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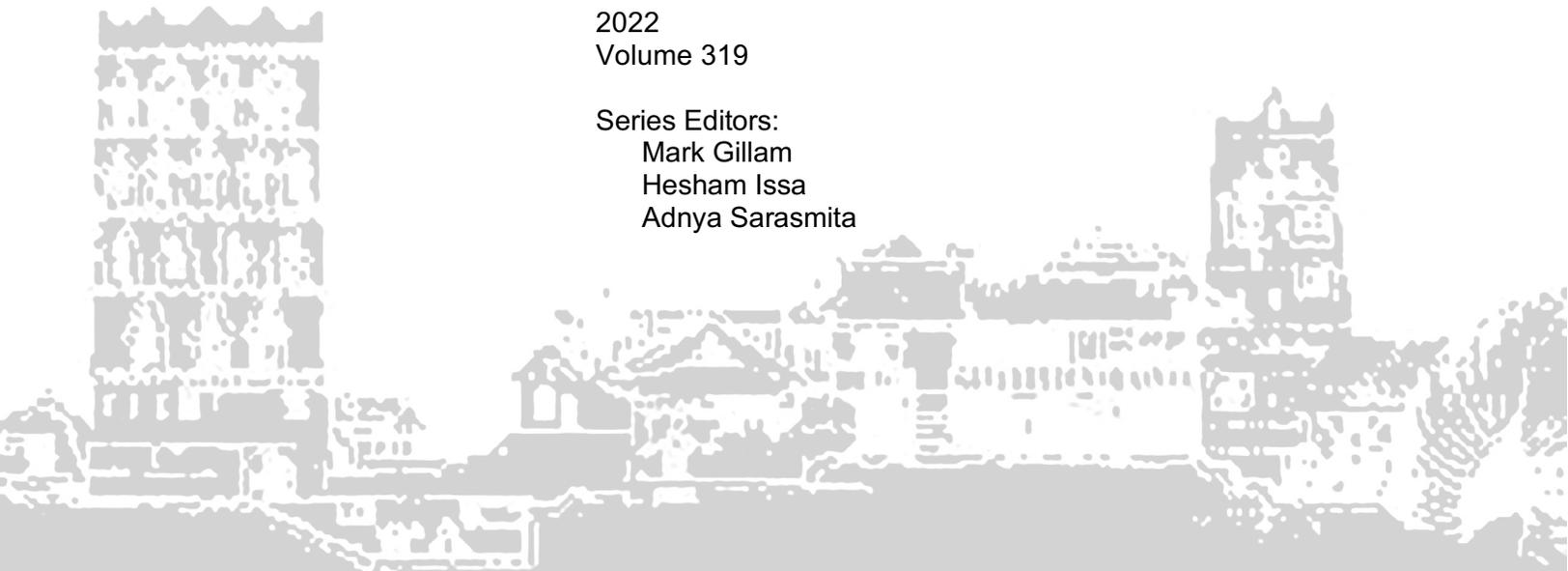
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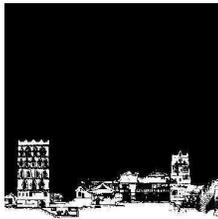
Arief B. Setiawan

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements
Working Paper Series

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE YIN YU TANG
PROJECT AND THE PRESERVATION OF
HUIZHOU-STYLE VERNACULAR DWELLINGS
IN CHINA**

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE YIN YU TANG PROJECT AND THE PRESERVATION OF HUIZHOU-STYLE VERNACULAR DWELLINGS IN CHINA



The paper outlines how the identity of the Yin Yu Tang project has been continuously revised in Chinese articles based on societal changes in China, especially those caused by the impact of evolving ideas in the preservation and the position of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings. Including a broader context, longer timescale, the project's constantly changing impact, and the accordingly varied focuses in propaganda, this paper reclaims the importance of the Yin Yu Tang project in both preservation and history study and introduces a more comprehensive approach toward the study of preservation projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) signed the *Yin Yu Tang Cross Cultural Agreement* with the local Chinese government in Huangshan and started a project including relocating a traditional Huizhou-style vernacular dwelling to the U.S. as a permanent exhibition and helping preserve other historic structures in the same county. Yin Yu Tang, now in Salem, Massachusetts, provides an invaluable opportunity for its visitors to examine the daily life of a Chinese family before the 21st century.

The project is the only example of re-erecting a major proportion of a traditional Chinese building outside China. The popularity of the exhibition abroad and its uniqueness make Yin Yu Tang a well-discussed topic in China. Also, this relocation to the U.S. provokes a new way for the Chinese public to look at vernacular dwellings. Because there is no official introduction to the project in China, the public could only learn about it from other sources. The perspective of these articles alternated with changes in preservation awareness as well as social contexts within China. This has in turn led to misinterpretations and rumors about the project and the field of preservation, eventually affecting the Chinese public's understanding of preservation and its actions.

The changing identities of Yin Yu Tang are connected with the rise of tourism, preservation, and cultural confidence in China. Initially, the project was widely reported in domestic newspapers and blogs, making the general public realize the values of the traditional Huizhou-style dwellings- many traveled to Anhui to visit them. Witnessed this renewed attention for vernacular houses and the general rise of tourism in the area, the developers and Huizhou region house owners thought these buildings were lucrative. The developers spent abundant money on purchasing them, and many owners refused to sell, hoping for a higher price in the future. This change allowed a slowdown of destruction, and a certain amount of care was added to these structures by the owners. Developers generated many articles claiming their purchase as preserving traditional culture and architecture, just like the Yin Yu Tang, even though sometimes they would sacrifice authenticity

to attract more tourists. With the balloon of tourism in the region, traditional dwellings gradually looked alike because of tourists' tastes, inappropriate adaptive reuse and re-erection methods, and a lack of correct preservation awareness. This change made the general public call for a more authentically preserved vernacular environment and architecture. At the same time, the tone of the public media rendered the Yin Yu Tang project a private purchase and mentioned the government-issued cross-culture exchange aspect less and less. All of these factors evoked a public disdain for purchasing and re-erection of old houses in articles and newspapers, even changing the public's attitudes toward Yin Yu Tang.

Besides tourism, the identity of the Yin Yu Tang project also connects with the general preservation awareness in China. The initial Chinese articles and reports about the project let many Chinese learn about preservation ideas and practices for the first time. Yet, with more and more of the public forming a better understanding of preservation and turning their backs on ex-situ preservation, the public and media started to blame the Yin Yu Tang project for moving the original dwelling abroad.

Moreover, with the improvement of preservation theories and practices in China and the development and investment in preservation funding, many Chinese experts and newspapers urged the preservation of traditional Chinese architecture in China by Chinese professionals instead of overseas by foreign teams. While the intention is sound, after being re-interpreted by so many people on social media, the idea turns into a lament of having U.S. experts preserving the Yin Yu Tang in the 1990s. These misunderstandings will emerge because the general public is not familiar with vernacular dwelling preservation conditions in the 20th century, especially the context and difficulties. Furthermore, because of the improvement in domestic preservation of traditional culture and architecture, the Chinese developed more confidence in their culture, and many views any practice by other cultures as opposed to the Chinese Way.

This research examines the context and influence of the Yin Yu Tang project from social, political, and cultural perspectives. Meanwhile, the paper means to re-organize the development of historic vernacular dwellings' preservation in China and to locate the position and role of the Yin Yu Tang project in the entire process, especially how societal changes in China impact public understanding of this project. From there, it is possible to cast a light on how a preservation project can serve as more than a historical document and preservation example. It can reflect the dynamic historical and social background, as well as continuously guide and inspire future efforts.

2. THE RAPTURES: MISSING CONTEXTS AND LANGUAGE BARRIER

Yin Yu Tang is a centuries-old Huizhou merchant's house, originally located in the rural village of Huang Cun, Xiuning County, in the Huizhou region of Anhui Province. A typical Mid-Qing Dynasty Huizhou-style

vernacular dwelling of China, the two-story, 4,500-square-foot Yin Yu Tang centered a central, open-air courtyard.

Once belonging to the Huang family, the building had been unoccupied for about a decade and the family members were planning to put it for sale when Nancy Berliner, an independent scholar of Chinese art and later the Curator of Chinese Art and Culture at the Peabody Essex Museum, discovered the building in 1996. With the support of a U.S. foundation and the will of the local government:

“an agreement was established (in May of 1997): Yin Yu Tang would be transferred to the Peabody Essex Museum as part of a cultural exchange that would help protect and promote Huizhou architecture. Additional projects would be established in China to protect and conserve historic architecture in Huizhou.” (Peabody Essex Museum¹).

At the end of 1997, after measuring and labeling the house’s structure and components, the Chinese carpenters and engineers dismantled Yin Yu Tang and loaded the parts into customized crates. These components were shipped from Shanghai to New York City and then delivered to a warehouse in Massachusetts². After a three-year process of identifying, inventorying, and documenting individual pieces in the warehouse, the project team started the “revival” of Yin Yu Tang in 2001. Two years later, the building opens to the public as a permanent exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum.

Team members from both countries worked together to preserve the building’s cultural and architectural authenticity, as well as values and heritage from its hometown- ancient Huizhou. The team carefully generated the *Yin Yu Tang Re-erection and Preservation Guidelines*³, and kept video, audio, and image records of the whole process. All the official introductions about the project and its detail are in English, and not everything is available online.

Because of language barriers and cultural differences, it is hard for most people to form a comprehensive understanding of the project, its context, and its impacts in both the U.S. and China. The U.S. public may find it hard to understand the social background and the culture related, and the Chinese might not be able to learn about the project accurately though they know more about what happened when the project originated.

Although scholars may most likely be the ones who have the ability to research the contexts of the project and read and write bilingually, not many take the project as a case study for their academic papers. Most researchers studying Yin Yu Tang focus on its exhibition and its influences in the U.S.

Most Chinese public may not be able to study first-hand resources about the project, so they have to rely on online Chinese articles and blogs' translations and re-introductions. The authors of such publications may not have a related academic background, are more likely to intentionally or unconsciously create bias, re-interpretations, and misunderstandings during the translating process, and may not refer to reliable resources. These irresponsible yet widespread articles become a big reason behind the continuously changing identity of the Yin Yu Tang project in China.

Another rupture in the study of Yin Yu Tang lies in the timescale. Existing publications often take the opening of the Yin Yu Tang exhibition as the starting or ending point of their research, without putting the project into a continuous context. Doing so creates a gap in analyzing what enables the project to happen as well as what impacts have been created by the “absence” of Yin Yu Tang in China.

3. THE RISING OF HUIZHOU-STYLE VERNACULAR DWELLING

Many factors and social changes enabled the Yin Yu Tang project, including the emergence of preservation awareness, economic development, “heritage fever”, and a growing international interest in Chinese daily life.

The rise of modern Chinese architectural historiography in the 20th century began with the investigations and descriptions done by Western and Japanese scholars, who focused on the typology and style of Chinese architecture and kept many drawings and photos as records. Later, these research methods and results became important references for Chinese scholars and their way of approaching ancient Chinese architectural research.

In 1930, the first Chinese academic institution aiming at researching ancient architecture- the Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture (SSCA) was founded. In 1931, the famous architect and architectural historian Liang Sicheng's joining the SSCA marked the beginning of modern Chinese architectural studies and preservation ideas as well as an invisible research competition between Chinese and foreign scholars about Chinese traditional architecture. Members of the SSCA, most of whom received professional training in the West or Japan, used international architectural history research and architectural drawing methods to re-interpret and represent ancient Chinese architecture. By doing so, Liang and his colleagues made it possible for foreign scholars and architects to better understand traditional Chinese architecture, craft, and related philosophy.

In 1978, the Chinese Economic Reform started. New policies not only influenced the development of Chinese villages but also brought China back to the international stage. In 1985, China joined UNESCO and its conventions. Shortly after, there was an emergence of “heritage fever” in China as the Chinese

government actively participated in the declaration of UNESCO World Heritage. Some scholars point out, “by designating ‘traditional culture’ as world or national cultural heritage, the Chinese government aimed to emphasize the significance of the nation’s history and culture, and how deserving it is of world recognition and respect⁴.”

Meanwhile, before the 1980s, Huizhou culture and architecture remained appealing to only a few scholars; for most of the Chinese public at the time, Huizhou was no different than other historical areas in China. Local villagers, because of the barren farmlands in the region, chose to leave their homes to chase a better life. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping gave the Huangshan Speech and launched a plan to provoke the international popularity of Mount Huangshan to improve the economic development of southern Anhui and rely on tourism to save the villages from poverty⁵. In 1999, ICOMOS promulgated the *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage*⁶, which outlined issues and principles for conserving built vernacular heritage. In the same year, China nominated “Ancient Villages in Southern Anhui – Xidi and Hongcun,” which got inscribed in 2000 as a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

Therefore, the efforts of bringing vernacular Chinese dwellings and villages to the international stage had already emerged before the Yin Yu Tang project. In fact, around the same time as the Huangshan government was preparing for the nomination of the two Huizhou villages Xidi and Hongcun, the Xiuning County Cultural Relics Administration was “seeking an American cultural institution to assist in an effort to increase international awareness of the traditional architecture of the region⁷.”

On the U.S. side, John G. Waite, an American architect and historic preservation professional hired to oversee the Yin Yu Tang project, said he did not typically support relocating historical structures, but Yin Yu Tang was exceptional. Waite hopes the attention, time, and money spent by the team will prove to the Chinese people and government that their architecture is worth saving. Hence, the Yin Yu Tang project is not only a preservation project but an opportunity for both local government and international preservationists to evoke economic development and preservation awareness in the Huizhou region by forming international cooperation and cultural exchange.

Meanwhile, around the 1990s, changes in China enabled Americans to gradually re-examine Chinese culture and realize that they should be observing Chinese society more closely and deeply. As a result, more and more Americans became curious about Chinese people’s daily lives, and they re-emphasized all aspects of daily life in China. Such a description of the everyday world in China was a necessary way for Americans to imagine China⁸. This shift of interest towards the Chinese people’s daily life explains a lot about why Yin Yu Tang, an everyday vernacular dwelling, would be chosen to become an exhibition in the U.S.

According to Nancy Berliner, Yin Yu Tang is just one of the many ancient vernacular dwellings her team has visited; it was chosen because “(the team) intentionally want a house that reflected a non-elite lifestyle. In America, people could see a building that belonged to an ancient Chinese Emperor or literati, but that is just a small percentage of the population; we really want it (the chosen house) to convey the way the rest of the population in China lived⁹.” Hence, though PEM’s decision to exhibit an ordinary people’s dwelling in the U.S. was courageous and innovative, it was not arbitrary but an inevitable conclusion given the premises of the era.

Usually, comments on Yin Yu Tang only focus on the project’s impact in the U.S.: “to preserve the house, its contents, and the family documents; to present the house to the public as an important example of Chinese vernacular architecture, interpreting the house and its associated decorative arts for visitors; and to raise awareness of Chinese culture,” yet ignore the more comprehensive intentions behind the project. Looking retrospectively, it is clear that the project team and local government also valued the potential impacts of this project, especially hope it can boost the preservation of vernacular dwellings in Chinese villages.

