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## CONTEMPORARY COSMOPOLITAN STRATEGIES

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**Traditional Dwellings and Settlements**
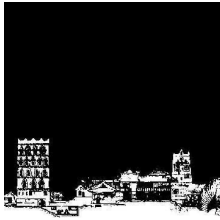
Working Paper Series

MAPPING THE HETEROTOPIAS OF
BENGALURU: THE COSMOPOLITAN OF
THE OTHER

*Priya Joseph*

# MAPPING THE HETEROTOPIAS OF BENGALURU:
# THE COSMOPOLITAN OF THE OTHER

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*Borrowing the idea of Heterotopia from Foucault, the paper analysis the extraordinary, or the places of anomality in the city. The paper investigates these heterotopias or anomalies of the cities of the Global South, specifically of Bengaluru and how the contexts of caste, rural-urban divide, political ecology and capital make them conflicting sites, while bearing its cosmopolitan identity. The counter mapping of these sites, in various mediums such as cartographic drawing, photographs and artistic representations of these sites are used as a method to understand the characteristics, histories and lived experiences of its commune, to define a nuanced cosmopolitanism of the global south.*

## 1.  INTRODUCTION

Heterotopia literally means 'other places' [1]. Borrowing the idea of Heterotopia from Foucault's work, the paper analysis the extraordinary, or the places of anomaly in the city. The formation of these micro heterotopias in the city of Bengaluru, South India, makes it an ensemble of precarious spaces, these spaces being contested, some of order in chaos, some places of refuge and the others a place of anomality, turning visible the fact of (in)equality. The paper provides evidence through mapping of these heterotopic sites, of how Bengaluru, known for its cosmopolitanism is conflicted in its identity. The Dhobi Ghats (community washing yards), Flower markets, Weavers' Colony and many such sites, make the city of Bengaluru an agglomeration of heterotopias, deep within this cosmopolitan identity.

The research is carried out through identifying and mapping some of these sites in the city of Bengaluru. The counter mapping of these sites, in various mediums such as cartographic drawing, and artistic representations of these sites, became a tool to understand the characteristics, histories and lived experiences of its commune, while using Foucault's framework of Heterotopia. The research aims to push the boundary of articulating what a cosmopolitan city in the Global South means, and why the definition of 'cosmopolitan' should be much more nuanced when looking at cities of the Global South.

The Dhobi Ghats or the washing yards, in Bengaluru for example are run by a community that holds one of the lowest caste statuses in the caste hierarchy system in India. The Dhobi Ghats, while servicing the city, use the scarcest natural resource of the city- clean water, modern machinery for washing in the center of a city with land prices as high as rupees 200,000 per square meter. The intersection of caste, natural resource use, astronomical land prices break all ground rules of operating in the city. Another example of a heterotopic site in Bengaluru is the flower and meat markets, which seem chaotic, system-less in the first glance but have survived more than a century. These are sites of abnormality and heterotopia, that function systemically

within this chaos. Similarly, other sites that are elaborated in the paper present their peculiar existence, completely contrasting from what one may think a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, global city offers. The cosmopolitan in the city is intertwined by systems of caste, immigration and the rural-urban complexities.



Fig 1: Dhobi Ghat (washing yard) at Vyalikaval, Bengaluru within the red box, which was a public swimming pool earlier. (Source: Author 2024)
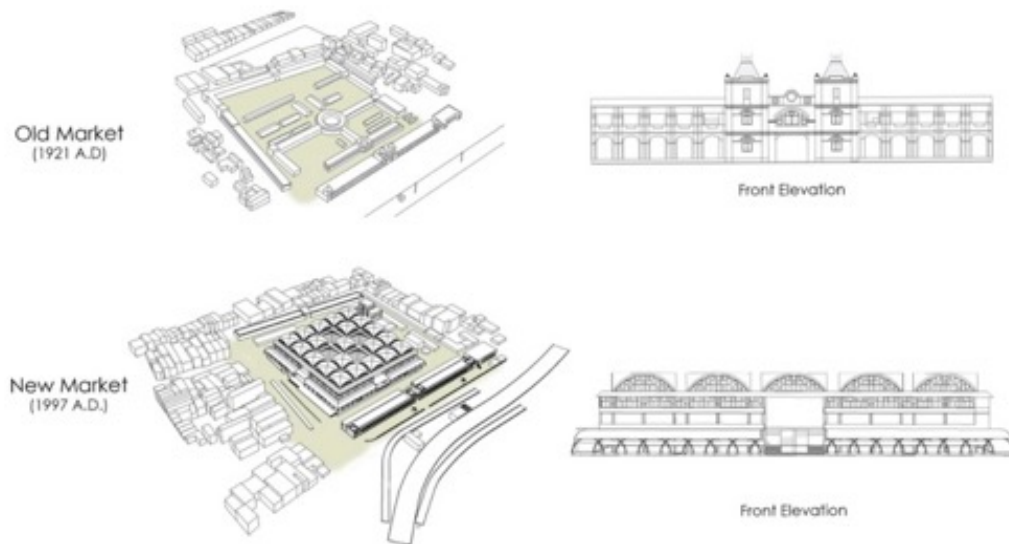


