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A STUDY ON THE REGIONAL REVITALIZATION
THROUGH THE SENSE OF PLACE IN HISTORIC
SITES – FOCUSING ON THE CASE OF ALBAICÍN
IN GRANADA, SPAIN –

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**A Study on the Regional Revitalization through the Sense of Place in Historic Sites
- Focusing on the Case of Albaicín in Granada, Spain -**

Synopsis:

This paper seeks to analyze Albaicín, a historical site in Granada, Spain that has achieved regional revitalization using historical relics, through the authentic sense of place explained by humanistic Canadian Geographer Edward Relph.

**A Study on the Regional Revitalization through the Sense of Place in Historic Sites
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1. Introduction

Many European cities that experienced decline after the Industrial Revolution achieved their regeneration and revitalization through various ways. Cities in Asia started imitating successful urban regeneration cases in Europe, building new cultural facilities and holding cultural events. Many cities have achieved regeneration and revitalization, but are losing each of their unique characteristics. In this situation, it has become important to figure out how to revitalize historical spaces that declined with the expansion of cities. Historical sites with rich historical and cultural assets are also cohabited by residents who live there. The residents in historical sites are experiencing more urban problems than the residents of other developed cities. Human-oriented urban regeneration and not only changes in physical structures will achieve the region's overall regeneration.

This paper seeks to discuss the revitalization of historical sites based on the authentic sense of place, focusing on a case example in Granada, Spain which is carrying out revitalization in historical sites. Spain is a country with rich historical and cultural heritage and thus have many cases of using historical sites with historical and cultural heritage in various ways. Albaicín in Granada has many historical assets of the Moors from the Islamic rule remaining intact, but still experienced decline despite of having many cultural assets with high historical values. The city government has implemented the regional revitalization plans by using the historical and cultural assets remained in the region, rather than creating a new landmark. The residents' activities have been carried out after the regeneration plans. Albaicín's regional revitalization is made through the local government's plans and the regional residents' activities.

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2. Sense of Place in Historical Sites

A city's historical sites identifies and differentiates a city by forming a past space and considerable group memory of our society¹ The revitalization of historical sites will become a key to regain the identity of place in a region that is turning placelessness due to indiscriminate development. A place with many historical structures that have been maintained for a long time delivers a different feeling from a place with a uniform look throughout the world, i.e. a place covered with high-rise buildings and multinational franchise stores that do not match the city's identity.

It is important to differentiate a city from other places, but a sense of place that both insiders and outsiders feel must also be considered. A sense of place consists of a feeling that insiders or outsiders have through a physical and psychological experience in a certain place. Relph, E (1976) divided the authentic sense of place into two: unconscious sense of place and self-conscious sense of place. "An authentic sense of place is above all that of being inside and belonging to your place both as an individual and as a member of a community. And to know this without reflecting upon it. (...) It provides an important source of identity for individuals, and through them for communities."² In contrast, a self-conscious sense of place is "an attempts to experience all the qualities and meanings of a place both as the people living there might experience them and also terms of their functional, aesthetic, or other qualities that might not be apparent to existential insiders."³ However, it has become difficult to feel these two authentic senses of place. Due to a city's various changes, insiders can no longer have their own sense of belonging to a place because they have often had to move their place of residence, and it has also become difficult for outsiders to experience something from a place that is losing its own characteristics.

A historical site is a place with a rich sense of place internally and externally; it can easily have a magnificent feeling that a place has and can reproduce memory with unchanging landscape over a long time. However, other problems have occurred by continuing physical preservation to maintain such identity of place; problems in human life such as population decrease, residents of old age groups, and inconvenient accessibility. To revitalize historical sites, preservation and use of them must be achieved together to attain an authentic sense of place that Relph has said.

¹ Miguel Ángel Troitiño Vinuesa (2003). LA PROTECCIÓN, RECUPERACIÓN Y REVITALIZACIÓN FUNCIONAL DE LOS CENTROS HISTÓRICOS, *Ciudades, arquitectura y espacio urbano*, Vol.3 , p.132.

