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**The Creative Economy as a Driver
of Rural Development: A Case Study
of Szigetköz in the Hungarian-Slovak Border Region
in North-Western Hungary**

Abstract

Kevin Stolarick and Richard Florida (2006) argued that an agglomeration of those whose occupation is creative (or has a creative component) is responsible for regional innovation, using interaction and spillovers. Following this line of thought, this paper deals with the problem of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in the Hungarian-Slovak cross-border area of Szigetköz, located in north-western Hungary. In a strict sense, the aim is to explore the strengths and untapped potential of the region's CCIs. The research methods adopted include statistical data analysis based on individual enterprises and firms and in-depth interviews (N=30). The study describes the micro-level CCI sector for the period 2015–2020, where the number of enterprises is steadily decreasing and the number of self-employed is steadily increasing. However, most of the activities of the sector are less visible (and therefore less accessible) to the wider public. It also highlights the problems and gaps in the creative economy in the Szigetköz region, falling into four main categories: localisation of the creative economy, the 'meeting points' of

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supply and demand, cooperation and communication, and the operational and management issues of the creative economy.

Keywords: creative class, creative economy, cultural and creative industry, rural area, Szigetköz, Hungary

Introduction

In the 21st century, cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are recognised worldwide as one of the most promising sectors of the economy, offering great potential, contributing to local and regional prosperity and job creation, and accounting for almost 3% of the world economy. Beyond economic benefits, CCIs promote sustainable development, creativity, and culture (Klein, Gutowski, Gerlitz & Gutowska, 2021). The exploration of this research problem is justified by statistics indicating that CCIs are concentrated in metropolitan areas. With some intelligence and willpower, creative industries in rural areas could be developed as part of economic regeneration (O'Connor, 2010), since they are often considered an essential engine of innovation, not only in creative sectors but, more importantly, also in the general economy (Wijngaarden, Bhansing & Hitters, 2021). Many of today's innovations are presumed to be generated by a dense network of creative individuals, and such an agglomeration of those whose occupation is creative (or has a creative component) is responsible for regional innovation (Storalick & Florida, 2006).

This study examines the CCIs in Szigetköz, a small rural area in one of the most economically prosperous parts of Hungary, a region with unique natural resources and wetlands closely linked to two of the three pillars of the new economy: the information economy, the creative economy and the cultural economy (Baji, 2014). This area was found to be the most relevant to test the idea of whether CCI-based development strategies – originally applied to urban spaces – could also be effective in rural areas. The relative economic stability, the proximity of prosperous towns, and the attractiveness among Hungarian inhabitants made this area a perfect subject for the study. The following question reflects the research topic examined in the study: What are the strengths and untapped potential of CCIs in the 35 towns of the Szigetköz region in Hungary? The study aimed to investigate the creative capital and creative economy on a micro-level (municipal,

urban) because, as Kovács, Egedy & Szabó (2011), Kereszneyi & Egedy (2016) and Szara (2019) found, research on creative capital is relatively sparse. It is hence crucial to shed light on this research problem in rural areas. Stasiulis (2017, p. 225) found that “those from Central and Eastern Europe are slow to give up romantic notions and isolationist habits. This state of affairs inhibits successful development because communication-based creativity adapts much better in the context of a fast-changing and fragmented market with constant innovation. Researchers generally recommend switching to market-based approaches, collaboration among different sectors of creativity and towards modes of creativity both attractive to the public and useful to developing creativity-based economies”. It also raises the question – if untapped potential can be identified, whether market-based approaches and collaboration could work in Szigetköz, and if yes, which would be the most appropriate way?

The novelty of this study’s results lies primarily in several national and regional research projects having been published on the matter (Kereszneyi & Egedy, 2016), such as the work of Egedy (2021), who elaborated upon the urban geography of the creative economy through the example of Budapest as an agglomeration. The present study is an important step in this direction as it presents the local specificities of the creative class in the context of Szigetköz in Western Hungary.

The results of this research could contribute to the long-term improvement of the region’s economic situation by attracting creative labour. It will also contribute to informing and inspiring the leaders of Szigetköz municipalities to draw ideas from good practices for developing their rural areas in the current economic crisis caused by the pandemic. Thus, CCIs, the high value-added, labour-intensive sector with a long tradition, are a breakout point for Hungary (Design Terminal, 2016).

