

# **Community Cultural Properties as the Sustainable Enablers: Focusing on the Case in Bukjeong Village, Korea compared to Naoshima Island, Japan**

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## **Abstract**

As the urbanization progresses and the post-industrialization accelerates, the diversity of the regions and its unique cultures are cultural properties for the city's competitiveness. The concept of cultural heritages and resources have expanded in these days. In the past it was confined as architectural and artistic artifacts, now cultural heritages and resources have evolved to include environmental elements, industrial and vernacular constructions, urban and rural settlements and intangible elements related to community activities and their ways of life.

Community is the carriers of cultural resources and heritages. And the places of the cultural heritages have been contributed to build the community's identities. This multi-layered discussion on the community engagements in cultural heritages and resources provide the unique approach for the cultural properties as sustainability enablers.

**Key words:** Community Engagements, Sustainability, Cultural Resilience, Cultural Properties Developments

## **1. Introduction**

As the globalization progresses and the post-industrialization has accelerated, the role of the region is emphasized and the diversity of the local culture has become the urban competitiveness. It requires paying attention to the historical and cultural resources of the region and its unique community engagements, and also needs to concern on the community's cultural resilience for the sustainable developments. Especially as for the place where the cultural heritage is defined as the local identity, the developments of community based cultural resources relate to the lives of inhabitants strengthen their cultural characteristics.

In Korea, discussions about the community based cultural resources as the sustainable enablers are now being started. As the local developments have been mainly focused on physical revitalization, local history and community culture have been declined, and regional characteristics, unique place, and even community destruction also have progressed. In this regard, the discussion on cultural regeneration considering both the protection of the local residents and the quality of their life has been persuasive for sustainable developments.

Among the 759 UNESCO World Cultural Heritages, castle-related legacies are recorded as citadels, castles, wall, fortresses, fortified cities and townships. There are several castles surrounding the city, but it remains extremely rare to

present. The castle boundary of old Seoul, Hanyang City Wall that still remains in Seoul, is the largest of the existing castles in the world, and Hanyang has long been the capital from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century [1]. The Hanyang City Walls in the present Seoul are cultural resources as well as socio-historical indicators of Seoul.

Since Seoul was designated as a capital city in 1394, Seoul has become one of the cities with long history. Hanyang City Wall, a typical old city remains, is a historical and cultural asset that is overall adjoined by nine districts and 22 villages surrounding the inner city center of Seoul and is also a city asset representing modernized urban culture of Korea.

Since the efforts to register Hanyang City Wall as a UNESCO World Heritage Site began in 2013, the old castle remains of Hanyang and its surrounding castle towns have attracted attention as a unique cultural resource of Seoul. This area is mixed with residential space right adjacent to the cultural heritage, and Hanyang City has a place sense integrated with the living area of the residents, as well. In terms of the authenticity of the heritage, the protection and comprehensive management measures of the naturally occurring inhabitants over many years have become an essential for the sustainable developments.

The Hanyang City Wall was conserved and partly reconstructed from the castle wall of old city, rooted from the capital city of the Joseon Dynasty, completed in 1396. It was a boundary of the city and operated like a fence that protected the lives of people living within the wall. But the intended function of the old city wall has disappeared in the process of modernization of the city. The wall is being revived for very recent times through excavation and restoration, and it is still embracing people's living inside the wall boundaries as going through the changes of season and day and night [2].

The castle town adjacent to the city wall was in the shadow of the rapid urbanization and expansion of Seoul, and it has been recognized as a place to be removed for the preservation and management of the Hanyang City Wall and for improving the urban environments. As the social and cultural reflection on the value of the unique local culture has progressed, the new evaluation of castle town which contains the urban culture of Seoul from the past to the present has gradually discussed. It is well known that the preservation of cultural heritage encompasses not only architectural objects with physical reality, but also various cultural elements of the region [3].

