

The Conserving Cultural Landscape as a Driver for Identification in Local Communities in Taiwan

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Abstract

A cultural landscape, which encompasses various elements in a specific area, represents the combined works of nature and man. An organically evolved cultural landscape may represent a specific production process for a place, and may consolidate the identification for local people through conservation process of cultural landscape. With this concept, traditional economical model with special cultural meaning may be kept, and new model and idea may be created. Besides, specific and protected environment in a cultural landscape may become the visual source of memory which influences belongingness of local people and visitors. The legacy of knowledge, technology and beliefs which could be inherited may become social and cultural identification for local community. With the influence of globalization, local identity in rural area becomes crucial for the communities. The conservation of cultural landscape may create an alternative model on economic, environment and society, by which new local identity would be formed, and transformed as a new model for sharing. In this paper, cases of cultural landscape of rural areas in Taiwan will be discussed, especially the influences on identification of economic, environment and society during the conservation process.

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1. Introduction

Local rural villages are important in the long term history of regional development. A rural village, recorded history and memories, may be the center of rural land around which numerous farms have been cultivated, and become the place of interaction of people and goods. However, due to influences by globalization and urbanization, many rural villages have been declined: young people may lose their job opportunities in the rural villages, by which population ageing have been increasing in the villages, while houses, monuments and farms have been also abandoned gradually. Woods(2007) concluded five topics rural research and globalization and argued that globalization has both positive and negative impacts on rural development, and globalization has been associated with depeasantization which involved both the commercialization of production systems and the subjugation of localized rural cultures and social structures.

It is significant in the rural area in Taiwan which has been seriously impacted by globalization, especially the influences from the Agreement on Agriculture of World Trade Organization (WTO). The fallow policy in rural land has made the deterioration more serious. Consequently, the local culture, historic evidence, and other interactions between human and environment would vanish, while the farms and rural village became sites for real estate.

Nonetheless, a rural area should not be the place for housing or second home only. It may be a place related to food security, food safety, ecology, and the landscape modified through interaction of people and environment. The value of a rural area thus expanded from economic asset to an integral resource which encompassed economic, environment and social significances.

2. Cultural Landscape and Identification

2.1 Definition of Cultural Landscape

A cultural landscape, which encompasses various elements in a specific area, represents the combined works of nature and man. The definition of cultural landscape under UNESCO World Heritage focuses on the interactions between people and their natural environment, which often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008). Since 1992, more than 100 sites have been nominated as cultural landscape in World Heritage.

In the system of World Heritage, three categories of cultural landscape are identified, namely (1) clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man; (2a) organically evolved landscape - a relict (or fossil) landscape; (2b) organically evolved landscape - continuing landscape; (3) associative cultural landscape. More than 50% sites are category (2b): organically evolved landscape - continuing landscape, which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At

the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2008). With the definition of cultural landscape in World Heritage, it is more emphasized on the process of interaction between people and land which may have specific cultural meaning through time. The demand for protection of tangible and intangible parts of an integral landscape may be revealed.

In Taiwan, the amendment to Cultural Heritage Preservation Act had been added the category of Cultural Landscapes at 2005, which includes the spaces and related environment of myths, legends, circumstances, historical event, community life, or ceremony. And the Operational Guideline of the Act further indicates the detail categories, which includes the location of myths and legends, the routes of historical or cultural facts, religious landscape, historical garden, the locations of event, agricultural landscape, industrial landscape, transportation landscape, irrigation facilities, military facilities, and the landscape interacted between humankind and the natural environment (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). Although these functional categories, unlike conceptual categories defined as World Heritage (Fowler, 2003), may lead to some misunderstanding in some sites due to the restriction of limit list of categories, cultural landscape has provided new opportunities for a rural site which has been transformed and accumulated various cultural significance through time, while is still functioning today.



Fig. 1 An irrigation cultural landscape in Taiwan



Fig. 2 A salt pan cultural landscape in Taiwan

2.2 The Core Value of Cultural Landscape

From the cultural heritage point of view, a cultural landscape should be a site reflects the interaction of people and environment/land, not a “landscape” of cultural idea, thinking, or viewpoint. It should be constituted with six basic components: theme, people, function, environment, objects, and time. A cultural landscape may be interpreted as functioning process made by people, at the same time some objects are made in the natural environment, while it is a dynamic and change process through time by which the historicity also accumulated.