Literature Review: Developmental Opportunities for Cultural and Creative Industries

Hall (1998) reveals that most CCIs are concentrated in large cities. Already, at the turn of the millennium, 26% of the UK cultural industry’s workforce was concentrated in London (Pratt, 1997b), while in the US, 50% was located in major metropolitan areas (Scott, 2000). Scott (2010) as well as

Miszlivetz & Márkus (2013) argue that the changes generated by the CCIs are most visible in metropolises of the modern world. However, there is a similar trend concerning cities at lower levels of the urban hierarchy, such as the smaller craft and cultural centres in modern Italy (Cuccia & Santagata, 2002; Mizzau & Montanari, 2008; Scott, 2010). The positive case studies on creative cities refer primarily to large cities and their metropolitan regions (Ságvári-Dessewffy, 2006; Scott, 2000), where the share of the creative economy in the overall economy has doubled, serving as a model for smaller cities. Today, both smaller and larger cities use culture and creativity as a 'magic recipe' to remain competitive in the global market (Blessi et al., 2012). Egedy et al. (2014) argue that developing a creative and cultural economy is not a question of economic development; less economically developed cities can also choose this development path. Whether a city sees culture as a tool for development and how it uses it depends on several factors such as the current city leadership, good examples, municipality characteristics, opportunities available, etc. The KRAFT concept (Miszlivetz & Márkus, 2013) supports the theory; it defines three factors – the potential of creativity and innovation, social and relational capital, and sustainability potential, indicating the potential for development, regardless of the size of the settlement. However, since the 1980s, creativity and culture have been in the spotlight, and cities have been continuously implementing different development strategies therefor. Grodach & Loukaitou (2007) have systematised the CCI development strategies applied in Europe and the United States in recent decades (Table I), which we believe could apply to the Szigetköz, considering local circumstances.

Based on this, three main strategic directions are distinguished. The entrepreneurial strategy aims to enhance the city's image, achieving economic growth through tourism, and stimulating private-sector investment. Accordingly, the main target groups are tourists and wealthy residents. The strategy is based on promoting special flagship events and activities appropriately.

The strategy of attracting the creative class is based on Florida's (2002) premise that if new residents/employees are attracted to the city's creative economy and the number of quality-of-life services increases, the city will experience economic growth. This can be achieved by creating arts and entertainment districts and encouraging collaboration between the arts and the private sector. Thus, the target group for this strategic direction

Table I. Creative and cultural development strategies

Types of Strategies	Goals	Types of Cultural Projects and Programs	Geographical Focus	Target Audience
Entrepreneurial Strategies	Economic growth through tourism, city image Catalyse private sector investments	Flagship cultural projects Spectacular events Promotional activities	Downtown, areas 'Prime City'	Tourists and conventioners Affluent residents and suburbanites
Creative Class Strategies	Economic growth through quality-of-life amenities Attract new residents/employees in the 'creative economy'	Arts and entertainment districts Collaboration between arts and private sectors	Central city and historic urban neighbourhoods	Existing and prospective residents Young urban professionals and 'knowledge-based' workers
Progressive Strategies	Community development Arts education and access Local cultural production	Community arts centers Arts education programs	Inner-city neighbourhoods Underserved neighbourhoods	Underserved residential populations

Source: Grodach-Loukaitou (2007, p. 37).

comprises current and future residents, young urban professionals, and knowledge industry workers. In these cases, the geographical focus of development will be the city centre and the historic districts.

The progressive cultural strategy targets the underserved local population through local community development, promotion of local cultural production, and arts education. However, besides the city centre, the focus here is on the less-served neighbourhoods, where creating a community arts centre and developing arts education would bring neighbourhoods closer and thus develop the city (Grodach & Loukaitou, 2007).

