

Sharing Heritage Restoration Expertise: The UNESCO Creative Cities Network as Opportunity of Creative Development for Kuldīga, Latvia

Pilar Fernández, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany

Kristina Rovnenko, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany

Abstract

Kuldīga's old town preserves its built environment thanks to the continuous restoration of its historic buildings. Such commission has required the application of a specific knowledge experientially transferred among generations. Ensuring the existence and transmission of this expertise to new apprentices, major participation of local citizens by diversifying the preservation activities and finding stable economic sources presents difficulties. The on-site observation of the city's built heritage, the access to inventories and the review of the main activities implemented by the Restoration Centre have been key to understanding these deficiencies and rethinking the development of Kuldīga through its creative potential. An important finding is that the expertise derived from a repeated reproduction of artisanal techniques on the field of restoration, can be a unifying factor in the development of Kuldīga, and that the flexible nature of the experiential creative practices allows for greater experimentation towards unexplored areas. In the light of the current actions successfully undertaken by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network's participant members, the eventual incorporation of Kuldīga to this network may enable collaboration and visibility at the international level, and linking its craft expertise to areas such as creative tourism, innovation through research and first-hand education activities.

Keywords

Heritage; Restoration; Experiential Knowledge; Kuldīga; UNESCO Creative Cities

The present paper explores the case of Kuldīga's old town as a noteworthy example in preservation matters and on the potential of its craft expertise associated to restoration practices as an opportunity of associative development for the city, as part of the solution to the present challenges.

Kuldīga, a city located on the arrays of the Venta river in Latvia, retains an untouched town scenery which displays a series of traditional techniques developed through centuries on the building's roofs, doors, windows, furniture and small-medium scale objects; an aspect that has shaped its character giving it a unique degree of authenticity preserved over the last 300 years. Recrafting buildings with artisanal accents has been one of the paramount tasks undertaken by the city authorities during recent years, a work that has required a very specific know-how in treating the wood and developing intellectual and manual processes in order to keep the uniqueness of the site.

Its preservation has been mainly materialized thanks to the work conducted by the Kuldīga Restoration Centre, the institution that has carried out various restoration actions and awareness

raising programmes targeting the old town's residents. However, despite the truth that the implementation of these activities has brought advancements in conservation issues, education and participation of local population in understanding the cultural value of the city's built heritage; is still necessary to expand collaborative alliances towards new audiences and ensuring the economic resources to give continuity to the preservation's practices.

Therefore, this paper aims to develop a deeper understanding of the artistry expertise required to conduct restoration works in many built examples of Kuldīga, and to explore the associativity with similar crafts cities in order to use the creative potential of these processes as a collaborative means of advance for the city's creative sector. Additionally, to review and propose coherent partnership as part of the solution to current problems faced by the Restoration Centre.

The Experiential Knowledge in Context of Built Heritage

Several experts have developed numerous approaches to the meaning of the term "experiential knowledge" over time. Although these definitions derive from authors involved in distinct disciplines, there has been consensus in affirming that knowledge of this kind emerges mainly from "things recalled from experiences, things tacitly or implicitly learned or acquired" (Storkerson, 2009), and that given the relationship between individual and experience, not always can be accurately communicated to others.

Another significant aspect in its definition is its intuitive nature, specifically since most times "[...] we arrive at knowing in such a way that consciousness is informed of what is known without witnessing or knowing how it was arrived at" (Storkerson, 2009), being a feature that does not allow to classify it as formal knowledge. In consequence, a great resistance has been demonstrated in linking experiential knowledge with research in many disciplines.

However, despite these characteristics seeming to be at odds with the rigorous methods generally applied in the research area, "[...] many researchers in art and design and related fields perceive experiential knowledge or tacit knowledge as an integral part of their practice" (Niedderer and Reilly, 2010), which links the experiential knowledge to the creative sector and suggests a degree of complementarity.