The “theme” means a cultural landscape should be a site which “reflect how people use natural environment intentionally, while try to achieve specific purpose or work”. Plachter(1995) further argued that a site may be regarded as a cultural landscape where man’s culture and nature really shapes or has shaped each other. Besides, man is or was conscious of this influence in terms of defined aims, and the material structure of the landscape reflects those aims. Finally, he also noted that ecological mechanisms of control, reconstruction and decomposition are still at work, and man’s interactions with nature make use of these mechanisms. Thus a possible cultural landscape site may be not only analyzed and reviewed from the tangible structure of a

landscape, but also the functional process and interaction described as “theme” (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 *St. Emillion* – an UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape site of vineyard



Fig. 4 “People” as an important part in a religious cultural landscape

“People” means a cultural landscape should be created and modified by people - especially many people and common people. Even the associative landscape in which the view is normally natural, it will not be considered as a cultural landscape if it is not used, interpreted, and associated by people, by which the meanings and significances have been internalized as part of culture (Fig. 4). Otherwise it will be only a natural landscape, and people just explain the view of a natural landscape. “Function” means how people work in the cultural landscape. The function must be made by people, while it should be also particular for environment limits or opportunities. The results of “function” will be “objects”, and only objects made by people with particular function may be considered as part of components of a cultural landscape (Fig. 5). Besides, “function” should be also related to the theme of a cultural landscape, which reflected “how people use natural environment intentionally” described by “theme”.



Fig. 5 The cultivation of sugar cane in a sugar cultural landscape



Fig. 6 The specific structure prevent heavy wind in the natural environment

A cultural landscape must be created from a natural “environment”. The environment is the subject of “people’s” interaction and the place for “function”. Thus, the view in a cultural landscape must be based on a specific environment, in which limits and opportunities due to the natural environment have further shaped the particular view. Otherwise, it will be just a phenomenon made by people while has no relation to the physical environment (Fig. 6). “Object” is the physical and visible part of a cultural landscape. It is not only a single or significant object, but also common and general objects made by people in a site. It must not virtual idea or imagination, but a physical material which may represent idea or imagination.

Finally, with the component of “time”, a cultural landscape has become the “Text” of a site, accompany with other components, which may describe the development history through time. In this sense, all elements in a cultural landscape must be changing through time, and also a dynamic process which will be continuing changing. Even the changing process may be stopped in the past, the influences should be still recognizable in the present.

2.3 Local Identification and Cultural Landscape

Identity within people will be one of key factors in the conservation of cultural landscape. The identity is not only the appearance of heritage, but also the story behind it, and about the extend in which it gives identity both to the elements and the community (Kuipers, 2005). Cultural landscape as at the interface between nature and culture, tangible and intangible heritage, and biological and cultural diversity; represent a tightly woven net of relationships that are the essence of culture and people’s identity (Mitchell, Rössler, & Tricaud, 2009). With the suitable conservation work, it will provide the opportunity for local people to develop new levels of self- and place-awareness – a renewed sense of self-worth, community identity, positive realignment with local landscape and history (Jaworski & Lawson, 2005). However, the conservation may accompany with some restrictions, people who own, use or create the landscape may be affected. Only if the community wholeheartedly and prudently advocates the meaning and significance of the concept of “intrinsic value” as it relates to nature, habitats and species, will citizens possibly understand and consequently accept restrictions (Joos, 2004).

The conservation of a cultural landscape with heritage value should focus on people, especially local people. It is possible to conserve the significance of rural area through the integral concepts advocated by the idea of cultural landscape. If we try to enhance the identification of local people on the rural village, they might be willing to conserve specific living tradition and values. Especially under the threats of globalization, the continuing and traditional operation of a specific rural area may become more significant than those eroded gradually following general values. This also echoes with the idea of cultural landscape with cultural heritage value - basic components of theme, people, function, environment, objects, and time, which also implies the conservation method should not be limited on the “objects”, but extended to other components.

3. Sustainable Conservation and Identification

In a site of cultural landscape with cultural heritage value, it will become important resource for raising local identity with the conservation from economic, environmental, and social aspects, the three pillars of sustainable development. However, sustainable development may imply continuing increase, or improvement from a worse condition. Nonetheless, cultural landscapes, especially those with cultural heritage value, are the products of long-term co-evolution between culture and nature which reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use and inspire sustainability (Wu, 2011). The conservation for these landscape should protect the traditional functional process, while avoid creating new model completely irrelevant. Management is regarded as preserving an inherited landscape rather than forming a new one (Kendle, Rose, & Oikawa, 2000).