Fig 2: KR Flower Market, showing the inside and outside of the structure and the elevations of the market. (Source: Drawn by Jeenus Sreshtha, funded as a part of the project by Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology. 2020).

## 2.  THE PALIMPSEST THROUGH THE HETEROTOPIC LENS

The very vagueness of the term Heterotopia as drawn from Foucault's essay allows for different interpretation of the urban, within a framework of 'extraordinary', making the vagueness of the term its strength, allowing for the 'other', the undefined to be acknowledged. Overlapping it with the idea of cosmopolitanism, allows for an even deeper dive into what it means in cities such as Bengaluru, geographically located in South India, with an exploding population, fragile ecology, scathing divisions based on caste and class. The issues of migration and class that form the bases of most debates of cosmopolitanism in the west are only the starting point of what may be cosmopolitanism in Bengaluru, considering castism, religion, poverty, political ecology and the forceful populist governance that is overlayed as a palimpsest. Having said that, the use of the concept of Heterotopia to understand the cosmopolitan of the Global South is powerful, even though the term Heterotopia is a source of confusion and inspiration at the same time, in the urban discourse.[2]

Like Heterotopia, the idea of cosmopolitanism, holds the assurance of a city that accommodated the other, with the plurality and heterogeneity that many people of different origin bring.[3] Bangalore is now officially called Bengaluru for many years, but the older, more colonial name 'Bangalore' is still stuck with many, including the people who belong to the city and those who know it from afar. The name resonates a belonging for a large population local and global, even though it has colonial roots. The city is a refuge for anomaly, it absorbs many peoples of the state and beyond, seeking political refuge, an escape from hunger, from prejudices of caste and discriminations of gender. Like in the Nolli map of 18th century Rome, the interiors of the churches are shown as cavities, within the solid built mass of the city, ascertaining the heterotopia of this 'sacred' space' which does not fit in the conventional taxonomy of private-public.

Also, what is seen in the same map is the heterotopias of the west, in the form of the vestiges of a stadium, transform into a clear public space. Similarly, the weavers' colonies, the Dhobi Ghats, the precarious markets are occupied by people, making a place for their community, making the city cosmopolitan but also forming a heterotopia.[4]