An example of the relationship between experiential knowledge and creativity are the artisanal processes applied in the generation of uncommon products, accepting as principle that "craftsmanship involves the skilled working with the hands to create something of use for a purpose where the skills require training and usually continuous practice" (Klamer, 2012). On this aspect, Sennett (Sennett, 2018) stresses the importance of training to develop a skill, due to "[...] the more people train and practice in developing a skill, the more practical minded they will become, focusing on the possible and the particular" (p. 46), highlighting the practical sense of any craft.

According to Duffy (2011) in the context of built heritage, the meaning of artisanship "[...] can be extended to the remaking of things" (p. 234). This fact demands directing the attention on the same piece or building several times, particularly considering that "[...] the notion of craft becomes paramount in any discussion of character, particularly in the context of pre-industrial building types" (p. 233).

Nowadays, the practice of re-crafting and restoring the built heritage is indeed a very common exercise, especially in sites of abundant historic urban value such as picturesque areas, architectural ensembles with focus on crafts or historic towns, among others; places that require retaining specific physical attributes and relevant historical layers as part of their seal of authenticity. This is the case of the city of Kuldīga, Latvia.

The Kuldīga's old town presents more than 400 wooden living houses built between the 17th – 19th centuries and developed in a modest geometry erected in accordance to epochal materials and technologies. Most of these dwellings, where local residents have been living for generations, are also the product of a particular artisanal skill acquired by repetition over time, a fact that was

fundamental in achieving an incomparable built environment. This expertise is distinguishable on the roofs, facades, doors, windows, ornaments and even furniture, characteristics that gave a formal unity to the town and endowing it with a unique value.

Latvian Heritage: The Case of the Old Town of Kuldīga

Kuldīga was the former centre of Cours, Bandava, until the formation of a new settlement around the 9th century, and invaded by the Germans years later. It was mentioned for the very first time in official documents in 1242, and from 1596 to 1616 served as the capital of the Duchy of Courland (Municipality of Kuldīga n.d.). The urban fabric includes buildings of various centuries harmoniously blended in the wind-streets of the town. Due to a charming atmosphere of the past and the Venta River, Kuldīga is often called the “North Venice” (Jākobsone, 2010).

Over time, the inhabitants of the city have developed a very strong sense of belonging towards the values of Kuldīga's old town, constituted by a unique cultural landscape where it is possible to observe tangible remains of previous peoples' actions, particularly, the exceptional artisan handwork. This important work facilitated obtaining the European Heritage Label in 2008, because of the preservation of its singularity.

Jākobsone (2010) has also specified that result of applied local surveys have shown the relevance of continuing with the implementation of education activities to renovate and improve the cultural heritage environment, following the core principles, techniques, methods and materials demanded by the historical building preservation field.

Kuldīga and its Unique Environment of Wooden Buildings and Craftworks

Until the present day, the urban-planning structure of Kuldīga has preserved features of an ancient town with a large number of long-standing buildings, art objects and unique products of local artisans.

Following to Jākobsone (2010) the urban and architectural characteristics of Kuldīga underwent several changes over the centuries. The old site plans and pictures of the city show that initially the vast majority of structures were wooden. One of the main constructional features of the buildings was double-pitched roofs made of straw and shingle. Later, fire safety considerations came to the fore due to an increase in site development density, and as an intention to reduce the possibility of fires, tile roof construction was started, a circumstance that has given the city a distinctive atmosphere to this day.

In the 19th century, single-story wooden houses remained the dominant type of dwellings, whereas, in contrast, one-and-a-half story buildings and two-story ones were less common. Afterwards two- and three-story masonry houses came into ascendance, creating a clear outline of the perimeter of the streets (pp. 41-50).