4. VERNACULAR DWELLING PRESERVATION IN CHINA

The study of Chinese vernacular dwellings preservation cases should be carried out via a critical analysis of social, cultural, and historical background. On one hand, these contexts help better understand preservation decisions or regulations. On the other hand, a thorough knowledge of the development of the Chinese preservation field, especially the interactions and relationships between Chinese practices and theories and the Western ones, is necessary for anyone who wants to have an objective understanding of the terrain. Thus, in order to grasp the origin and importance of the Yin Yu Tang project, and its impact on preserving vernacular Huizhou-style dwellings and the preservation field in China, it is crucial to examine vernacular dwelling conditions as well as research and preservation efforts in the 20th century.

Before the Yin Yu Tang project, very few people besides scholars paid attention to the value and preservation of Chinese vernacular dwellings. Many times, preservationists’ main obstacles came from residents and villagers who wanted to replace such old buildings with “modern dwellings”. With the international popularity of Yin Yu Tang, many locals started to ask themselves: why would foreigners be interested in our vernacular dwellings- we did not even consider a form of architecture. Moreover, many Chinese reconsidered the relationship between vernacular dwellings and traditional culture and wondered what could represent Chinese culture, history, and national identity. Thus, the involvement of Western forces in the project stimulates domestic recognition of the significance and potential of traditional dwellings and enables more attention, respect, and resources for Chinese scholars and preservationists.

At the turn of the century, Chinese vernacular villages and dwellings were disappearing like “avalanches”¹⁰. According to Li Peilin¹¹, “from 1985 to 2001, the number of traditional villages in China dropped from 940,617 to 709,257. Only in 2001, 25,458 old villages vanished- at an average speed of 70 villages per day¹².”

Many factors caused the rapid disappearance of vernacular dwellings. Still, the most crucial of these reasons was that the Chinese public, especially the villagers, viewed traditional dwellings as the opposite of the modern better life and disdained these buildings as the remnants of the old society. Owners of these traditional dwellings sold the well-decorated architectural parts, disassembled the buildings for reusable wood and stones, and burned the rest. In other circumstances, villagers let the house rot naturally after grabbing profitable components from the building¹³.

The earliest systematic research of Chinese vernacular dwelling originated in the 1940s by members of the SSCA. With the dismissal of the association in the 1940s, former members took on various administrative and educational positions to further develop the idea of architectural preservation in China. Liu Dunzhen, a key member in the SSCA and later a professor at Nanjing Institute of Technology (nowadays Southeast University), saw the root of Chinese architecture lay in vernacular dwellings. Thus, Liu further developed the Society’s methods for vernacular dwelling research and raised a team to work on such studies¹⁴. Results were published in Liu’s book *Chinese Traditional Residence*. Meanwhile, *Huizhou Ming Dynasty Residence* (by Zhang Zhongyi), the first book specifically focused on Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings, was also completed.

Later, one of the leading figures in the study of vernacular architecture is Chen Zhihua, a former professor at Tsinghua University and a famous architectural historian and ideologist. Chen spent more than ten years recording ancient villages across the country with his colleagues Lou Qingxi and Li Qiuxiang. These scholars advocated putting vernacular architecture in a broad context of their social, historical, and natural environment instead of talking about the architecture alone and studied the evolution of vernacular architecture, including the origin and interaction of different architectural styles and regions¹⁵. For Chen, the goal of protecting ancient buildings at the time was not to recall the respect for feudal cultural values or traditions but to explore a sedimentary layer of deep history and culture. Walking through these buildings and villages enabled one to learn knowledge that could not be experienced in any library or museum.

These scholars applied cultural-humanistic and sociological research methods to vernacular villages in China and kept numerous surveys, photos, and oral history materials. In addition to such works for students and scholars in the architecture and preservation field, Chen and his colleagues published a series of books focusing on introducing traditional vernacular architecture to the Chinese public. Moreover, in his serialized column ‘North Window Miscellany’ in the journal *The Architect* (serialized from January 1980 to August 2012)

and other newspapers, Chen shared his experience living in traditional Chinese villages and how he had witnessed the rapid removal of vernacular architecture in the 80s with a sincere tone that everyone could easily empathize with- to call for the protection of vernacular architecture and popularized the concept and practice of architectural preservation. Such public education was urgently needed because the study of vernacular architecture was greatly hampered by local people and governors. Locals viewed preservationists as hinderers in the path of renewing their houses or building new structures. In some villages, local governors blamed the villager who welcomed the research teams and stopped the group from entering¹⁶.

Besides Chen, very little material was left from scholars at the time talking in detail about the conditions of vernacular buildings, or the obstacles of researching and preserving these buildings in the 20th century. This lack of “voices from preservationists” usually leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Even though many people at that time realized or experienced the vanishing of traditional villages and the massive destruction of vernacular dwellings, it is very hard for future generations to have an objective understanding of this history without written materials. For instance, later when people look at the vernacular preservation projects in the 20th century, such as the Yin Yu Tang, some superficially condemn Chinese scholars for taking no action. However, the truth is: based on the economic and other conditions of Chinese society at the time, many preservation activities were unable to realize. In the 20th century, there were so many buildings to be saved and recorded, yet so few preservationists and scholars, not to mention they “had to race against time, bulldozers, and disasters in order to meet the changes¹⁷.” Chen mentioned in his column:

“... of course, this is not a job that a few people or some institutes could be able to do...

The only thing I can do is raise this proposal for our future researchers. When they are trying to blame us for not doing our job carefully, I want to let them know we are not stupid or not responsible for our precious national cultural heritage. This is a tragedy caused by the condition of our society in this historical moment.” (Zhihua, Chen¹⁸).

These early Chinese teams lacked equipment, well-trained members, and funds. Chen remembered that when working in a village in Zhejiang Province, some foreign scholars were also researching nearby. Different from such American and Japanese teams who had the latest facilities to take photos and recordings, the Chinese researchers had to carefully consider the cost of every image they took. In 1988, a Japanese team even told the director of the local cultural bureau that Chinese people no longer needed to do vernacular studies and could go to Japan for any research materials-they claimed that the future Chinese vernacular research center would be in Japan¹⁹.

This architecture research competition is very similar to the one between Japanese scholars and the SSCA in the 1930s. The challenges raised by foreign scholars quickened the pace of vernacular architecture preservation in China. In 1992, Chen had read the publications of those American and Japanese teams and concluded that the Chinese team had won this competition for “research quality”, but their photos and video resources were much less detailed. So maybe someday, one will need to borrow research materials from foreign researchers²⁰.

National-level attention to vernacular architecture in China started in 1986. However, in the list of the major historical and cultural sites protected at the national level before 2000, vernacular architecture only counts no more than five percent²¹, and many of these protected vernacular dwellings belonged to famous elites instead of ordinary families. Hence, the preservation of vernacular dwellings mainly relied on unofficial efforts, and most of the vernacular dwellings still needed proper recognition or preservation methods. In the late 20th century, buying old brackets, window frames, or even the whole house became the most practical approach for domestic and international vernacular architecture lovers to prevent them from being burned. In an article published in 1994, Chen commented:

“... I stood in front of these cultural treasures that were about to disappear from the earth, and a sobbing cry poured out of my heart: ‘rich people, come and buy them! As long as you can keep them, no matter where you get them, go ahead!’ When I was young, we were angry that the Americans bought the coffered ceiling from the Zhihua temple in Beijing and blamed it as an activity of Imperialism. Decades later, now, when I know that more vernacular buildings will be transported to the country of foreigners on an incomparable scale, I have no anger, only deep sadness. We have not been able to protect our thousands of years of cultural heritage until now, though some people are still showing off our ancient history of civilization and glorify the achievements of our ancestors.” (Zhihua, Chen²²).

From this citation, one can see how vernacular architecture preservation was almost impossible to be appropriately carry out on-situ or only by the Chinese at the time. Many scholars and governors reluctantly accept the fact that foreign efforts- finance, influence, and techniques, were necessary to preserve the Chinese vernacular dwellings. Thus, toward the end of the 20th century, the idea of competition between scholars faded- people from different cultural backgrounds and countries worked together to demonstrate the importance of vernacular dwellings and protect the existing buildings. This change triggered the Yin Yu Tang Cross Culture Project- the Xiuning County Cultural Relics Administration started to look for a United States cultural institution to form a cultural exchange and spur interest in historic preservation in China to counter a recent trend of families tearing down old houses and building new, American-style mansions in their place.

One of the heavily debated characteristics of the Yin Yu Tang project is that the building was re-erected abroad, and foreign scholars and preservationists have dominated the preservation project. While many of the Chinese public are concerned about the overseas ex-situ re-erection as a way of preservation and hope Chinese historical heritage could be protected by Chinese in China, historic preservation is an international field. Re-examining the development of preservation theories and practices in China, it is clear that communications with other countries and cultures have continuously influenced the cultural identity and preservation-related emphasis in China since the idea of preservation formed in the early 20th century.

5. CHANGING IDENTITIES AND INFLUENCES

Although there are no official Chinese publications about Yin Yu Tang, the project has been continuously mentioned on Chinese social media and in daily conversations. Yin Yu Tang becomes an example that people, for various purposes, refer to when they are making a statement.

Before Yin Yu Tang, the professionals had no example for demonstrating their preservation principle and activities. For instance, many Chinese experts emphasized that preservation was not only about keeping the façade or the structure of the old house; it also included collecting and researching its oral and rural history—such as letters, local folk songs, and poems²³. However, no project in China carried out this demand successfully. In some circumstances, scholars were not lucky enough to encounter a village or family that kept such records or did not have enough time or budget to develop a comprehensive interview and research. Mostly, these elements were simply ignored in the preservation plan because nobody realized their importance. The Yin Yu Tang team collected tons of written and oral records about the house, the family, and the village for the project. Such materials composed the Yin Yu Tang website, book, and audio tour script, vividly introducing Chinese culture and daily life to the general public and saving these first-hand resources for future generations. For preservation-related scholars such as Chen Zhihua and Luo Zhewen, Yin Yu Tang is a realized sample of their proposals. Luo Zhewen told a journalist at the opening of the Yin Yu Tang exhibition:

“The paperwork and letters reflect how the owner of Yin Yu Tang built this house, how he started his business, and the family’s daily life and business conditions. Through these things, we not only know the family’s economic situation at that time but also are able to glimpse at the entire industrial and commercial situation in China at that time. These findings are of great significance to the study of Chinese folklore and as much as the value of the house itself.” (China Today²⁴).

Though the project aroused preservation-related discussions and interests in China, an interviewee pointed out that the success of Yin Yu Tang and its continuous project did not significantly impact villagers' attitudes toward vernacular architecture. The practical problems in these historical structures, such as the incapability of fulfilling modern life requirements and expensive preservation and maintenance costs, still exist. "However," the interviewee said, "Yin Yu Tang did save many vernacular dwellings from being dismantled or replaced because many villagers see the potential economic value in their old houses²⁵."

The local government has banned the unauthorized purchase of ancient vernacular architecture and its components since 1997. However, villagers in Huang Cun said in the years after Yin Yu Tang, many entrepreneurs and collectors from Shanghai, Zhejiang, Beijing, and other places came to the village to buy the ancient buildings²⁶. According to a report, some owners would dismantle their old dwellings or intentionally speed up the collapse to sneakily get the house out of legal protection. Others heard rumors about how much the American foundation spent on the project²⁷, "deciding to protect the integrity of their old houses, waiting for them to generate the same money as Yin Yu Tang- the project had given them hope²⁸." Despite the final result being good- eliminating the secret purchases and vandalism of vernacular dwellings, the intention behind the villagers' protective actions is slightly ironic. Further education regarding preservation, and a more effective policy, is still fundamental. Overall, the project fulfilled the local government's expectation in the 1990s- "encourage the conservation of other remarkable structures in the country²⁹."

Besides, developers, collectors, and local governments commonly refer to Yin Yu Tang as justification in the propaganda for their vernacular dwelling purchases and ex-situ re-erection projects. The Yin Yu Tang project cost a great amount of money, time, and effort and successfully promoted the preservation and Chinese culture. However, this does not mean tremendous investments will promise a similar project. Many Chinese changed the concept and let the public believe the more money one spends on ancient buildings, the more care they will put into preserving and maintaining them, and the more authentic the final result will be. Thus, massive Chinese media continuously emphasized the cost of purchasing historical architecture and the number of buildings got relocated. For instance, in 2011, many online articles promoted that the Hengdian World Studios has spent 120 million yuan to purchase 120 pieces of Ming and Qing dynasty historical architecture and relocate them to the studio to create exhibition halls and settings for filming³⁰. Some local dailies even wantonly reported the relocation of Huizhou ancient buildings to their area as a measure of the achievement for the local cultural industry. For example, Yixing Daily proudly introduced that Jiangsu province bought ancient Huizhou dwellings from the southern Anhui region for off-site re-erect, forming the Pingyao Ecological Agricultural Science and Technology Demonstration Park³¹. In another case, a collector mentioned that two hundred of his ancient building collections were used to build the Taiping Ancient City Project. The project-related reports all claim that this 3.8-billion-yuan project expresses majestic features of

the ancient city: 128 high-quality Huizhou-style authentic old buildings created a brand-new landmark representing local culture and art³². However, does putting ‘authentic’ traditional buildings together retrieve an ancient city? One can wonder how much ‘local culture’ can this Frankenstein-style complex represent.

According to an interviewee, ever since the Yin Yu Tang project, every ex-situ re-erection project will mention how their team numbered the architectural components, dismantled the structures, and transported the pieces to the new site, precisely as Yin Yu Tang did³³. Saying so, seems can imply that relocated buildings have also experienced careful preservation and restorations like Yin Yu Tang. However, these developers value profit as the primary goal: the significant investment tends only to mean a potentially lucrative return. Usually, instead of restoring and preserving original materials as much as possible, the project teams are more likely to “re-create” than “re-erect”. In other cases, the developers will mix components from several dwellings from the same area to form a “reconstruction” since most bought buildings would not be fortunate enough to have all their pieces preserved without collapse.

Obviously, these activities are not preservation but use “preservation” as a gimmick to attract tourists and consumers. The trick can work because of the rising popularity of Huizhou architecture and the preservation idea: tourists started to prefer more traditional, cultural-related tourist sites instead of modern and western ones. However, the popularity of Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings caused numerous relocations, moving these buildings away from their original environment and contexts. Later, as more and more people learned the importance of in-situ preservation, comments on off-site projects turned relatively negative.

Accordingly, the Chinese public retrospect the Yin Yu Tang project- the first well-publicized ex-situ re-erection project. Articles started to blame the local government for selling Yin Yu Tang as well as the PEM for moving the building abroad. Gradually, the fact that the project was a ‘cultural exchange between China and the U.S.’ got forgotten, and the continuous projects- the foundation supported several related preservation projects in Huang Cun- were ignored by the public. Yin Yu Tang project transformed from a government-organized cultural project to becoming an overseas purchase. Finally, an article published in Guangming Daily, a nationwide, authoritative newspaper, claims: “(the relocation of Yin Yu Tang) is now considered a shame for the Chinese ancient architecture research community, the Hui culture research community, and even the entire domestic cultural community³⁴.” This statement is contrary to what official media stated earlier, such as the one by China Today (an official outlet of the Chinese Communist Party) in 2003³⁵ and in a documentary on CCTV (China Central Television)³⁶. Without extended explanation, the project turned from a government-sponsored cultural-exchange project into “a pity for the Chinese” under the journalist’s pen.

