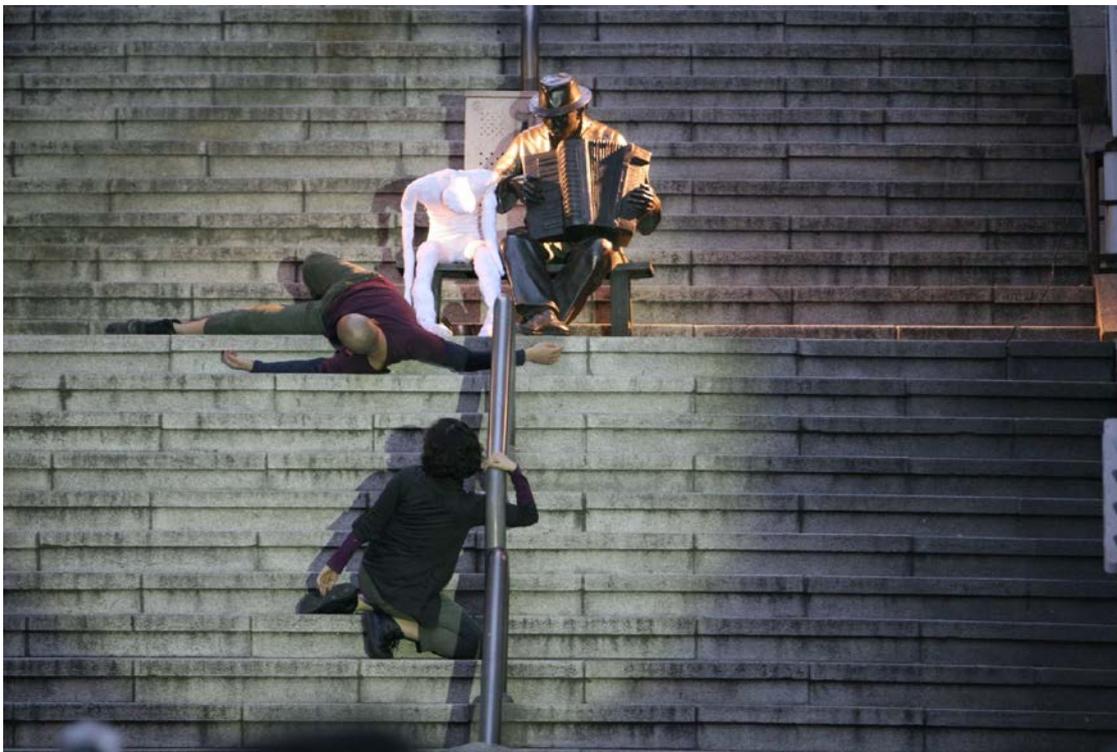


HISTORIC DOWNTOWN CULTURE CLUSTER 'TOTATOGA'



ARTS ATTRACTIVENESS CREATIVE ECONOMY
IDENTITY HERITAGE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT
PROMOTION MONITORING **CULTURAL NETWORK**
CITIZENSHIP **URBAN RENEWAL**

1. Context

Busan is the 2nd largest city in Korea. The old downtown of Busan, located in the *Jung-gu* District, has been playing a valuable role in facilitating foreign cultural exchanges since its port opened in 1407. In 1678, *Choryang-waegwan*, a residential area for Japanese living in Busan, was established

¹ Artists deliver a passionate performance on 'the 40-step stairway'.

to handle diplomacy and trade between Korea and Japan. Such historical resources are utilized in the *TOTATOGA* project.

The old downtown used to be one of the liveliest areas with major administrative offices and commercial buildings. It was a hub for transportation, media and publication. During the Korean War, Busan served as a provisional capital of Korea and provided a shelter for fleeing refugees. People from all regions of Korea came there to escape the horrors of war. As a result, cultural diversity flourished. In particular, the *Jung-gu* District was a venue where dispersed families were reunited with their relatives. However, the district encountered a decrease in population and an increase in office vacancies after the Busan City Hall moved to the *Yeonje-gu* District in 1999.

In 2009, Busan unveiled the Creative Village Project to promote urban regeneration and reinvigoration through culture and the arts. Busan organized a roundtable meeting with local artists, and decided that the old downtown area – where the *TOTATOGA* project is currently in place – was the most appropriate location for the project to be implemented. After the relocation of the City Hall to *Yeonje-gu*, buildings and houses in the old downtown suffered increased vacancy, with a negative impact on residents because of increasing crimes, accidents and environmental pollution. To alleviate the degeneration of the area, the city tried to overcome this challenge through culture and the arts. The *TOTATOGA* project, sponsored by the local government, is being operated by the Busan Culture and Art Education Federation (BCAEF) to facilitate cooperation with the private sector.