The Tentative List report submitted in 2011 indicated that the singularity of this area in comparison to other areas of the world, such as the Scandinavian states, is the result of “[...] its authentic town environment of the 13th century, as well as the character of cultural landscape from first half of the 20th century”. The report also defined the old town of Kuldīga as a mixture of “[...] wooden building manners of the North-Eastern costal (sic) regions of the Baltic Sea, but also masonry building manners, details and authenticity in general, that is not preserved in equal value of concentration, compactness and harmony elsewhere” (Latvian National Commission for UNESCO 2011).

Buildings, architectural elements, and small-medium scale objects like furniture produced during the 17th-18th-19th centuries conform Kuldīga's wood heritage. In relation to Kuldīga historic centre's architectural values, Jākobsone (2010) has established that some of them have been recognized as not alterable in order to preserve the original image of the city; for instance, the medieval town planning's configuration, small streets and backyards, the red clay tile roof landscape and the details of civil buildings and churches. These details are based on carpentry such as doors and ventilation panes above them, woodcuts, windows, jagged ledges; and hammered work in vanes and gates (p. 19).



Fig 1. Photo collage showing different examples of Kuldīga's wooden heritage made by the authors. (Photos: Kuldīga: Architecture and Urbanism, 2013).

From Buildings to Small-Medium Scale Objects

As already mentioned above, Kuldīga has a great number of wooden structures and elements. This collection is represented by buildings, entrance doors, transom windows, pieces of furniture and small-medium scale items. For instance, the St. Catherine's Lutheran Church, built in the 17th century, is the oldest monument of sacred architecture in the town. Wooden structural elements of the building and a collection of objects such as an organ, an iconostasis and a pulpit are of particular importance. Additionally, elements of dwellings are no less valuable. Ornamentation of transom windows, which was created individually for each house, serves as a proof of local artisans' craftsmanship. Therefore, many of the buildings belong to the group of objects with a national significance; some of them represent examples of properly implemented restoration; others testify mastery of Kuldīga's artisans.

For a better understanding of wooden built heritage stock, it has been divided into two large groups according to its main function and use: religious buildings and civil ones.

Ecclesiastic buildings always stand out among other structures in cities for the reason of their spiritual significance as well as a unique architectural appearance peculiar only to this type of structures. Jākobsone (2010) states that churches of Kuldīga, represented by a diverse range of styles, are considered jewels of built heritage. Not only the buildings themselves, but also artful items in the interiors testify to the skills of local inhabitants and active community involvement (p. 234).

Residential houses represent the most common types of buildings in the town. Recent research provides evident data on the origin of wooden architectural elements relatively well preserved over the centuries. Gained through the study, knowledge of artisans' talent and applied techniques contributes a proper restoration of the buildings in order to preserve the atmosphere of an ancient town, especially in its historical centre.

A list of properties and objects, which fully displays the scale and sizes of the Kuldīga's wooden heritage repertory, is attached below (see Table.1):