6. CHANGING PROPAGANDA FOCUSES

English-speaking scholars and the public may find the mission and details of the Yin Yu Tang project understandable because of numerous online and physical authoritative resources. However, for the Chinese, the identity of the project has been constantly manipulated by online blogs and newspapers. As mentioned, the fate of vernacular dwellings is closely related to how the public value historic structures and their comprehension of preservation. Hence, analyzing the shifting focuses of Chinese articles about the Yin Yu Tang project is essential to examine the dynamic interaction between preservation-related project introductions and societal changes.

From 2015 to 2017, the most often referred to and included information in Chinese articles about Yin Yu Tang is its cost- many articles summarized this event as an oversea purchase than a cultural-exchange. These articles' titles vary from "a lady bought a Huizhou-style architecture³⁷," "a businessman spent \$125 million buying an old Chinese house³⁸," to "an American moved the traditional Chinese building to the U.S.³⁹". Nevertheless, the project team has never revealed how much the Fidelity Foundation spent on the project. Moreover, the project includes the restoration, re-erection, exhibition of Yin Yu Tang, and following preservations in Huang Cun and the region. In Chinese articles, authors rarely count the preservation efforts in Huang Cun as a part of the Yin Yu Tang project, simply concluding "buying" Yin Yu Tang at the cost of 125 million dollars. There is no way to trace the origin of the "\$125 million" statement in such reports.

Since 2017, with an increased preservation awareness among the Chinese public, the reporting focus on the project changed from the cost to the contrast between the fate of Yin Yu Tang and other Huizhou-style vernacular dwellings remaining in their original site. Many articles questioned what could be Yin Yu Tang's fate if the building was still in China. One author writes: "how come the ancient buildings that belong to our country, which preserve the rich national history and culture, cannot be left on our land? How can foreigners protect them with a more responsible and professional spirit than the Chinese? This is embarrassing⁴⁰." In such articles, the project became a rescue action- Americans saved a Chinese vernacular house and did the preservation projects alone. One article was even entitled, "an American female has spent seven years moving a Huizhou-style building to the U.S., preserving the feeling of a home⁴¹."

Some such authors may have good intentions to stimulate Yin Yu Tang-like preservation projects in China. Yet, between their lines, Chinese preservationists are set apart and almost in the opposite position from American ones. These articles rarely mention the Chinese government also steers the project; Chinese professors and students surveyed the building; local craftsmen participated in the labeling for dismantling and re-erection, and Chinese experts were intensely involved in the project. The descriptions in Chinese articles

were far less objective than those published in the U.S.: “It was an intriguing cultural exchange...Both sides were deeply committed to the project’s success. There was a lot of national pride for both the Chinese and the United States⁴².” The Chinese reports would misguide the readers: to suppose that the Chinese government and scholars did not care about vernacular dwellings in the 20th century.

According to scholars who study rumors, the most correct and effective way to prevent the public from being misled is to establish a system that contains freedom of speech, open, balanced message and accurate information from insiders. In the case of Yin Yu Tang, besides blaming the misguided articles and the incautious attitude of some authors, it is also true that the Chinese public can hardly learn about them from an insider. Nancy’s book about Yin Yu Tang is not available in China’s bookstores or online bookshops; the Yin Yu Tang website cannot open since 2021 when Adobe Flash got “retired”. Unfortunately, though software update is unexpected, after a year, PEM has this problem remained unsolved. Hence, even if one in China wants to verify the accuracy of the information about the Yin Yu Tang project and has no problem reading English, studying the project is becoming difficult: project insiders are getting old, some crucial Chinese preservationists have passed away, and fewer people still care about the truth of the Yin Yu Tang project.

One of the most valuable innovations of the Yin Yu Tang project, and the reason why the author can study the project in great detail, is that the Yin Yu Tang team has preserved numerous records and multi-media resources about it and the whole procedure. And the main reason that caused the misreading and misunderstanding about the Yin Yu Tang project is the lack of reliable Chinese introduction. From this, one can tell how the accessibility of the record and information of a preservation project can influence its identity and the public’s understanding. Studying historic preservation projects reveals the social conditions at three stages- when the building was built, when the project was implemented, and currently, when the project is being reviewed. A comprehensive study of these three layers can help one better form a continuous understanding of preservation principles and projects, but more importantly, of other aspects of society: economy, international relationships, cultural identity, etc. Thus, preservationists should try their best to ensure the public accessibility of reliable preservation project information.

7. LESSONS FOR TODAY

From the changing identities and propaganda focuses of the Yin Yu Tang project, one can see that as soon as the public was involved, they became the main driver of how preservation activities are perceived. Hence, improvements in how the public understands preservation and how the general media talks about such projects are crucial. Despite the Chinese government has repeatedly emphasized the importance of heritage

protection and management, there are minimal publicized official resources. Moreover, because of the language barrier, preservation-related international exchanges usually remain among scholars; the public rarely has a chance to access translated trustworthy introductions about a foreign project. With the rise of social media and multi-media, the most straightforward and effective solution is to invite preservation experts to provide more reliable public education on preservation theories and practices using these new tools. Also, multilingual Chinese preservationists should enhance the exchange of preservation experiences and principles in China and worldwide.

The Chinese public is not familiar with preservation conditions and projects. Before the 2020s, only the national, long-established, and famous projects were widely introduced on newspaper and TV programs, such as the restoration and maintenance of the Forbidden City and Mogao Caves. Despite intense efforts that need to be devoted to preservation-related public education immediately, as shown in the case of Yin Yu Tang, improper introductions would cause worse issues and threats. Publicizing a preservation project is not an easy task- preservation teams should prepare the materials carefully and promise continuous updates about the project to the public.

Education about historic preservation and heritage protection needs to be well-designed and should consider multi-form media. For example, former Director of the Palace Museum Shan Jixiang participated in China's first interactive documentary program to visit and reveal the secrets of World Heritage sites. Through walking and communication, Shan wants to make more people re-understand the "treasures" near their homes⁴³. Wang Nan, an Architecture Department Professor from Tsinghua University, became extremely famous in China for his online lectures about traditional Chinese architecture during the quarantine. Wang uses simple and exciting ways to explain why these ancient structures are valuable and attract the audience to look forward to being a scholar about traditional Chinese architecture research and preservation. In addition to traditional means of education, cooperation with other fields can also help increase public awareness of building heritages. For example, a well-received Chinese animated movie sets its scene in Fujian Tulou, a World Heritage site, and this animation attracts many young people to explore life in Tulou. It is worth noting that experts and producers of such programs, websites, publications, and exhibitions need to simplify some historical and cultural details to make content easier to understand. However, if only aiming at making the project look attractive, it is easy to create bias and misrepresentations, just as how reports focusing on the project's cost changed Yin Yu Tang's identity. Moreover, promoting a preservation project needs patience and continuity- it should not stop at the project's completion moment.

Failed attempts and difficulties in the preservation process should also be revealed to the public. As discussed, except for Chen Zhihua, early scholars rarely mentioned misunderstandings and impedes from

professionals, governors, and local people. The reason may vary from the Chinese people's character to the fact that publishing was expensive and the authors wanted to leave more space for their academic results. With the boom of new media, preservationists should be able to record detailed realities in their work, setting up both a more scientific attitude for record-making and references for others. Despite the Chinese tend to consider talking about difficulties as making excuses for themselves, without recording these difficulties, the later generation will be unable to understand the context of a preservation project. For instance, without Chen talking about the preservation methods his team proposed and why they could not apply, later generations may over-idealize the working condition of these preservationists and overlook their efforts. Chen's words not only allow one to review the context of Yin Yu Tang thoroughly but also arouse appreciation toward the relentless efforts of the experts, the updated regulations and laws, and the public education by the government and scholars.

Besides popularizing preservation-related practices and theories in China, cross-cultural preservation experience exchanges are also vital. There is a public misunderstanding in China that since traditional Chinese architecture is very different from those in Europe and America, spending time learning about Western preservation experiences is useless. However, as discussed earlier, China's preservation system and principles have been closely connected to international ideas and trends since the SSCA. Neglecting this connection will create unnecessary competitive pressure and sacrifice the importance of cooperation, as happened to the Yin Yu Tang project.

A thorough understanding of national and international preservation theories, practices, and cut techniques is essential to any modern preservationist. In today's circumstances, oversea cases are more and more referable and can help avoid repeated mistakes. Moreover, as preservation professionals expand, future preservation experts may not all be bilingual, highly educated scholars who take theoretical courses. Translating English, Italian, Japanese, and other preservation resources into Chinese means extending the coverage of advanced experience and ideas to the entire heritage preservation practitioners.

Besides the domestic shortage of preservation information, many foreign scholars find it hard to learn about a Chinese project. On the one hand, this is undoubtedly caused by China's general lack of preservation project propaganda. But on the other hand, other than international collaboration and award-winning projects, Chinese preservation teams will rarely write a non-Chinese introduction about their protection or translate their project details. Recently, foreign art and educational institutions, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)⁴⁴, Columbia University⁴⁵, and Harvard CAMLab⁴⁶, have launched exhibitions, colloquia, and lectures on promoting Chinese preservation projects. Instead of waiting for western scholars to research such projects, Chinese preservationists could prepare more available multi-form materials for international scholars

and the public to learn about historic preservation in China.

8. CONCLUSION

Because of the uniqueness and irreproducibility of the project, many view the Yin Yu Tang project as an isolated case and neglect the value of studying the project. However, the project contains widely applicable preservation methods and ideas, provides crucial historical documents for us to learn about the condition of vernacular dwelling preservation in China in the late 20th century, and serves as a case to study the changing emphasis of vernacular dwelling preservation in China.

Moreover, this research method is applicable to other preservation projects and could provide new perspectives for Chinese and international preservationists to learn and carry out new projects. With the update of preservation ideas and social needs, the project gains new reinterpretations. Thus, when studying these cases, one can always have a new understanding of the past, present, and future. By examining the Yin Yu Tang project's context, influences, and evolving identities over time, this paper proves that a thorough analysis of a preservation project can reflect the trends and changes in the preservation field and society. Besides, this paper reveals the essence of a continuous and reliable study and promotion of preservation projects.

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⁴⁵ Columbia University has launched the *2022 Fitch Colloquium* focusing on *Preservation in China’s Future* and invited Chinese architects to share their experience in working with preservation projects.

⁴⁶ In 2022, Harvard CAMLab organized a series of lectures about preservationists and traditional Chinese architecture.

Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

A PROPOSAL OF DEVELOPING URBAN VILLAGE TO CONSERVE THE HISTORICAL VILLAGE IN HONG KONG – CASE STUDY OF A HISTORICAL WALLED VILLAGE REDEVELOPMENT

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A PROPOSAL OF DEVELOPING URBAN VILLAGE TO CONSERVE THE HISTORICAL VILLAGE IN HONG KONG – CASE STUDY OF A HISTORICAL WALLED VILLAGE REDEVELOPMENT



This article, through the study of the Nga Tsin Wai Village Renewal Project, provides a new concept of the urban heritage redevelopment of Hong Kong; which is to develop the historical village as an urban village to continuity allows the historical site's original users to persist in their indigenous culture. Meanwhile, based on the transformation of historical villages in Hong Kong, the concept of developing an "urban village" in Hong Kong is proposed.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Hong Kong, many conservation cases have been seen as failing to preserve the unique value of heritage areas or buildings. Sadly, this situation is caused by the vague objective of preserving Hong Kong's old sites; most conservation cases strongly emphasize financial viability (SCMP, 2016; Yung E.H.K. and Sun Y., 2020). The Nga Tsin Wai Village Renewal Project is a typical commercialization case showing the hypocritical conservation of the Urban Renewal Authority. In 2007, the Hong Kong government agency -- Urban Renewal Authority (URA), officially undertook to renew an ancient walled village in the center of Kowloon, Hong Kong. At first, the URA proposed a renewal scheme to renew the village as a conservation park. Nevertheless, villagers, sociocultural groups, and the masses who care about local history questioned the aim of this renewal scheme. A conservation project should ensure the cultural significance of a site or architecture.

This article aims to understand that the renewal project of Nga Tsin Wai Village offers many experiences for traditional community renewal policy elsewhere. The findings of this case remind us to rethink the form of redeveloping any vernacular environments with local significance. Does the 'protection' lead to something being destroyed? This study is from a perspective of humanistic care and inheritance of local culture to balance challenges between conservation and redevelopment. And also provides a new concept of the heritage urban of Hong Kong; which is to develop the historical village as an urban village to continuity allows the historical site's original users to persist in their indigenous culture. Meanwhile, based on the transformation of historical villages in Hong Kong, the concept of developing a "Hong Kong-ism" urban village is proposed in this article, which is a preferable approach to coexisting the heritage village and the problem of land shortage in Hong Kong.

2. CASE OF NGA TSIN WAI VILLAGE

2.1. Historical Background and Its Community Engagement

Nga Tsin Wai Village was established during the mid-14th century; before its dismantling, it was one of the oldest villages in Kowloon, Hong Kong. This 600-year-old walled village started in the Yuan dynasty around 1250 to 1279. The village was established by Ng's and Chan's families and Li Shing-kai, who moved from mainland China. This village has experienced a series of crises over the past century. According to Nga Tsin Wai Village, located in front of the Yamen (the government office in feudal China, also can spell as 'Nga-mun'), thereby 'Nga Tsin Wai' means the walled village in front of the Yamen. Similarly, there were other places named Nga Pin Heung, Nga Tsin Long, and Nga Yau Tau... to display the location surrounding the Yamen (Nga-mun) (Hase P.H., 1999).

Between 1352 to 1354, the Tin Hau Temple in the village was built; it is regarding the villagers under the protection of Tin Hau (means goddess). And the village was given the name 'Hing Yau Yu' (庆有余) with the meaning of having superabundant happiness, the name 'Hung Yau Yue' has been kept on the village's gatehouse. Nga Tsin Wai Village is also known as Hing Yau Yu Village. The village includes a primary school, an ancestral hall and a temple that serves the villagers. The temple is one of the buildings with the most significant architectural values, called Tin Hau Temple. It has over a hundred years of history and represents villagers' beliefs through the ages. The old village is rectangular in shape, with each of the four corners of the walled enclosure defended by watchtowers, with moats around the village as protection. The four watchtowers, village walls and the moat were built against pirate attacks to protect the villages during the Qing dynasty. The ancestral Hall is located outside the village (the rectangular), in front of the primary school. It is because, in the past, the village was a private space for all the villagers, but the ancestral hall served as a public ceremonial. If it is built within the village, residents from other places but same ancestors will not allow to use it easily.

The people of this village have a strong lineage relationship and an "invisible community" with the nearby villages that had been destroyed during the Second World War. However, during World War II, many buildings were destroyed by the Japanese army, especially the villages near Nga Tsin Wai Village were demolished to give places to establish the Kai Tak Airport runway. Nga Tsin Wai Village is the space that luckily avoided the demolition, but there had filled up the space of moats on two sides to build roads. And after the past time, the walls of the village within the four watch towers had been demolished. It leads to Nga Tsin Wai Village, the only walled village in Kowloon after the war.

