



The role of stakeholder collaboration in culture-led urban regeneration: A case study of the Gwangju project, Korea



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ABSTRACT

The preliminary stages of a large scale culture-led urban regeneration project initiated by the Korean government in Gwangju were studied. Stakeholders' perceptions of culture's contribution to urban regeneration and their views on collaborative partnerships were explored. Qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews from 19 purposively selected stakeholders. This case study determined public-private cooperation in regenerating Gwangju could, simultaneously, generate positive socio-cultural and economic impacts in society. However, stakeholders lacked opportunities for active participation. Hence, closer working relationships between central-municipal government and public-private/voluntary sectors were recommended. The case confirmed that long-term implementation of such projects needs to be anticipated and based on longitudinal and structured strategic planning to promote successful partnership collaborations amongst central/municipal governments, local communities and residents. This paper contributed to the knowledge gap in the area of stakeholder collaboration in building tourism/cultural systems by examining the micro-level interactions amongst stakeholders.

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Introduction

Deindustrialization in postindustrial cities in Europe and North America has considerably shrunk the workforce and, in turn, contributed to stagnant economic growth due to socioeconomic problems (Kollmeyer, 2009). As such, many cities have initiated urban regeneration to neutralize deindustrialization and attract new investments to stimulate their economies (Jones & Evans, 2008). However, urban regeneration projects are time consuming, complex, have a high uncertainty rate of completion and a high failure rate, and involve a chain of actions to improve "the economic, physical, social, and environmental conditions" of cities (Yu & Kwon, 2011: 889). Hence, practitioners, stakeholders and scholars have continued to debate the challenges of such initiatives in the context of economic, political, social and environmental factors, and are yet to come to terms with them. For instance, an African regeneration project led by the government to develop telecenters in the region failed because most Africans were unable to gain access to telecommunications (Benjamin, 2000).

Urban regeneration can be initiated by, and associated with, different themes like property developments, arts, culture, strategic marketing and image reconstruction, and mega events (for example Garcia, 2004; Shin, 2010). Due to resource constraints, the present study focuses on culture-led urban regeneration. The 'pros' of culture-led urban regeneration to stimulate economy and to revive postindustrial cities have been well documented (for example Garcia, 2004; Middleton & Freestone, 2008; Sasaki, 2010). However, the confusing interpretation of culture and multiculturalism, and the lack of discussion of reality of culture-led urban regeneration, are key issues awaiting further exploration (Miles & Paddison, 2005). In reality, the success of culture-led urban regeneration cannot be achieved without the cooperation and participation of various stakeholders (Lee, 2007; Shin, 2010; Timur & Getz, 2008) as stakeholder partnerships form the basis of efficient policy outcomes and value delivery (Kort & Klijn, 2011). Research regarding the mechanisms and perceptions of stakeholders' collaboration in culture-led urban regeneration in Asian cities is dearth. As such, the present study aims to identify, elicit and analyze stakeholders' perceptions of their collaboration, participation and partnerships in a real culture-led urban regeneration project in Asia.

The Korean government has instigated more than 500 urban regeneration projects during the last 40 years, although in 2011,

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Yu and Kwon noted that more than half of these initiatives had not yet commenced. However, one of the promising urban regeneration projects led by culture is ongoing in Gwangju, South Korea; it is founded on the rich local and regional cultural resources in both rural and urban areas (Shin, 2010). Through this project, the researchers were presented with a rare opportunity to explore stakeholders' long-term perceptions of the contribution of culture to a real large government led and initiated urban regeneration project. As such, the following two questions were posed to address the aim: (i) What are the stakeholders' perceptions of culture-led urban regeneration at micro-level interactions among stakeholders during the conceptualization of a large collaborative project (cf. Arnaboldi & Spiller, 2011) in Gwangju city? (ii) What are the stakeholders' views on the current environment and the status of participation and partnerships in the project in Gwangju city? Issues encountered in structural planning for long-term implementation are also considered.

In order to provide a research context, key pertinent issues examined in the literature review are urban regeneration in the context of cultural tourism and stakeholder collaboration in urban regeneration. Subsequently, taking account of the roles, responsibilities and perspectives of the stakeholders, the documentation and procedures involved in setting up the Gwangju project are studied. Then, through semi-structured interviews, socio-cultural and economic aspects of the case are examined through the eyes of key stakeholders. The paper then addresses the issues raised in the literature in the context of the case of the Gwangju project. Finally, potential positive and negative perspectives are highlighted, tactical tourism developments are proposed and strategies for the long-term implementation of collaborative project outcomes are put forward.