Buildings	Building Ornaments	Furniture	Objects
There is a great number of wooden buildings being symbols of different eras in the town. Their value is determined by the presence of authentic structural elements and materials, as well as properly implemented restoration work reflecting features of the former settings. Some constructional details and junctions represent unique methods developed by artisans of that time (Jākobsone, 2010).	Many entrance doors and windows of ecclesiastical and residential buildings in Kuldīga are decorated with different ornaments mostly following geometrical and scrollwork patterns. Some facades are decorated with casings, and wooden frames of windows have artistic fittings in the corners. Transom windows with muntins often have their own decor created by craftsmen of local workshops.	Wood furniture of the ecclesiastical buildings is of particular artistic value demonstrating harmonious composition of the elements, detailed carving and peculiarity of forms. Some items are made and restored by renowned carpenters.	Sculptures, located in the churches of Kuldīga, are great examples of applied art made by skilled professionals. Some of them stand separately; others are parts of the interior elements. In both ways, elaborate ornamentation and proportions of the forms catch visitors' interest.
1 storey wooden residential building Address: 1905. gada iela 12 Date: 19 th century Significance: National significance	Entrance door A Address: 1905. gada iela 14 Date: No date (n.d.)	Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church: 1. <i>Central altar;</i> 2. <i>Pulpit;</i> 3. <i>Organ loft;</i> 4. <i>Confessional booth;</i> 5. <i>Chest of drawers;</i> 6. <i>Chest for baptismal font.</i> Address: Raiņa iela 6A Date: 17 th – 18 th century	Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church: 1. <i>Easter Christ.</i> Address: Raiņa iela 6A Date: 17 th – 18 th century
1.5 storey wooden commercial and office building (old town hall) Address: Baznīcas iela 5 Date: 19 th century Significance: National significance. Status: Restored	Entrance door B Address: Baznīcas iela 1 Date: No date (n.d.)	St. Anne's Lutheran Church: 1. <i>Altar;</i> 2. <i>Pulpit.</i> Address: Dzirnāvu iela (Mills Street) 12 Date: 19 th – 20 th century	St. Catherine's Lutheran Church: 1. <i>Figure supporting the pulpit.</i> Address: Baznīcas iela 31/33 Date: 17 th – 19 th century
1 storey wooden residential building Address: Baznīcas iela 7 Date: 19 th – 20 th century Significance: Regional and/or Local	Transom window A Address: Baznīcas iela 7 Date: 19 th – 20 th century	St. Catherine's Lutheran Church: 1. <i>Altar;</i> 2. <i>Pulpit;</i> 3. <i>Organ.</i> Address: Baznīcas iela 31/33 Date: 17 th – 19 th century	

2 storey wooden residential building (Duke's pharmacy, now a dwelling house) Address: Baznīcas iela 10 Date: Early 18 th century Significance: National significance Status: Restored	Entrance door C Transom window B Address: Baznīcas iela 17 Date: 18 th – 19 th century	The Orthodox Church of Intercession of Our Most Holy Lady: <i>1. Iconostasis</i> Address: Smilšu iela 14 Date: 19 th century	
1 storey mixed construction residential building Address: Baznīcas iela 17 Date: 18 th -19 th century Status: Restored	Entrance door D Address: Kalna iela 13 Date: Late 18 th century	Chest-like wardrobe Address: Baznīcas iela 17 Date: 18 th -19 th century	
1 storey masonry and wood commercial and residential building Address: Jelgavas iela 1 Date: 19 th century Significance: National significance	Entrance door E Address: Skolas iela (School Street) 2 Date: 19 th – 20 th century		
1 storey wooden residential building Address: Kalna iela 13 Date: Late 18 th century Significance: National significance	Entrance door F Address: Skrundas iela 12 Date: 19 th century		
1 storey wooden residential building with a wind porch Address: Kalna iela 14 Date: 19 th century Significance: National significance	Transom windows C Address: Smilšu iela 23 Date: 19 th century		
1 storey wooden residential building Address: Kalna iela 15 Date: Late 18 th century Significance: National significance	Entrance door G Address: Corner of Pasta iela - Jelgavas iela Date: 19 th century		

1 storey wooden residential building Address: Liepājas iela 17 Date: 19 th century Significance: National significance	Transom windows D Address: Ventspils iela 37 Date: 19 th century		
1 storey wooden kiosks (Dairy and Tourism Pavilion) Address: Pils iela 4a Date: 20 th century Significance: Regional and/or Local			
2 storey mixed material residential building (villa) – Museum Address: Pils iela 5 Date: Late 19 th century Significance: Regional and/or Local			

Table 1 List of Kuldīga's wooden heritage repertory made by the authors. (Source: Kuldīga: Architecture and Urbanism, 2013).

The Kuldīga Restoration Centre as Vector of Preservation

In Kuldīga one of the most active organizations in conserving the artisanal and architectural features of the city's built heritage has been the Restoration Centre, the institution that has stimulated the association between different stakeholders and the community by implementing various initiatives. As recognition of this labor, "the Kuldīga Restoration Centre has been awarded the European Union cultural heritage award 'Europa Nostra' for researchers and restorers work with residents in furthering understanding of cultural heritage issues" (Krastiņš, 2013), a distinction that not only highlights its practical vocation but also its socializing role.

