

Gréta Marosán: Culturally Based Economic Development Practices in Bihar



Introduction

The topic of our research, which was presented at the 2021 National Scientific Student Conference, is cultural economic development based on Local intellectual, Built and Natural heritage. Our study explores the motivation, social responsibility, willingness to network and embeddedness of the culturally based economic development initiatives that are present in Hajdú-Bihar County. Based on these four topics, we analyze six particularly well-functioning and exemplary cases. Az empirikus kutatás második felében pedig a megyében található kulturális és kreatív gazdaságot fejlesztő programok adatbázisáról olvashatunk. In the second part of the empirical study, the database of programs for developing the cultural and creative economy of the county will be presented.

Theoretical background

As concepts, the intellectual, built and natural heritage are worth being defined separately. While English-language special literature distinguishes tangible and intangible heritage (Munjery, 2004), in Hungary we talk about Hungarian world heritage sites and intellectual cultural values. In the tangible category, there are four declared natural heritage sites (Aggteleki karst, Hortobágy National Park, Fertő cultural landscape, Tokaj wine region) and four built ones (Budapest - the banks of the Danube, the Buda Castle District and Andrassy road, Hollókő - the tradition-preserving Palóc village, [Benedictine](#) Pannonhalma Archabbey, Early Christian burial chambers of Pécs (Csorba, 2017). The intellectual cultural heritage consists of 31 values (Intellectual Cultural Heritage in Hungary website, 2019). Among others, this includes the Busó-walking of Mohács, the Matyó folk art and the Dance house movement. All these are joined together and supplemented with additional categories by the Hungarikum, a collective term denoting the outstanding performance of Hungarians, the 8 categories of which include more than 70 values (Collection of Hungarikums- Collection of Hungarian Values homepage, 2019). At national level, the various values can be classified into a constantly expanding categories, of which 6,631 have been accepted to date (Collection of Hungarikums- Collection of Hungarian Values homepage, 2019). These values can deliver related services for a nation, the utilization of which means an enormous knowledge base. At the same time, income can be generated for a settlement by attracting

consumers looking for these values (Csath, 2018).

Culturally based economic development in practice

The settlements of Hajdú-Bihar county have already started to utilize the local intellectual, built and natural heritage as a resource. Although more culturally related and economically beneficial initiatives and developments might be observed in turistically more prominent counties, there are also a good number of programs worth displaying in the eighty-two settlements of the currently examined region.

However, before presenting them, we would like to briefly present an example of national importance, which can be a model for all of us to follow. The location is the [Benedictine Pannonhalma Archabbey](#), which rightly holds the World Heritage and Hungaricum titles, since the people who live and work there have been preserving their traditions since the foundation of the monastery in 996. Among these, the most suitable example for the cultural-based economic development is the cultivation and processing of herbs - which also operates in a similar way in Tihany (Vaskor, 2014). The amount generated by this activity is supplemented by the touristic services of the archabbey and frequent events, e.g. Lavender Weeks and Herbs Week, thanks to which the abbey is visited by approximately 100-150,000 people every year (Viant, 2013). In addition to its touristic impact, its role to strengthen identity is also significant. Many young people study in the secondary grammar school belonging to the abbey, so apart from the "Ora et labora!" ideology, this also shows how to lay the foundation on intellectual heritage. At the same time, based on what we have read, it is noticable that this is complemented with the built and natural environment. Thus the individual categories can sometimes be difficult to separate and their complexity may demonstrate the intensity of the project.

The characteristics of the sample, the description of examined projects

Within the three main categories examined (intellectual, built and natural), we created additional sub-categories, each of which is presented in detail with an example working perfectly (Table 1). Within Hajdú-Bihar County the examples were selected focusing on the Bihar region.. In the following, six active projects will be presented, about which I collected informtion by preliminary document analysis, and then the managers and employees of each project added their knowledge, for which we would like to express our gratitude.