3.1 Economy and Identification

The economic requirement of local people in a cultural landscape should be fulfilled. The concept of sustainable management would not pursue economic growth only. On the other hand, it would try to ensure a balance condition of six components through suitable and reasonable economic model. Sustaining ordinary traditional landscapes based upon rural economies such as agriculture, stock raising and forestry demands an adapted policy and supporting actions (Antrop, 2006), while the feature and value of cultural heritage should not be changed or substituted. Strategies for marketing and branding traditional products and crafts produced in and around parks as a way of strengthening economic sustainability, resource stewardship, and ties between local communities and cultural landscape sites (Diamant, Mitchell, & Roberts, 2007).

The sustainable agriculture in Taiwan would be more emphasis on the problem of the economic viability, and the quality of life for farmers. Besides, since the change of the economic features, the agriculture is also declining. This also results in the population outflow in the rural village, sometimes only the elder farmers and their grand-children still live in the village. For the economic development of the agricultural system, some strategies try to help promote the farm products and diversify farm income, such as direct marketing, agritourism, etc., many farms would rely on non-farm source of income (Committee on Twenty-First Century Systems Agriculture; National Research Council, 2010). Specific marketing strategies directly related to the feature of cultural landscape site would provide unique brand of products, and identification of local people may be also enhanced through the products and benefits from selling products.

3.2 Environment and Identification

In most cases, agricultural cultural landscapes may only work in specific environment conditions, which have made a cultural landscape site different to other sites. It is necessary for a continuing cultural landscape that the balance between production process and natural environment. In this sense, preserving and maintaining local and indigenous traditional knowledge and community practices of environmental management are valuable examples of culture as a vehicle for environmental sustainability and sustainable development, which will foster synergies between modern science and local and indigenous knowledge (United Nation General Assembly, 2010). The environment for a cultural landscape site would be not only the place and resource for the production process, but also the image which has been memorized and cherished by local people.

In Taiwan, agricultural cultural landscapes could be identified through specific environment condition and production process related to the environment, which at the same time have been created unique images. Although the registration of an official cultural heritage would be an encouragement for the identification of the local people who use, create, involves in the landscape environment, the production image with the specific environment would further prompt people to cherish this memory. The cultural landscape of tobacco cultivation, the fishery and salt making cultural landscape along the seashore, the rice growing cultural landscape in the plain with specific irrigation system (Fig. 7), all have its unique environment and image of production which may become identification of local people, and nostalgia of those who ever lived and worked in it.



Fig. 7 The rice growing cultural landscape in Taiwan

3.3 Society and Identification

People in a landscape are not only the user of resource, but also creator. A corollary of the sustainability principle is that we must participate in it and be on our guard against irreversible actions (Thompson, 2000). It will become a social conservation, from the participating process, that the knowledge, technology, experience, faith, religion, and other resource will be inherited through people. Landscape provides a way of telling stories about the past and about cultural identities that are tied to place or region and to the local context within which identity and distinctiveness are forged (Fairclough, 2006). Local identity will also be increased from the intangible components of cultural landscape, while the significance of a site will also be differentiated through local identity and landscape features created and operated by people.

Thus the conservation on social aspect, through faith, activities, education, and impartation, will be necessary for local identity. Education, which often involves respecting and encouraging traditional, sustainable practices, is mainly concerned with raising the awareness of local people about the importance of sustainable approaches to agriculture (Phillips, 2002). In Taiwan, the fishery cultural landscape along seashore, and agricultural cultural landscape in an indigenous community have enhanced local identity through practicing, worship or memorial ceremony, and other activities (Fig. 8). These intangible parts, accompanied with tangible, have further enriched the diversity of a cultural landscape, whereby the local identity and local people is the kernel.



Fig. 8 A memorial ceremony in a cultural landscape may enhance local identity

4. Conclusion

The concept of cultural landscape, from the point of cultural heritage, has extended different vision on the issue of local identity. Six basic components of cultural landscape, namely theme, people, function, environment, objects, and time, covered tangible and intangible parts of a site which also become resources for local identity. With the conservation of cultural landscape, which focused on economic, environmental, and social aspects, local community and people may have chance to keep the ordinary living style.

Although the concept of cultural landscape is a new category in cultural heritage field, it provides a new integral conservation idea by which various elements in a site may have different contribution. It will become a virtuous circle of sense of local identity and cultural landscape conservation, and people are the key factor. Suitable conservation model would inspire people to rethink the significance of a place, and to increase personal identity to the place at the same time. Moreover, these inspirations will further encourage people to preserve the features of a cultural landscape.

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