International Restoration Workshops

The International restoration workshops consist of a sequence of practical sessions organized and implemented mostly by the Kuldīga Restoration Centre aiming at professionals from the creative field concerned.

The strategic goals of these international meetings are improving the wooden houses' condition by applying practical works and offering seminars to spread the awareness of preservation of wooden architecture and traditional crafts techniques internationally. In addition, these workshops are a didactic attempt oriented particularly to young professionals, offering them educational classes where the knowledge is shared emphasizing the importance of traditional crafts in the progression of the tourism industry and the relevance of undertaking sustainable development maintaining the authenticity of cultural assets for future generations.



Fig 2. International summer workshop of restoration in Kuldīga, 2010 and 2017 respectively. (Photos: Ilze Zarina, Head of Kuldīga Restoration Centre)

Preservation Activities Complex of Kuldīga Old Town

Conforming to information provided by the Head of the Kuldīga Restoration Centre, since 2008 the centre has been performing the project “Preservation activities complex of Kuldīga old town”. The project, which aims to improve the attitude of the community in understanding the values of Kuldīga’s built heritage, and “to preserve traditional and rare craft skills and knowledge that are in danger and disappearing [...]” (Kuldiga Restoration Centre, 2018) has brought several benefits. For instance, the institution has notably broadened its network beyond the region to other countries such as Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, having as common operational objectives “[...] the conservation of the authenticity of the historical sites, to ensure appropriate maintenance of the sites and to exchange the knowledge about heritage sites preservation” (Kuldiga Restoration Centre, 2018).

Furthermore, the initiative has been a successful example of bringing together different actors involved in protected heritage, such as “craftsman, experts on historical buildings, architects, municipality specialists and owners of the historical houses” (Kuldiga Restoration Centre, 2018), and in reaching multiple advancements in restoring the built heritage of the city by sharing international experiences between regions of similar profiles. These advancements have been possible thanks to the implementation of particular activities that are part of the project, such as the “Cultural heritage laboratories” and the “Regular maintenance of windows” programme, among others.

In the case of the Cultural heritage laboratories, the main goal has been focused on educating to Kuldīga’s citizens in the appreciation of the significance of local cultural attributes. Since 2008, the institution has organized eight laboratories oriented to instruct residents through the guidance of local and international experts in restoration subjects.

The practical approach to the restoration topic has attracted the participation of citizens in different activities, such as painting the facades of buildings, practical preservation of wooden details, restoration of roofs, maintenance of windows, isolation of historic buildings and the examination of historical layers from different time periods present in old buildings, among others (Kuldiga Restoration Centre, 2018). Some of these laboratories have also addressed issues related to common climatic features, such as saving energy in old houses, by providing several alternatives to be applied by the same residents in their own houses and opening discussions on certain problems to be solved at the municipal level given its complexity.

For its part, the Regular maintenance of windows programme was created as an endeavor to motivate the participation of Kuldīga’s residents in applying restoration works to their own properties, bringing them closer to simple but effective techniques. This commitment was

formalized through the signature of several contracts between the participant families and the municipality to ensure at the same time economic coverage of the “(...) costs of materials for windows preservation and consultations of the specialists” (Kuldīga Restoration Centre, 2018).



Fig 3. Example of window's restoration work conducted by the Kuldīga Restoration Centre in Baznīcas iela 7, Kuldīga, 2018 (Photos: Pilar Fernández)

Through the findings, it was revealed that in different family groups committed to carrying out practical work on their houses, the youngest ones (for example: grandchildren) collaborated with the more adults and experts of the group, gaining early knowledge about traditional materials and methods. This fact represents an auspicious situation not only for the work itself, but also in transmitting valuable knowledge and non-formal training within local families, contributing to reinforce social-cultural aspects such as regional identity and sense of belonging in Kuldīga.

