The Role of Local Nonprofit Organizations in the European Capitals of Culture Project

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The paper has been initiated by two facts: Professionalization in the nonprofit sector and the growing involvement of nonprofit organizations in community projects. The phenomenon of professionalization in the nonprofit sector gives the theoretical background of the paper. The growing demands for better quality services and complex strategies, and other circumstances such as competition from business sector and other nonprofits force these organizations to focus better than earlier on professionalism and quality in services, which makes a conscious knowledge management necessary (McHargue 2003).

The paper studies primarily public-serving organizations (Salamon-Anheier 1992) taking part in the European Capital of Culture Project in Pécs (Hungary).

In the framework of the European Capital of Culture Projects the local government is inviting applications of civil and nonprofit organizations with the aim to support their initiatives which are connected to the European Capital of Culture Project. The aim is to support those programs through financial funds which were initiated by and take place with an active participation of the local community, with the participation of local citizens, and so they contribute to the improvement of local identity and to shaping the community. This project is open for nonprofit organizations which have been residing in the city of Pécs for at least one year: foundations or associations. The applications have to fulfill rigorous requirements such as ensuring the complete communication of and about the accepted and supported projects towards the target groups. The projects offered in the applications have to fit the idea of the Borderless City.

The paper examines the grant applications of local NGOs submitted to the local government with proposals to participate in the ECoC project. It analyses what kind of applications were submitted, which ones were accepted, how they can shape the cultural palette of the city. It is going to be analyzed what they offer, which kinds of proposals have won grants to do it, with major focus on projects which are linked to knowledge transfer possibilities between these organizations and the target group.

The paper examines the categories, the profiles of the more than 200 organizations, which applied for grants. Applications include a broad variety of services. Most of the applications are targeted towards everybody, some aim at special groups. The services offered in the applications include arts, social sciences, humanities, city wide programs, programs for local visitors, and programs for tourists.

Central issue of the paper will be to examine what kind of knowledge these organizations provide and what knowledge transfer channels they use during the project execution, and to see to which extent these findings support the general tendency of professionalization of NPOs.

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