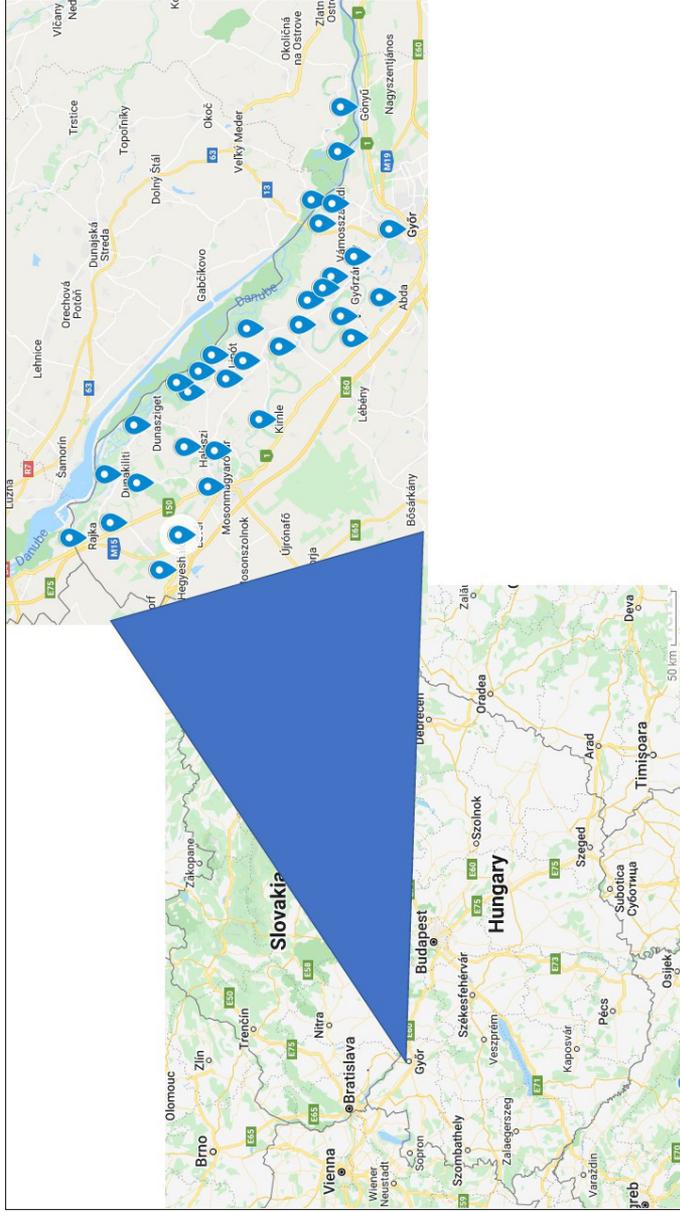
Method and Data

Area of study

Our study focuses on the Szigetköz,¹ a sub-region of the Kisalföld in northwest Hungary. It is located between the Danube (Old Danube, Great Danube) and the Moson Danube in central Kisalföld. The Szigetköz area is divided into lower and upper inter-islands according to natural geographic units, with Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár as the dividing line between Hédervár and Ásványráró (Göcsei, 1979; Szabó, 2005). The Szigetköz is located by the Danube, entering through the Bratislava gate (Map 1), and has one of the most significant groundwater resources in Hungary and even in Europe (Pécsi, 1975; Szabó, 2005). The area is also a border region, which, together with cross-border socio-economic relations, is a priority of regional and socio-geographical research in the Szigetköz and Csallóköz (Hardi, 2008, 2012; Hardi, Hajdú & Mezei, 2009; Hardi, Kupi, Ocskay & Szemerédi, 2021).

¹ Abda, Gönyű, Öttevény, Győrújfalú, Dunaszeg, Kimle, Levél, Ásványráró, Máriakálnok, Dunakiliti, Győrladamér, Dunasziget, Darnózseli, Kunsziget, Hédervár, Bezenye, Nagybajcs, Kisbajcs, Lipót, Dunaszentpál, Püski, Mecsér, Feketeerdő, Károlyháza, Mosonudvar, Kisbodak, Dunaremete and Vének (Map 1).

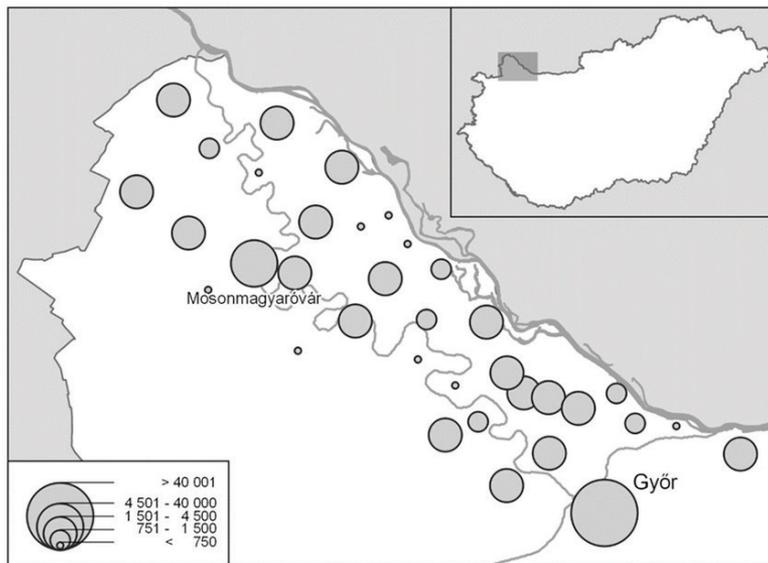
Map 1. Szigetköz, the investigated study area



Source: Edited by the authors.

Though a declining and ageing population typically characterised the Szigetköz municipalities, high population replacement rates offset this trend, representing another creative force for the municipalities (Richards, 2020). Following the millennium, the housing stock in the Lower Szigetköz – located in the Győr area – increased significantly due to agglomeration processes (Fekete, 2022), which have become more pronounced as mainly younger generations of working age have moved out of the cities or moved ‘inwards’ to their workplaces; thus, the population of a municipality has increased significantly (Jóna, Henézi, Döbrentei & Gaál, 2021). The Szigetköz municipalities under study are home to 225,743 permanent residents. The largest of these is, of course, the county capital of Győr, home to 73% of the population. The smallest village is Vének, with 207 permanent residents. It is also exciting and vital to note that 86% of the total population of Szigetköz is concentrated in the two large cities of Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár, with only 14% living in villages (HSO, 2021).

Map 2. The 2 cities and 33 villages surveyed in Szigetköz in Hungary in proportion to the population



Source: Edited by the authors based on Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2020) data.