Problems and Challenges

The activities implemented by the Kuldīga Restoration Centre between the years 2008–2012 have been funded through different sources. Some of them coming from the Kuldīga District Council, the Latvian State Culture Capital Foundation (SCCF), the Nordic Council of Ministers (KKNORD) through its NordPlus Adult Educational programme, and country members of the project's network such as Norway, Denmark and Finland (Kuldīga Restoration Centre, 2018).

However, the support has been mainly obtained on a competitive basis. This situation has meant laborious work for the Kuldīga Restoration Centre, since every year it has to apply to different funding calls, generating uncertainty among the organizers, particularly considering that “[...] results of the granted applications always are announced rather late” (Kuldīga Restoration Centre 2018). The lack of economic guarantee not only has demanded a busy schedule, but also has put at risk its continuity, a circumstance that has instigated the Kuldīga Restoration Center to be in a permanent search for new financial alternatives.

In this sense, the centre's team is aware that it needs to enlarge their cooperation to other

countries and other groups, such as NGOs from social fields, and to set new education guidelines oriented to different audiences and to improving the understanding of Kuldīga's heritage. The institution has also concluded after several years of work with the community, that the introduction of new activities is urgent in order to attract to all those citizens who have not yet participated in the preservation of the city's old town.

The UCCN as an Opportunity of Collaborative Development for Kuldīga

The UCCN is a project established in 2004 “to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development” (UNESCO 2013). The network formally designates cities in several creative categories, connecting local actors into an international web, and puts an emphasis on specific areas for the development of creative economy of cities (OECD, 2014). It covers seven fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music (UNESCO, 2013).

Nowadays, the 180 cities from 72 countries “which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level” (“About us | Creative Cities Network”, n.d., para.1).

According to the UCCN's mission statement (2013), the organization aims to achieve the following objectives:

- strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of their sustainable development;
- stimulate and enhance initiatives led by member cities to make creativity an essential component of urban development, notably through partnerships involving the public and private sectors and civil society.
- strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
- develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector;
- improve access to and participation in cultural life as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, notably for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals;
- fully integrate culture and creativity into local development strategies and plans.

The Crafts and Folk Art Category and its Compatibility to the City's Profile

At present, there are 38 cities designated under the “Crafts and Folk Art” category. By means of nomination for this creative field, Kuldīga acknowledges the human talent in traditional craftwork.

The wooden architecture of the city developed through centuries, giving evidence to and accumulating a rare “know-how”, an aspect that has played an important role in the city's construction and has reinforced local identity. Accordingly, various events and measures have been undertaken at local and national scale by the city authorities to preserve these particular features, such as the improvement of regulations on building activity, academically oriented research, restoration and renovation of buildings, and the elaboration and publication of graphic and educative materials, supported by different institutions and municipal departments.

Until now, the efforts in preserving the Kuldīga's building architecture and its craftworks have been mainly materialized thanks to the Kuldīga Restoration Centre. The institution has achieved important progress in this matter, and has increased local participation. Additionally, recognizing that the mastery in crafts is present in daily life, citizens have received the Restoration Centre' assistance in restoring the appearance of each dwelling by re-crafting elements such as doors,

windows, shutters, etc. This practice has undoubtedly enhanced the creative field of traditional craft and the transference of related expertise within the region.

Joining the UCCN's network will provide opportunities to Kuldīga for reaching sustainable urban development through the Crafts and Folk Art field as the main strategy, and will benefit from it in the long term in facing the current problems and challenges derived from the preservation of wooden architecture and craftworks. Cooperation with UCCN will help advance Kuldīga in raising the visibility of its heritage at the international scale, and will direct attention to cultural assets via different platforms.