The castle town is the complicated place where the past and present of the metropolitan Seoul are mixed and has a unique history and locality including community history, culture and

natural resources. Moreover, the community in the castle town itself has the same intangible value as the living heritage. Community activities of the castle town that are the most distinctive among the other towns are slowly formed compared to rapidly changing of the urban circumstances. But cultural and social interactions of the communities are actively continued and now become the barometer of the important urban heritage features.

It also needs to discuss the cultural properties of the community, which has been integrated with the Hanyang City Wall and its contribution as the sustainable enablers. Discussions on community engagements in old heritage sites considering the residents and their quality of life have continuously reviewed and developed.

Based on the assumption that the local community is an important asset for the sustainable developments of the area, this study starts from the following consciousness of the problem: First, community's cultural properties can be positioned as the subject of the sustainable developments. Second, heritage based community activities develop and sustain local assets creatively and subjectively to achieve sustainable developments. Third, community engagements in cultural properties can improve the quality of life and happiness of its members and become the basis of elasticity for resolving problems in the region.

## **2. Comparative Case: Bukjeong Village, Korea and Naoshima Island, Japan**

### *2-1. Methodology*

We conducted basic research through literature review and expert interviews, if necessary. The main concepts and field research directions for studying the characteristics of community culture are formed based on the following framework analysis. The theoretical background for the community research derived from the basic survey was (A) social and cultural network perspective, (B) urban anthropological perspective, and (C) social and cultural representation of the community [4].

(A) The community as a social and cultural network can be summarized by several characteristics:

- Based on the bonds formed by sharing and collecting opinions, responding to local and social issues
- High levels of personal and collective involvements in local identity
- Formation of a channel for sharing opinions through on / offline multi-media
- Maintain sustainability of community activities
- Active creation and intervention of indigenous knowledge and community interventions

(B) The community characteristics derived from the urban anthropological viewpoint can be summarized as the following community elements:

- High level of human value and semantics of community formation
- Easy access to community focused on local resources and cultural properties
- Contexts between the conditions of life in the region and community formation, such as urban mobility, place-making, formation of public spaces, urban policy and governance

(C) The social and cultural representation of community identity can be derived from the following characteristics:

- Interrelationship between residents and spaces and places with unique local culture in the region
- Interaction between non-residents and residents as diverse layers, ages, and social beings
- Role of the community culture as a factor that mediates regional identity, collective identity, and individual sense of belonging
- The inherent value of natural resources, historical and cultural resources, and social assets
- Provide the rationale for combining community activities and local events as catalysts for cultural mediation, social communication and identity formation.
- A series of acts that remember, share, and record community memory and local history.

### *2-2. Heritage and Community: Bukjeong Village, Korea*

#### *2-2-1. Context*

Since Hanyang was designated as the capital of Korea in 1394, it is not an exaggeration to say that the relics of Hanyang connects the regional, historical and spiritual origins of Seoul to the present. Hanyang is a symbolic old city heritage that represents the historical and cultural identity of Seoul, transformed into an urbanized megacity Seoul.

Since the beginning of the construction in 1394, the city of Hanyang City Wall has completed a total of 18.6km of the city, and the walls connecting the four major glottis and four small gates have been completed. During the Japanese colonial period and the turbulence of the Korean War, the original castle has been preserved in its original shape of 13km. The remains of old city are cultural properties containing the history of 600 years, dynamic changes through urbanized, and a cultural identity of Seoul.

The formation of a castle town outside the city was the result of the inhabitants who lost their grounds in the rural areas after the Japanese colonial period. Gradually castle town has come into a measure to settle the myriad of homeless people that have arisen due to floods, natural disasters and sudden social changes. A series of residence group began to form on the hillside slope of the city, under the wall, on the railroad side, on the river side, and under the bridge. Especially, the vicinity of the castle was not the existing residence because of the nature of the hill [5].

Bukjeong village is the part of this landing history located in northern hilly area of Seoul adjacent to the Seongbuk section of Hanyang City Wall. The residents of the Bukjeong village have a long average residence period, high percentage of elderly people, and a high degree of community-centered utilization of local resources.