> "Since Immanuel Kant's early conceptualization of cosmopolitanism, the term has been variously deployed and variously contested in different literatures. As (Szerszynski and Urry) argue, 'there is no one form of cosmopolitanism; it rather functions as an "empty signifier" . . . having to be filled with specific, and often rather different content, in different situated Cultural worlds."
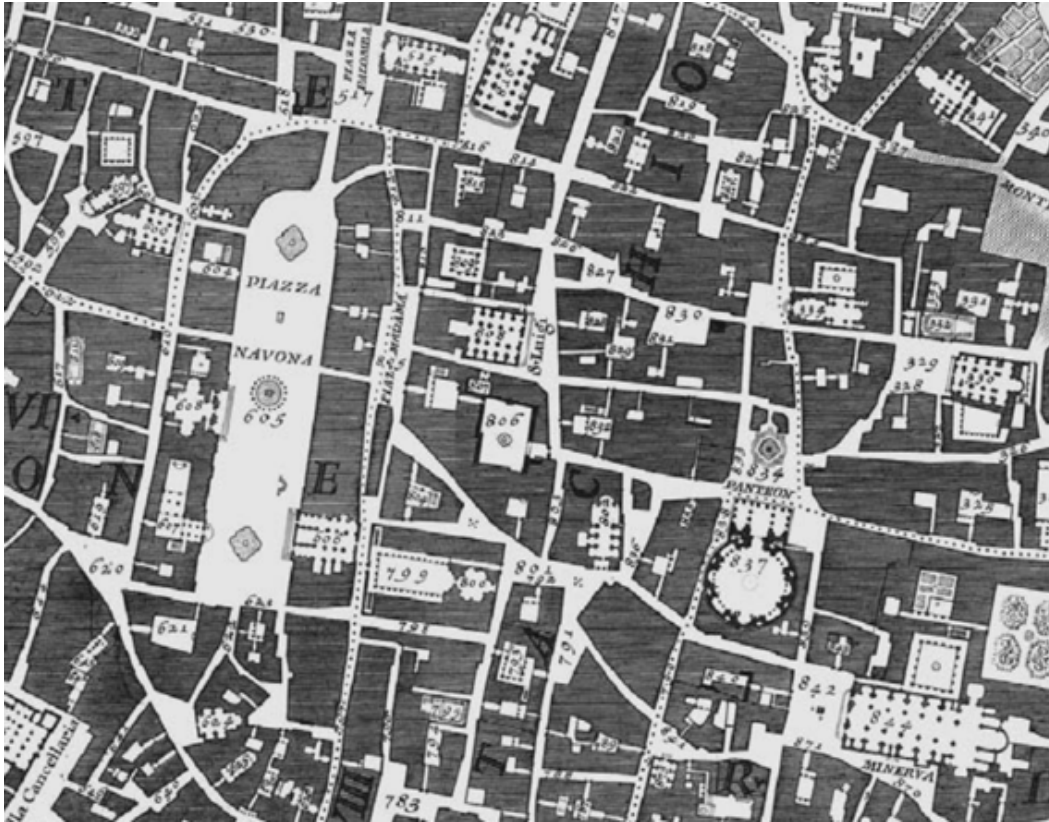>
> Binnie, Hollway and et 2006, 4[5]

Fig 3. Map of Rome by Giambattista Nolli (1748) with the churches of Borromini prominently surrounding the Piazza Navona. (Source: Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons.)

## 3. COSMOPOLITANISM IN RISING NATIONALISTIC ATMOSPHERE

Cosmopolitanism is a highly contested idea, as several scholars point out.[6] [7] Cosmopolitanism allows for using affiliation and belonging to city in a way that does not privilege the national. The idea of cosmopolitanism, which allows the 'other' is many a times in opposition of the purist, nationalistic tendencies of rising democratic authoritarian states in some contemporary societies, which think of homogeneity as an important virtue for a state or a nation to function in. The concept of cosmopolitanism is contested with dynamics of class, caste, sexuality, gender and power.

> "Beck thus posits an ongoing process of 'cosmopolitanization' as being about a dialectics of conflict: cosmopolitanization and its enemies. These enemies include nationalism, global capitalism and democratic authoritarianism."

> Ed Binnie 2006, 22 [8]

In India, on one hand the government wants to showcase its cities as cosmopolitan and attach other words that are identified with the cosmopolitan India, such as 'technology driven', 'World city', it uses the term for a neo-conservative political project. While Bengaluru is called the 'cosmopolitan' city of India, the 'Silicon city

of India' attracting many tech people from around the world, its religious prejudices and power dynamics are still rigid in many forms. Rather, the word, 'cosmopolitan' is used as a brick to build a 'one nation, one tax' or 'one nation, one pension' sort of schemes that are aimed at national centralization, defying any concern for diversity, diverse needs, and coercions caused due to these hegemonic differences in the city. So, in a way, the word 'cosmopolitan' is used in a rather convoluted way by civic authority and governments, to create a nationalistic agenda, which only supports (if it really does) diversity in culture, if you are from a certain cast and class.