Partnership within the UCCN with Focus on Creative Tourism, Education and Research

Creative Tourism

In 2006 the UCCN accepted a definition of creative tourism given by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): “Creative tourism is travel directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place. It provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture” (OECD, 2014). Many cities have already taken advantage of their nominations in order to improve their tourism industry and to develop specific city brands. For example, Santa Fe recognized for “City of Crafts and Folk Arts and City of Design” has already evolved a creative tourism program, and the “Literature label of Edinburgh city is expected to generate almost EUR 5 million a year in total economic benefit” (OECD, 2014, pp. 82-83).

In view of these examples, a city that can effectively cooperate with Kuldīga is Gabrovo, Bulgaria. According to UNESCO, Gabrovo has developed an Ethnographic Open-Air Museum (ETAR) and possesses the largest number of craft centers among the whole country (2013). Its craft field consists of woodcarving and wool weaving, works that are annually displayed at the International Craft Fair, where artisans from all over the world visit Gabrovo to demonstrate and share their skills on traditional techniques. This being a good example for Kuldīga in improving practices in the craft field.

Gabrovo can act as reference in rethinking Kuldīga's old town as an open-air museum due to its uniqueness. By designing a craft-route as a concrete option to guide tourists through the exploration of rare examples of the restoration of buildings and unique objects. The OECD (2014) affirms that this type of tourism industry is different to traditional models due to its skill-based approach, and prioritizes active participation in cultural occasions rather than a passive approach of learning by visiting museums and attending events only as a spectator. A change from cultural tourism towards creativity occurred in the 1990s and was put successfully into practice by many countries based on the creative features of particular cities, such as music, crafts, etc. (pp. 51-53).

The same report (OECD, 2014) also emphasizes that the main objectives of this perspective are to reach and expand new groups of visitors and to advance growth of the creative sector. Therefore, the anticipated positive effects include making the city more appealing place for craftsmen, tourists and local residents; engaging new specialists; design a better image of the city; improvement of “soft infrastructure” such as small-scale businesses and creative platforms; knowledge exchange due to new cooperation and partnership; raising the city's visibility and attractiveness (pp. 62-63).

Innovation through Research

In the field of innovation and research, the suggested partner is Carrara, Italy, designated as a member of the UCCN in 2017 for its white marble. According to the description given by UNESCO (Carrara, Creative Cities Network, n.d.; UNESCO Creative Cities Programme for sustainable development 2018), the city is an active member of the network, carrying out initiatives within the craft field on sustainable development of creative economies, and preserving local identity by hosting international meetings and events.

One of the most important events organized by Carrara is The International Fair Carrara Marmotec, an initiative that explores and highlights the use of modern technologies (UNESCO Creative Cities Programme for sustainable development 2018), exploration that can contribute to Kuldīga's International restoration workshops by sharing and applying new approaches to the processing of wooden materials.

Highlighting the fact that the Kuldīga Restoration Centre already has experience in carrying out technical initiatives; researchers, academics and students could be a new audience to attract, due to research in a wide range of topics and interests, from theoretical and conceptual issues to innovative use of specific equipment or new tools in the preservation of built heritage. The practical exploration can also bring into light product novelties, such as the accurate reproduction of damaged or lost wooden pieces, the creation of new parts of architectural elements based on original patterns, material innovation applicable to windows, doors and roofs to save energy, etc. In this context, experts can share new advancements as a matter of discussion in international meetings, and original results may be displayed in exhibitions and fairs, a circumstance that even can bring economic profits to local developers.

Education and Training

Barcelos, Portugal, is the suggested partner in this area. The city, widely recognized as the “city of artisans”, has permanently organized and performed the Craftsmanship and Ceramics Exhibition to promote traditional craft. The main purpose of implementing this initiative aims to involve new generations in a creative craft field, a situation that can be useful for Kuldīga as a strategy to attract young professionals who are willing to learn a particular creative expertise to the region.