Cultural economic development based on intellectual heritage	Cultural economic development based on built heritage	Cultural economic develop based on natural herita
--	---	---

Gáborján Tradition Preservation Public works project (2015)	Biharkeresztes Csicsóka Heritage House Museum (2013)	Berettyóújfalu Bihar Termálliiget Bihar Termálliiget spa (1927/2009)
Pocsaj Spiral macaroni making and best men's meeting (2008)	Zsáka Rhédey Castle (1858/2020)	Vekerd Bazsarózsa Horticultur (2016)
Table 1. Categorical list of the examined projects with the year of foundation (author's edition)		

Methodological background

During the research, we used document analysis and interview analysis. We used document analysis to investigate the documents and settlement marketing components of the examined settlements. We conducted semi-structured interviews with several managers, entrepreneurs and founders working in culturally-based economic development projects in Hajdú-Bihar county.

The questions of the semi-structured interview can be divided into 4 major topics.

The start. What was the motivation behind the initiatives, what form did they take, what initial difficulties did the dreamers of the idea face, and how typical is it for a settlement to consciously build on its own cultural values?

Impact. What role does local culture play in the development of the economy of the investigated settlements, how does the infrastructure of the settlement and the attitude of the residents change when an idea is implemented, and how much does all this affect the strengthening of the identity of the local citizens. Finally, we can find out how typical it is to use local human resources as laborforce.

Cooperations. What kind of partnerships do the given organizations have in the county, and what is the leader's opinion about them. We can also find out about the scope of the current and future planned activities.

Latent and obvious goals. Where do consumers and those interested mainly come from? Does the organization have programs for the society, or are they planning to introduce them? What motivations led to them, what made them start programs that did not purely serve business purposes and why do they considered them important or less important.

Statements

In this study, we made four statements.. These presuppositions were evaluated by analyzing the responses of culturally-based and/or creative economy businesses, organizations, and individuals operating in the settlements of Hajdú-Bihar.

Statement 1. Appearance. We assume that the majority of the initiatives examined in the region were launched based on an initiative coming from within (the settlement).

Statement 2. Embeddedness in the settlement. Based on the statement of Bugovics (2007), who states that the development of a settlement has an effect on the identity of the people living there and this, in response, strengthens the more active participation of the population, we assume that the initiators tend to pay attention to this factor - which can be considered to be a significant resource.

Statement 3. Networking. Based on Porter's (2000) regional cluster theory, we assume that if several actors in a region start culturally based economic development programs, cooperation will develop between them and they will support each other.

Statement 4. Social Responsibility. We assume that social responsibility activities aimed at improving the quality of life is given a lower priority as compared to the economic profit-making.

The results of the interview-based research with the institutional representatives

The institutional representatives gave us a warm welcome and willingly provided us with professional answers to explore the topic of our research and analyze our claims.

In the case of our **first statement**, we studied the motivation behind the initiatives There were most unanimous responses to the question of how typical it is for the given settlements in Bihar to consciously build on their own cultural values. They do not build on it adequately, there are no serious efforts to create an image, the reason for which is considered to be the alleged underutilization of future investments in tourism. This perspective may be due to the fact that the given projects are not always profitable, and this would presumably be the case for other innovations as well. Thus, these projects contribute to the economic development only to a lesser extent, it is not typical for the region that the local culture would appear prominently among the sources of income of the settlement.

However, if there is willingness to take on a new initiative, it does not grow from an external business motive without roots, but from local roots along the lines of local value. Such is the folk peasant architecture in the case of the heritage house museum, the peony as an ornament of every old flower garden, making spiral macaroni and wedding ceremonies, basket weaving, carpet weaving as old traditional handicrafts, the thermal bath that has been operating since 1927 and the castle built in 1858.