On one hand diversity is seen as an essential virtue of a creative, progressive and innovative society, while on the other, the colliding of the old and new culture, the differences on class and caste in the larger cities of India, including Bengaluru is related to increase in crime, such as drugs and assault. These virtues are discussed in many cities of the world. For example, as a map of neighborhood produced by 'The Independent' news, highlighted the ethnic groups in each of the neighborhoods and the associated criminal activity. The map indicated that Albanians were involved in vice in Soho, Jamaican 'Yardies' involved in the drugs trade in Brixton and Hackney. The article was titled 'London's cosmopolitan criminals targeted' by Jason Bennetto the paper's crime correspondent.[9] Just a fortnight earlier, 'The Guardian' in January 2005, ran a series of articles, portraying London as a city, where never have so many people of different ethnicity and class lived in close quarters.[10] These are two distinct ways of thinking about cities and their cosmopolitan character. A similar scenario exists in many of the city areas of Bengaluru, such as Kammanahalli, where sprouting nursing schools, language and computer training institutes have encouraged many African youth to come to the locality, while medical tourism has been the other reason to have many people from poorer countries come here for years on end to tend to their ailing families and then thereafter to have stayed on. There is migration from other parts of the country inside, from within India too, who are looking for refuge from hunger and droughts, to make a living on this street of the city. Though this street in Bengaluru is a melting pot of different cultures, with restaurants serving food from Middle East to East Asian cuisines of Korea to West African food of Ivory Coast, Congo, Ghana, Nigeria which the local populace enjoys, the rise in racial discriminations, attack on sex workers, hits the headlines of the local newspapers many a times.

While there is immigration from outside the country, the migration from within the country alone is of great complexity. The complexity arises from economic disparities, cultural differences, and social integration challenges. More than 50% of Bengaluru's population is formed of migrants, especially from Indian states of Karnataka (other than Bengaluru), Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. There is also seasonal migration for business from many agrarian families, as they face drought months each year when nothing can be cultivated.

Bengaluru was a city that was made on a call for migration. Kempegowda, the founder of the city, made a clarion call for traders and other craftsmen to make the new city their home in 1537 after laying its foundation. Centuries later, Bengaluru is one of the most cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual cities in the country. Historians say three waves of migrations made the city what it is today. Historian Suresh Moona said, "It was an equivalent of modern-day investors' meet. When Kempegowda built his mud fort in 1537, a call was made for traders and other craftsmen to move to the new city. In fact, many areas in Bengaluru were named after the occupations such Akkipet (rice), Ragipet (Millet) among others." [11]Encouraging craftsmen to migrate to Bengaluru continued in the Tipu Sultan era. The remanence of the Tipu era migration remains in Bengaluru, the Kalasipalaya areas in the heart of the city, was a settlement of Kalsi, the expert tent-pitchers and organizers of military camps of Tipu's army. However, the first wave of migration that changed Bengaluru's demography, took place during the time of the British. The British empire brought in labor and skilled craftsmen to build the cantonment, including a large Tamil population, even to date, in the cantonment. This changed in the 1950s and 1960s with large public sector industries opening in the post-independence era.  Public sector industries such as Bharat Electronics and Hindustan Aeronautics — made the city their base. After Independence, Bengaluru became the ideal location for strategic industries as it was away from international borders and its proximity to other major cities. The strong public sector presence led to private sector manufacturing that began in the late 80's, that led to the growth of the IT industry. As Bengaluru became Silicon Valley of India, the migration patterns in the city too changed. From having a large Tamil population post-independence, the service industry now witnesses a large migration of the citizens from north and north-east India.

## 4.  SITES OF HETEROTOPIAIN BENGALURU

Through mapping, interviews and photographic documentation, the various anomalies of the cosmopolitan Bengaluru were recorded. This paper highlights some of the many of such sites, including the *Kammanahalli Street,* which is a place of migrants from various regions within India and from outside of India, street-based sex work, medical tourism and more, making it a site of refuge for many such communities. Then the *Dhobi Ghat of Vailikaval is mapped,* which is a public swimming pool converted into a washing yard in the very expensive upload area of a city, which is run by the Madiwala community, then the *KR Market* and the *Malleshwaram markets* are mapped through artistic means to understand the heterotopic other in the sites and finally the *Weavers' Colony in Yelahanka* and the representation of its heterotopic quality is elaborated through an artistic medium.

**Kammanahalli Street**

The Balloon Sellers: This particular street has immigrants from the neighboring states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, where the farmers come in the lean seasons and find daily wage labor work in the city but there are also people from the North of India from states such as Rajasthan who are the most underprivileged and are forced to live on the edge of this cosmopolitan city, selling balloons. The city streets are used to create a temporary bed each night and the corner of the footpaths are cornered off to make a space within. They carry the children on themselves and use the second (or even third/forth hand) strollers for moving their homes around on the street as they sell colorful balloons on the traffic signals. The street becomes the home of the community, and they occupy the last fringe of space the city has to offer. An island within the street becomes their home, cordoned off for the night, with makeshift furniture, such as the baby strollers, umbrellas and loose nylon strings.