Methods

The present study uses a mixed-methods approach: besides literature and content analysis, quantitative statistical data analysis was used, supplemented by qualitative in-depth interviews.

The starting point of the research was the defining of creative and cultural industries. This paper's definition of CCIs is similar to that of UNESCO (2020, 2021) and encompasses the following cultural domains: audio-visual and interactive media, literature and press, performing, visual and crafts art, design, creative services, heritage, tourism activities, and gastronomy. The paper is based on the 12 sectors (European Commission, 2018a, 2018b, 2020) recommended by the Platform for Creative Industries (KIP, 2010) and the mapping between creative industries and the Hungarian sectoral classifications (TEÁOR) identified in the Borsi-Viszt (2010) analysis.² For this analysis, we collected data for a total of 36 Hungarian sectoral classification (TEÁOR) codes.

The statistical analyses rely on the database of Dun & Bradstreet Hungary Information Services Ltd. The data were downloaded from the database on October 11, 2021. The analysis examined both business enterprises and sole proprietorships from 2015 to 2020. The data were collected for companies and sole proprietorships operating on the last day of the year, based on the Hungarian sectoral classification (TEÁOR) codes in force and by indicated head office, thus guaranteeing full territorial coverage. In the case of headcount data, the statistical headcount for the year in question and financial data, only the accounts for the entire calendar year were included.

Besides analysing statistical results, obtaining a complex overall picture required qualitative studies. The first steps involved research (content analysis) on social media and fieldwork in the villages of Szigetköz. During the social media research, we carried out observations in Facebook groups with very diverse themes (e.g. local public affairs, give and take, cultural groups, making 32 groups in total), primarily considering two main aspects:

² In the broad interpretation, 99 TEÁOR codes (Borsi-Viszt, 2010, p. 28) (Appendix 1) and in the narrow interpretation, 36 TEÁOR classifications (Borsi-Viszt, 2010, p. 29) (Appendix 2) are included. Time constraints played a crucial role in determining the interpretation. Thus, in delimiting CCIs, we used a narrow interpretation based on Borsi-Viszt (2010, p. 28) (Annex 2).

whether and how the Szigetköz, the inter-island identity, is represented and whether, how and which creative actors are represented. The question of identity was examined with a two-step analysis; first, searching the term “Szigetköz” in comments and the text of posts, then analysing the context. The creative actors were searched by a content analysis of posts and events, using the following search words: name of creative activities and the words “culture” and “creativity”. The identified creative actors were contacted, and potential subjects for in-depth interviews were collected using a snowball method. In parallel, between July and September 2021, we visited many local events and participated in many programmes to map the characteristics of the local creative industries through an observational method. The social media research and fieldwork served as the first foundational step of the empirical research, mostly confirming and complementing the quantitative research results.

To explore the CCI sector of the area as broadly as possible, in-depth interviews were conducted between 1st October 2021 and 1st March 2022 (n=30). The interviews were based on Babbie (2021). The interviewees were selected using a snowball method and interviews were conducted online (Google Meet, Zoom) and face-to-face. No audio recordings of the interviews were made; only written notes were taken. During the meetings, we conducted an unstructured, in-depth interview that tended to be guided, permitting respondent ‘digression’ if it was related to the interview topic. The opening questions of “Where do you live?” and “Where are you from?” and the closing question of “If we were in Szigetköz 25 years later, could you tell us what we would see?” framed the conversation that also covered the issues of creative existence, the creative industry, difficulties, gaps, opportunities, desires and solutions for Szigetköz and the cities of Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár. Table II lists the interviewees and their activities.

Table II. List of interviewees and their activities based on Hungarian sectoral classification

	Interviewees	Activity Based on the Hungarian Sectoral Classification
1	Expert	5819 Other publishing activities
2	Expert	5829 Other software publishing
3	Expert	6020 Television programming and broadcasting activities

Table II. List of interviewees and their activities based on Hungarian sectoral classification

	Interviewees	Activity Based on the Hungarian Sectoral Classification
4	Expert	7111 Architectural and engineering activities
5	Expert	7111 Architectural engineering
6	Expert	7111 Architectural engineering
7	Expert	7111 Architectural engineering
8	Expert	7112 Engineering activities and technical consultancy
9	Expert	7200 Scientific research and development
10	Expert	7200 Scientific research and development
11	Expert	7311 Advertising activities
12	Expert	7311 Advertising activities
13	Expert	7410 Fashion and design
14	Expert	7410 Fashion and design activities
15	Expert	7410 Fashion and design activities
16	Expert	7420 Photography
17	Expert	7420 Photography
18	Expert	9003 Creative art
19	Expert	9004 Operation of arts facilities
20	Expert	9004 Operation of arts facilities
21	Expert	9004 Operation of arts facilities
22	Expert	9231 Creative and performing arts
23	Expert	9231 Creative and performing arts
24	Expert	9231 Creative and performing arts
25	Expert	9499 Other community, social, and personal service activities
26	Expert	9499 Other community, social, and personal service activities
27	Expert	Creative project manager
28	Expert	Municipality major in the research area
29	Expert	Municipality major in the research area
30	Expert	Municipality major in the research area

Source: Edited by the authors.