In proportion, the leaders of three initiatives are local residents, and the leaders of three initiatives live close to the location of the implementation, without having bond to the settlement, they brought it to the settlement only because the location proved to be excellent for the

implementation of the idea. A good example is Vekerd, where peony plantations on both sides of the road greet visitors to the settlement. Since then, more and more people have paid a visit to the owners and like the Lavender gardens of Léta, it is starting to gain a greater reputation every year. The Horticulture of Vekerd, the Spa of Berettyóújfalu and the Heritage House Museum of Biharkeresztes are privately owned, while the Gáborján public works project, the events of Pocsaj and the Castle of Zsákai are patronized by the local government. In the course of their operation, each project has already received tender funds.

Each of the six settlement cases developed from within, but it must be noted that more of them operate as private enterprises, so not all the ideas could be considered to be the intrinsic idea of the settlement. At the same time, our first statement is supported by the fact that the development was not carried out by an outside observer, a professional who did not know the settlement at all and did not understand its profile in any of the cases. Based on this, our first statement was confirmed, the majority of the studied initiatives were created on the basis of individual or local initiatives, taking into account the well-being of the local people.

In the case of our **second statement**, focusing on settlement embeddedness, we examined the utilization of local resources, especially human resources. All our interviewees emphasized that although the initiation of the given project brought only little fame to the settlements, the well-being of the locals and the embeddedness of the settlement proved to be more important at the beginning and it continues to be the same to date.

Of the other two sustainability factors described later, more interviewees ranked social responsibility in the second place in the order of importance, and networking mostly came in the third place. Typically the embeddedness of the settlement came first, which is one of the most important features of the given initiatives, since when something new is created, it is inevitable that it will not have an impact on the local citizens, - emphasized the owner of the Bazarózsa horticulture.

With the exception of the horticulture and the heritage house museum, every project employs external workers, a phenomenon strongly characterized by the involvement of local people. Exceptions are the events of Pocsaj, which, due to their seasonality, also do not require the employment of special laborforce, however, all the organizing work is carried out by employees of local public institutions. In Gáborján, the public works project started with 179 people in 2015, involving local labourforce without exception. Likewise in Zsáka, most of the employees of the renovated castle in 2020 are locals, and in Berettyóújfalu the employment of local residents are also typical. Obviously, it is necessary to employ external employees for posts of exhibition guides, and basket weaving teaching and other jobs with expertise, but in most cases local people take up the existing jobs, thus strengthening the embeddedness in the settlement.

Referring back to the topic of the appearance, we were interested what changes there are in the infrastructure of the settlement and even more so in the perception of the local residents when a new idea is implemented. The interviewees mostly saw the initial difficulties before or after the start-up in the attitude of the locals. This has moderated over time, it has become much more accepted and supported. The leaders put an emphasis on this, because without local support, there would not be camping groups at the heritage house museum, no flower-picking volunteers at the horticulture, and no workforce in the public works project either. We must consider it important

to recognize this, since every well-functioning project must first be accepted at the local level. This effort can be seen in almost all the six cases, one of the best examples of which is that local residents are offered discounted admission fees to the spa in Berettyóújfalu. This also shows that quite often the smallest things represent additional opportunities leading to sustainability, and that at the settlement level there are continuous efforts to involve the local people and to think in terms of sustainability.

As mentioned above, in this region founding finances on local cultural values is even less developed, so we cannot talk as much about its economic development effect as we could in our wine region, around Lake Balaton, or near our capital. In addition to monetary economic factors, other types of support are more typical. While the heritage house museum mostly receives exhibits for display, the horticulture mainly employs volunteers from the neighboring Zsáka for the duration of the season. The leaders of the projects receive support from the local government, when renovating the castle, during spiral makaroni-making and best men's gatherings organized in public institutions, or when organizing events and performances in the spa.