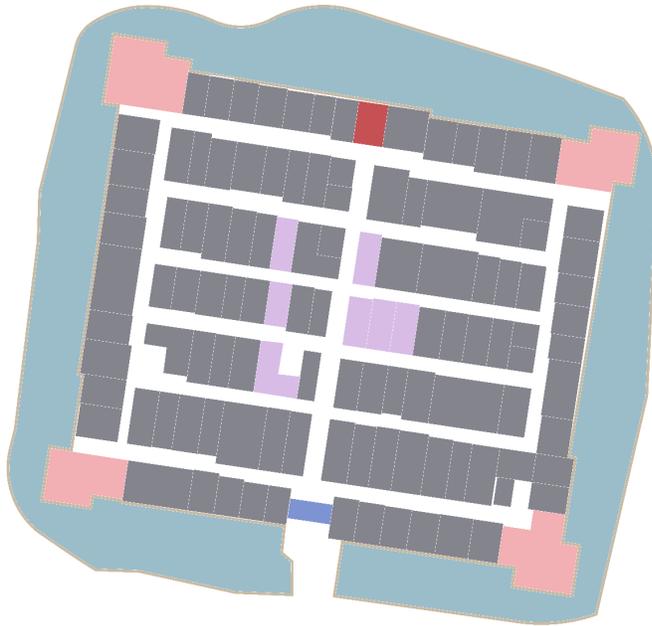


Fig 1. Layout of Nag Tsin Wai Village with a moat (blue) and four watchtowers (pink). (Drawn by: Tan Y.Y., Source from: Hase P.H., 1999; Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs Subcommittee on Heritage Conservation, 2007b).



Figure 2. 42. Nga Tsin Wai Tsuen, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon. Punti elongated house-wall type. A- Ancestral Hall. B- Kai Tak River. C- San Po Kong. D- Tung Tau Estate. E- Car Park. (Source from: Dyson J., 2021).

Before the renewal, Nga Tsin Wai Village occupied an area of 4,637 square meters with 36 affected buildings and about 109 villagers (URA, 2022). However, most of the buildings in the village have been identified with no significant architectural value. Some houses combine private lives and commercial, which are multiple functions in a single form. The villagers rely upon their business within their homes to attract surrounding residents. The various types of small businesses from villagers were developed to meet the demand of surrounding residents; it simply engaged community groups and neighborhoods.

Nga Tsin Wai Village provides an understanding of the grassroots history of Hong Kong. Most of the present villagers are old adults who own the stores on the ground floor of their homes. The village has a barber, a store for snacks, a clothes store, and a Chinese medical herbal... these commercials are selling items with good value making the surroundings willing to come, particularly the children and youth who would like to come here to buy snacks and have a haircut. This engagement linked the village and the surrounding residents to develop a sense of belonging. At present, the villagers value every Chinese traditional festival and its celebration, particularly the Dragon Boat Festival; they would invite the singer to sing the 'Dragon Boat Songs' and the villagers would stay outside the gatehouse to listen for hours in the evening. Besides, the villagers still celebrate the birthday of goddess Tin Hua and Tai Ping Ching Chiu.

In conclusion, Nga Tsin Wai Village is a historical site but is still used by people, and these people gave the intangible culture to this village, the villager making the village worthy of surrounding residents come to visit and keeping the culture in their daily life. The historical buildings in the village were not forgotten of their original function by villagers, and they are still using these buildings to live, worship and have social contact.

2.2. Renewal Project and Its Controversy

The Nga Tsin Wai village house has been demolished and has been identified with less architectural values or informal reconstruction. However, this kind of method to extend the usable space of buildings is pervasive. The informal building and the extension of the house are usually declined to the minimum level to be cheap; meanwhile, they get the maximum efficiency (Zhang W.P., 2009). Before the demolition, the Nga Tsin Wai Villagers changed the houses to mixed-use: 1. store on the ground and living in the upper; 2. store in front and living/ storage at the back. This informal building is logical to grow by the local livelihood, not the government's planning. Typically, this kind of building is in a random and simple form based on the users' demands. But sometimes, these informal buildings are shown to misuse public space in their areas. Nevertheless, the existence of this misuse is trade from other potential uses; from the relations of villagers and surrounding residents, we can know that the shops in the village provide a convenient life and humane atmosphere. And also, this old space can serve as a reminder that the city is undergoing a continuous

evolution process. Therefore, a suggestion is that the developer could maximize the efficiency of the space usage.

In 2007, the URA proposed redeveloping Nga Tsin Wai Village into a conservation park for all civic visits. This renewal project aims to provide a public open space to keep the memory of the historical village and vernacular culture. Except for the conservation park, the URA was planning to establish four 40 meters high residential towers surrounding the park, which is mainly residential development, with about 750 flats, 7000 square meters of commercial, and 1400 square meters of open space (URA, 2022). The project also aimed to protect the three historical items, including the Tin Hau Temple, the gatehouse, and the stone tablet on the gatehouse), and reconstruct eight village houses inside the conservation park, which use as retail stores.



Figure 3. Renewal layout and aerial view. (Resource from: LEGCO, 2007; Li B.Y., 2015).

Most houses would be knocked down to change the village into a conservation park and build residential towers. The developer thinks most of the buildings do not worth protecting; they represented that only less than 12% of the existing remaining fabric is genuine. Hong Kong Legislative Council (2007a) described that these houses with structures are dilapidated. Some places have the uncontrolled proliferation of illegal structures due to the villagers' poor living conditions and the lack of proper sanitation facilities, which look like slums. The renewal project changes the functions and users of this space. Compared to 'renewal', the way that changing Nga Tsin Wai by URA's project is more like reinventing here. From the redevelopment layout, see Figure 3, we can see that the government does not realize the villagers' urgent housing needs and wishes to improve their living conditions within the preserved village.

Villagers and sociocultural groups gave different viewpoints to this renewal project. From the villagers' standpoint, Nga Tsin Wai Villages as their ancestral roots with significant means to them. The ancestral hall is a clan organization based on continuation (Freeman, 1958). The villages wish to own their flats after the Nga Tsin Wai Village redevelopment. Besides, some villagers that have moved out are also expected to live with our villagers in the future Nga Tsin Wai Village. However, the urban renewal projects did not improve the villager's living environment and divided the old community due to its loss. There was almost no consideration for the long-term livelihood of the villagers in this renewal project, also the demolish of the village hurt the villagers; Burgess and Gold pointed out that when a cherished place and landscape is threatened by change, especially by massive destruction, people's sense of attachment to it can be significantly enhanced. And also, the villagers understood that they are hard to oppose URA's decision to resist forced evictions; the 'Nga Tsin Wai redevelopment concern group' was established by villagers in 2012 and gave up struggling in 2017. They devoted themselves to negotiating with the URA to advance better conservation to preserve the significance of the village. In the villagers' position, they had been forced to move out of their village by the power of land managers. Yung E.H.K. and Sun Y. (2020) also noticed issues of balance between heritage conservation and urban renewal under control by power; he pointed out the vital reply from the government that intends to profit from redeveloping the site into a residential project: "the government has never stated that it is a conservation project from the very first day... the URA has been embracing its social responsibility in preserving the three historical relics and the eight houses." (Interview, 2016). The URA is unlikely to undertake commercially unattractive developments (Adams and Hastings, 2000) since Hong Kong is a hyper-density city with pressure problems and limited public and private space. "The case of Nga Tsin Wai Village illustrates the two key problem areas in Hong Kong's conservation practice: The first is that without considerable political will, there is essentially no way to protect a diffuse but important site like the village. The second is that there are no established mechanisms to compensate owners and investors for any development shortfall that may result from conservation efforts." (Chu C. and Uebelang, 2002). Also, Yung E.H.K. and Sun Y. (2020) pointed out that the issue of urban renewal in Hong Kong is the shortage of

developable land due to the increased land. Therefore, several pre-war (World War II) buildings like Nga Tsin Wai Village had to demolish or redeveloped. In response to this phenomenon, Zhang W.P. (2009) mentioned a joint appearance happened in this city ‘architects still dream of relying on the traditional concept of design (such as permanence, axis, and dogma), which have already been proved ineffective in reality to solve the urban problems...’. It can be seen from the renewal project that the architects and landscaper design attempt to preserve the village while reaching the requirements of creating as many resident units as possible. Although urban renewal has been driven by property-led and economic profit-driven re-development, it should not be based on the oppression of low-income people and the gentrification of the site.

Besides, the design method for the Nga Tsin Wai Village renewal project is not innovative in Hong Kong. Even this design is a standard formatting way without profound critical design thinking. The parks in Hong Kong, like Nga Tsin Wai Conservation Park surrounded by the high-rise building, have been called ‘breathing space’. The breathing space in the super high-density area has been described as the condenser of urban events by Zhang W.P. (2009) ‘...they are always ‘impermanent’, refreshable and will be ‘redefined’ and ‘refilled’ by new programs endlessly.’ Normally, this kind of space comes in three types: 1. The historical heritage or the heritage renewed as the museum, gallery and monument; 2. Religious buildings; 3. Small public parks. Normally, the open breathing space with historical heritage and religious buildings is the ‘traditional Chinese garden’ style park; however, Zhang W.P. (2009) point out that the design, the layout and the material for renewal make the atmosphere different to the traditional. This shows an issue is that the government is not paying attention to the specific historical, social value, cultural and other contributions to folklife while renewing a heritage area. Many similar sites and buildings have been homogenized and transformed into public parks, losing their vague historical significance and uniqueness.



Fig. 4. Redevelopment scheme proposed by the URA (Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs Subcommittee on Heritage Conservation, 2007b).

Therefore, the unclear objective of the renewal project leads to the renewal design's ambiguity. The design of conservation park within resident towers is ambiguous in the public realm. How 'public' can public conservation park be? The links of the conservation park and the four residential towers between private and public, this kind of design is the same as the most residential zone in Asia, making the conservation park like a courtyard belonging to the residential tower, See Fig. 4. It leads to the conservation park being hard to define whether it is exclusive to the people who are living in the four residential towers or the public in the aspect of civics.

This ambiguous renewal design provides a feeling of capital power in capitalist urban development, creating an estrangement atmosphere. The atmosphere influences visitors' behavior in the conservation park. We must reflect on why the surrounding residents are happy to visit Nga Tsin Wai Village but prudently visit the conservation park. The villagers' community lives as a generator of the atmosphere. Hypotheses of using this space in the future, although the villagers can come back to their ancestral hall to celebrate their festival each year, it is incompatible with the surrounding environment. The new residents do not necessarily enjoy the atmosphere coined by villagers' culture and the way of celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival, the Birthday of Tin Hau and the 'Tai Ping Ching Chiu' downstairs of their resident tower from the morning till the night. This causes the different groups of people to use the same space, and segregation might exist between the villagers and new residents. As time passes, the villagers might be forced to use other areas to celebrate their festival to avoid disturbing the new residents; just like they had been forced to leave their village. This means the function of the historic buildings (including the temple, gatehouse and ancestral hall) will effect by the pressure from the new primary users of this area. Perhaps, the new residents do not mind the villagers coming back here to use the temple and ancestral hall. But not every environment could emerge with idealized community relationships and engagements.

Compared to the conservation park with that four residential towers, Nga Tsin Wai Village houses carry more social functions with the neighborhood, not just providing residence and a public place for keeping historical memory. Its conservation could ultimately play an essential role in strengthening Hong Kong people's identity and developing a greater awareness of and interest in Hong Kong's history and Chinese culture.

3. THE VALUE

The social values and meanings may have historical dimensions (Byrne et al. 2003), Nga Tsin Wai and its villagers within lifestyle and culture are tangible and physical. As UNESCO describes, 'a community-based intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities or groups. This turn into a problem of placelessness, which is the village lost a significant place identity and the attitude

of a lack of attachment to place. The existing villagers might lose their habits and rituals, although the developers do not think it is necessary and worth protecting. However, the increasing attention paid to a social value, which Jones (2017) defines as ‘a collective attachment to a place that embodies meanings and values that are important to a community or communities’. As Johnston (1994, 10) argues, attaching meanings and identities to specific localities is also integral to producing a sense of place. Studies show that people's sense of place is made comprises constituted meanings and values, over and above nationally recognized heritage ones (Harrison 2004; Waterton 2005). And also performance and practice play a vital role in establishing social value at heritage sites (Bagnall 2003). These may include community festivals; ritual, and ceremonial activities, everyday practices, recreation and leisure; memorial events and ‘mark-making’ (Frederick 2009, 210). Therefore, driving out the villagers and changing the village to a public park would lead the culture to disappear; on the contrary, conserving the Nga Tsin Wai Village by promoting a friendly environment of the village to improve the life quality of villagers, and help them to engage villagers could give the meanings, memories, identities and values to the village.

Using architectural and historical values to examine space or buildings is too simplistic. Riegl A. (1903) proposed a concept of ‘age-value’ based on the fact and a sense that the thing is old. Albertsen N. (2019) concluded that the viewpoints of Böhme G. (1998) and Kirkeby I.M. (1998), this value is not relative to architectural and cultural-historical value; it is a city’s historical depth and age-atmospheres without the knowledge acquired through the historical formation. Suppose the Hong Kong government put forward the conservation policy to preserve standard significance historic buildings, not just the values of architecture. Perhaps the Nga Tsin Wai Village will gain better renewal decision-making. Hong Kong is bereft of historical buildings; there is always value in having diverse urban landscapes. If Nga Tsin Wai Village is redeveloped as URA planned, there will be no differentiation between this highly historic area and any other of the thousands of residential zone. This “monoculture” of city spaces not only erases any traces of history but also detracts from the livability of the city as a whole.

As Yung E.H.K and Sun Y. (2020) analyzed the redevelopment way of URA, they believed that the government are too focused on the pro-growth ideology in property development rather than heritage conservation. This has resulted in the loss of substantial precious and unique local history and culture during urban development. Many local people realize this fact; the civic mistrust government’s redevelopment decision of the old areas and architecture is partly based on their previous disappointing projects, such as the Kowloon Walled City. Also, as mentioned above, the intangible culture is worth protecting. The dismantling of the villagers is a kind of destruction to this village. The developers did not realize that Nga Tsin Wai Village is not a historical object that lost use value; the original users are still alive and providing meaning and soul to it. However, a good heritage conservation redevelopment can promote a sense of place, cultural

identity, diversity and social networking (Yung E.H.K. and Chen E.H.W., 2015). Normally, heritage conservation is a way to protect historical objects and promote awareness of heritage values. But Hong Kong’s conservation practice has suffered from a narrow understanding of cultural heritage.

4. THE CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN VILLAGE AND NGA TSI WAI VILLAGE

The current status of Nga Tsin Wai Walled Village is similar to the concept of an urban village. Nga Tsin Wai Village is not only a historic village but also an urban village. An urban village in China or Chinese cultural background literally means ‘village in the city’, is a special phenomenon in the Mainland of China. It is different to the western concept of the urban village, which refers to ‘a village-style neighborhood in the urban context of western countries’ (Liu Y., et al., 2010). In a western context, Urbuilfor and Huxford (1998) described an urban village is “a concept of a settlement which is small enough to create a community in the truest sense of the word—a group of people who support each other, but big enough to maintain a reasonable cross-section of facilities.” An urban village is a concept of a settlement which is small enough to create a community in the truest sense of the word—a group of people who support each other, but big enough to maintain a reasonable cross-section of facilities. And in the Chinese context, an urban village is a mixture of villages and urban communities, see Figure 5.

The image of urban villages among scholars has experienced a change from negative and subjective to positive and objective. Because at the past, urban villages were considered the dark side of urban development, with recognized as ”dirty”, ”chaotic”, and ”deteriorated”. However, behind its negative image, the positive effects of the urban village should be recognized. Zhu et al. identified that urban villages are the last physical places to inherit local and traditional culture in highly urbanized areas.

