Cultural-led Revitalization and Regeneration
in Abandoned Urban Districts

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Abstract

This paper explores the Cultural-led Revitalization and Regeneration in abandoned urban districts by concentrating on case studies from South Korea and China; It investigates the urban transformation resulting from past development-oriented urban planning policies, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of the results of culturally driven initiatives. by utilizing a critical approach to these case studies, including Gamcheon Village, Ihwa Village, Seongbuk Village, Totatoga, Beijing 798 District, M50 District in Shanghai, and Guangzhou International Club, the study emphasizes the subtleties and challenges of culture-led revitalization and regeneration initiatives; while highlighting how crucial it is to take into account both the beneficial aspects, like economic growth and an improvement in quality of life, and the adverse consequences, like commercial exploitation and social disparities, while developing new urban planning and development strategies.

Introduction:

The development and construction of transportation infrastructure and commercial, cultural, and residential structures became the main goals of top-down urban planning in the 20th century and it has changed the appearance of the city and the residents' interactions in both new and old neighborhoods (Zukin, 1996, p. 24).

After a few decades, the governments realized that this top-down, development-oriented policy had not only left some issues unresolved but also caused new adverse effects. For example, neighborhoods have been abandoned and turned into slums; the population has been gathered in particular spots; neighborhoods have lost their identity; and so on. Therefore, governments made the decision to develop new policies with the intention of assisting the communities' economic and social improvement and motivating residents to keep living there. In the new strategies complex transition processes are involved and the city's cultural policy issues are caught in a variety of dilemmas and demand a thorough and adaptable understanding; tackling these issues by using cultural and artistic approaches to revitalize areas is one of the most frequently discussed solutions (Rich, 2019, p. 738).

These approaches were initially influenced by the most advanced methods used in Western nations and have had a variety of beneficial and detrimental impacts on the structural and function of the cities because they were typically implemented quickly and outside of the cultural norms of the destination countries. In the new strategies for revitalizing cities with cultural and artistic approaches, two important objections are mentioned since the city not only shapes its own culture but also influences how the culture shapes the city. Firstly, the idea of culture has changed from its original form and has become an economic asset in recent decades; the commercializing of culture has restricted the use of critical thinking and creative expression. Secondly, the perspectives that contribute to social isolation, social injustice, and fragmentation have been fostered (Scott, 2006, p. 7).

With community participation in urban cultural revitalization being widely considered in developed countries, a growing demand for civic participation and greater collaboration among stakeholders has emerged in other countries, primarily with a critical attitude toward previous development-oriented approaches.

Concentrating on the local economy and cultural assets has resulted in a number of benefits, including economic growth, increased real estate values, new infrastructure, and an improvement in overall quality of life. This concept became an element of urban planning and became a powerful tool for the government in the development of infrastructure and

development projects by providing more chances for economic policies (Douglass, et al., 2019, p. 49).

However, two decades after these approaches first came into use, both their beneficial and negative consequences started to be recognized by society. The principles underlying revitalization initiatives should be reconsidered by analyzing both the positive and negative effects of these approaches. Several cultural heritage sites in China and South Korea have been revitalized, and the responses that have emerged led to in the development of paradigms for revitalizing and regenerating cultural and historic sites that can be used for other initiatives, particularly those that are not Western-centered; but it can be seen that they have not all been equally successful in achieving the intended results over time, resulting in the current state of these areas. Each of these examples comprises multiple cases that can be investigated in order to prevent them from recurring (Ursic, 2019, p. 82).

The concept of cultural revitalization and regeneration initiatives will be examined further in the following case studies from South Korea and China. Gamcheon Village, Ihwa Village, Seongbuk Village, and Totatoga in South Korea, as well as Beijing 798 District, M50 District in Shanghai, and Guangzhou International Club in China, are among the seven case studies chosen.

1. Culture-led Revitalization and Regeneration

Urban transformation has played a significant role in the growth of cities and intercity networks in both the West and the East during the past fifty years (UNESCAP, 2016). Human flourishing, a philosophical and ethical concept that prioritizes holistic well-being, encompassing mental and physical health, social connections, etc (Douglass, et al., 2019, p. 32), and the 'Just City' theory developed by Susan Fainstein emphasizes that policymakers consider both physical and social aspects of cities and prioritize equity, inclusivity, democratic planning, diversity, quality of life, and so on (Fainstein, 2010, p. 63), has greatly influenced urban studies, focusing on creating fairer and more equitable cities.

