"Gwangju Folly," The Cultural Landscape in Gwangju: Strategy and Concepts of "Gwangju Folly" as a Cultural Intervention for Urban Revitalization

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Abstract

Gwangju Metropolitan City established "Folly," a project of small decorative buildings situated randomly in Gwangju City as "urban devices for revitalization" to create a city image for Gwangju. Folly shows different progressions by phase (Folly I, II, III), and after the first Folly was installed in 2011, the second was executed in 2013, and the third is now in progress. In this study, with respect to theory, we first explore future cities according to their cultural direction through existing cases that have formed cultural landscapes through Follies. Second, by phase, we compare the characteristics of the Gwangju Follies, which function as urban devices for revitalization in the gradually declining old downtown of Gwangju Metropolitan City through examining their background and current status. Third, we explain the concept of place marketing and consider five factors as indicators for evaluating Follies. Fourth, we analyze the Gwangju Follies by phase in terms of sustainability, authenticity, integrity, connectivity and efficiency, and make appropriate recommendations.

Keywords: Gwangju Folly; Urban Revitalization; Cultural Landscape; Place Marketing

1. Introduction

Until now, urban regeneration has been conducted as part of the physical urban maintenance and development, rather than aiming to revitalize and revive the declining area. The prescription for declining areas focused on improving the physical environment has not contributed to actual regional revitalization, and has revealed many problems even in the process of promoting the project. Therefore, it is necessary to design a comprehensive new system for urban regeneration given the limitations of existing rehabilitation projects, the general prescriptions for the problem of urban decline, and the establishment of a sustainable growth base for the future cities of Korea. As responses to this problem, urban regeneration grafted with culture is emerging. The reason why the twenty-first century is called the century of culture is that the term culture refers to holistic lifestyles, and the status of culture is rising even in the value systems of individuals and nations. The flow of cultural policy is being expanded to "art → industry → life → city". The keyword emphasized in the early cultural policy was "artistic", focusing mainly on promoting artistic creations and promoting the enjoyment of culture. Subsequently, cultural policy has been expanded in the direction of focusing on industrialization utilizing the arts, including cultural contents, cultural industry and cultural brand. The keyword that is regarded as important here is "economic feasibility," and cultural industries, cultural technology, cultural tourism, and so on may be important policy areas. In addition, cultural policy has been...
expanded to the many cultural aspects of life, including housing, welfare, leisure, transportation, ecology, green park spaces, etc. The keyword emphasized here is “dailiness,” and cultural enjoyment, cultural activities, cultural welfare, leisure culture, etc. are important policy areas. Recently, the area of cultural policy has been expanded throughout the city to include cultural cities and urban culture, urban regeneration, urban branding, place marketing, etc. The important focus here is “placeness,” and spatial culture, cultural environment, cultural landscape and cultural administration may be important policy areas. Urban regeneration, in particular, needs to pay attention to the placeness and culture of the region. In a city, culture implies the temporality of the life of a citizen embodied in a space, namely, historicity. When the lives of urban people are changed through creative processes and values, which are unique attributes of culture, and various contents that create relationships, their lives infused with cultures, and secure the power of sustainable urban regeneration. Therefore, Gwangju Metropolitan City established “Folly,” a project of small decorative buildings here and there in Gwangju City as “urban devices for revitalization” to create an urban image of Gwangju. Folly shows a different progression according to phase (Folly I, II, III), and after the first Folly was installed in 2011, the second was executed in 2013, and the third is now in progress. This study can be used as a basis to suggest a solution for a sustainable Gwangju Folly by comparing the Gwangju Follies by phase.

2. Folly in City

Historically, follies have been widely used in the fields of architecture, visual arts, literature, etc. as strategic places allowing for satire and free from the constraints of social norms, as were seen as a part of light refreshment and stimulation. In addition, follies have been used as critical mediums and objects that cross between aesthetic autonomy and socio-political potential; they are located in the field between contextual conditions and non-contextual states. In other words, although it is placed in a structured urban space, the unstructured device beyond this is a folly in the modern sense; this is the reason Gwangju pays attention to follies as an alternative in the new creative space, namely, because they overcome the limitations of the existing urban context and communicate with the public. Folly, literally means “a ridiculous act,” was used in city architecture in the sense of a small public facility with cultural characteristics. Since Bernard Tschumi used it in the 1980s when designing Parc de La Villette in Paris, Tschumi’s folly can be seen as a means to organize the whole earth. By using basic elements of design: dot-line-face, each folly placed in the grid system becomes a dot element; the passage for walking in the park becomes a line element; a square or a sports ground becomes a face element; together they give the pleasure of making various unexpected “visual incidents.”