However, the majority of my interviewees believe that they contribute little or not at all to the strengthening of the local identity by running their project. Only in the case of Pocsaj and Gáborján can we see a clear positive identity strengthening, in the case of the latter, since the launch of public works project started five years ago, a significant change has taken place regarding the perception of the locals. In Pocsaj, the cooperation and participation during the organization and implementation of the events is also unique. In the case of the other settlements, everyone among the locals knows about the given initiative, so its operation is known by the public, but the active participation of the population is less typical. This may be due to the fact that in most cases we are not talking about active operation for a long time, and it is well known that becoming embedded in a settlement requires time.

In view of these, the statement of Bugovics (2007) seems to be refuted regarding the current cases, but in a few years, when the projects will be more well-known by the public, this may change. However, our statement examines the point of view of the initiators, which was confirmed, since the leaders aim to involvement the locals, as we read in the case of Gáborján, Berettyóújfalu, Zsáka and Pocsaj.

The starting point of our **third statement** is the theory of networking and Porter's (2000) cluster theory. We know several partnerships that work well internationally, so it may be interesting to examine how the same works at a county level. Several studies (Scott, 1997; Bathelt et al., 2004) have already recognized the importance of social capital and networking as its consequence. Utilizing this not only brings regional development (Porter, 2000), but also the competitiveness of initiatives through collaborations (Bathelt et al., 2004).

Knowing this, in the case of the current six initiatives we enquired what partner collaborations they currently have and which ones they are considering developing in the future. Zsáka is mainly visited by groups from the area, mostly just to visit the castle, but there are also initiatives for welcoming of camping groups. In this the neighboring settlement of Vekerd is a partner whose garden serves as a venue for one-day camping for groups of children. When we were there, it was suggested that we should even visit the attractions and programs in the area as part of a camping week in Bihar, including the nearby heritage house museum and the spa. In the case of Zsáka and Vekerd, since they have not been on the market for a long time, the development of the services is at the level of brainstorming, but they are ambitious to realizes inquiries, the number of which is

constantly increasing.

The horticulture considers the presence in social media as one of the key elements of this, while Gáborján does it by giving away locally produced products for promotional purposes. The mayor emphasized that when someone comes to the settlement, they always present them with some of their own products, which has already generated orders. They visit neighboring settlements in the county to take part in craft fairs, so they have been exhibitors at the events of the heritage house museum in Biharkeresztes, among others. There are also several skilled craftsmen and farmers working in Biharkeresztes, who have the opportunity to sell their products at events organized in the heritage house museum, among other things. What is more, the owner admitted that on the day of the first Day of Heritage House Museums in 2016, many locals displayed their products here for the first time, to the mayor's surprise, who had not known how many talented people lived in the settlement. Pocsaj invites the local minority municipalities, associations, and hobby circles to the spiral macaroni making event before the best man meeting, who, in addition to offering their time and work, also contribute to the event with cakes. In the case of Berettyóújfalu, addressing the communities is also typical. Among other things, local and neighborhood choirs, zither groups and dance groups have already performed on the spa and there is considerable interest in these additional events.

Everyone positioned their project as a strong one in the county. Constant efforts are made to expand the scope. People from Romania and Ukraine came to Pocsaj for the 2020 Best Man meeting. Vekerd is also trying to make as many international sales contacts as possible, people from across the border regularly visit the bathe in Berettyóújfalu, and the heritage house museum has also had German, American, Mexican, Chinese and Japanese visitors. However we must note that this is not among the primary goals in any of the cases, but if the situation requires so, everyone is open to such opportunities.

Our interviewees evaluated all the collaborations so far positively, believing that they were able to mutually support each other. In all the six cases there is willingness to cooperate in the future, the importance and advantage of which was recognized by all the representative interviewees. As rivalry and pushing are not typical because of the position of the region and no one mentioned hostility or competition our third statement is fully confirmed.