The concept that cities, where humanity flourishes, would be created by unrestricted economic expansion brought about by global competition, has influenced the structure of the cities in many ways (Brenner & Christian, 2014, p. 735). The focus on "global cities" has resulted in population decline and an economic downturn as they are unable to find a place in the world market (MARTINEZ-FERNANDEZ, et al., 2012, p. 217). This strategy resulted in the emergence of slums and a decline in population in historical districts, which caused the city to experience an unexpected social and economic crisis while its previous problems remained unresolved. The local population was profoundly dissatisfied as a result of this circumstance (Bolay , 2006, p. 286).

Urban planners like Charles Landry and Richard Florida have promoted the idea that emphasizes how innovation, culture, and the arts can improve a city's economic and cultural vibrancy. According to this philosophy, urban settings should embrace flexibility and diversity by combining top-down and bottom-up approaches. In order to combine economic progress with the use of cultural resources and social innovation, it emphasizes the necessity of customizing experiences to meet the local context (Ursic, 2019, p. 71). Urban revitalization driven by culture, follows a distinct course of growth and makes use of the arts and culture in a way that isn't dominated by growth priorities in a state-led political context (Yu, 2019, p. 4). In different case studies, the two terms Culture-led revitalization and culture-led regeneration are used to refer to the almost same concept, approach, and process.

In the Oxford dictionary regeneration is defined as "the process of making an area, institution, etc. develop and grow strong again"; it Refers to the process of regrowing or renewing something that has been damaged or destroyed (oxford , n.d.) and the definition for revitalization is "the process of making something stronger, more active or healthier " It refers

to the process of bringing new life or energy to something that has become stagnant or inactive (oxford, n.d.).

An integrated model of revitalization and regeneration project selection is used in an article by Wei-Ming Wang et al., and it is mentioned that the prospects for district revitalization and regeneration are interdependent. Considering how quickly society and the environment are changing in modern times, revitalization and regeneration are widely accepted by practitioners, governments, and academics (Wei, et al., 2013, p. 1094).

3. Case Studies

3.1. Gamcheon Village, Busan, South Korea

South Korea has undertaken numerous initiatives to revitalize neighborhoods in its major cities, aiming to address various local issues. Busan, located between mountains and the sea, faced problems such as influxes of refugees, slum development, and the separation of new neighborhoods from the historic core. The Gamcheon Village project transformed one of these slums into a renowned South Korean tourist attraction

The village's unique architecture was influenced by the Taegeukdo religion, featuring multi-story buildings with short roofs to provide ample illumination. In the past, residents painted their houses with pastel colors, initially due to their affordability, which later became a charming feature of the village. As part of Busan's redevelopment efforts, this once-struggling village was included in a demolition and reconstruction program initiated by the municipal authorities (Choi & McNeely, 2018, p. 89).

Artist Jin Yong Seob, along with a group of artists, professors, and students from a nearby art institution, initiated efforts to connect with local residents and document the neighborhood's homes before the municipality's demolition plans took effect. Through seminars involving community members, they crafted a revitalization proposal titled 'Machu Picchu Dream of Korea' and secured a $100,000 prize in a national art competition.

Following the award, a local revitalization fund was established, leading to the creation of numerous artworks, the conversion of vacant houses into cafes and galleries, and the depiction of the neighborhood's unique traits in art. The Korean government also became involved through a village art project, leading to investments and revitalization policies. Today, Gamcheon attracts 300,000 local and foreign visitors each year. (Yu, 2019, p. 224).

3.2. Ihwa Village, South Korea

The first "art in the city" initiative in South Korea, known as the Naksan project, which led to the creation of the Ihwa Mural Village, formally began in 2006 with direct, unilateral government intervention and a top-down approach (Park & Kovacs, 2020, p. 4).

The project aimed to enhance the local environment through artistic revitalization, drawing on the region's cultural heritage and historical significance to attract tourists, boost the economy, and promote tourism. It involved preserving existing structures as a form of regeneration in a post-war Korean neighborhood with 134 households. Over three months, 68 artists created 70 artworks in this neighborhood, which is near University Street and the Daehak-Ro Cultural Center (Kovacs & Park, 2020, p. 104).