Fig 4: Kammanahalli Steet Balloon Seller, who have cordoned off a section of the footpath to sleep at night. (Source: Author).

The Sex Workers: The second group of people who operate on the street are the sex workers. Bengaluru does not have defined red light areas, but sex work is rampant on the streets. A survey conducted by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) in 2019[12]  estimated that there were approximately 5,000 female sex workers in Bengaluru and one of the areas with the greatest number of sex workers operating are in Kammanahalli. However, experts believe that the actual number may be significantly higher, given the clandestine nature of the profession and the stigma associated with it. Laws in India are a complex patchwork

of legislation, often at odds with one another. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, commonly known as the ITPA, is the primary legal framework governing prostitution in the country. Under this law, prostitution itself is not illegal, but soliciting, brothel-keeping, and trafficking for the purpose of prostitution are criminal offenses. In Karnataka, like many other states, there is no specific state-level law addressing prostitution. Instead, the ITPA is applied uniformly across the country. An entire ecology around street-based sex work has slowly disintegrated, pushing many sex workers into further invisibility and vulnerability, but a street such as the Kammanahalli street still somehow allows for sex work and means for some immigrants through sex work. There are students, farmer migrants, and many such groups that allow this ecosystem, making this street an island with all classes of people in a small geographic area of about a kilometer square.

**Dhobi Ghat of Vyalikaval, Bengaluru**

Just like Giambattista Nolli's 1748 map of Rome has the Church interiors of Borromini are marked as cavities, displaying the difficulty in categorizing these 'sacred spaces' and marking the ambiguity of this space in the city being private or public, in the black-white logic of this map, a similar case of the Dhobi Ghats (or washing yards) of the Vyalikaval area in Bengaluru exists. Though this is no sacred space, it is an anomality in the city, through its various attributes.



Fig 5: Dhobi ghat of Vyalikaval, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru, which was a public swimming pool converted into a washing yard. (Source: Author 2024)

Fig 6: Mechanization of the Dhobi Ghat at Vyalikaval with large machines. (Source: Author 2024)

The Madiwalas or washer men and women from this washing yard service the hotels, beauty parlors, hospitals, using the Dhobi Ghat as their site of work. But the present site came about when they were pushed from the close by Sankey tank, where they operated with the tank water. The Sankey talk was to be developed for the walkers and joggers, a function and aesthetic which make the 'Madiwalas' the 'other', who couldn't be seen as a part of this modern idea of the city. They were to be there but invisible. The present site has a political and ecological story of its own. It was a 'Kere' or a lake which was later turned into BBMP (the municipal body of Bangalore) into a public swimming pool and now it operates as a Dhobi ghat with lines of colorful cotton fabric, wavering in the quintessential Bangalore breeze. Now what is better than and much more important than this romantic and lopsided view of the dhobi ghat is that it is mechanized now, saving

manual labor, grueling work, and providing better income to this community of washer men and women. There are multiple other small businesses which operate from the site. Like selling of Donkey's milk, selling of chemicals for washing, a food canteen and more. This space also doubles up for household chores of drying spices, which need at least a small stretch of flat surface and sun, both difficult and contested in small slum like neighborhoods which many of these workers afford. There have been politics of the space, about caste and vote banks, politics of water, involved apart from the speculative land markets, as understood clearly in contexts like these in South Asia. What makes it a heterotopic site is the place is for the 'other', becoming a place of refuge, or work, of livelihood of a people who are burdened with caste and class suppressions and hierarchy. Now, the fact that a public swimming pool became a site for the work of washer men and women needs tenacity to interpret in its complex behavior. This brings one to think, the idea of refuge is the instinct of being rational, of being and just surviving. Hence situations in the urban that become places of refuge are also places that let one escape and survive. These may be from atrocities of class, caste, poverty, discrimination and generally societal norms and hegemonies. The Madivalas have this place of refuge in the center of the city, which costs 200,000 Rs per sqm approximately, to not own but to make a living in. Without such a place, considering its many flaws, (which is falsely romanticized), the community would be left with no place to work and pushed on the edge socially and economically. So, this space which is by the very virtue of the way it is operating, now not a public swimming pool but a public space for making a livelihood, is a place of refuge. It is a contemporary 'out space'. It is precarious because it is a common, but also a refuge. It is a common, in a highly priced land, it is a place of business but also a home for animals, some people and smaller relying businesses. A place not equal, still but a place of refuge. All these complexities of this abnormal public space in Bengaluru become heterotopic then and must be analyzed and understood by the city as not an opposition to utopic but may be with the idea of it being a refuge and being a different form of a cosmopolitan.