The project started as a community program for residents, where participants learned to communicate and share with one another through painting and other artistic means. As a result, the old downtown area started to restore its cultural heritage and reclaim its old glory. Naturally, the happiness and pride of residents increased.

THE AIM OF CULTURAL POLICIES IN BUSAN IS TO MAKE THE CITY A PLACE WHERE CULTURE IS PART OF DAILY LIFE AND CONTRIBUTES TO THE CITY'S PROSPERITY.

2. Busan and culture

The aim is to make **'Busan a place where culture is part of daily life and contributes to the city's prosperity'**. To this end, Busan seeks to focus on the cultural contents of citizens' lives, regarding cultural contents as essential resources for urban regeneration and the creative economy. The city supports the various cultural fields to gain the public's support and boost active participation among citizens. As a result, various cultural contents have attracted travellers to local tourist spots and increase revenue of the tourism industry.

One of the outcomes from these efforts is **'Historic Downtown Culture Cluster *TOTATOGA*'**. The project, where citizens directly participate to create and enjoy cultural contents, was designed to strengthen the local cultural capacity and narrow the cultural gap between the many districts of Busan. Supported by the local government, artists have used empty buildings as art studios to deliver performances and hold exhibitions for citizens. The project benefited residents and artists alike by generating income for both sides. The success of *TOTATOGA* can be attributed to the unwavering governmental and public support on culture and arts.

Community projects are usually led by the government. However, the Busan Metropolitan Government chose to take a back seat approach and let the BCAEF come up with the detailed operational methods for the project, taking a public-private cooperation path. The city fully sponsored operating expenses, but never interfered. Artists didn't have to worry about progress reports or formality during the events. They could freely plan their own events based on their artistic needs and wishes.



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Approximately 100 printing companies and art studios were established near 'the 40-step stairway' in the old downtown as a part of the project. After the Korean War, refugees lived on top of the hill that can be reached by the 40-step stairway which eventually became a symbol of the war and peace. Now, the neighbourhood near the stairway has been transformed into a venue to showcase the cooperation between artists and citizens and is full of activities including art exhibitions, festivals, street performances, flea markets, and educational programs to facilitate citizens' access to culture and the arts.

The old downtown district effectively formed an artistic ecosystem because it was highly accessible by public transportation and had plenty of cultural resources. With continuous support and deep interests from the city government, artists and citizens, TOTATOGA will continue to be carried out in various new ways.

TOTATOGA has become an exemplary case in cultural policies and urban regeneration. Civil servants working in culture-related departments from home and abroad, including cities in Korea, Japan and Germany, have visited Busan to learn about the project.

SUPPORTED BY THE CITY, ARTISTS USED EMPTY BUILDINGS AS ART STUDIOS TO DELIVER PERFORMANCES AND HOLD EXHIBITIONS FOR CITIZENS.

3. Objectives and implementation of the project

1.1. Overall and specific objectives

The aim of the project is to provide a stable cultural venue for rising artists and establish a cultural environment for citizens by utilizing empty houses and unused buildings in the old downtown sector.

² Folk music artists give an intimate performance at the 'arche x freedom' theatre.

The *TOTATOGA* project has four specific goals. First, it provides financial support for local artists to focus on their works. Second, it establishes and expands a cultural network connecting citizens in the educational art programs with local artists. Third, it utilizes unused buildings within the old downtown as a venue for artistic activities. Finally, it promotes cultural exchanges to facilitate creative and artistic activities within the community.

1.2. Key stages

To achieve these goals, the city has promoted activities, such as establishing art studios for local artists, planning daily cultural contents, i.e. art and culture festival, street performance and flea market, as well as developed educational programs for citizens. In addition, many cultural activities are tailored to the needs of culturally underprivileged people. Busan also promotes cooperative community activities between artists and citizens and among the artists themselves.

TOTATOGA connects artists with residents, and revives the old downtown district as a venue to provide culture and art education programs. Starting with 35 venues in 11 buildings, the project has expanded to 74 venues in 22 buildings. 350 artists are devoted themselves to creative work without worrying about expensive rental fees. In addition, the city government is making tireless efforts to achieve the successful convergence between the old downtown culture and the new cultural trends of other districts of Busan.

THE CITY SUPPORTS VARIOUS CULTURAL FIELDS TO GAIN PUBLIC SUPPORT AND BOOST THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS.