3. Gwangju Folly

Gwangju Folly was originally named “Urban Folly” derived from urban which referred to the city and folly as decorative architecture, but in order to convey the identity of Gwangju, Urban Folly was changed into the proper name “Gwangju Folly,” and while it is being used for the identity of the city, it attracts domestic and foreign interest. “Gwangju Folly” is a project organized by Gwangju Metropolitan City and sponsored by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation to present the small architectural arts (follies) of globally celebrated architects and artists. In order to regenerate the downtown of the city and strengthen its brand, it has been promoted since 2011, and the third project is now in progress. The background to the promotion of the Folly project is to position the city brand of Gwangju as a “Folly City” and make it a tourist attraction by connecting the indistinctive and monotonous cityscape from “dot” to “line” through the follies expanding the entire downtown of the city to “face,” and transforming it into a beautiful art city. The Folly project has progressed by phases, and the themes and features associated with them are displayed differently. Gwangju Folly I was installed with ten follies along the traces of the old Gwangju town castle site, which plays a role in awakening the existence of the past Gwangju town castle and the new values of the May 18
movement. The folly functions to connect the past with Gwangju’s present. Gwangju Folly II intended to release the potential of public space in various ways in the context of the “Gwangju spirit” held by the human rights city – Gwangju - with the theme of human rights and public space. Gwangju Folly III established the “dailiness of the city” as the core concept to overcome the historical limitations of the city, and to develop a new popularity by building on the successful inheritance of the first and second Gwangju Follies’ tasks. In particular, Folly III strengthens the identity of Gwangju, which was selected as a media art creation city, and provides a new form of project that combines media art and the Folly program.  

Gwangju Folly will form one pattern through clustering and will exert its influence rather than work as a unitary entity within the city. Follies to be located in the city are intended to lead the regeneration of the city’s downtown by transmitting a strong cultural powerfulness to the old downtown area of Gwangju which has experienced rapid growth for the past 40 years and experienced the downtown being hollowed out.

4. Comparison of Gwangju Follies

The evaluation index can be varied considerably depending on the stance for viewing the object. As this study looks at and understands Folly from the viewpoint of place marketing, we suggest a new evaluation index suitable for Folly by reconstructing the place marketing evaluation index of previous research. Prior to that, we will review the concept of place marketing. According to glocalization since the inauguration of the local autonomous entity in 1995, an urban development strategy emphasizing an identity specific to the
region has suddenly emerged. This is referred to as a place marketing strategy, an approach that involves a comprehensive, systematic, connective, cultural, and active urban development strategy pursuing the progress of urban culture, urban economy, and urban society simultaneously, by establishing a long-term vision and identity of the city based on a clear evaluation of the place's nature; this is undertaken through a close partnership among the city's formative agents. It also entails providing products to citizens, tourists, and enterprises by developing city-specific products based on using the techniques of the place marketing strategy. The place marketing strategy has a thread of connection with the plan for improving urban competitiveness, which is achieved through the development of urban culture. In other words, it is possible that when the image and identity of the city are clear, the urban economy becomes firmly based on the cultural assets inherent in the city, the qualities of the citizens' lives are guaranteed to be rich and diverse, and the urban communities living together can be created through these assets. The departure of the place marketing strategy starts with the task of creating placeness where the identity of the place is discovered, interpreted, planned, and created. After that, local cultural contents that can be commercialized based on the place are planned and developed, and concrete marketing strategies and programs are promoted to commercialize and brand them. In this way, based on the three core concepts of place, cultural contents, marketing, to improve the image and identity of the city, to create an economic ripple effect through cultural tourism and cultural industry, and to create urban communities oozing the quality of life and identity may be cultural significance of place marketing.

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1) The aspect of sustainability
Folly I: The first Folly began in conjunction with holding the Biennale but without the precise preliminary investigation of the actual situation with which Gwangju was faced. At the initial planning stage, the validity of placing the Folly in the old downtown of Gwangju was insufficient.
Folly II: While the first Folly emphasized the place identity of the region alone, the second Folly was meaningful in that it aimed at a wide target group and pursued universal value through the discourse of human rights.
Folly III: In order to strengthen the identity of Gwangju’s selection as a media art city, this Folly used the experiential device “taste and flavor” which is one of the everyday elements of experiencing the city. It intended to breathe new vitality into the awakening nighttime landscape downtown that surrounds the Folly. However, the validity of the third Folly location and its relevance to media art still seem to be insufficient.