Our **fourth statement** examines social responsibility as a sustainability factor. First, we were looking for connections between the cultural and the economic approaches. When our interviewees had to decide between culture-centricity and economic-centricity, four of them considered the initiative to be in the first group while two had economic development elements in focus. However, when we asked about profit maximization and improving the quality of life of the local population, without exception, the second element was more emphatic. In the case of Berettyóújfalu and Zsáka, it was stated that the two focuses work together and should be treated with equal emphasis, since income is only generated if someone feels good in the given place and wants to return there. So, if we create the conditions, our profit will also increase - emphasized the employee of the spa.

What we find interesting is that when we talked about the importance of social responsibility, several interviewees mentioned children and the younger generation, the sense of identity of whom they would like to contribute to. In addition to the children, the organizations consider it



















important to involve local and nearby settlements and to advertise there because even if interested people arrive from across the border, the primary market will be the local residents. However, this is subject to being well-known by the public. Since most of the projects can be defined as less profitable, they cannot undertake a program aimed at greater social responsibility due to the lack of their resources, but there are ideas and ambitions for this. The heritage house museum regularly recycles its income so that it can implement new programs. As an example, the owner mentioned that part of the income from the New Year's Eve ball they organized was donated among the locals and from the other part a band was invited to the yard of the heritage house museum where anyone could participate free of charge. The contents of the donation box displayed at the concert were offered to a home.



Another example worth mentioning is that of Gáborján, where since the start of the public works project, nearly 70 percent of the participants have already been working in the main labor market. The settlement continuously monitors the project, so it is known that there are currently about 50 people working in the public works project in the settlement, but the mayor sees that this type of employment will "eliminate itself", as it gives everyone a chance to step further, and the settlement can provide all the conditions for this. In this case, social responsibility means serving the needs of the local residents, which makes them more self-conscious, prouder and more skilled workers.

Czene and Ricz (2010) mention the importance of several segments in connection with a culture-based economic development model. Below, I summarize how my six interviewees feel about each point (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Effects of the six presented good practices (author's edition)

Az alábbiakban felsorolt helyi gazdaságfejlesztéssel járó hasznok közül, melyeket érzékeli az Önök esetében (Czene és Ricz, 2010)?
(több is megjelölhető)*

Erősíti a helyi identitást és a lokálpatriotizmust	 6-0 
Együttműködést generál a helyi szereplők között	 6-0 
Mozgósítja a helyi közösséget, bővíti a helyi együttműködési hálót	 6-0 
A helyi erőforrások fenntartható használatához vezet	 6-0 
Területfejlesztési és vidékfejlesztési haszonnal jár	 6-0 
Munkahelymegőrző- és teremtő szerepe van	 2-4 
Helyi vállalkozói tevékenységet generál	 1-5 
Növeli a település népességmegtartó erejét	 2-4 
Javítja a település élhetőségét	 3-3 

*  =IGEN  =NEM

All the respondents agreed that the implemented projects strengthen local identity and local patriotism, generate cooperation between local actors, mobilize the local community and expand the network of cooperation, contribute to the sustainable use of local resources and they bring about regional and rural development. It can be stated partly true that new jobs will be created as a result of the initiatives or would generate entrepreneurial activity. Whether the ability of the settlement ability to retain population and its livability changed as a result of the initiative was a dividing question. However, there was not a single sustainability element that was excluded by all the respondents. As every project manager or employee recognized, operating the projects without the support of the society cannot last long, so only based on that can we gain greater economic benefit on the basis of cultural value. With this statement, our fourth statement was refuted.

Summary

Summarizing the results of the four statements and the answers to the research questions, it can be stated that initiatives coming from within, achieving and deepening settlement embeddedness, social responsibility and networking are all extremely important sustainability factors. Each of the six presented examples tries to put as much emphasis as possible on all these areas. The first three statements were confirmed, the fourth was refuted. Thus, it can be said that initiatives coming from the inside, employment of local people, becoming a part of the settlement and building and maintaining relationships characterize the six presented best good practices. Strengthening the sense of identity of the locals is present in the projects with differing degrees, but the answers of a research repeated in a few years might refute this, considering that the older

the project is, the more it becomes part of the public consciousness and famous, and its embeddedness in the settlement develops greatly, and the locals are also proud of it.