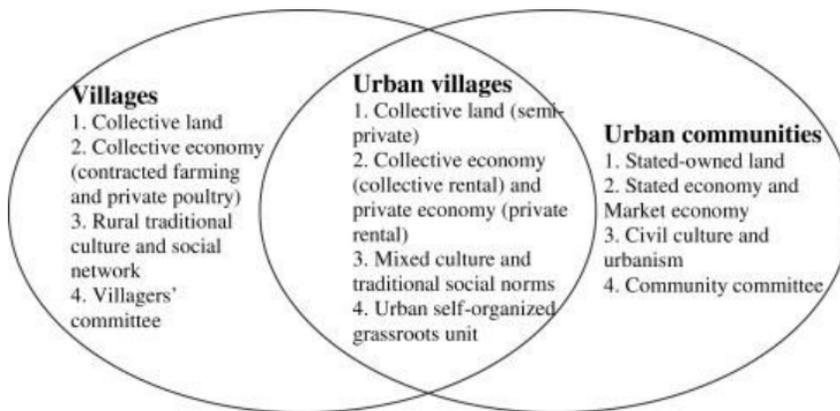


Figure 5. The plural characteristics of the urban village (Source: Liu et al, 2010: 137)

Therefore, the redevelopment of the historical village in Hong Kong could be a reference experience from the urban village in Mainland China. In this way, it protects the culture and provides economic benefits through a collective economy. Thereby replacing the development of the real estate, and avoiding the destruction of village cultures and gentrifying urban space.

Similar to the social value of Nga Tsin Wai Village, the social value of the urban village is vital. The scholar noticed that protecting the traditional village culture (Dai, 2015), and emphasizes the value of urban villages as a base for a large number of low-income people (Acker, 2005).

5. CONCLUSION

The Nga Tsin Wai Village project represented many similar historical villages and buildings without worthy architectural value and deteriorated vernacular buildings. They had to face the issues of renewal of old places and gentrification. The developers, especially the real estate developers, generally do not consider the historical village have cultural heritage value. At the same time, the villagers think that their culture and social network cannot be demolished.

It is worth considering that it is possible to redevelop the historical buildings and places located downtown into the urban village in Hong Kong. Most of the research on urban village cases is based in Mainland China and western countries; there is rarely or scarcely research on the feasibility of redeveloping an old place into an urban village in Hong Kong. The obvious benefit that comes to mind is that it creates opportunities for a collaborative economy, mixed culture and traditional social norms based on preserving the village culture and not forcibly driving out the original villagers. The well-regulated form of the urban village can retain the village culture while providing living space for the original villagers. Plus, create more commercial spaces or units for grass-roots citizens to rent. The form of urban village mentioned above allows for solving multi-issues of Hong Kong urban. First, the urban village brings the economy and residents places. It provides more opportunities for the market economy within living places. However, it is different to the benefit of developing resident zone for middle-class civic. Second, it would not be driving out the original villagers and demolishing the village culture. Yet, the form of the urban village could protect the culture because the redevelopment process needed to encourage the villagers' democratic participation. Plus prove a better living environment for them. Reshaping a historical village in the city into an urban village is a way to add more functions based on the original village's character. This means keeping the original social network and the traditional culture is vital, and avoiding the mechanization conservation leads to homogenization. Third, preaching the history and culture of the site by the cultural and creative industries can attract civic visits and consumption.

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**BEHIND THE VISIONS: RACE AND
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN
CONTEMPORARY ATLANTA**

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BEHIND THE VISIONS: RACE AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN CONTEMPORARY ATLANTA



The United States is a multi-ethnic nation, a make-up that shaped its social, political, and cultural dimensions and manifested in its history of racial segregations and discriminations. Its attitudes towards racial relationship have changed significantly since mid-twentieth century. However, recent movements in social justices lay bare the facts that racial issues are still deeply embedded in America in a much more subtle and nuanced ways. In this line of thought, this paper focuses on architectural design and aims to interrogate the intersections between design and racial and economic segregations and discriminations. It looks at the city of Atlanta.

1. INTRODUCTION

Designs of the built environments carry the bias, prejudices, and politics of segregations and discriminations. Atlanta is an economic and cultural powerhouse in the South, the region associated with slavery and racial discriminations. It has built a reputation as an inclusive city based on coalitions between Black civic and political leaders and White economic establishments, summed up by the former mayor Hartsfield as “a city too busy to hate.” Today, it is one of the fastest growing cities in the nation. In the last decade, the most important development in the city is the Atlanta Beltline, a creation of an urban, linear park that encircles the city and has spurred massive re-development along the corridor. However, many research showed that from demographic and economic angles, it is a gentrification that displaced residence of existing neighborhoods, who were mainly minorities. The Beltline envisions itself as a revitalization of the city, disrupting the typical urban and social fabrics and structures. It intends to stimulate Atlanta’s transformations into a post-racial and post-industrial city based on service economy. It has led to flurries of design activities to realize these visions, including adaptive reuse of large-scale, abandoned industrial buildings, renovations of existing, vernacular houses, and constructions of large-scale new buildings and infill residential structures. Their design aesthetics evolved from either selected historical, vernacular buildings or clean, simple geometry and lines. However, designs of everyday buildings in Atlanta are never far from allusions to racial and economic segregations. They are deeply entangled with economic and social discriminations. In these contexts, what are the intentions behind and significance of the choices of design along the Beltline? How do they entangle with racial politics, bias, and prejudices? What are their potentials as a part of the socio-cultural dynamics of American society?

2. ATLANTA, A HYPHENATED CITY

The Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the busiest airport in the world, provides stories of the city from its name. This hyphenated name reveals its history, socio-cultural facets, ambiguity, and paradoxes. It came from former Atlanta mayors, William Hartsfield and Maynard Jackson. The former was credited for steering the city during the Civil Rights era and laid the groundworks for today's Atlanta and the latter was the first African American to be elected to that position. It paints the picture of a city in racial harmony and the most prominent in the South and one of the largest economies in the United States.¹ It is one of the fastest growing regions in the nation and the cradle and the center of the Civil Rights movement in the country with a large proportion of middle-class minorities. However, it is one of the cities with the most inequality. The recent growth of the city increased the disparity, not only in the economic sense, but also in racial dimensions.² It has a high-level of poverty, leading to the minorities and the low-incomes groups in disparities in healthcare, food, and environmental. Affluent people move into the city, while the have-nots had to be move out. It paints a picture of continued process of gentrifications

Historically, it was one of the youngest major cities in the United States, founded in 1836. Although it grew and gained prominence as one of the economic centers in the South, it only served as the capital of the State of Georgia in 1874. One of the myth of cities was the burning of Atlanta at the end of the Civil War, over which the city rises again and thrived like a phoenix. Indeed, the city logo depicts a phoenix, encircled with the motto "Resurgens." The city was unique compared to other cities in the South. While segregation persisted, economic and educational institutions of the African Americans thrived, such as the establishment of the Atlanta University, which is an agglomeration of a number African American colleges. In efforts to be accepted as part of major cities in the nations, the city leaders kept building and promoting its image.³ In 1886, Henry Grady, the editor of the Atlanta Constitution, gave a speech in New York in which he proclaimed the term of the "new South," a South that transformed itself into industrial economy with a different social term with Atlanta as the leader of the new South. Nevertheless, Atlanta and other Southern cities were excluded from the World's Columbian Expo, held in Chicago in 1893. As a response, the city organized the Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895 to demonstrate its emerging industrial power. However, this expo might be best remembered for the speech "Atlanta Compromise" given by the African American leader and educator Booker T. Washington. He accepted the separation between the blacks and the whites, in exchange guarantees in education and legal process. It led to the principle of "separate but equal," an institutionalized segregation that governed life in the South until the Civil Rights movement in 1960s. However, as the Federal law prohibited all white primary voting, African Americans in Atlanta gained political advantages. Whites' business and political leaders negotiated with African American leaders and formed alliances. In exchange for political supports, African Americans thrived economic and culturally that

allowed Atlanta to navigate the turbulent history during the Civil Rights era and following a non-violent path.⁴ The city produced its finest son, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. From the mid twentieth century, the city grows fast as the financial capital of the South, culminating in the 1996 Olympic Games. However, similar to many cities in the nation, Atlanta also suffered from the turn into post-industrial economy. Its growth slowed down and lost its population. However, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, the city has taken off again.

3. URBAN FORM AND THE SPATIALIZATION OF RACE

Atlanta is a city that grew along changes in technology of transportations. It was shaped by evolutions from trains to automobile, and eventually to airplanes. It was born as a railroad crossing and junction, evolved as a streetcar city, embraced the arrival of automobiles and the highways system, and eventually becoming a global hub for air travels. The city is on the ridgeline of the Appalachian Piedmont plateau, which was a major trail for the Cherokees and the Creeks. As Allen aptly stated, Atlanta was not a planned city, instead, the layering of its topographical condition, and patterns of streets, blocks, lots, and infrastructure formed the urban structure and its developments.⁵ The converging of three railroad lines, from the east, south, and southwest in downtown Atlanta dictated the patterns of streets, blocks, lots, and infrastructure. Commerce grew in this intersection and served as the driving force of the city ever since. Allen stressed that Atlanta is a railroad town, similar to many cities in American West and different from other Southern cities which grew from seaport and planned.⁶ Terminus, the first name of the city, and its current name, Atlanta, were toponyms that reflected its origin.⁷ As the city grew as a major transport hub in the region, so did its economy and urban form. The city rebounded after the Civil, reflected in the construction of the state capitol and a state-of-the-art hotel for the time.⁸ Along with the emergence of suburbs as a merging of cities and countryside, Atlantans moved out from the downtown into suburbs while working in the city.⁹ True to the character of the city, the growth of Atlanta was driven by transportation system and commerce.¹⁰ Atlanta business magnates, such as Joel Hurt and Henry Atkinson, built suburban neighborhoods that were linked to the city by their streetcar lines. Streetcar lines formed an extensive network and a pattern of suburbs within the range of around two miles from the city center. It included a loop of rail tracks connecting these neighborhoods and surrounding the city. However, this urban form was not neutral, as they were exclusively white neighborhoods. Meanwhile, African Americans resided in the city around the industrial areas. Streetcar services also followed the racial lines, serving only the white neighborhoods. The Washington Park, the first African American suburbs and park was only developed in 1921, named after Booker T. Washington. The city form, informed by transportation technology and land speculations, spatialized the race relationship, conditioning a geography of growth and economic access. The line in this spatialization of race took a sharp turn after the race riot in 1906.¹¹ Neighborhoods were compartmentalization along the racial lines, facilitated by legal means, such as exclusionary zoning regulations in the suburbs, and economic tools, such as discrimination in lending.

The African American community in Atlanta responded by developing their own economic, social, cultural, and educational institutions within their space. Spurred by their growing economic prosperity, the Sweet Auburn district emerged as the wealthiest and most vibrant African American district, leading to the term the Black Mecca.

Then automobile replaced trains and streetcars. It necessitated an infrastructure of the network of roads and highways that also transformed the urban form and the geography of the city. Atlanta suburbs shifted into an auto-oriented residential areas with their shopping center with off-street parking. The city also constructed new infrastructures, such as the viaduct in downtown. After the Second World War, all streetcar companies folded, their infrastructure scrapped, and car-oriented suburbs emerged far out from the city.¹² These transformations coincided with the Civil Rights Movements and the end of segregation. As segregation-based regulations deemed unconstitutional, white Atlantans moved out to new suburbs in the surrounding counties, followed by the relocations of economy. The network of roads and highways provided the framework for this flight. Atlanta's historic suburbs became in-town neighborhoods and changed from whites into African Americans. They declined, as affluent people moved out, leaving behind the less affluent. Houses and the neighborhoods deteriorated. The ring of the interstate highways became the de-facto city boundaries. The city itself was quartered by two interstate highways running north to south and an interstate highway on the east-west direction, intersecting in downtown.

Against this backdrop, however, Atlanta grew very rapidly, attracting companies and investments, and becoming the most important city in the South. Spatially, it expanded into its metro area. To support the growth of the city, Atlanta leaders embarked in development projects that also intended to address demographic and economic challenges. As with other cities in the nation, they used the instruments known as the urban renewal programs to reshape the city. They took shapes in the constructions of highways as well as a series of major projects to sustain and invigorate downtown Atlanta.¹³ The premise of the programs was to use the constructions and developments of urban infrastructure to improve the quality of life in the city. However, these constructions targeted areas with high concentrations of low-income and minorities. Condemning them as blighted urban areas, these projects razed these communities. Although the federal government included the provisions of the construction of public housing for the displaced communities, it was rarely enforced. In the end, Atlanta built a series of public housings to replace the low-income housing stocks. However, the city infrastructure, including public transits, healthcare facilities, and grocery stores, did not properly serve these housings. Further, the Atlanta leaders situated these urban renewal projects as spatial and physical buffers between the minority neighborhoods and the downtown.¹⁴ As the city became a sprawling metropolis, the urban form also transformed significantly. New business and economic centers grew outside the perimeters, mostly on the northern parts, connected by suburbs that spreading further away

from the city. The patterns of the development also reflected this racial geography, with more development occurred in the outlying suburbs, mainly to the north. Thus, the spatialization of race work both ways. Outward, it distanced different races between the city and the new suburbs. Inward, it compartmentalized the city into enclaves of minority neighborhoods. The urban form segregated the whites in northeast and northwest and the black, middle class in southwest of the city.

As Atlanta became one of the most sprawling cities in the nation, a new initiative to address the dispersing metropolis took shape. The Atlanta Beltline is the development of a loop that encircles the city of Atlanta in its entirety. It is a 33-mile-long loop consisting of a network of trails and public parks, borne out a master thesis project by Ryan Gravel. It caught the attention of community leaders of the city, who campaigned for the transformation of the thesis into actual urban project. The grassroots efforts successfully gained tracks to mobilize supports for the initiatives, both from the public and private sectors, became the initiatives of the City of Atlanta since 2005.¹⁵ The construction broke ground in 2011, scheduled for completion in 2030. The loop is built on the line of the historic rail tracks that encircled the city, integrating the abandoned industrial sites along the tracks. While the abandoned track turned into trails and parks, former warehouses and factories acquired a new lease of life into varieties of residential, commercials, and entertainment. The city also built several new public parks on sites in proximities to this trail. In terms of the urban form, this Beltline reconnects the historic, in-town neighborhoods of the city.

The project has effectively transformed the city, with businesses invested back in the city. It spurred the emergence of offices, shopping, and entertainment venues along the Beltline, in tandem with new residential buildings, both multi- and single-family dwellings. It has led to a frenzy of new constructions, large and small, and conversions of old, abandoned buildings, reflecting the shifts from industrial to post-industrial city and economy. It embraces current emphasis in sustainable designs at every scale. It facilitates the influx of people back into the city. Affluent people move into the city and drive the property values tremendously.¹⁶ In turn, it has priced out existing residents and pushed them out of their neighborhoods. Dilapidated houses in the historic neighborhood changes hands and renovated, while vacant lots turned into contemporary houses; both of which to meet the lifestyle of new residents. The low-income parts of the city have become exclusive and up-market areas in a short span of time. In short, while the trails has transformed the urban form and led to its rejuvenation, it also facilitates the changes in demographics. It is a process of gentrification and displacement. In fairness, the Atlanta Beltline integrates policies and strategies to address the issues of housing affordability. They have work to prevent displacement of low-income residence and to provide options for affordable housings. However, these measures are still behind compared to the drives for upscale developments.