2) The aspect of authenticity
Folly I: In the ten Follies installed along the old town castle of Gwangju, the placeness was strongly reinforced by the theme of restoration of history
Folly II: In the second Folly, which conveys social messages through the public space around Gwangju City, the participants themselves give meaning to the place where the Folly was installed.
Folly III: While the first and second Folly were to serve in specific form as small public sculptures, Folly III suggests a new type of Folly focusing on a functional program (to see, to cook, to play) rather than the physical properties which other Follies have. By attracting visitors through various experiential devices, it has become directly helpful in improving the city’s image.

3) The aspect of integration
Folly I: The problem of lack of communication with local communities and citizens was initially when conflicts with residents concerning the Folly occurred sporadically around downtown. The dissatisfaction with the lack of understanding about the public space and lack of communication with the residents, the infringement of citizen's pedestrian rights, incongruity with the surrounding environment, and covering up of nearby shops’ signs, etc. has brought the residents’ indifference to the first Folly.
Folly II: The Gwangju Biennale Foundation has been providing opportunities for cultural enjoyment to citizens since 2012, operating the tour programs with Folly docents, and sponsoring programs with local youth, and culture and arts organizations, etc.
Folly III: Folly III is meaningful in that citizens have participated in the entire process from the public contest involving the works up to their selection and operation. This is called “crowdsourcing,” and it encourages the citizens’ participation through their suggestions in a Folly Idea public contest over the location, type, program, etc. of the Folly and by providing selected items among the contested ideas through social and broadcasting media. In addition, citizens may participate directly in the form of managing community businesses in general operation after Folly’s construction.

4) The aspect of connectivity
Folly I: The Folly I project promoted as part of the Asian Cultural Center City Project was close to the government’s publicly driven type of city regeneration.
Folly II: In the second Folly, the Folly project is said to have gradually developed as a bottom-up, community-driven type of urban regeneration in that citizens and social organizations participated as operational partners for each work from the planning stage and established a “citizen council for the Folly” to improve communication between citizens and planners and artists.
Folly III: As local youth have established a cooperative and donated a part of the profits to the Biennale Foundation, which is the main subject of the Folly, like “Cook Folly” where chefs selected from local youth actually cook dishes and sell them to the visitors, it is meaningful in that the Folly is changing into a public-private type of cooperation with citizens in their everyday lives, rather than being only a festival of invited artists.

5) The aspect of efficiency
Folly I: Although the first Folly was aimed at regenerating the old downtown and expanding the cultural assets of Gwangju by attracting the works of the world-renowned artists, and some achievements were recognized through the issues raised, it did not help the local economy.
Folly II: Efforts to diversify the contact points for citizens became the driving force for winning the first prize of the 2014 Korean landscape grand prize, under the name of “Urban public design project together with citizens.” Various revitalization projects that have progressed through collaboration with regional culture and art organizations have created a new urban civic culture and are bringing vitality to the old downtown of Gwangju.
Folly III: The third Folly affects the revitalization of the regional economy through a new form of Folly combined with social issues based on popularity and participation. In particular, the Cook Folly is expected to be able to play a role as cultural industrial regeneration model based on “small urbanism” combining commercial facilities and public arts for revitalizeing the local alley market.
5. Conclusion

In the Folly I project, regional culture was expected to bloom through the Gwangju Folly using the place marketing strategy in collaboration with the Gwangju Biennale, but because the marketing was unsystematic, the ripple effect on the area was merely temporary. The Folly II project that subsequently appeared took a strategic approach by subdividing the target group. In addition, from its planning to its operation and management, it gradually established the identity of the region through collaboration with the local community. The Folly III project strove to connect the Folly and regional identity more aggressively, and through communication among various interest groups, it led to the development of the regional economy. In order for Gwangju Folly to contribute to the successful urban regeneration of Gwangju Metropolitan City, systematic guidelines must be prepared based on the comparative analysis described in this study. First, organic collaboration between the city planning department of Gwangju and the stakeholders must be achieved. Second, we should not look at the Folly individually in itself, but look for ways to harmonize and develop it together by considering the environment surrounding the Folly and its various infrastructures. Third, for a sustainable Folly, residents must be able to engage more actively as part of the management. The effect of Gwangju Folly as an urban device for revitalization will be further enhanced if it is continuously promoted. It is very important to understand Gwangju Folly as a process of constant change and growth, not as one completed entity, so that culture may blossom in the realm of everyday life and transform the city into a culturally revitalized place through the Folly. When the lives of urban people are changed through cultural arts that construct a creative process, value, and relationships, not simply fixed things, targets, products, or completed output, the city will be regenerated; when life is the top priority in creating an infrastructure for the cultural space required by society, and when the quality of the urban environment where life can be culture is improved, society will acquire cultural power through spatial transformation.

Notes & References