#### *2-2-2. Cultural Properties*

Hanyang City Wall is a historical result that spatially embodies the concept of East Asian castle building and Confucian reign. It is also a record of urban reconstruction and developments beyond the functional purpose of city defense at the time of construction. Moreover, it is the source of local community cultures formed around the region of the city wall. Especially, this historically formed community along with the

Hanyang City Wall tends to be the strong fusion of cultural heritage and the identity of local residents compared to other regions in Seoul.

Nowadays, there is a tendency not to exclude the factor of human lives who directly or indirectly relate to the cultural heritage in various discussions. Moreover, the notion of cultural properties has expanded ranging from the urban structure to the unique characteristics of the place, and also to the cultural activities of the community.

Bukjeong village located at the scenic area with beautiful landscapes, valleys and has been formed very close to mountains from the Joseon Dynasty. It was also well known place where intellectuals, writers and poets have been hiding here from political confusion. In the Japanese colonial period, there were lots of famous writers, artists' residents, and the wealthy villas. In the meantime, there were also the historical and cultural spots where the national movements leading by independence activists opposed Japanese imperialism.

Based on these cultural and historical backgrounds, a community with a unique local culture and bond was formed such as Bukjeong village. The community, which has grown along the Hanyang City Wall, has been attracting attention as a intangible cultural properties. Nowadays, it needs to be newly evaluated and protected along with Hanyang City Wall as the urban cultural resources.

### 2-2-3. Community Engagements

Seoul City supports the activities of local communities in securing their own local identity historically formed along with Hanyang City Wall. This support is going in several directions such as restoring pride of the residents near by the heritage sites, sharing heritage values and actively preserving heritages for future generations. In the Bukjeong viillage, there are various communities, civic groups such as residents' associations, and other social and cultural groups actively encourage the cultural properties in the region.

Bukjeong Village has formed during a long average residence period, and there are a high percentage of elderly people living in this area, a high level of community-centered utilization of local resources. In addition to these common points, there are differences in the speed of sustainability of community activities such as public spaces and the composition of governance.

The community is now getting actively involved in developing cultural properties such as creating traditional well-being food such as *Meju* which traditionally fermented soybeans, home-made tofu, voluntary participation of cultivating their community activities such as First Full Moon Festival, and heritage hybrid festival *Wall-Moon*, which re-examines the historical and cultural value of the area for outsiders visiting the village.

### 2-3. Art Project and Community: Naoshima Island, Japan

#### 2-3-1. Context

Naoshima Island is one of the representative areas symbolizing the modernization of Japan. On the island, there was a smelter of Mitsubishi, one of Japan's leading companies, where the industrial function was emphasized. But the plunge in copper prices has led to a decline in the

area, job decreased and population declined. The more serious problem with the decline of island was about the environments such as polluted oceans, industrial wastes and bold mountains on the island by pollution. In order to overcome these problems, efforts for sustainable developments that combines environments and arts have begun. In these attempts, Soichi Fukudake of the Benesse Group and architect Tadao Ando, who designed and conducted a major direction for sustainable developments, played the enormous role. The characteristic of the arts utilized in Naoshima Island is the site-specific art, which provides a unique experience that can be found only in that local area, without being forced to intervene in nature and inhabited life.

Important cultural sites that played a major role in transforming Naoshima into the cultural island are the Benesse House Museum and the Chi Chu Art Museum. In the sense of 'living well', Benesse Group adopted the culture and arts as the main mediator for sustainable developments of the nature and human beings. In accordance with eco-friendly Cultural Project proposed by Fukudake on Naoshima Island, the Benesse House Museum was completed in 1992 and the Chi Chu Museum of Art was completed in 2004.

An important example of the sustainable developments of local communities and cultural resources in the island is the Art Project in the Honmura region. The Honmura area is a typical Japanese country village with many old houses over a hundred years old, has formed from 1600. As the population in this region also declined and empty houses came to emerge, sustainable regional development was introduced to overcome these problems.