In our study, we were able to get some ideas of the emergence of culture-based economic development initiatives, their impact on settlement identity, and their cooperation background. Furthermore, through the examined initiatives we were able to learn about the resources that such initiatives can mobilize. Initiatives coming from inside, a program taking notice of the needs of the local population, embeddedness in settlements, networking and social responsibility are all aspects that must be taken into account when we start economic development activities based on local cultural values. Based on the statements of our six interviewees, we also need to consider values such as dedication, patience, the desire to act, cooperation with the locals and the economic approach, but in addition to all this, learning about the social and cultural background is also essential. The cases discovered and presented in this study have a positive general outcome, but we should be aware that there are, so to speak, critical counter-examples, the reasons for which could be analyzed in another study.

Bibliography:

- Bathelt, Hans, Malmberg, Annika, és Maskell, Peter (2004): Clusters and knowledge: local buzz, global pipelines and the process of knowledge creation. *Progress in Human Geography* 28. 31-56. pp.
- Bugovics Zoltán (2007): Társadalmi értékek és identitás kialakulása. [The emergence of social values and identity.] Széchenyi István Egyetem. Elérhető: <https://kgk.sze.hu/images/dokumentumok/kautzkiadvany2011/ujkormanyzas/BugovicsZ.pdf>
- Czene Zsolt és Ricz Judit (2010): Helyi gazdaságfejlesztés Ötletadó megoldások, jó gyakorlatok. [Local economic development. Imaginative solutions, best practices.] Területfejlesztési füzetek 2. Budapest, VÁTI Magyar Regionális Fejlesztési és Urbanisztikai Nonprofit Kft.
- Csath Magdolna (2018): A kultúra, mint társadalmi tőke és versenyképességi tényező. [Culture as social capital and competitiveness factor] In: SZÍN Közösségi Művelődés. A Nemzeti Művelődési Intézet folyóirata. Kulturális gazdaságfejlesztés. 23/3. 4-9.pp.
- Csorba György (2017): Magyarországi világörökségi helyszínek. [World heritage sites in Hungary] Infojegyzet, 2017/77. Elérhető: http://www.varosrehabilitacio.net/new/pdf/kreativ_gazdasag.pdf
- Hungarikumok Gyűjteménye – Magyar Értéktár honlap. [Collection of Hungarikums-Collection of Hungarian Values homepage] Elérhető: <http://www.hungarikum.hu/hu/szakkategoria>
- Munjery, Dawson (2004): Tangible and Intangible Heritage: from difference to convergence. In: Museum International. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford. Vol. 56, no. 1-2, 12-20. Elérhető: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000135853>
- Porter, Michael (2000): Location, competition and economic development: local clusters in a global economy. *Economic Development Quarterly*, Vol. 14., 1.
- Scott, Allen. J. (1997): The cultural economy of cities. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. Volume 21. Number 2. 323-339.pp.
- Szellemi Kulturális Örökség Magyarországon honlap. [Intellectual Cultural Heritage in Hungary website.] Elérhető: <http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/?menu=fooldal>

- Vaskor István (2014): Változatos programokat kínál a Pannonhalmi Bencés Főapátság. [The Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalmi offers a variety of programs.] In: Szalay-Zala Andrea és Vaskor István (2014) (szerk.): Nemzeti kincseink, a Hungarikumok. Vidékjáró hungarikumai és nemzeti értékei. 27. pp.
- Viant Katalin (2013): Hazai tájakon a Pannonhalmi Főapátságban. [Homeland in the Pannonhalmi Archabbey] In: Vaskor István és Szalay-Zala Andrea (2013) (szerk.): Vidéki Élményportya. Tájak, ízek, kultúrák. 25. pp.