The dhobi ghats and the markets, both are collective and shared and have precise mechanism of opening up and closing in as public- private spaces with private spaces embedded within the public realm. Like the sleeping quarters for the flower sellers or shop owners and the donkey herding within the most cosmopolitan city of South India, within the dhobi ghat. Hence, this type of cosmopolitan holds the promise of a city which accommodates the other, the plurality and the heterogeneity. It also allows the other, in the case of the Dhobi Ghat when the community is ousted from the posh neighborhood because of the 'aesthetics' of their work, the abandoned swimming pool becomes the washing yard, allowing a place to be reconfigured for the 'other'. The markets and the dhobi ghats are inverted spaces, contested spaces and real spaces. The cities are built on inclusion and exclusion, and it is evident in the working of Bengaluru, through the sites of dhobi ghats and markets. There is a new contemporary spatial order that the machine of inclusion creates. [13] [14]

The connection vs disconnection, order vs chaos, exclusion turns into appropriation in the washing yards, and resonates the order vs chaos, and territory issues of private vs public. Hegemonic Indian society would have untouchables or lower cast people almost outside of the city, but contemporary cities accommodate deviance, such as in specific caste, community or even gender within the city. This is not to say that there is no hegemonic divide or control, but it is much more nuanced, and not totally detached to the urban fabric. Infra-political production of the site of the city is for control, for survival for resistance. They challenge the law of the land, land regulations, police and caste biases and segregation. The dhobi ghats operate on the city's most expensive site, while servicing the whole network of rich but also sitting in the center and markets sell on streets more than inside, deifying the law set for street commerce and land use issued by the police and master plan by planners.

**KR Market**

Krishna Rajendra Flower Market: The Krishna Rajendra market of Bangalore at the first site looks chaotic with its many human and nonhuman beings all in a public space of being a workplace, a rest place, a place of commerce as much as a place for a personal and communal identity. A closer look shows that it has a very distinct order to its working, a working which is unique to the organization of this space. They have many interdependent and communicative areas within them. While there is the daytime for business, one person from each family sleeps next to the goods, in this case the flowers, in the nighttime. Business starts at 3am and the flower as a material object has a lifecycle and route into the city. It is far from the western notions of cleansed urban design but has a unique sense of its spatial and temporal working which makes it a heterotopia. It is not a living quarter, but it houses many people every night as they sleep under their ware. It is chaotic but organizes millions of rupees of business and livelihood each day and functions like a well-oiled machine, like no government supervised markets that were attempted by the government could. This market like many local markets is an anti-thesis of a utopia but a survival for thousands, a refuge. These sorts of functions don't need regular plans, it needs distortions accommodated into the rigid city. Rather, the indoor market, built as an organized structure does not work as successfully as the spill over market on the edges of the building. The building itself has become a marker, a boundary against which successful and abundant business happens. Formal city plans are rational means of dividing parcels, but has little to say about human commerce, behavior or these heterotopic conditions in Indian cities.
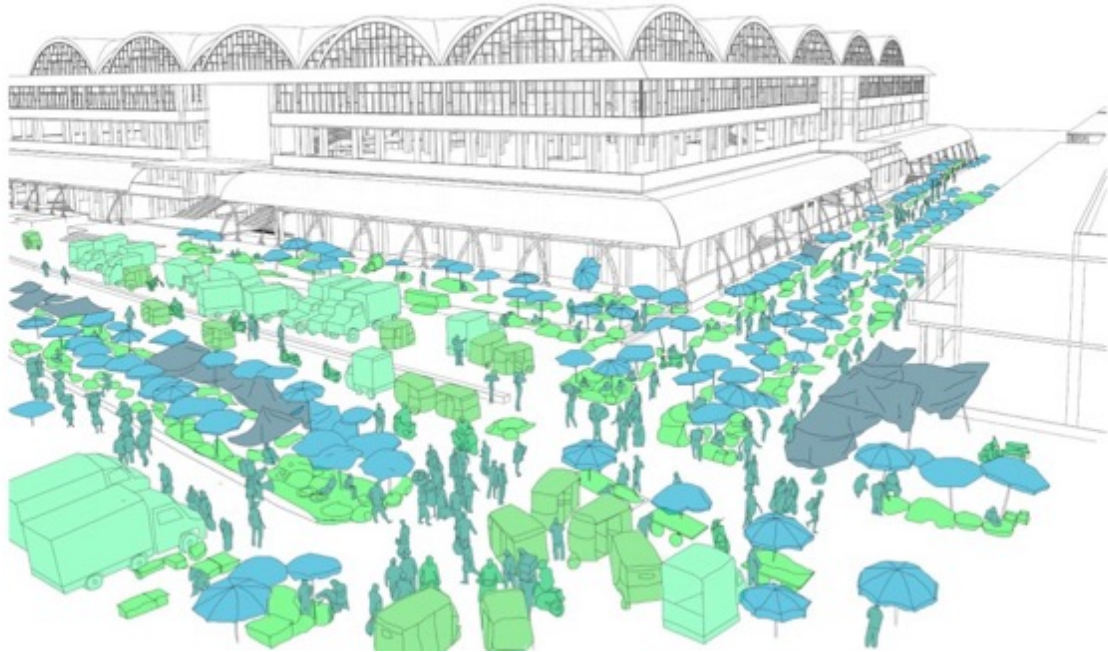
Fig 7: Drawing showing the skill over of the KR Market in Bengaluru, outside the assigned indoor space and the chaos and order within. (Source: Drawn by Jeenus Sreshtha, funding as a part of the project by Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology. 2020).