#### 2-3-2. Cultural Properties

Honmura area, one of old villages in Naoshima Island, where Japanese traditional facilities such as castle, temples, and shrines are scattered, and the number of vacant houses have increased due to the decline in population and aging residents [6].

As the number of vacant houses in the village grew, a community-based project called 'Ie Project' began, specifically by local resident donating his old house to community center and utilizing it.

'Ie' means 'house' in Japanese, and project committee invites an artist for staying in the old empty house, feeling and interpreting the surroundings and contexts sufficiently. Finally the artist has created installation works in harmony with the environment. The first house of 'Ie project' was completed in 1997.

It was *Kadoya*, artistically reconstructed by contemporary media artist Miyajima Datsuo, and the project has transformed currently a total of seven empty houses into artistic spaces. *Kadoya* provided island residents with a chance to rethink their cultural resources utilizing old abandoned houses.

The project is a prime example of sustainable developments through the cultural space-making using old resources to creative new properties. Particularly noteworthy is the process by which residents express cultural values in their own places and familiarize artistic activities with their own properties. In addition, visitors can search the seven main vanues in the villages by using the maps created by the

community center, so that they will naturally look around the Honmura area and experience the meticulous living space of the area's history, culture and community itself.

It is getting alive with young people coming to the village where the elderly population was the majority, and students and young people are volunteering and guiding the project.

It has achieved sustainable developments through art projects without violating the original culture and space of the community. The success of this area has been adopted in Inujima Island, which has been experiencing the same problem.

### 2-3-3. Community Engagements

The main activities of the residents centered on several platforms. The community center is the representative space selling tour tickets, related cultural goods and also advise village information. It also plays an important role in accumulating and managing archives related to the region.

Naoshima Hall is an eco-friendly community platform that takes into consideration the natural wind and light as the space elements keeping traditional Japanese style of house. Local residents used the hall sometimes as a stage for traditional cultural event such as Kabuki performance, and sometimes as space for the athletic, socio-cultural activities, and usually life space for the community.

Naoshima Island, under the leadership of Benesse Corporation, promoted sustainable regional developments by introducing culture and arts to regenerate this region. Particularly, this success is possible because the elderly-oriented local community has made efforts to be the better community. Nowadays, countless tourists go around the village with maps, so even though the actual living space is occupied by them, but the residents have been adapting this change at the community level and have restored their resilience for the various changes.

### 3. Implementation and Conclusion

As we have seen in the previous cases, the use of cultural resources, which emphasize the roles and responsibilities of the community in sustainable regional development, is becoming an important factor. In other words, sustainability needs to be actively discussed not only in economic and environmental aspects but also in cultural and social aspects. Sustainable development strategies are responsible to the historic-cultural context and the uniqueness of a place and community. Moreover, community-based approaches to development are most effective and sustainable.

Throughout the past decades, statistics, indicators and data on the cultural sector, as well as operational activities have underscored that culture can be a powerful driver for development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts [7]. Similarly, the cultural properties has evolved to include landscapes, industrial and old local heritage, vernacular constructions, urban and rural settlements and intangible elements like temporary art performance and even ways of life [8]. The idea of sustainable development has also been expanded along with the expansion of cultural properties in the region.

Communities are firstly slow but getting actively involving in developing cultural properties presented in their own environments. Community based cultural properties generally focuses on some aspects that are perceived as familiar by the inhabitants but as unique by visitors. It has an association with historic past, sometimes with community's narratives that align to the site-specific artworks and therefore make these intangible elements are subsumed into the special local cultural resources.

The various representations of culture also provide some ways to sustain that culture into the future, and that culture is essentially not the same as it has been in the past. Intangible elements comprise cultural properties that are rather ephemeral than buildings and townscapes, but that still form essential elements of culture. It can include spoken stories, community seasonal activities, food, clothing, dance, the way of life, and even memories [9].

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