The city has brought into action educational programmes to transfer traditional craft knowledge. As “part of its Strategic Plan for Urban Sustainable Development, Barcelos is renovating a series of important historic buildings and sites in the medieval city centre in order to provide additional spaces for the creation and promotion of culture within the area” (UNESCO Creative Cities Programme for sustainable development 2018). Such efforts seem to be a compatible characteristic when considering the main projects and initiatives conducted by the Kuldīga Restoration Centre during recent years, and the number of properties with particular cultural significance that can be converted into educational centres. Formal and reconditioned infrastructure can help in providing better conditions to professionalize the transference of experiential knowledge in small regions.

A final aspect to be considered is the relevance of mobility. Barcelos cooperates with cities from the Global South to foster interchange and creative development (UNESCO Creative Cities programme for sustainable development 2018), facilitating intercultural exchanges. This is a possibility for Kuldīga in sharing best practices in the preservation of old towns.

Conclusions

The case discussed concludes affinity and complementarity between experiential knowledge and the craft processes applied in the restoration of built heritage. This fact is given by the distinctive character of the Kuldīga wooden heritage created by artisans owning valuable knowledge and experience acquired through time, and by its practical and participatory preservation perspective.

The preservation system led and implemented by the Kuldīga Restoration Centre is based on two empirical factors. The first one is the deep understanding that the experiential approach plays an essential role in the sustainable and correct maintenance of architectural heritage. The second one is the relevance assigned to the development of a practical educational component focused on the skills of artisans since the hand-working abilities cannot be gained by using only theoretical knowledge.

The Kuldīga experience demonstrates that transferring knowledge of this kind to the community and interchanging experiences request of innovative methods. Hence, it is possible to assert that the versatility of this expertise has ample potential to experiment with new possibilities beyond the

region, contributing to the development of the city through its creative profile.

Concerning the current challenges in terms of preservation, the need for associativity is imminent. Kuldīga's profile reflects auspicious compatibility to the UCCN objectives, aimed chiefly to the integration of creativity into local development plans by implementing cultural initiatives and sharing good practices. With this regard, the original values observed on the wooden buildings repertory of the city proves a particular closeness, as distinctive regional heritage, to the "Crafts and Folk Art" category established by the UCCN.

The examination of the activities implemented by the member cities of such category has shown that the alliance with similar pairs benefits a collaborative development. Being a member of the network will help Kuldīga by providing new opportunities for experimentation based on available expertise. The proposed lines of action to be explored by joining the network are three: creative tourism, innovation through research and education and training.

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Pilar Fernández

Pilar Fernández graduated as an Architect in 2011 from the University of Magallanes (UMAG), Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic Region, Chile. Since 2014, Fernández has been an academic at the Department of Architecture at the University of Magallanes. She is currently obtaining a Master's degree in Heritage Conservation and Site Management at the Brandenburg University of Technology, Germany, funded by the University of Magallanes and by the Ministry of Culture of Chile (2018-2019). As an academic, she focuses on teaching Theory and History of Architecture, a position that involves discussing several historical aspects that have stimulated her reflection on the notion of heritage and its relevance for societies. However, during the last years, Fernández has developed a particular interest in the historic urban heritage management mechanisms and the effectiveness of preservation policies at national and regional levels. Previous works presented at conferences have addressed issues such as the built heritage derived from institutional actions and the impact of state decisions on the preservation of the built heritage's integrity in Punta Arenas, Chile.

Kristina Rovnenko

Kristina Rovnenko is a student at the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, pursuing a Master of Arts in Heritage Conservation and Site Management. Rovnenko graduated from the Kuban State University, Russian Federation, in the field of Architecture. Current studies and participation in heritage-related projects increased her interest in the topic of architectural preservation and the role of community involvement for its proper implementation. Her past position as a teaching assistant at the Department of Urban Planning and Architectural Design at the German University of Technology in Oman was a great platform for the development of issues concerned and knowledge exchange, working not only theoretically, but also practically with the local residents.