The identification and selection of local experts was based on previously established statistical analysis, expert opinions, and the results of social media/fieldwork research. When selecting the experts, including representatives from different fields was important.

Results and Discussion

Results of statistical analyses for business enterprises and sole proprietorships

Regarding the main activity registered in the Szigetköz municipalities, the number of companies belonging to the CCIs shows a steadily decreasing trend between 2015 and 2020 in the 35 municipalities as a whole. Considering 2015 as the base year, the number of CCI companies decreased annually (3% in 2016, 6% in 2017, 9% in 2017, 12% in 2020, and finally 15% in 2020).

The main activities of companies registered in the Szigetköz municipalities in 2020 were investigated. We found that out of 28.6% of the municipalities surveyed (Bezenye, Darnozseli, Dunakiliti, Dunaremete, Dunaszentpál, Gönyű, Károlyháza, Kisbodak, Lipót and Rajka), no company was engaged in any CCI-related activity. Companies in the municipalities of Abda, Dunasziget, Feketeerdő, Győrladamér, Halászi, Hegyeshalom, Kisbajcs, Kunsziget, Levél, Máriakálnok, Mosonudvar, Nagybajcs, Püski and Vének carry out Hungarian sectoral classification (TEÁOR) activity related to the CCIs. Two TEÁOR activities exist in the municipalities of Ásványráró, Dunaszeg, Hédervár, and Mecsér, three in the Kimle municipality, four in the Öttevény and Vámoszabadi municipalities, and five in the Győrújfalú and Győrzámoly municipalities. In the two regional centres, CCI companies show a more significant variation in terms of their activities, with thirteen different TEÁOR activities in Mosonmagyaróvár and 20 in Győr in 2020.

Among the Hungarian sectoral classification activities narrowly defined for the CCI sector under study, 20 main activities are carried out by different companies in Szigetköz, in degrees varying from one municipality to another (Appendix 1).

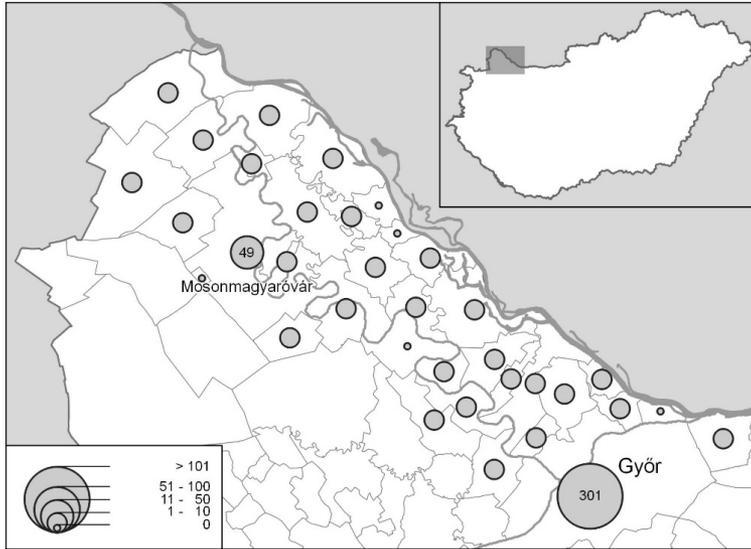
Overall, the number of companies operating in the CCI sector in the Szigetköz municipalities decreased steadily between 2015 and 2020,

with only 42,000 companies operating in 2020. The territorial distribution of these companies is diversified in terms of their main activity only in the two regional centres of Győr (20 TEÁOR) and Mosonmagyaróvár (13 TEÁOR). Moreover, in Győr, due to suburbanisation, creative force is more strongly present in the suburban areas of the city, such as Győrújfalú and Győrzámoly (5 TEÁOR), Öttevény and Vámoszabadi (4 TEÁOR) where various CCI sector-related activities are also carried on. Out of the 36 TEÁOR activities narrowly defined as a CCI sector, 20 are found in the Szigetköz municipalities, while the remaining 16 are not. Of these activities, one-third of the companies offer some kind of market services, while one-quarter are engaged in media and publishing, or artistic activities. Only one-sixth are classified as engaged in scientific research and development. In terms of financial data, considering the available after-tax results for 2015–2020, only one activity achieved an exceptionally high result: other software publishing. Activities in the region with a post-tax result of more than HUF 20 billion include advertising, film, video, and television programme production, and, in 2015, other scientific and technical research and development almost reached this figure. Activities that reached HUF 10 billion after tax are architectural activities, media advertising, film, video, television program production and services, as well as other scientific and technical research and development.