Literature review

This section sets a foundation for the present study by critically reviewing literature related to culture-led urban regeneration and stakeholder collaboration in urban regeneration in the following sub-sections.

Cultural tourism and urban regeneration

Since the early 1990s, cultural tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism market, particularly in Europe, and the relationship between culture and tourism has been shown to be mutually beneficial (for example, Hughes, 2002; Urry, 2002). Smith (1977), investigating the negative and positive effects of tourism on local communities, found that visitor type (explorer, elite, off-beat, unusual, incipient mass, mass and character), expectations and numbers all play significant roles in the effect of tourism on local culture. Gamper (1981), examining the influence of tourism on ethnic relations between two populations in southern Austria, revealed that tourism had the effect of breaking down ethnic boundaries and Hughes (1998) revealed its effect on culture in theatres (diverse, adventurous and innovative theatrical scene and creative artistic talent) in London. In 2008, Sharpley investigated the relationship between tourism and contemporary culture, particularly the way in which certain characteristics of postmodern society impacted on tourism. He pointed out that changes in the cultural condition of the tourist's society are likely to bring about changes in the style and significance of tourism. Cultural tourism is seen as a panacea for heritage conservation and development worldwide (Aiesha & Evans, 2007), that plays a significant role in revitalizing local and national economies and in enhancing people's quality of life. An increasing number of cities have initiated festivals and events within urban regeneration

projects to promote local cultural tourism (Thrane, 2002). These festivals and events have helped to generate economic benefits, enhance local quality of life, and create community social solidarity while simultaneously causing environmental damage, increasing traffic congestion, and perhaps adding to law enforcement costs (Frey, 1994; Getz, 1993).

Certain European cities, like Barcelona, Glasgow and Bilbao, have used the approach of culture-led urban regeneration as a postindustrial solution (Garcia, 2004; Middleton & Freestone, 2008; Miles, 2005). Reviewing the case of Glasgow, European's Capital of Culture in 1990, Garcia (2004) perceived that, although Glasgow had benefited from improved infra- and super-structure, it suffered from a lack of long term planning in terms of public and private partnerships. Garcia (2004) determined this problem to be a consequence of Glasgow's approaching the event from a purely economic rather than a cultural perspective. In fact, culture-led urban regeneration in this instance was judged to be a "creative impulse for economic growth" that "diminished considerations of social equity in development" (Mooney, 2004: 338). To overcome such a problem, various researchers (including Garcia, 2004; Sharp, Pollock, & Paddison, 2005; Timur & Getz, 2008) suggested that private and public partnerships should ensure community involvement in order to acquire and sustain long-term benefits. In this vein, Middleton and Freestone (2008) confirmed that culture-led urban regeneration schemes in Europe often failed to succeed due to the lack of local residents' support. In order to gain local residents' support, Bydgoszcz in Poland, Zaragoza in Spain and Rotterdam in Holland, all of whom have distinguished cultural backgrounds (Banks, 2011), integrated arts, design, engineering, architecture, religion and sports in both the city centers and the outlying areas in order to take account of less-privileged communities. However, funding needs to be available to develop and maintain the cultural infrastructure in the long term to ensure sustainable development. In the context of cultural urbanization and tourism development, Al-Hagla (2010) studied the importance of sustainable community development in the city of Saida, Lebanon and concluded, in line with the European context, a need for community involvement to ensure sustainable community and tourism development. In addition, Toke (2005) investigated community wind power initiatives in the UK and concluded that initiatives progressed and led by the local people can generate more benefits than those developed by the governments. Furthermore, Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed, and McAlpine (2006) revealed that environmental initiatives, like desertification reduction, lacked of community involvement have led to project failures.

In an Eastern/Asian context, culture-led regeneration is considered to be the key to boosting long-term economic growth. For example, Wang (2009) reviewed the Red Town project in Shanghai, which was documented to be set up as an attempt to enhance the development of art and culture but it transpired that its planning and execution was solely to generate revenue. Subsequently, critics referred to "deliberate manipulation of culture", with a particular focus on social inequity due to the fact that low cost industrial properties were transformed into creative spectacular buildings and then sold as office spaces without any economic benefits for the community or the artists (Wang, 2009: 319). Sasaki (2010) studied the Japanese city of Osaka, where policies failed to achieve culture-led urban regeneration in 2007, not due to a lack of community involvement but because of financial problems and political changes. Later in 2007, private and public entities worked together and started projects in order to develop Osaka with the result that the citizen's council decided to build creative places throughout the city in line with a movement launched by the citizens that transformed Kanazawa into a creative city (Yahagi, 2009). These cases demonstrate and underpin the importance of not only private and public partnerships but also community

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