leaders possessing former experience in the non-profit cultural sector. Together with the team members, they share knowledge in organizing and managing reconstruction, financing, dramaturgy and communication.
2.	History & building revitalization	A common sign of all buildings is their originally different purpose and historical value. After the reconstruction and conversion, they serve as cultural community centers.
3.	Building scope	Within the research project, there is a similarity in building conversion towards community cultural centers, independent culture, social events, markets, and creative industries as hubs or labs.
4.	Program scope	All objects possess multi-genre dramaturgy, regular markets, creative and innovative workshops, charity events, various services as shops, bars, and cafés.
5.	Target group(s)	Broad age and interest spectrum, social categories, locals and visitors, representatives of all sectors.
6.	Team	Creative, innovative and interdisciplinary individuals, educated professionals with experience and skills. They work in organizations with strong culture and vision and use conceptual and system thinking, leading to effectiveness and sustainability.
7.	Project financing	Multi-source financing focusing on sustainability and

		transparency.
8.	Stakeholders' reaction	Declared continual support, long-term interest, best practice status, awards for development, local and international network membership, effective communication, transparency and sustainability.

Source: Own processing

In spite of the fact that the revitalized venues are located in different cities and regions of Slovakia (considering possible demographic and economic deviations), the summarized outcomes indicate prevailing compliance visible in all the studied subjects. The period of a detailed analysis of the selected categories was followed by the phase of identification of the characteristics typical for our studied subjects - centers of independent urban culture. Through the comparison and the consecutive summary of the gained outcomes, it was possible to define the level of similarities and/or differences within our studied subjects.

The presented regenerated urban projects in the Table 3 are a part of a complex and conceptual framework, which indicates creative and innovative management. The observed leaders with their teams demonstrated the ability to learn and share valuable knowledge and experience coming not only from their previous projects but also from exploiting the skills of their Slovak or foreign peers. Both the reconstruction itself and the entire management of the revitalized buildings, including tailored program offers, effective communication and collaboration with stakeholders and transparent financing, deserve to be defined as a “success story”. As emphasized by Olejárová (2017), such an outstanding effort of presented urban transformations including effective learning processes and management of knowledge caught the attention of the public and experts and resulted in receiving several Slovak and foreign awards.

The phase of collecting data was followed by the further stage of analyzing and comparing the studied categories in the context of selected subjects, while similar and different characteristics were identified. The elaborated set of case studies provided us with valuable outputs, which led us to the conclusion that the studied organizations indicated almost identical characteristics in the observed categories. Their intention was to convert dilapidated buildings into vibrant centers of culture offering a rich program suitable for various communities: not only for the young but also for families and seniors, creative artists and students, as well as for tourists. Olejárová (2017) highlights that such elements as open communication with stakeholders and demanding the feedback, insisting on transparent financing methods and sustainability were common procedures of innovative and creative management.

5 Knowledge Management Model

The base for our proposed knowledge management model is the SECI model. Our intention was to create a scheme which comprises the most decisive factors for an effective knowledge management cycle encompassing the knowledge creation, externalization, sharing, and critical assessment. It was also vital that it emphasizes the need of assessing all consecutive stages of knowledge conversion in order to achieve the desired goal: the efficient and effective knowledge management and communication among the team leaders, their teams and stakeholders. In other words, the purpose was to demonstrate how to learn and benefit from best practices and how to coordinate participative management of culture-based urban regeneration projects based on common effort coming from the non-for-profit sector, government, businesses, media, target groups and volunteers.

5.1 Characteristics of the Model Elements

In the following part of the paper we intend to briefly mention the particular elements of our suggested model, in which a *revitalized object*, together with a *knowledge database*, represent two poles of the model, which interfere with presented elements of the model, specifically within repeated knowledge transfers as well as identification of internal and external factors, challenges and barriers, the aim of which is to gain effectivity and sustainability of the regenerated subjects. Additional values of the observed activities are the implementation of the innovative and creative elements in the management of urban cultural centers, together with the interaction and inclusion of all involved stakeholders.