Contrary to identified company trends, the number of self-employed persons is increasing yearly. In tune with Kézai and Rechnitzer, (2023, p. 178), we too hypothesise that this change may be due to the Small Business Activity Tax (KATA) tax regime, which was introduced for sole traders, sole proprietorships, limited partnerships with only individual owners, general partnerships, and law firms. “The ‘hoofed’ entrepreneur does not have to account for their expenses; the requirements for such persons are simple administration (tax returns must be filed once per year) and a fixed monthly amount of tax payable on turnover up to HUF 12 million (side-line: HUF 25,000, full-time: HUF 50,000 and HUF 75,000); additional tax is payable above a certain amount (HUF 3 million) for the same or a related principle”.

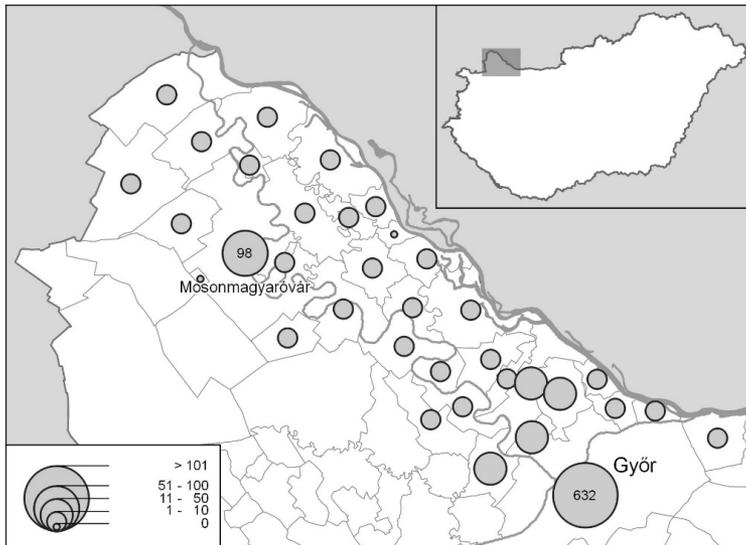
From 2015, the number of self-employed persons in the CCI sector in the Centre of the Island has increased by at least 14.5% year by year, and in 2020 (Map 4), the number of self-employed persons in the CCI sector was more than double (211%) the 2015 figure (Map 3).

Map 3. Number of self-employed persons in CCI in the Szigetköz (2015)



Source: Edited by the authors.

Map 4. Number of self-employed persons in CCI in the Szigetköz (2020)



Source: Edited by the authors.

In 2020, the number of self-employed in the CCI sector reached 882, of which 18.9% were engaged in architectural activities, 17.3% in creative arts, 12.9% in fashion and design, and 12.5% in advertising. In addition, between 5% and 10% were engaged in photography, cultural training, activities ancillary to the performing arts, as well as film, video, and television production.

Considering the performance of sole proprietors, they did not have an aggregate tax liability in 2015–2016 but have been regularly liable since 2017 (38% in 2017 and 2018, 28% in 2019, and 24% in 2020).

Social media and fieldwork findings

Based on the KRAFT concept (Miszlivetz & Márkus, 2013), local “Szigetköz” identity was defined as the possible basis of social and relational capital (one of the three KRAFT factors of development potential) and was the starting point of the social media research. It revealed that the inter-island identity of the Szigetköz as a ‘reference point’ is less present and is associated only with water tourism, e.g. as a location for events or when its characteristics are highlighted. Szigetköz inhabitants also tend to be more attached to their municipality. The content analysis revealed that people living in the two regional centres do not know which municipalities belong to the Szigetköz and what exactly the Szigetköz means. This indicates that if social and relational capital is to be created, creating a local identity or at least a brand for the Szigetköz region is necessary. Field observation findings highlight the importance of cultural events and tourism programmes. These can be divided into three broad categories regarding visitors. Smaller local events attract residents of the municipality concerned. In contrast, the more prestigious fair-type events of a short half-day or one-day duration attract residents of the surrounding municipalities and regional centres. More extended programmes are almost exclusively attended by visitors from further afield. Interestingly, the majority of Győr citizens do not consider the Szigetköz as a tourist destination. The few events and programmes organised and run by the Szigetköz are with the participation of the Szigetköz residents. Consequently, relatively few creative actors have been identified. However, it subsequently became apparent that creative resources would be available in the region (including the two regional centres). Most creative activities are unseen in the Szigetköz;

hence the snowball method yielded the best results. The first phase of the empirical research also confirmed – supported by statistical data – the creative predominance of the two regional centres, especially Győr, on both the demand and supply sides. The main lessons from the first phase of empirical research are presented in Table III.