Fig. 1: Changes along and around The Atlanta Beltline. (Source: author's photographs).

4. ARCHITECTURE IN ATLANTA

The urban form of Atlanta has always framed the racial geography of the city. Along this line, this study looks into the scales of buildings, hence, architecture in the city. It does not intend to paint a comprehensive survey of architecture in Atlanta. Instead, it is a vignette of several moments in contemporary Atlanta. Historically, designs of buildings did not exhibit differences. Houses of upper- and middle-class African American families were similar to those of the whites. For example, the house of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an example of a Queen Anne style house in the city. Conversely, houses of the lower-class whites and African American tended to be similar, including the typology of shotgun and bungalow. Indeed, the former has origins in African American houses. Overall, architecture in Atlanta, especially that of institutional edifices, whether governmental and commercial, were similar to contemporary architectural trends, nationally and globally. These edifices appeared to follow mainstream trends, whether modernism, post-modernism, and later, the return to modernism in architecture, albeit in generic manner. It seemed that an attitude of the city was its pragmatism, in which the city very rarely adorned with signature work of architecture. However, in the realm of everyday architecture, historicism and traditionalism took hold, with buildings were designed in vernacular, historic European, or Antebellum outlooks. Robert Craig has provided a picture of modern architecture in Atlanta.¹⁷ He argued that the evolution of architecture of the city corresponded to the dynamics of architecture in national and international scenes. As mentioned above, the city was closer to the entrepreneurial, speculative cities in the West. This also informed its architectural characters. He pointed that other Southern cities tended to cling into the Old South ways of life, which was rooted in traditions and shunned progress. Architecturally, the Old South preferred traditional and historic architecture, including varieties of revival styles. The prosperous Atlanta, fueled and driven by commercial and economic enterprises, embraced architecture that reflected progress to distinguish itself from the rural, agrarian Old South. Instead,

modern, urban architecture of the city intended to project the spirit of the New South. It was architecture that explored abstract, simple forms, the advance of technology, and left historical styles behind. It is crucial that Craig related the attitude in design to the image-conscious city in terms of the New South and its distinctions from the Old South.

It is conspicuous that a significant part of the leadership of the Atlanta way is literally builders, including architects and developers.¹⁸ Along this line, towards the late 1970s, Atlanta leaders envisioned turning Atlanta into a convention city. It implies shaping downtown as a middle-class shopping and entertainment. These intents led to the investment in reshaping the downtown, which figured two prominent developers, John Portman and Tom Cousin, who shaped the architecture of the downtown, spatially and formally, giving shapes to the skyline of modern Atlanta. Cousins developed the Omni Center, now the CNN Center, a complex of hotels and sports and entertainment venues. Architecturally, it was a series of long, vertical concrete and glass slabs that were anchored by a large auditorium with a distinctive shape. The developer also donated his land as the site for the construction of the convention center as a part in the bid to turn Atlanta into a convention city.

The Atlanta native John Portman was a unique figure, an architect and a developer. He developed an extensive portfolio in downtown Atlanta, including hotels, offices, shopping centers, and parking garages, which he designed himself. Indeed, his development shifted the central business district up north from its historical point. He started with three merchandize marts. However, he would be remembered for the three hotels, the Hyatt Regency in 1967, the Peachtree Plaza Hotel, now the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in 1976, and the Marriott Marquee hotel in 1986. As noted elsewhere, Portman's hotels brought a new interpretation of downtown hotels. His vast, soaring atria has become his signature, that he replicated in design of hotels all over the world. Instead of a typical double-loaded corridor with rows of bedrooms, the architect-developer introduced a giant atrium at the center that went up the full height of the building.¹⁹ The first of these atria at the Hyatt Regency was a rectangular space, occupying most of the length and width of the building and opening up all the way to the top of the hotel. The hallways of the hotel lining up every floor of the hotel overlooking the atrium, creating repetitive elements of lines. This atrium was surpassed by the Marriot Marquee hotel atrium, which was as 47-story height curved space, enclosed by rhythmical curvilinear hallways. In Portman's atria, the space was dotted with elements hanged from above and the exposed elevators with their glass-cars turned into vertical elements that enlivened these spaces. They created a composition of vertical and horizontal linear elements in and around a vast, soaring volume. The processions into these atria were a choreography, in which people moved through confined space of ordinary modern buildings, then suddenly open up in these grand openings. However, from the streets of the downtown, Portman's buildings appear undistinguishable, similar to typical tall buildings in any city. They are simple, tall,

geometric solids, such as cylindrical or tall slabs, either steel-and-glass or concrete skyscrapers. The street frontages of these buildings are also unassuming with understated entrances. The simplicity of the buildings stands in stark contrasts to the exploded space of the atria. His marts also followed a similar design, solid, brutalist concrete buildings occupied the expanse of the city block. In contrast, the space inside is organized around similar vast atria. With regards to the architecture of city, Portman's buildings featured an apparent neutrality and banality in formal terms, along with a peculiar spatial relationship to the downtown area. The architects linked his downtown properties with bridges between one building to another. It created another level of space for people to move about the downtown separated from the pedestrians, isolating spaces inside Portman's buildings from the space of the city. People move from one interior space to another, without the need to go outside. The spatial organization of the atria and the skybridge turned the city outside in. The street fac, became screens that compartmentalized the city into layers of private and public space. Indeed, most of the people are visitors, who could get into the downtown in a subway, getting out in the subterranean station beneath one of the Portman's buildings, then proceeded to one of the atria and to other buildings without ever step out into the sidewalk.

In the Atlanta Beltline, architectural designs along and around the trails demonstrate certain tendencies that reflect both the overall trends as well distinctive occurrence related to the trails. Buildings along the trails range from small, medium, large, to very-large scales. They include new structures, adaptive reuse, and renovated buildings. Medium to extra-large buildings accommodate residential, entertainment, offices, and mixed-use, while the small buildings are residential. Designs of these typologies demonstrated changes over time. The large, residential buildings from the late 1990s were designed in garden apartment type. This residential complex is divided up into multiple structures that are organized in cluster organization, sitting on an expanse of parking with trees surrounding the buildings. Each building is a low- to medium-rise structure, usually three- or four-story height, with gable or hipped roofs. Their surfaces are clad with vinyl that appears as if they were wooden planks. Often, the bottom part is clad with bricks or masonry that created a tripartite appearance. Staircase and walkways are often exposed. They emphasize on the presence of the roofs that, along with balconies and types of windows, give the impressions that allude to notion of houses in the South.

By the early 2000s, the typical design of large, residential building turned into different formal and spatial strategies. The basic pattern of this type consists of a large, multistory parking garage and housing units organized in a long, linear form. These housing units wrap around the parking garage, and often incorporate a courtyard. In comparison to cluster of volumes on a field of the previous era, this type occupies the lot to the edges. This type ranges from four- to eight-story height. It emphasizes the appearance of a basic volumetric shape. This basic formal feature demonstrates a flexibility in the design of the elevations. In the early 2000s, during the popularity of New Urbanism, the facades referred to historical patterns, such the tripartite vertical

divisions, allusions to various historical roofs, and windows based on historical types. In contrast, buildings from latter periods emphasize the basic geometric solid, articulated by flat roofs. They articulate strong horizontality through the orientations of its two- and three-dimensional elements, that often create horizontal bands. Facades appear as a composition of planes that read as a flat surface. Balconies often are not project out, but recessed in, creating surfaces with subtractions. The placement of balconies on the corners of the buildings lends to the impression of the destruction of a box. It often aims to relate to the aesthetics of industrial buildings or to the mid-century modernism of the Bauhaus. Functionally, this type changes from exclusively residential to mixed-use. Distinctive to the Beltline area is the adaptive reuse into residential and commercials of abandoned industrial buildings, including former factories and warehouses. These buildings offer vast, open space with long span and high-ceilinged space that allows for flexibility in dividing and organizing space into units. Most of the low-rise former industrial buildings turn into food halls and retail complexes, while medium rise into multi-family residential. These conversions usually carve out a large space, creating multi-story space that serves as the main area. They celebrate and expose materials and constructions of these building. Often, they feature large windows that set the tone for the rhythm of the facades.



Fig. 2: Changes in the apartment typology. (Source: author's photographs).

In the neighborhoods along the Beltline has seen the changes architecturally as well. For examples, Cabbagetown and Reynoldstown were two working-class neighborhoods of that consisted of small bungalows and shotgun houses. After the Beltline, existing houses are renovated, and new houses sprung up in vacant lots. The designs of these new houses stand in strong contrast to the vernacular houses. They articulate basic geometric shapes of rectangular prisms and tend to be small in scale, with emphasis in verticality. Taking advantage of building codes for the residential areas, these new structures often rise to three-story height, while most of existing houses are one-story height, often with attic. They tend to

emphasize the solidity of the volumes, with narrow windows that strengthen the verticality. In contrast to the gable and hipped roofs of existing houses, almost of all these new structures are flat-roofed. The palette of materials emphasizes a composition of woods, metals, bricks, and stucco. The facades are flat surfaces. They also forego porches and verandahs, which is a common feature in vernacular houses.

5. DESIGNS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

Visual observations of changes in the historical neighborhoods demonstrate certain preferences for architectural design. The overall neighborhood appears to improve visually, with old houses turned into a pristine condition with well-manicured lawn. In general, new, infill houses are designed in modernist tastes and fashions. A question that arises is the relationship between the choice as specific design with the values of the property. This paper look into data of property values of new houses and old, renovated houses in the neighborhoods of Reynoldstown and Cabbagetown, from the official website of the Fulton County Board of Assessors. This office estimates market values of properties and administers property taxes. It keeps an extensive data of properties, including construction year and changes in values, in the Fulton County, including in Atlanta, that date back to early 2000s. These data demonstrate significant increases in those values between years before the completion of the Atlanta Beltline and after. Further, the comparisons between renovated and new, modern houses also demonstrate significant differences. New, modern-looking houses have much higher values. Similarly, the values of new houses with historic appearances are also less compared to houses with contemporary modern appearances.



Values in 2022: \$ 110,600

Values in 2022: \$ 804,000

Fig. 3: Houses in the Reynoldstown neighborhood, The Atlanta Beltline. (Source: author's photographs and The Fulton County Board of Assessor).

In terms of large scale, multi-family residential, both new development and adaptive reuse, this paper delves into the websites of these establishments. They tend to deliver each apartment complex as upscale, modern living in Atlanta. Common expressions that appear in these websites include “urban lifestyle,” “trendy,” “outdoor,” “diverse,” “skyline view,” “modern living,” and “short walk.”²⁰ These packaging emphasizes the locations, a walkable and outdoor modes of life, active engagements with urban entertainment, and references to certain architectural features and design. Indeed, the imagery foregrounded modernist aesthetics that portray simplicity, geometry, and a palette of primary colors. They often feature young persons of diverse ethnicities. The design of the websites also gravitates to modern graphic design in their ordering of images and texts, palette of colors, and typography. They package a certain lifestyle of the young, hip, trendy, and vibrant. They also target specific segments in society, that is, the young, millennial professional. In this line, housing adverts are disseminated through the internet and offer insights into the interior of these housings, that operate on the notion of interior space of comforts. This space provided them with amenities as a part of this lifestyle. These websites aim to develop and cultivate certain lifestyle associated with these establishments. Modern design occupies a central part in forming these images, a part and parcel of the image of modern life that these apartments offer. They are in essence forming a lifestyle based on imageries.

The Atlanta Beltline has produced an extensive set of documents over the years to guide the development of the trails, ranging from economic development to design and planning. The latest set of documents includes its masterplans. The Beltline is divided up into ten sub-area to facilitate its development. In turn, each sub-area produced its master plan for such area.²¹ (20) Common lines in the masterplan and master plans of sub-areas emphasize the intents to achieve transit-oriented community. Aspects relating to design and aesthetics factors emphasize the quality of design, the intents to strengthen distinct characters of each area along the trails, historic structures as an asset both architecturally and economically, and investments in public arts. The masterplan certainly puts premium on design quality, which in practice, translates into the prevalent taste of the day. The documents never explicitly state the type of design that the project referred to as quality design. However, the illustrations in those master plans consistently depict modern architecture based on simple, sleek geometric design. It did not contain illustrations of design that refer to historic, traditional, or vernacular architecture. Indeed, gable or hipped roof did not present in any of these illustrations. The masterplans emphasize the intents on celebrating the characters of neighborhoods. It seems that the character veers toward the industrial past of the areas along and around the trails. This relates to the other main theme of the design documents. The masterplans endorse and encourage adaptive reuse of stocks of buildings in the neighborhoods. Besides their economic values, these buildings possess aesthetics distinctiveness and flavors. Further, the documents stresses arts as an important feature of the development of the project and lays out strategies to deploy arts in that role. It encompasses arts to contribute to the community development to art as an economic means. In a way, the plan positions art to develop the image and lifestyle. With regards to arts

and historic buildings, these points are in tune with the citywide design strategy outlined in Atlanta City Design.²² The masterplan for the design of the city also put premium in the crucial roles of arts in shaping the design and the future of communities in the city. It also recognizes the potentials of historic buildings and encourages actions including adaptive reuse.

Sara Schindler discussed that architecture could act as a regulating means to control our behaviors, both personal and collective.²³ Design feature have capacities to influence and regulate relationship between person and between group of people. In turn, over time, these configurations and choreography could shape our behaviors, instilling routines in us. Simple means through design, such as access separations, and constraints, could affect larger routine. Precisely, this collective dimension offered design as a means to discriminate and segregate. In short, design has the potential to enact exclusions. She listed a set of categories of design elements or interventions, including physical barriers and transit design. Examples of the former included entrances, walls, and sentry. The latter included placement of transit elements and the design of wayfinding. Schindler also noted legal means that could work in tandem to exclude, such as ordinances, building codes, and covenants. Along this line, Weyeneth studied architectural design as a means to facilitate racial segregations.²⁴ The author pointed to two basic principles in racial segregation through architectural designs, that is, isolation and partitioning. Architectural isolation aimed to use design as a way to minimize contacts between different races. It included exclusion, mainly through legal means to separate a space. Another means was through duplication, that is, creating two separate spaces, each for a race. Temporal separation employed time to segregate races, such as different schedule for blacks and whites. The second principle was architectural partitioning, which manage the encounters between persons of different races in a shared space. This included fixed, malleable, and behavioral separations. A fixed separation was physical feature to separate, such as different entrances. A malleable separation was invincible, such as different areas to sit in a room. behavioral separations were instituted through customs. Architectural segregation often achieved by constructing new structures to accommodate separations or adapting an existing space or building to accommodate segregations.

Further, Lasner explored the design of residential buildings that entangled with the notion of racial segregations.²⁵ First, the traced the historical trajectory, starting from the emergence of suburban apartment complexes that catered to single adults. This implicitly designed to target a certain group of people and exclude other groups. In conjunction with the passage of time which led to desegregations, developers of apartment turn to the devices of rural imagery and opacity, and privacy that cater to the white privileges. It was a type of garden apartment. Further, Invisibility of apartment complex become a virtue. He noted that since desegregation, white tenants seemed to prefer places that were difficult to see. He also noted that the design of apartment complexes deployed semiotics means. The appearance of these design harkened back to

historical houses in the south. In particular, Lasner studied the design of the Post group from Atlanta, that spurred the generic design of apartments in the area for a particular era. Indeed, the Post group was a group of John Williams, one of the figures of builders of Atlanta mentioned above. With regards to architecture of the South, Driskell and Trawalter inquired different perceptions to architectural designs.²⁶ They observed the tendency of new neighborhood in the South to be designed and developed following the Antebellum styles or elements derived from them. They pointed to the nostalgia and attraction to the Old South. Pointedly, they found that African Americans were less receptive to the design based on Antebellum styles. It was the associations between the Antebellum with racism, segregations, and slavery.