This initiative aimed to address social disparities in 11 underprivileged South Korean neighborhoods, innovate development plans with collaborative art by local and neighborhood artists, create pleasant neighborhoods for all citizens, and educate students about local traditional culture. As a result, Ihwa Village gained recognition and was ranked fifth among China's top tourist destinations in 2016. However, a challenge emerged when the neighborhood's residents were not adequately informed about the revitalization project's objectives, leading to misunderstandings and fears of gentrification. Their dissatisfaction grew due to noise pollution, overcrowding, visual clutter, loss of privacy, and the emergence of over-tourism issues, sparking ongoing demonstrations. The absence of local involvement in the economic and cultural development of the area resulted in a lack of community attachment to the produced artworks and a desire to protect them. In protest, some of the most famous artworks, including the renowned koi fish painting, were vandalized and removed by locals. Residents opposed to using their property as art canvases believed that if the revitalization continued as planned, it would not only infringe upon citizens' privacy but also hinder the neighborhood's development. Over time, more of Ihwa's artwork was lost due to inadequate security, and some artists requested the relocation of their works (Park & Kovacs, 2020, p. 6)

3.3. Seongbuk Village, South Korea

Seongbok Dong, a village just outside Seoul's city limits, has witnessed three migration waves. First, universities attracted students and scholars in the 1920s-1930s. In the 1970s, the Seoul Performing Arts Center was established, and in the 2000s, artists, galleries, and studios moved to Seongbok's affordable buildings. Notably, in the 1990s, urban development plans were put on hold, leading to a surplus of empty houses and decreased real estate values, making it an accessible space for artists to set up studios and galleries. This shift led to the development of

new cultural facilities, such as the Korean Furniture Museum and Gilsangsa Temple, as well as the emergence of expensive cafes and restaurants in the neighborhood. It also resulted in a temporary exhibition of national art treasures from Ganseong. In response to the neighborhood's rise in prominence, a local revitalization office was formed to boost culture, identity, and investments. It led to public cultural institutions, a 2013 historical-cultural area designation, historic structure listings, and the recognition of cultural landmarks like the Korean Furniture Museum (Seo, 2020, p. 5)

The neighborhood's cultural success is attributed to the ongoing interaction among cultural clusters: investors, government, residents, and artists acting as interfaces. This cultural movement combined a strong government with a society lacking self-governance. It involved the local population in decision-making, planning, and budgeting and bridged the gap between government and the community by designating artists as leaders. Through effective representation by artists, these measures strengthened local committees and boosted civil participation. In 2016, residents vehemently opposed tree-cutting in the neighborhood and successfully prevented it. Afterward, residents set up historical monument markers, cultural spaces, and theatrical groups to revive traditions. Prioritizing nationalism over tourism and commercialization, they created cultural treasures, fostering neighborhood revitalization with high community participation and minimal costs (Heckmann, 2013).

3.4. Totatoga, South Korea

The name To-ta-to-ga combines "To" from the French word for tolerance, "ta" from the Korean word for separate, "To" from the Korean word for together, and "ga" for the street in Chinese characters. It symbolizes artists and people coming together despite living separately, exchanging art and culture in their daily street life, and celebrating differences and diversity by honoring each other. Busan's Tutatuga center was once depopulated due to development-oriented policies. Thanks to local activist Cha Jae-gun's proposal, the government invested in creating an artist residency center, sparking an artistic renaissance and cultural festivals in historic Busan. Tutatuga hosts events without obvious physical changes, aiming to connect with local history, social interactions, and artist-community relations. It's now recognized as Busan's cultural hub (Yu & Park, 2016, p. 12).

3.5 Beijing 798 District, China

China's former industrial districts attract artists and entrepreneurs reimagining urban spaces. Some redevelopment solutions have become models for preserving and reviving China's industrial heritage, though not all efforts have yielded the same success over time. China's revitalized industrial site, 798 Art District, comprised former military facilities. It was revitalized in three stages, with Chinese avant-garde artists initially moving in, followed by more artists and galleries due to low rent and unique Bauhaus architecture, sparking a bottom-up revitalization and regeneration. Next, the government collaborates to strengthen the area's position. In the third phase, an agreement was reached between the government and Seven Star Group to include 798 in economic development as part of Beijing's high-tech zone, focusing on electronic manufacturing. Furthermore, the government collaborates to boost its position. In the third phase, they agreed with Seven Star Group to develop 798 as an electronic industry park within Beijing's high-tech zone. Consequently, these actions further led to the stage that artists could not rent new spaces, and the complex was gradually destroyed (McCarthy & Wang, 2015) (Shaofei , et al., 2018, p. 507).

