

PRECAUTIONS FOR HERITAGE TO BE A DRIVER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF RELATED PRINCIPLES MANIFESTED IN THE ICOMOS CHARTERS FROM A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of heritage as a driver for regional development seems trendy and acceptable these days, and there appear to be successful cases, in which heritage plays a major role in regenerating historic communities and old quarters. Promoting heritage as a catalyst for development, however, tends to obscure critical issues of existing preservation principles, which need to be conditioned beforehand.

Conventional principles for heritage conservation, which are promulgated in such forms as the ICOMOS charters, do have certain conflicting points with development practices, due to the inherent conceptual differences between preservation and development. Development itself used to be viewed as threats to heritage, and to a certain degree, this notion is still legitimate.

Then, in order to advance heritage as a driver for regional development, it is necessary, as preconditions, to clarify the values and strategies of desirable development, which could coexist with conventional principles of heritage conservation. This kind of examinations should precede any articulation of heritage tactics that entice development.

From a perspective of recent development ethos, this paper scrutinizes critical preservation principles, manifested in the ICOMOS charters for the past forty years. From the early Venice Charter (1964) up through the recent Charter on Cultural Routes (2008), this paper conducts a content analysis of twenty three ICOMOS documents. The goal is to provide a set of precautions in promoting heritage as a driver for development, which, hopefully in the future, could contribute to constructing a new ICOMOS charter for regional development with heritage.

2. DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES and HERITAGE STRATEGIES in the ICOMOS CHARTERS

As early as in the 1964 Venice Charter, there has been an impetus, hinting heritage to be a

motivation for regional development. The Article 5 of the Venice Charter, for example, asserts that “the conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose, and such use is desirable”. Furthermore, for such use, modifications by a change of function may be permitted. Although the Article 5 also emphasizes that “the lay-out or decoration of the building must not be changed,” one of the significant concepts lies in the phrase of “making use of heritage for socially useful purpose.” This indeed opens doors for active utilization of heritage. Regional development by using heritage could be justified and encouraged, as long as it serves “socially useful purpose.” Then, a critical issue is to define “socially useful purposes,” in contrast to economically useful purposes, which used to be a main goal of regional development.

The 1981 Florence Charter, on the other hand, announces that “access to historic gardens must be restricted to the extent, demanded by its size and vulnerability.” Furthermore it declares that operations serving to restore the historic garden’s authenticity take precedence over the requirements of public use. It is heritage’s authenticity that must not be compromised in any circumstances. This concept sounds natural, but, in reality, it is constantly and inevitably challenged to function as such in the regional development activities.

Among the ICOMOS Charters, there is a heritage type that shares the basic conservation principles, similarly as does the Florence Charter (1981). It includes the Charters for Archeological Heritage (1990), Underwater Cultural Heritage (1996), Wall Paintings (2003), Historic Timber Structures (1999) and others. These Charters, commonly regarding development as threats to heritage, adhere to the conservation of heritage’s authenticity. Here, strict restrictions and controls over commercial exploitation, excessive public access and improper use are more emphasized than any promotions for

potential heritage utilization.

Meanwhile, a different heritage type, which deals with the area-based subjects, tends to emphasize adaptation, improvement, and utilization of heritage, rather than to focus on authentic preservation of the monuments. This type refers to the Washington Charter (1987), The Cultural Tourism Charter (1999), The Cultural Route Charter (2008), as well as the Resolutions for smaller historic towns (1975), the Tlaxcala Declaration (1982), the Dresden Declaration (1982), the San Antonio Declaration (1996), and the Xian Declaration (2005) among others. To be most effective, these charters suggest that conservation and management of the area-based heritages, including historic towns and urban areas, become an integral part of urban and regional planning at every level. Especially when it is a living heritage, in and around which indigenous local people still reside, conservation principles become even more complex. Improvement of housing for better standards of living, for example, becomes a basic objective of conservation. Here, heritage, defined as a part of regional planning, aims to operate for sustainable development.

The tangible contents of heritage conservation to be sustainable development, however, are yet to be articulated. So far, some of applicable contents refer to the principles of “observing the existing scales; respecting its characters, buildings, and relations to landscapes; and retaining the specific visual qualities of urban spaces, streets, and squares, so as to provide a continuous network linking the main points of interest.” While this type of heritages acknowledges the significance of revitalization and rehabilitation of the regions, it also asserts that its “economic function should be selected so as to imply neither disruption nor dereliction of the historic substance and structure.”

The Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) and the Declaration of San Antonio (1996), too, provide some referable principles for heritage to be a driver for development, as they directly mention the tourism and authenticity of heritage. Above all, it is clearly mentioned that “the relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values, which should be managed in a sustainable way.” Here, practical approaches to sustainable tourism development are provided, which include fair allotment of the revenue, derived from tourism, to conservation of heritage, and equitable distribution of tourism benefits to the host community.

Recognized as one of the most comprehensive and inclusive charters that encompass practical principles for heritage conservation, the Burra

Charter (1999) states that “the aim for conservation is to retain the cultural significance of a place, and conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings.” Yet, the Charter also emphasizes that heritage conservation “requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible. Changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.”

3. PRECAUTIONS

Summing up the findings of this paper, a set of precautions for heritage to be a driver for regional development may be spelled out as follows:

- 1) There exist the conflicting values between heritage conservation and heritage utilization for regional development;
- 2) Development used to be threats to heritage, and may still have attributes to be threats to heritage to a certain degree;
- 3) Authenticity of heritage should not be compromised for the economic values of regional development;
- 4) There exist the mediating grounds for the conflicting values, where discourses such as socially useful purpose, sustainable development, appropriate use, wise use, stable development, and cultural tourism provide hopes and possibilities for heritage to be a driver for regional development;
- 5) These discourses may end up existing only as rhetoric, though, as their tangible and practical substances are yet to be articulated to be solid strategies of both conservation and development;
- 6) Nevertheless, utilization of heritage for regional revitalization and local regeneration should continuously be pursued in more sensitive and creative ways, so that the conflicting values between heritage conservation and heritage utilization for regional development may coexist better.

Enhanced by further studies in near future, these precautions might serve as a foundation in drawing a new charter for regional development with heritage.