The prevalence for contemporary taste encompasses architecture and public arts in the Beltline. The trails regularly feature art installations and even facilitates large murals and gravities along the trails. Even large apartment complexes integrate extensive murals on many surfaces of their establishments. Designs of these public arts demonstrate celebrations of pop arts, including the iconography, iconology, and the design techniques. This prevalence of contemporary taste in design relates to several factors. First, it relates to the market. As mentioned above, buildings that are designed in contemporary architecture possess higher market values.²⁷ Even the generic design also follows suit. Developers want high return to their investment and modern design deliver that. It was a shared taste, not only for customers, but also among architects. Principals in architectural firms in the city also are from the younger generations, much the same as the demographic that of the millennial. These crops of architects received their architectural education and training in schools in the region that are the bastions of modern, that is, Georgia Institute of Technology, Auburn University, and Florida. This taste seems to transcend beyond the race lines. Not only in terms of the consumer, but also among minority architects. For example, Jordache Avery is one of the rising, young architects in Atlanta. An African American originally from Florida, his designs celebrate simple geometric shapes.²⁸



Fig. 4: Public arts on The Atlanta Beltline (Source: author's photographs).

6. CONCLUDING NOTES

The urban form of Atlanta has changed over time, from one that was organized on colliding grids based on directions of rail tracks into one that was sprawled on a web of highways and roads. In these modes, however, they gravitates around centers, whether a singular downtown or multiple centers. The Beltline, slowly but significantly, has changed the urban form into a growth along its linear, enclosing loop. In a way, it has taken away the centrality of Atlanta business districts in the downtown area. The urban forms do not only govern and inform the spatial and formal organizations of the city. In Atlanta, they play instrumental roles in the organizations of relationship between races. They informed the segregations, turning the social and cultural patterns into spatial patterns. Indeed, these spatialization separate communities do not only operate along the color lines, but also along economic lines. Changes in urban form brought by the Beltlines also affected the geography of different communities. The loop fundamentally brought down the separations in the city, linking and connecting formerly blacks and whites neighborhoods. In a post-racial society as in contemporary urban America, segregations have changed from racially based into economic-based. In this vein, connecting neighborhoods in Atlanta also means a wave of gentrifications, in which low-income neighborhoods have been pushed into up-scale neighborhoods. The fact of the correlations between racial and economic minorities is still prevalent. In long term, the trails facilitate the expansions of up-scale space into new urban frontier, that is, the low-income and minorities neighborhoods. However, it is also offered potentials for tactical spatial countering. Public arts that convey political messages, especially related to social injustice and racism, penetrate this space of comforts. It might stand as a reminder of the absence and the displacement of the minorities.

Recently, the Black Lives Matter is a watershed moment that changed and challenged the stands and discourses in race relationships in the country. It is a widespread movement that brings into forefront issues and problems of social injustice, racism, and social inequities. Fifty years after the Civil Rights, this movement lays bare the facts that the nation is still mired in issues of social equity. Indeed, it shines the light that such problems are structural and embedded deeply in every facet of our societies. It has disrupted our acceptance of normality of everyday life and institutions, forcing moments of reckoning in every institution, including in architecture and urbanism.²⁹ Discourses in architecture are framed within Eurocentric concepts, and, in practice, the percentage of minority architects is very negligible. Atlanta as a cradle of the Civil Right movements is still experiencing persistent issues of racism and social inequities, compounded by economic disparities. In this time of reckoning, the Beltline provides space for political expressions. Marches protesting social injustices and racism took place along the trails and political events occurred in parks of the Beltline. Political public and street arts with messages supporting the Black Lives Matter and demanding social justice constantly appeared along the trails.

In this line, architectural designs act as the formal expressions of the marquee projects in Atlanta. In the mid and end of the twentieth century, modern architecture, albeit a generic version of it, was the preferred formal expression of Atlanta's progress. Efforts on revitalizations of the downtown exemplified these. The intents were to turn downtown Atlanta as a middle-class shopping and entertainment. However, city and business leaders did not want these middle-class mingle with low-income, leading to continued efforts to eliminate minority, low-income neighborhoods.³⁰ Indeed, architecture in downtown Atlanta creates separations between interior space connected by skybridge and urban space outside. Recently, along and around the Beltline, modern architecture and design form an integral part in forming the image of the character for present and future of the city. Modern architecture could perform this task because of its a-historical character, that allows it to be neutral in terms of cultural and racial memories. It could act a means for smoothing out differences. However, its very neutrality also makes it possible for the commodification of culture through creation of images. The Beltline is a space that is embraced by diverse and multi-racial and cultural demographics. However, it is a space and design that reflects the socio-economic divides in the city. In a way, modern architectural design expresses a duality, that is, bringing people together through taste but separating people from different economic background. The designs are still skewed to follow common discourse in architecture. They have not yet embraced the diversities in architecture and design. While the market embraced and commodified sustainable design, it has not yet embraced designs of the minority. The aesthetics tastes that define these images of future and progressive Atlanta are still confined within the Eurocentric designs, conforming to white space and aesthetics of space and forms.

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¹⁸ Maria Saporta, "The Evolution of the Business Leaders who built modern Atlanta," in in Harley Etienne, Barbara Faga, ed., *Planning Atlanta*, (Chicago: American Planning Assoc., 2014) pp. 139 - 46. She noted several prominent figures that shaped Atlanta, including John Portman, Tom Cousin, John Williams of the Post group, and Wayne Mason took advantages from the sprawling Atlanta, and Henry Russell, the largest minority-owned construction company. Indeed, Wayne Mason was an early significant actor in the development of the Atlanta Beltline

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²⁷ Robert Cain, one of the award winning architects in Atlanta, mentioned similar lines in his lecture at Dept. of Architecture, Kennesaw State University, September 21, 2015.

²⁸ A feature in Atlanta Magazine, Spring 2021. Josh Green, “Jordache Avery has built one of Atlanta’s most in-demand modern architecture firms,” Web version: <https://www.atlantamagazine.com/great-reads/jordache-avery-has-built-one-of-atlantas-most-in-demand-modern-architecture-firms/>

²⁹ Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis, Mable O. Wilson, ed., *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, (Philadelphia: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020)

³⁰ Lary Keating, *Atlanta: Class, Urban Expansion*, (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 107 - 110

Traditional Dwellings and Settlements
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**AN EMERGING URBAN NETWORK DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC-HONGKONG
IMMIGRANTS IN A HISTORIC CITY OF TAIWAN**

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AN EMERGING URBAN NETWORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC -HONGKONG IMMIGRANTS IN A HISTORIC CITY OF TAIWAN



This paper focuses on the strategies of a new community, Hongkong immigrants, in the oldest city in Taiwan, Tainan City, which settled around 400 years ago. This young community has grown up in numbers just in the last decade. However, they established an online food order network with an idea derived from a local and traditional social-spatial unit in the city, 'Li'. In this paper, we illuminate that with crisis comes opportunity, and the physical separation led to a closer and functional business and dynamic network under the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a traditional Han settlement of immigrants, civilians in Tainan City once formed a cross-ethnic-group civil defensive system about 150 years ago. This system was based on the cooperation of temples. At that time, the temple's religious sphere, 'Jing', was spatially turned into the defensive scope in which it responded. This system was weakened in the following trend of colonial urbanization and modernization introduced by the Japanese government (1895-1945) and magnified by the R.O.C government after WWII. In the urban area developed after WWII, we witnessed that folk belief was individualized. The religious community was not that necessary the force grouping people together nowadays.

'Li' was a basic administrative unit established by the R.O.C. government. It symbolized the control and penetration of national power into society. After the 90s, the control of the governing authority was loosed, and the 'Li' became the scope of the neighborhood. During the pandemic of Covid-19, the Hongkong immigrant group re-coined this term as a cyber concept covering the whole urban Tainan City, both the historic and the new area. It was an identified symbol claiming their struggle for livelihood earning and the pursuit of being a member of this historic city. Under this idea, a network of shops and stores was established. This network ran a business model combining online shopping, group buying, delivery and takeout, apps and cross-store loyalty card, etc. In sum, the pandemic is more like a driver for the Hongkongers collectively work out a set of strategies to enhance their internal cohesion and perform a positive rule outward to the habitants in the city.

1. INTRODUCTION: A BUSINESS NETWORK RUN BY HONG KONG IMMIGRANTS IN A HISTORIC CITY, TAINAN CITY OF TAIWAN

In Summer 2021, under the Covid-19 pandemic, Taiwan was forced into a severe lockdown, and the business of restaurants sharply decreased. In Tainan City, we observed a commercial network called 'Li community center mutual aid box' was set up to face the challenging circumstance (Figure 1). Hongkong immigrants mainly ran this network, and their way of promoting this network was both commercial and cultural.

'Li' is a fundamental administrative unit in Taiwanese cities, that is, the end of the authority's social welfare, governance, and especially political control during the martial law period (1949-1987). After the 1990s, *Li* was gradually transformed into a neighborhood scope for establishing local identity. Therefore, those community centers of *Li* were prevailingly built and became a space for habitants gathering and meeting. However, in the 21st Century, with the alternation of generations, the importance of *Li*, to some extent, fades out. Younger generations are much less embedded into the local social network, and *Li* community centers serve the elder

group primarily. It could say so that some local identity is weakened. Young generations and families are more inclined to live an atomic lifestyle in a bigger city than in a more petite *Li* or village.



Fig. 1: *Li* community center mutual aid box. (Source: Gigi Kang. Photo [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved September 29, 2022, from <https://www.facebook.com/majajamaja>).

As the *Li* community center is no longer a necessary public facility for all habitants, a new group of Tainan City, the Hong Kong immigrants, especially those who immigrated in or after 2019, the ‘Hongkonger’, turns *Li*, a traditional symbol, into a slogan to recall the conventional moral spirit of mutual help in 2021’s Covid-19 pandemic. These immigrants established a network called the ‘*Li* community center mutual aid box’. On the one hand, this network combined new forms of business, including online shopping, group buying, delivery and takeout, mobile phone apps, cross-store loyalty card, etc. On the other hand, this paper focuses on this network’s historical and sociocultural context. (**Error! Reference source not found.**)

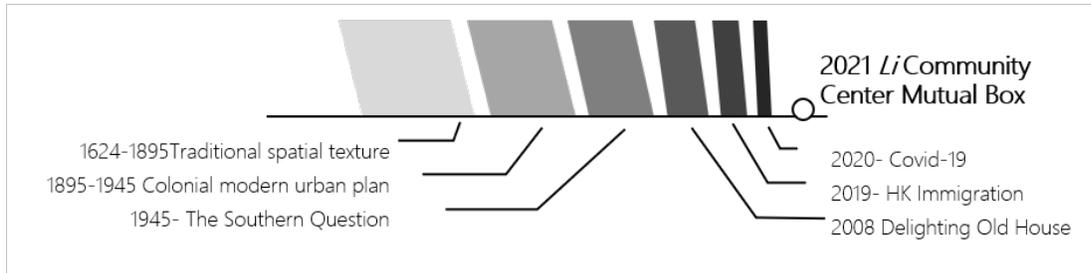


Fig. 2: Structure of this paper

Two significant dimensions must be noticed concerning the historical and sociocultural context. Hong Kong immigrants mainly ran this network, and it happened in Tainan City, a historic city in Taiwan. Following, this paper first traces back the context, including the background of the Hongkong immigrants, the ‘Delighting Old House Movement’ proposed by an NPO, the ‘Southern Question’ and the expansion of Tainan City after World War II, the spatial transformations from a traditional settlement to a modernized city in Japanese colonial period before WWII. Step by step, we illuminate how and why this network emerged at and only at this time and in the city.

After the observation and discussion mentioned, this paper proposes some conceptual interpretations of this event. First, a brief context of the Taiwan settlement study is introduced to show a perspective returning to the subsistence dimension of an urban settlement instead of the political-economic modern development discourses. Second, the historian Harootunian and his works on everydayness and temporality were reviewed to point out that the meaning of subsistence activities of a once colonized society is standing for the endeavor of the commoners in their/our lifetime. Third, in the scope of urban histories, we go back to the administrative unit ‘Li’ to reinvestigate the emergence of a new possible identity of the built and sociocultural environment called Tainan City.

2. OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

2.1. The Immigration and ‘Hongkonger’ in Tainan City

In general, there are three primary waves of Hongkong-to-Taiwan immigrants, the oversea students in the 1950s, the practitioners and employees of Hong Kong restaurants in the 1970s, and immigrants in or after 2019. It is realized that the context of these waves is the politic-economic situation in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. Especially the third wave is significantly pushed by the complicated political situation in Hong Kong.

The third-wave immigrant group has grown in numbers in the last few years. Unlike the first and second wave, these immigrants have stronger motivation and demand for identity. The pursuit of identity is in two directions: Hongkonger and a citizen of Tainan City. That makes them an ‘ethnic’ group with relatively vivid boundaries.

On the one hand, pursuing being/feeling like a ‘Hongkonger’ is quite a natural and even required reaction to an immigrant moving into a different society. This tendency might be strengthened for their reasons away Hong Kong were mostly political. On the other hand, being a citizen looks not that urgent. After all, the proclamation of local identity is not always necessary for immigrants. Therefore, it is interesting that this group shows a positive inclination to perform their local identity to Tainan City during the pandemic.

When the network ‘*Li* community center mutual box’ are concerned, some shops and restaurants proclaim the slogan ‘One island, one life’. It means we share the same circumstance since living in the same society. Moreover, some of them proposed a slogan with a more robust local identity called ‘You are what you eat.’ This slogan originally meant the connection between humans and the natural environment. Nonetheless, in the context of Taiwan, it emphasizes the bond and identification. You are supposed to be what you choose to eat and where you choose to live.

Here is a question: Why did these Hongkongers choose Tainan City to live in? Especially when it is not even the biggest three Cities in Taiwan. An interviewed Hongkonger replied that he would select Taipei if he wanted to make money and live a life just like in Hong Kong. Some Hongkongers appreciate that the life quality of Tainan City leads them to the city. This paper will introduce a movement called ‘Delighting Old House’ proposed by an NPO. We view this movement as a primary cause of the life quality of Tainan City.

2.2. The Delighting Old House Movement and ‘Tainaner’

As the first Han settlement in Taiwan, established nearly four hundred years ago, Tainan is characterized by its history and local culture (Figure 3). This historical context was emphasized and reified as cultural heritages after the 1980s. In Taiwan, the legislation for preserving cultural heritages, ‘The Cultural Heritage Preservation Act,’ was announced in 1982. In the beginning, preservation merely focuses on individual buildings and architecture. However, the importance of the whole historic built environment was realized followingly. In Tainan City in the late 1990s, a representative project, ‘Confucius Temple Cultural Park’, was put into practice by City Government, academia and industry, and the neighborhood. This project not only focused on the legal cultural heritages but also extended the goals to the whole historical and cultural environment under the concept of ‘Eco-museum’. That contributed to establishing a historic area in the downtown city in days to come.