3.6. M50 District in Shanghai, China

M50, a former textile business in bankruptcy, gained new life when architect Teng KunYen converted one of its warehouses into a design studio in 1998. Initially, the property manager rented spaces to artists for income. This sparked a successful creative revitalization effort in Shanghai, with key figures like urban planner Ruan Yisan playing vital roles. Teng Kun-Yen's work earned UNESCO recognition and raised the complex's profile. Simultaneously, Shanghai's reforms in urban industrial structure, cultural identity in planning, and the growing importance of creative industries and historical preservation shaped the project's progress (NANXI, 2008, p. 26) (Shaofei , et al., 2018, p. 509).

3.7. Guangzhou International Club, China

An abandoned factory and warehouse on the banks of the Pearl River were converted into the Guangzhou International Club as part of a top-down revitalization effort. The government provided abandoned state-owned factories to developers and investors, inspired by the success of the 789 and M50 projects. They created the Guangzhou International Club to foster creative businesses. However, lacking a prominent public area, it gradually became socially isolated and transitioned into a venue for press conferences, performances, and cultural exhibitions (Altrock & Hang , 2013, p. 216) (Shaofei , et al., 2018, p. 511).

Conclusion:

Cultural-led revitalization and regeneration have been used as an alternative to the development-oriented strategies of earlier decades, which have had a significant positive and negative impact, both of which must be taken into account to learn from them and avoid making the same mistakes in the future (Table1).

Table 1   Case Studies Comparison

Project Name	Gamcheon	Ihwa Village	Seongbuk	Tutatuga	798	M50	Guangzhou Club
Location	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea	South Korea	China	China	China
Approach	Down-Top	Top-Down	Top-Down Down-Top	Top-Down	Down-Top	Down-Top	Top-Down
Public Participation	Direct Wide range	-	Direct Wide range self-conscious	-	-	-	-
Artists Participation	Direct Wide range	within execution	within execution	Direct	Direct Wide range At beginning	Direct Wide range	-
Interaction	Government.Locals.Artists	-	Government.Locals.Artists	Government.Locals.Artists	-	-	-
First Goals	Connection to cultural heritage	economic boom	Connection to cultural heritage	Connection to Local History	economic boom	economic boom	economic boom
Sustainability	long term	Instability	long term	long term	semi-stable	semi-stable	semi-stable
current usage	Touristic village	Residential area	Residential area And Cultural hub	artistic and theatrical hub	Cultural and artistic park	Creative Art Park	Advertising and cultural companies

The attraction of young artists, cultural production, finding an acceptable response to contemporary cultural demands, fostering a sense of belonging among neighborhood residents, building a sustainable local economy, getting rid of and reducing slums, creating a win-win

situation for citizens, investors, and the government, and raising the standard of living of neighborhood residents are some of the positive effects of cultural revitalization.

Furthermore, the negative consequences of these projects may be the removal of artists over time and an increase in commercial exploitation, a shift in purpose from culture production to cultural consumerism over time, the commercialization of culture, and the neglect of cultural and social sustainability after achieving initial efficiency, focusing on attracting tourists rather than residents' private space, maximizing the value of the land as the primary goal, the emergence of new social inequalities, and turning "culture" into a tool for achieving political and economic goals, and an enormous increase in the region's real estate prices. Culture-led revitalization projects can be divided into three categories: bottom-up, top-down, and the interaction of top-down and bottom-up approaches.

According to the case study data, it appears that the most effective aspects of this project happened during top-down and bottom-up interaction. The government, as the upstream component with financial resources, planning power, and executive forces, and the people, as the downstream component possess the identity legacy of the neighborhood's past, present, and future. As a result, cultural revitalization should focus on how to shape places and urban communities based on cultural character, rather than recreation, profit, or real estate development, an in-depth examination of cultural capacities should be included in rational preparation in accordance with cultural methods. Tourism and... the neighborhood, as well as promoting cultural production rather than cultural consumption, should be viewed as a core premise, a tried and proven strategy to ensure the local economy and its long-term viability, with local people benefiting from economic, cultural, and social benefits.

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