² Relph, E., *Place and Placelessness*, Pion, 1976, pp.65-66

³ Ibid., p.66

3. Regional Revitalization of Albaicín, Granada

There is a historical site called Albaicín across Darro River, which flows right next to Alhambra that represents Granada. A region concentrated by Moors from the medieval era, Albaicín is a region with historical and cultural meanings. After Nasrid Dynasty surrendered to the Christian Spanish kingdoms of Aragon and Castile in 1492 and Christians conquered Granada, many regional structures of Al-Andalus⁴ disappeared. However, many structures of Moor styles remain in Albaicín compared to other regions, including the residence of medieval Moor styles such as narrow streets and small plazas that still remain. Tourists can also visit Casa de la Reina where aristocrats used to reside and Corral del Carbon where ancient merchants stayed, showing the prosperity of Albaicín in the past.⁵ Although a long time has passed, the city structure and buildings of Albaicín show the Moor style as it is, and based on this the entire Albaicín region was registered on UNESCO in 1994 like the designated Alhambra and Generalife. However, unlike Alhambra that gained high awareness and reputation, Albaicín was becoming a ghetto. In 1570, the Kingdom of Granada enforced the deportation of Moors, and as a result the population of Albacin decreased noticeably. After some time, this region became mostly populated by elders, gypsies, and residents from Northern Africa. Albaicín also had serious urban problems such as aging issue, population decrease, vacant residence, public order and security, lack of education and service facilities, unemployment, etc.

3-1 Project of regional revitalization of Albaycín of Granada

The first project to regenerate Albaicín is the EU's UPP (Urban Pilot Project), a part of the EU's urban regeneration project that started from the 1990s. This project was implemented due to the socioeconomic decline of cities caused by wide-ranging urban problems. Granada was selected in the second project in 1997, and through UPP it sought to lay foundation for the revitalization of Albaicín, its historical site. The region aimed to attract tourists by improving its accessibility and restore degenerating architectural heritage in short-term, and achieve sustainable urban regeneration in medium and long-term. The region sought to lay establish the foundation of regional development by focusing on 4 aspects: tourism (installation of Alhambra-Albaicín bus line, trail and signboards; establishment of Guide and Interpreter Association, etc.), university (tourism department, architectural restoration, and the establishment of historical heritage center, etc.), cultural and business.

In 1998, the City Council of Granada had the Albaicín Foundation to be in charge of the

⁴ The period of Muslims' rule on the Iberian Peninsula for 8 centuries (7~15C) is referred to as Al-Andalus (Hwang, Euigab. 1995).

⁵ UNESCO Granada—Alhambra, Generalife, Albaicín. <http://heritage.unesco.or.kr/whs/alhambra-generalife-and-albayzin-granada> (accessed November 20, 2016)

project management and development. This organization held various seminars while carrying out the project as a private economic agent, and encouraged active neighbors' participation. After, the Albaicín Foundation carried out the restoration and recovery of the historical assets of Albaicín as well as the regeneration of surrounding environment with the financial support of the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER) in 2000. URBAN Community Initiative Program, the third project from 2000 to 2007, encouraged more intensified neighbor participation mainly in issues for the region's residents, enabling wide-ranging participation of neighbor organization, environment organization, labor union, political parties, public institutions, and private institutions. The details of this project are as follows.⁶

(1) Recovery of abandoned solar and contaminated land. Rehabilitation of public spaces, including green areas:

- Actions in San Jerónimo-Catedral and San José-Muralla Ziri;
- Repair and installation of buildings to hold sociocultural leisure and sports activities;
- Activities for the preservation and appraisal of historical and cultural heritage.

(2) Entrepreneurship and pacts in favor of employment:

- A program to revitalize traditional stores that are not succeeded or maintained.

(3) Integration of marginalized and access to basic services:

- Promotion of education plans and personalized training for social reintegration;
- Promotion of community sensitization in line of modification of habits and attitudes generating social exclusion;
- Training and Insertion center in social services and services to people.

(4) Integration of public transport and communications.

(5) Reduction and treatment of waste. Efficient water management and noise reduction.

(6) Development of the technology potential of the information society.

(7) Evaluation, management and follow-up. Improvements in the urban government:

- Organization of the new models of citizen participation: Audiovisual materials were prepared and citizens' participation were encouraged to strengthen the understanding of program and joint responsibility.