The city has asked building owners to rent buildings without requiring a deposit – although it was quite rare for them to do so – to reinvigorate the old downtown by creating spaces for culture and art. Since then, owners have even offered a discount of 15 to 20% on rental fees, which has proved to be a win-win strategy for everyone involved. Sparing the financial burden for artists has led to an influx of artists coming into the area. This has increased profits for building owners and has made culture and art more accessible to citizens. Through a variety networks, the project has also been introduced to the world, such as in Japan and Germany. Now, local artists, citizens, and even people from around the world can share the *TOTATOGA* experience to enjoy culture and the arts.

The main beneficiaries of *TOTATOGA* are local artists and citizens. The decision to establish the art studios within the old downtown area has made the owners of empty buildings beneficiaries as well. In fact, the owners have played an important role in the success of the project by accepting the request for lower rental fees and no deposit money. Citizens have begun to enjoy more cultural experiences in their daily lives and have taken up the opportunity to engage in more cultural educational programs. The old downtown is reinvigorated, people are flocking to the area, and the local economy has been revived.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

Before *TOTATOGA*, policies that addressed urban problems used to focus mainly on urban re-development by means of construction works, by stressing ‘hardware’ improvements. However, *TOTATOGA* uses culture and the arts as a means of urban renewal, putting emphasis on ‘software’. The project is now regarded as an exemplary case which addresses problems associated with old downtowns areas that are turning into slums. It has become a benchmark for other cities to follow.

Impact on culture and local cultural actors of the city/territory

As most art studios were located in isolated places and buildings, citizens didn’t have easy access to cultural content. Upon implementing *TOTATOGA*, the old downtown area has become a space for artists and citizens to share cultural values. In addition, the successful outcomes of the project have



shown that culture and the arts can be the answer to deal with the many problems a city faces. People in the culture and arts industry now regard themselves as key players in the development of their city by participating in city policies.

Impact on the territory and its population

Artists in various fields such as literature, painting, crafts, music and dance now live in the area, changing its atmosphere. The area is now one of the most famous tourist attractions in Busan. The residents are proud of their neighbourhood and appreciate how culture and the arts have enriched their lives.

THE SUCCESS OF *TOTATO* PROVES THAT CULTURE AND THE ARTS CAN BE AN ANSWER TO MANY URBAN PROBLEMS.]

1.2. Transversal impacts

TOTATO has gained attention from other cities because of promoting its 'Low Budget, High Efficiency' philosophy. With a small amount budget of €250,000, the project has encouraged urban regeneration by forming 80 art studios (300 resident artists) in 32 buildings within a radius of 500 meters. Unlike other cities which may have purchased buildings using greater amounts of money, Busan adopted a unique way to rent empty buildings in the old downtown sector at a lower cost that has provided great benefits to all. The city provides spaces for local artists and citizens to receive the benefits of culture.

1.3. Evaluation

TOTATO deserves to be evaluated as a successful case. With its policy of 'Low Budget and High Efficiency', the project has attracted interest from other cities both home and abroad. In particular, the project received the grand prize for Korea's local culture brand from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism as it was recognized as a new model for regional regeneration by reinterpreting urban history and utilizing cultural resources in the region.

³ The vibrant open market scene jumps fully into life in *TOTATO* Culture Cluster.

1.4. Continuity

The *TOTATOGA* project is being carried out by Busan Metropolitan City, the Busan Cultural Foundation and the Busan Culture and Art Education Federation. The first phase started in 2010 as a three-year project. The second phase was successfully completed in 2015 and now the third phase is in progress.

Ironically, the success of *TOTATOGA* presented a new challenge. With higher incomes being generated in the old downtown district, rental fees began to increase and brought 'gentrification'. Eventually, the city decided to protect the cultural assets of the old downtown district by discussing policies with building owners, artists, experts and cultural agencies, such as the BCAEF.

The city continues to offer budget ranging from about 257,000 to 290,000 euros. In addition, Busan enacted an ordinance to solve the problem of gentrification which was caused by the rise in rental fees in the old downtown district and currently is making every effort to secure a budget to establish an anchor facility (€1.326 million in 2017) to prevent the fees from rising.

5. Further information

The city of Busan was nominated for the second '*UCLG International Award - Mexico City - Culture 21*' (January-May 2016). The awards jury produced a final report in June 2016 and asked the UCLG Committee on Culture to promote this project as a practical example of the implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture, and as a special mention of the second edition of the Award.

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