Fig. 3: The historic area of Tainan City.

Note: The grey area shows the historic site of Tainan City. The dotted line and squares locate the wall and gates built nearly 300 years ago.

Relative to the project promoted by the government, in 2008, a non-profit organization, the Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration (FHCCR), proposed the movement 'Delighting Old House'. This movement encouraged the well-designed and thoughtful conservation and reuse of old houses without legal capacity. As a result, it radically overturned the status of the old houses. The houses in narrow lanes in the profound depth of blocks were viewed as a special place representing the local spirit of this historic city (Figure 4). Since then, the commercially reuse of old houses has become a prevailing trend in this historic city. Soon after the movement, these reusing cases undoubtedly became a resource or niche of the tourist industry on one side. On another side, they did form a local and penetrating sphere mixed with contemporary life and the historic quality of the city.

It is observed that a local identity that could be called 'Tainaner' had been formed since the overturn caused by the 'Delighting Old House Movement.' The quality of a historical city was appreciated and benefited. Outward, some descriptions not that serious but fun about Tainaner were narrated to mark a particular group. Inward, the number of citizens who recognized this movement's value increased.

Naturally, the rent of old houses is getting higher and higher in the real estate market. However, it is still relatively affordable, especially compared with the rent of the capital Taipei City. Many Hongkongers chose the 'Delighting Old House' approach to run their business. In one way, this is a workable mode of

interaction. In another way, this approach, characterized by local culture and spirit, may match the pursuit of identity of the immigrant group.



Fig. 4: Hongkonger's shop with a 'Delighting Old House' approach. (Source: CHAN Hiu Tung, 2021).

2.3. The 'Southern Question' of Tainan After WWII

There is a more profound and extended context when the 'Delighting Old House' movement is interpreted as overturning the quality of Tainan City. That is the foundation for how Hongkongers would pursue it as an approach to identity. To clarify this context, it is necessary to understand the 'Southern Question' of Tainan City after World War II.

The 'Southern Question' of Tainan City is both economically and culturally, just like the 'Delighting Old House' movement's two-layer meaning. Tainan City was Taiwan's first city but gradually lost its political-economic advantage. The 'Southern Question' primarily means the disadvantaged status of Tainan City compared with the other cities after World War II. After World War II, KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party) government lost the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) to CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and pullback to Taiwan in 1949. The Martial Law was declared and implemented during the Civil War until 1987. During the Martial Law period, the resource was economically concentrated in Taipei City as the capital. As for Tainan City, it was trapped in economic stagnation. Culturally, to some extent, it was inevitable that the KMT government had to proclaim its political and cultural representativeness of 'China'. A consequence is that the history and culture of Taiwan were relatively ignored. Further, the Japanese colonial period was almost totally erased from national history. Tainan City and the rest of this island faced the same circumstance. The urban

area rapidly and constantly expanded but the issue of local identity and subjectivity somehow was not yet revealed and fulfilled. This is quite the ‘Southern Question’ in Taiwan after World War II.

However, at the end of the Martial Law period in 1987, under the ‘Cultural Heritage Preservation Act’, those cultural heritages built in the Japanese colonial period were gradually accredited legally. The ‘Confucius Temple Cultural Park’ just located around the political-economic core of the Japanese planned urban area. Taiwan’s history was evaluated, and to some extent, Tainan City represents the most historic settlement on this island. Therefore, when the ‘Delighting Old House Movement’ led to successful commercial achievement, s of Taiwanese identity was simultaneously enforced and valuable. This is the political-economic context of the essence and the pursuit of Hongkongers.

Followingly, the spatial texture of Tainan City as the very substantial foundation of the ‘Delighting Old House movement’ is illuminated. The two-layer socio-spatial structure consisted of a Han settlement, and the Japanese urban plan is the essence of the built environment of Tainan City.

2.4. Colonial Modernity: The Spatial Transformations Before WWII Under the Japanese Colony

Qing Dynasty ruled Taiwan since 1683, but Han’Hantlements had developed in the early 17th Century. In Tainan City, nearly hundreds of streets were set late Qing Dynasty. Soon after the Empire of Jathe pan took over Taiwan in 1895, the modern urban government put the current urban plan into practice sociocultural environment of Tainan City was dramatically changed in this modernized period.

In the colonial period, the Japanese government demolished city walls and gates to execute urban plans (Figure 5). The urban progressed to a two-layer urban spatial texture. The naturally formed streets and squares of the traditional settlement were cut by the avenues and blocks of the modern plan. This two-layer spatial texture, blocks with boundaries of roads and lanes inside with deep depth, forms the actual condition of the ‘Delighting Old House’ movement and so on.

Nonetheless, the Japanese urban plan also weakened the sociocultural organization of the Han people, which was called the ‘Lian-Jing System’. Jing means the spatial territory of a temple. In a substantial dimension, Jing has territorial boundaries. In Tainan city, for example, the Jing of temples in the walled city is composed of business streets and populous residential areas. Furthermore, in the abstract socio-cultural dimension, Jing means a religious spatial sphere of the local habitants. In Qing Dynasty, most Han people were immigrants from mainland China. They brought their gods of hometown to Tainan, gathered with relatives and friends and built private temples. These temples became the most important public places to execute social order and authority. And so on; financially, temples could impose contributions from habitats in their Jing to maintain

the function of Temples. This kind of Temple was called Jing Temple when they cooperated in a composite institution established in the late Qing Dynasty called the 'Lian-Jing System'.



Fig. 5: Traditional spatial texture and modern urban plan.

Lian-Jing System was an institution for city defense. The whole system was led by local headmen, mainly the merchant guilds. The headquarters were set in three public temples. In Lian-Jing System, Tainan city was divided into ten areas for defensive purposes. These areas were called Lian-Jing (united Jing), and each was composed of several Jing with its own Jing Temples. The local commoners motivated by Jing Temples took the practical works of defense.

Overall, Lian-Jing System was both a sociocultural and spatial product that symbolized the cooperation between the powerful and the powerless; the business profit, social order, political power and religious belief of the Han people. However, it is undoubtedly that this network was weakened under Japanese colonization.

The area Lian-Jing System covered is still a very identical historic area for Tainan citizens. Under the context just mentioned, followingly, we will start to discuss some conceptual issues of the ‘*Li* community center mutual box’ and rethink its contemporary meaning as the conclusion.

3. CONCEPTUALLY BRIDGING HISTORIES AND EVERYDAY LIFE

3.1. Return to Subsistence Dimension of Urban Settlement

To rethink the meaning of the ‘*Li* community center mutual aid box’, first, the subsistence dimension of settlement should be noticed. Generally, the primary research model of Taiwan’s urban study is the politico-economic approach. This approach focuses on the plans and policies of colonizers or the government. However, proposing a socioeconomic history focusing on the commoner and everyday life is necessary. From this perspective, the essence of settlement about living-earning could be returned to the research vision. Therefore, a way to interpret subsistence production of everyday life is pathed.

3.2. An Active Perspective of Everyday Life

Discussing everyday life between the West and the Rest is quite different. Historian Harootunian says that modernization leads to the separation between tradition and the daily life of the Rest, taking Japan as an example. ‘What distinguished the discourse on everydayness was how often it concentrated on the details of multiple practices, starting with unimportant, shallow, and trivial occurrences. (Harootunian, 2000a: 71).’ The everydayness is a crucial concept to question the essence of a modernized society and culture. Further, in the case of Japan under the context of multiple modernities, Harootunian (2000a)’s discourses on potentiality provide another key argument between the practice of everyday life and modernization.

Previously everydayness was referred to as routinized, dull everyday life of industrial society, especially in the cities. However, Harry Harootunian (2000a, 2000b) proposed a positive dimension by studying Japanese philosophers in the 1920s and 1930s. By comparing the difference in meanings of ‘everydayness’ between western and Japanese society, Harootunian proposed that westernization leads to a discontinued experience between traditional lived historical time and everydayness as a specific cultural form of modernity in Japanese society. Modern everyday life (*modan waifu*) is different from conventional life (*nicijjio-seikatsu*) (Harootunian, 2000a: 69-70; 2000b: 193). As the smallest unit of time, the repeated ‘everyday’ cancels the temporal structure of the present and past, then the history (Harootunian, 2000a: 63). Further, modern everyday life not only actualizes the past but promises the possibility of a future.

A society driven by the ever new in the ever same’, says Harootunian (2009), proposing how we could imagine a temporal form to bridge the nation-state historical narrative and everyday life. When subsistence production is concerned, it turns out that even though ordinary people devoted themselves to some modern

business, they just adapted themselves to urban spatial-socioeconomic transformations. It is not proper to discourse on the histories of modernization. That is how the colonized strived to live and represent their agency to the colonizer and headmen with resources.

The study of the modern everyday life of Japanese thinkers mentioned above was close to the urban space. A discipline called modernology (*kogengaku*) was proposed by Kon Wajiroin 1920s. He stood on Ginza Street corners 'to put into practice a new discipline devoted to the modern. This secondary revision upheld the claims of modernity as the product of determinate history directly only by the present and a different temporality that would, according to stages of development, ultimately yield hitherto unimagined new forms of human existence and experience for Japan's masses (ibid: 101).'

Harootunian illuminated that city, the expanding site of industrialization and the establishment of mass society, is where everyday life could be observed, not the rural area. Here the discussion back to the epistemological temporal assumption of modernity that '[i]t is thus the cities, not any more the countryside in general, that make up the contemporary scene, the now of the present' Harootunian (2000a: 19) said, '[T]he modernity of everydayness is the street, the buildings, the new institutions and constant movement, the ceaseless interrelationship between public and private that register large and small events alike. ...Everydayness is precisely the space of immanence that dissolves the received binary between inside and outside and within which we must locate historical practice. And it is in the cities that the everyday writes its own history.'

3.3. A boarder Image of Tainan city and 'Tainaner'

Under these conceptual contexts, we could discuss three dimensions of the 'Li community center mutual aid box': socioeconomic, cultural, and spatial. First, the strategies and possibilities parts of the business should be seen. In settlement study, the living-earning dimension is generally emphasized to explain how settlement socioeconomically supports human living, an essential function of the primary type of settlement. However, in the contemporary modern settlement, it might be appropriate to acknowledge the positive, devoting meaning of the socioeconomic practice. This perspective leads us to interpret how individuals react to the macrostructure and how the personal reactions are combined into a *mezzo* collective action.

Second, about the cultural dimension, it is noticed that history is a sort of resource of contemporary identity establishment, both for the habitants and the immigrants. To some Hongkongers, the choice of immigrating to Tainan City implies a choice about what kind of 'Taiwanese' to become. The way they appeal to historical context and lifestyle, in the meanwhile, is how they apply to keep hometown in the micro and practical level in everyday life.

Finally, spatially speaking, the location of the ‘*Li* community center mutual box’ should be investigated. In 2008 when the ‘Delighting Old House Movement’ was promoted, most of the stores were located in the historic downtown area. However, in 2022 when we analyze the location of the ‘*Li* community center mutual aid box’, it spreads out to the outskirts of the city (Figure 6). It is to say that the ‘Delighting Old House’ approach has been applied widely by stores in the city. Take ‘*Li* community center mutual aid box’, for example, some stores of it locate in the readjustment areas. Here we could trace back to the idea of the ‘*Li* community center mutual aid box’. As the proposer said, they view the whole city, not only the ‘historic downtown area’, a generalized meaning of ‘*Li*’. From this spatial perspective, the Hongkongers, as the previous immigrant groups, are undoubtedly citizens of Tainan city, sharing business approaches, life affordance, historical context, and local identity.

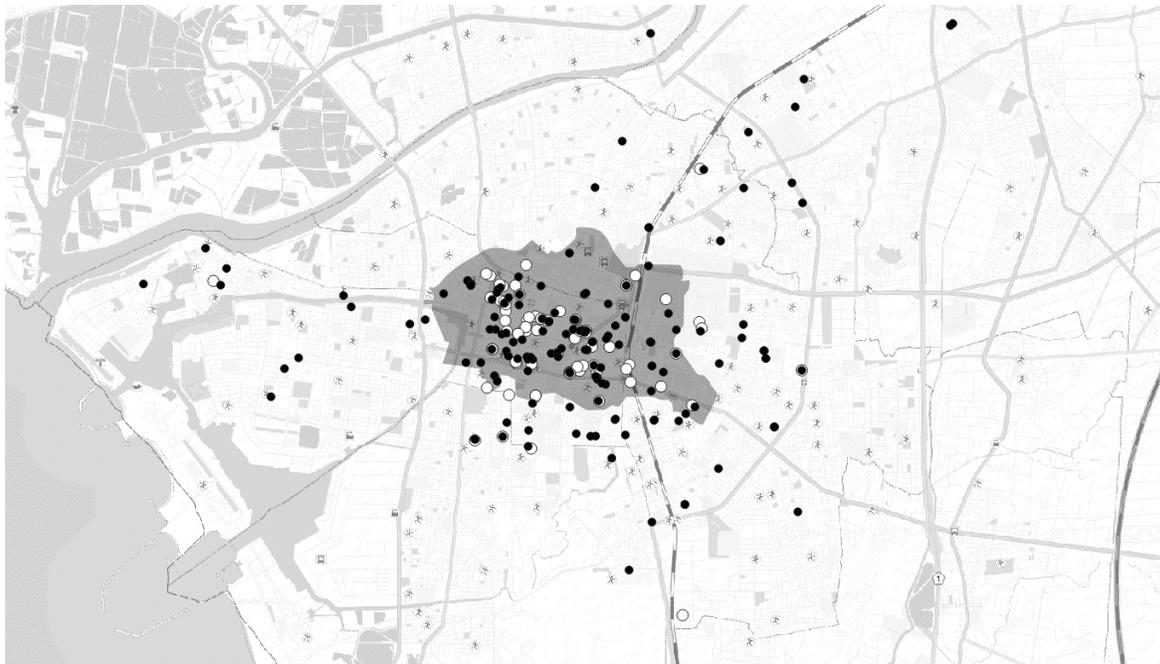


Fig. 6: The distributions of ‘Delighting Old House’ and ‘*Li* Community Center Mutual Aid Box’ cases.
Note: The white dots show the locations of the ‘Delighting Old House’ cases, and the black dots show the ‘*Li* Community Center Mutual Aid Box’ cases.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we observe an emerging network proposed by a new group. The main argument is that the private and third sectors could be active agents. And further, the commercial strategies presented with cultural idea reminds the historic city of an extensive image by a new immigrant group.

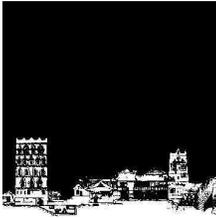
In Taiwan, the government's investments in cultural heritages are the leading work contributing to the historic environment. In this paper, the 'Confucius Temple Cultural Park project marks the start of the cooperation of the public and private sectors in Tainan City and Taiwan. To some extent, the 'Delighting Old House' movement overturned the structure both culturally and commercially. The affordable condition of living-earning and lifestyle-pursuing became the exact fundament of the contemporary local identity of Tainan City, the 'Tainan'. However, the new immigrant group, the Hongkongers, quite positively and broadly breakthrough the concept of Tainan. By proposing the 'Li community center mutual aid box', the Hongkongers described a new spatially and culturally defined image, with the traditional moral spirit to respond to the context of forced immigration and the inevitable pandemic.

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CITIES, VILLAGES, AND TRADITION

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