Table III. Results and lessons learned from social media research and fieldwork

Results of Social Media Research and Fieldwork	Lessons Learned and Directions for Further Steps in Empirical Research
Lack of Szigetköz identity and non-use of „Szigetköz” as a ‘reference point’	A deeper exploration of the ‘meaning’ of the Szigetköz among the respondents
The Szigetköz is ‘invisible’ for citizens of Győr	
The predominance of two regional centres (Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár)	Consideration of the distribution of in-depth interviews and focus group respondents by municipality
Creative activities are less visible	More in-depth examination of the issue of visibility
Under-utilisation of local creative (human) resources	Exploring existing and potential links between creative professionals
Lack of creative clusters and collaborations	

Source: Edited by the authors.

Results of in-depth interviews

The results of the in-depth interviews also confirmed the conclusions of the social media research that identity is only very rarely considered and that the definition of the area – Szigetköz – is very vague in the minds of most inhabitants (mainly Győr residents). The Szigetköz is nothing more than a relatively unspoiled natural landscape dotted with rivers where someone can paddle, but infrastructure is lacking. For some of the interviewees, the Szigetköz is their place of residence, their childhood abode: “*Szigetköz means for me my childhood*” (Expert 15, 16), while others mentioned natural elements and recreational activities: “*Szigetköz is the pearl of Hungary*”

(Expert 24); “Every summer, we spend weekends in Szigetköz paddling with family and friends” (Expert 1) “We used to go for a one-day bike-ride-tour from Győr to the Hédervár Castle” (Expert 27). All these were presented in a favourable context, with no adverse experiences associated with the Szigetköz.

Though all interviewees are involved in creative activities, with few exceptions, they did not classify themselves as creative professionals or consider themselves part of the creative economy. They consider it more a theoretical definition than an actual economic category. On its own, creativity has been understood very narrowly, almost in an artistic or inventive sense. After discussing the definition, they agreed that they belonged to the creative industries and/or solve problems creatively but were not clear about its conceptual framework, nor did they find it necessary to categorise themselves.

Interestingly, in the research on the creative economy in the archipelago, those interviewed who are considered creative do not identify themselves as creatives and have little or no identity as Szigetköz inhabitants. Creatives are those who because of their unique vision can create something special or make the most of a situation. “We solve our problems and challenges creatively and then report on local events on the local TV station (*Our World TV channel*), which has been run by volunteers for 30 years. *Our World TV channel aims to inform people about events in the village*” (Expert 3).

Four main problem areas related to the creative economy and creative class were identified during the in-depth interviews and are presented in Table IV.

Table IV. Problems and gaps identified in the creative and cultural economy of the Szigetköz region

Areas of the Creative Economy	Problems and Gaps
Localisation in the creative economy	Most of the creative activities are not localised
	‘Attractiveness’ for creative professionals in choosing where to live and work is important
	Creatives currently living in Szigetköz (not Győr) move here mainly because of the natural environment or because they are from here, as locals

Table IV. Problems and gaps identified in the creative and cultural economy of the Szigetköz region

Areas of the Creative Economy	Problems and Gaps
Supply and demand in the creative economy	Creative professionals are not discovered by potential clientele
	The demanding customer base is missing
	Lack of a financially strong and demanding client base
	Lack of 'quality' creative professionals
Relations, cooperation, and communication in the creative economy	Numerous creative professionals know each other in Szigetköz, especially within a narrow field
	Cooperation, especially between municipalities, is less common
	Grassroots initiatives have been launched to bring together and support individual entrepreneurs ('We love Szigetköz', 'Szigetközi Szatyor')
	There are municipalities where a creative actor, grouping, or institution can be clearly identified as the driving force behind creative and cultural activities
Operational issues of the creative economy	Scarce financial resources to support creative projects
	Space/location for creative activities (even old, disused buildings)
	Activities of numerous creative actors are 'invisible' to the wider environment
	The majority of creative actors seek to thrive on their own, with fewer clusters and collaborations

Source: Edited by the authors.

That most creative activities are not localised is both an advantage and a disadvantage for the Szigetköz region. If the region is attractive, it can entice creative class members (see Table I: Creative Class Strategies); but they can just as easily relocate themselves. Research shows that the natural environment is currently the main attraction for creatives living in Szigetköz, but there is a significant deficit of essential services and a lack of demand for their services locally or in the surrounding areas. To solve

these problems, creative class strategies (see Table I) could work if the regional municipalities can identify how they could attract and maintain the creative class in the region, whether through encouraging collaboration between creative and other sectors or offering the creative class (cultural, educational, and recreational) services and proper housing.

Related to the previous problem, another significant difficulty for creatives already living here is the lack of demand for their products and services. However, an earlier phase of the research (not part of this study) showed that the potential demand does not find creatives in the area either. A solution could be increasing the level of collaboration and cooperation among sectors, municipalities, and actors (see Table I: Creative Class Strategies). There are grassroots initiatives to foster these collaborations, but not all of them receive the necessary financial and relational support. Unfortunately, personal and historical oppositions also make cooperation between municipalities and other actors more difficult. In some municipalities, there is a clear identification of creative actors who could be the driving force behind creative and cultural activities; so, these municipalities are, by definition, more vital in their creative cultural life. Based on them, progressive strategies driven by community development (see Table I: Progressive Strategies) could also be an option. Besides all these difficulties, there also exist operational issues of the creative economy, such as lack of financial resources, deficiency in space and location for creative activities, and lack of cooperation and visibility of creative actors.