3-2 Regional Revitalization by the Neighbor Association of Albaicín: la Asociación De Vecino Bajo Albayzín

In January 2000, la Asociación De Bajo Albayzín was established for the rights and integration of the region's residents. The organization carries out various activities: Cultural activities, participation in all institutions representing the residents and related to the region;

⁶ Fundación Albaicín. http://www.albaicin-granada.com/pu/f_pu.htm (accessed October 15, 2017).

promotion of activities that help with the region's social, cultural, and economic development; raising problems that influence the common life; request to the government for subsidies to improve living conditions; planning of activities to coexist with neighbors; participation in forums, committees, and working groups to improve the region and residents.⁷ The organization carries out various cultural activities for the residents' integration, which are as follows.

(1) Albaicín City Library (Biblioteca Publica Municipal Albaicín) is carrying out book-related activities, such as the presentation of books on Albaicín, puppet shows, shadow plays, or poetry readings with Fiestas de San Miguel in Albaicín as a theme, etc.

(2) Photography Contest (Concurso de Fotografía): Photos selected by this event that is hosted by the residents' organization and sponsored by the Albaicín City Council are stored in the UNESCO database. The photos on the website of UNESCO showed Albaicín from very old past. The organization contacted the UNESCO by Twitter and the UNESCO decided to post the photos that won contest on its website.⁸ Various residents are participating in the region, depicting the region.

(3) Albaicín Live the Music. Flamenco Nights (Albayzín vive la música. Noches Flamencas): A flamenco performance supported by the government of Granada that is held three times in June.

(4) Cultural activities for elders and females and courses for unemployed people.

(5) Movie screening (AlbaicínE) and various exhibitions.

La Asociación De Vecino Bajo Albaicín carries out various cultural activities to promote the harmony of residents and increase their quality of life, through which residents have developed attachment to their place as well as make various requests to the city government to enhance their living conditions. The region's situation is improving through projects, but several problems keep reoccurring, which the organization is making efforts to solve.

Residents in a re-developed city, i.e. a region without many problems, has little sense of bonding toward their community and move to a better place anytime. However, the residents in Albaicín have a deeper sense of bonding, ponder over how to improve their life together, and voice their opinions to the outside. The unconscious sense of place that the residents in Albaicín becomes the motivation for their active behavior. Of course, the problems they demand must be resolved, and their active demand to solve the problems will enable more positive development than the model of a community they are indifferent to.

4. Conclusion

⁷ Estatutos de la asociación de vecinos "Bajo Albayzín" <http://albayzin.info/antiguo/Principal.htm> (accessed October 10, 2017).

⁸ la Asociación De Bajo Albayzín <http://albayzin.info/categoria/la-asociacion/actividades/> (accessed October 10, 2017).

This study examined the example of Albaicín, Granada that has been achieving regional revitalization by preserving and using historical and cultural assets, among Spain's cities. Starting with the Urban Pilot Project, Albaicín has executed various revitalization projects. As a result, its historical structures have been restored, systems, facilities, and contents needed in society have been developed, and the number of tourists has increased as well. Albaicín has improved accessibility, allowing visitors to visit this region more conveniently and feel the unique sense of place that Albaicín has. Not only the institution-led projects but also the residents' voices needed to achieve the regional revitalization have been added. The Asociación de vecinos bajo Albayzín has been raising awareness of the severity of many urban problems such as sanitation, noise, and crime, which have not yet been solved by regional regeneration projects. Although many problems are still appearing in Albaicín, the city has a high value in terms of the sense of place, which is the most noteworthy aspect for residents with attachment toward the region. Relph, E (1976) said that an authentic and unconscious sense of place is as important and necessary in modern society as in any past society.⁹ Such active efforts can generate a self-conscious sense of place for people who do not have an authentic sense of place in a place.

The authentic sense of place in a historical site maintains the sense of place in a region through a regional revitalization project and can create a self-conscious sense of place (an attempt to actively experience the place) through the activities by residents. If such self-conscious sense of place continues, it can lead to an unconscious sense of place, i.e. regarding the place as one's place. The city of Albaicín will be able to achieve valuable results in its revitalization through the cooperation with city government based on the participation of active residents.

⁹ Relph, E., op. cit., p.65

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