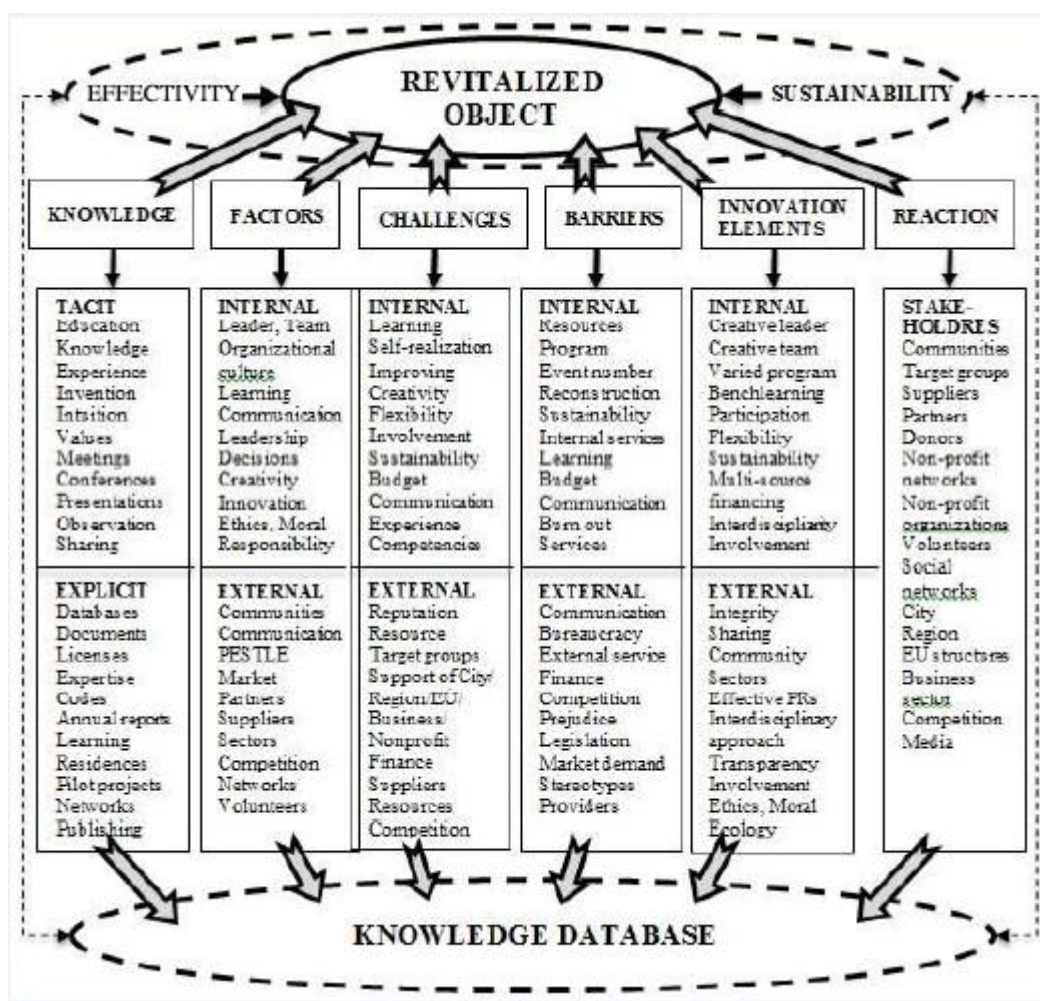


Fig. 2 Knowledge Management Model for Urban Revitalization
 Source: Own processing based on the SECI model

5.2 Revitalized Object

All the studied subjects are buildings the original purpose of which was different from the present one, with a partial exception of Stará tržnica (City Market Hall) in Bratislava and Žilina-Záriečie (Local Train Station) in Žilina. All of them possess their historical value and belong either to the municipality, regional, state or church property. The submitted agreements describing their future purposes, utilization and conditions resulted in signing the

contracts among their owners and future users - representatives of the observed civic organizations. Creative and innovative knowledge managers, together with their teams and other stakeholders, undergo the processes of gradual reconstruction and regeneration and actively anticipate their modification into living cultural urban centers.

5.3 Knowledge Database

The database of knowledge represents a generator of human knowledge from different disciplines and areas. It is a bank of data, contacts, procedures, proposals, processes and solutions related to cases and issues that were necessary to deal with and to solve in the past. It is an effective tool, the advantage of which is visible especially when the leaders are not present or do not work for an organization anymore, while needed knowledge is available to the other team members. However, an essential condition is permanent gaining and storing of such data and the ability of all the involved to share, correctly identify and implement them when needed.

6 Conclusions

Our suggested model of knowledge management resulted from analyzed, compared and summed up findings, and its intention is to serve as a platform for shared knowledge, suitable learning models and a set of recommendations for appropriate coordination processes leading to effective, multicultural and sustainable urban cultural centers. In the frame of the presented model, it is necessary to concentrate significant and permanent attention to the knowledge database which serves as a base of human knowledge, procedures, data and solutions from various disciplines and fields. We are convinced that due to permanent creation, contribution, fulfillment and sharing of both the motivated creative knowledge workers and other involved participants, it can become a very effective tool.

The presented tailored knowledge management model reflects observed and studied results of the regeneration processes of inappropriately used urban buildings and their conversion into vibrant cultural centers. It also advises and recommends usage of appropriate knowledge management tools for either new or existing organizations willing to learn. Considering the fact that knowledge management contains multidisciplinary character, we believe in the need of a complex and holistic approach towards our research. The authors suppose that the potential of creative, innovative and interdisciplinary approaches and bottom-up activities focused on the multifunctional exploitation of historical urban buildings contribute to strengthening of their “genius loci”.

Acknowledgments

This paper was elaborated in the framework of the research project VEGA No. 1/0562/18/13 “The links between Human Capital and Information and Communication Technology”.

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