If there is cooperation between the municipalities in the region, an entrepreneurial strategy (Table 1) could be implemented through tourism, which is constantly developing in the region. There are also plans at the governmental level to develop it, but a joint Szigetköz flagship cultural project could be a viable option.

It can be concluded that although all three strategic paths are feasible, the creative class strategy is the most viable for the region to implement on its own, and with external (mainly financial) support, the conditions for implementing the other two strategies are more or less given.

Conclusion

Richard Florida (2002, 2005) visualised the vital role of the creative economy and the creative class as early as 2002, and since then, numerous

studies have demonstrated the importance of the creative class. The recent economic crisis, caused by the coronavirus pandemic, has alerted experts to the importance of the CCIs, one of the most prosperous sectors currently among the worst hit by the crisis. However, this labour-intensive sector with high added value can be a breakthrough for Hungary.

Thus, this study examines the current situation and state of the creative economy in the Szigetköz micro-region, reveals its deficiencies, and thus develops a possible strategic direction for the future. The creative economy is present in the region, and although the number of companies has decreased between 2015 and 2020, the number of creative self-employed has increased. The quantitative and qualitative research confirmed the predominance of the two regional centres of Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár (mainly the former) in the creative sector. While statistical data suggest that the other municipalities are characterised by one or two creative activities, qualitative research has slightly nuanced the overall picture. In some municipalities, creative and cultural life is much more vibrant because these activities are fulfilled in other contexts (hobbies, voluntary work, and associations).

Attracting the creative class to the area is essential for developing the creative economy, and several conditions need to be met. Besides the natural attractions of the landscape – now the main attractive force for the creative class – it could be essential to have work that is financially, mentally, and morally rewarding (with the creation of a link between creative supply and demand). Complex development plans should involve all stakeholders to resolve the problems arising from not meeting the creative economy's demand and supply, the missing relations, cooperation, and communication, and the unsolved operational issues. Positive efforts to solve these problems or the launch of a central development programme can positively impact the entry and return of the creative class. Bringing the supply and demand sides of the creative economy closer together would require a revitalisation of communication channels between actors and a strong 'Szigetköz' brand or, at least, meaningful use of the word so that it does not merely mean the Danube's backwaters and floodplains to a wider audience. Once appropriate communication and networks have been established and close cooperation has been forged, it will be necessary to consider in depth and resolve the operational issues of the creative economy.

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Appendix 1

CCI TEÁOR codes	CCI main groups	Businesses location in Szigetköz in 2020			
		Győr	Gyórladamér	Győrújfalú	Hédervár
5811 Book publishing	Media and Publishing	Győr	Gyórladamér	Győrújfalú	Hédervár
5814 Publishing of periodicals and periodical publications		Feketeerdő	Győr	Mosonmagyaróvár	
5819 Other publishing activities		Győr	Kimle	Mosonmagyaróvár	
5829 Other software publishing		Győr			
5911 Motion picture, video, and television programme production activities		Győr			
5912 Motion picture, video, and television programme production	Artistic activities	Dunaszeg	Győr	Győrzámoly	Mosonmagyaróvár
5913 Film-Video and television programming		Győr	Győrzámoly	Mosonmagyaróvár	
6010 Radio broadcasting		Győr	Győrújfalú		
6020 Television programming and broadcasting activities		Győr	Öttevény	Vámosszabadi	
7111 Architectural engineering		Győr	Győrújfalú	Mosonmagyaróvár	

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CCI TEÁOR codes	CCI main groups	Businesses location in Szigetköz in 2020			
7211 Biotechnological research and development	Market services	Ásványráró	Győr	Mosonmagyaróvár	Levél
7219 Other scientific and technical research and development		Abda	Győr	Győrzámoly	Mosonmagyaróvár
7220 Social sciences, humanities research and development		Győr			
7311 Advertising activities		Győr			
7312 Media release		Dunaszeg	Győr	Győrzámoly	Kimle
7410 Design		Ásványráró	Dunasziget	Győr	Győrújfalú
7420 Photography		Győr			
8552 Cultural education		Scientific research, development	Győr	Kimle	Mosonmagyaróvár
9002 Activities complementary to performing arts	Győr		Győrújfalú	Hédervár	Mecsér
9003 Creative Art	Győr		Mecsér		

Source: Own compilations.

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Öttevény					
Vámosszabadi					
Kisbajcs	Mosonmagyaróvár	Öttevény			
Győrzámoly	Halászi	Hegyeshalom	Kunsziget	Máriakálnok	Mosonmagyaróvár
Mosonmagyaróvár	Mosonudvar	Nagybajcs	Öttevény	Püski	Vámosszabadi

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