Fig 8: The inside of the building showing the flower market and it busy everyday working through mixed media. (Source: Drawn by Jeenus Sreshtha, funding as a part of the project by Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology. 2020).

## Weavers Colony in Yelahanka

In the north of Bengaluru, Yelahanka there is a weavers' settlement in the thick urban scape. These houses are in clusters and form a residential colony, occupied with people migrated from Andhra and solely, who were professional weavers. The houses incorporate not just the dwelling spaces but also the working spaces, with the humming sound of the looms filling streets and the neighborhood. There is a constant metronome of the weaving looms in the homes and the streets and the distinctions between home and workplace blur fast as soon as you enter this heterotopia within the very busy site of the Bengaluru. The air is thick with the aroma of dyes and the sounds of steady conversation, all underscored by the mechanical clack of looms. The colony's narrow lanes and densely packed buildings create a sense of intimacy, fostering a strong community bond. This is a place where past and present converge—where artisans work with the same techniques passed down through generations, adapting ancient skills to contemporary life, migrating from another state to be able to make a living and belong to the larger cosmopolitan hub, which allows for other ways of living and working. The very unlikely place in a contemporary city, which doesn't follow the modern ethos of urban work and dwelling but rather operates much with the rural tenet of spaces which do not separate the work and dwelling, machine and hand-made, is a depiction of the cosmopolitan of the South. This is a place where past and present converge—where artisans work with the same techniques passed down through generations, adapting ancient skills to contemporary life. Weavers' Colony defies easy categorization. It is both a part of the city and a distinct enclave within it, mirroring yet subtly resisting the city's more rigid structures. The colony acts as a microcosm that challenges traditional notions of urban spaces. Wealth and status here hold less significance than the shared dedication to the craft of weaving. Families from varied socio-economic backgrounds work side by side. Within this space, the sound of the loom serves as a great equalizer, drawing all into a collective rhythm. The illustration of the weaving town's heterotopia created by the art of Vasanta Vemuri captures this environment by using delicate threads to represent the sound waves emanating from the looms, creating a visual rhythm that mirrors the colony's aural landscape. These threads cascade in flowing, wave-like patterns, intertwining and converging like the sounds themselves, which rise and fall in an endless loop. The threads trace the colony's paths, wrapping around spaces to signify how sound weaves its way through every nook and cranny, reinforcing the connection between workspace and living area. Through these "sound threads," the colony's heartbeat becomes visible, an endless flow that binds the community in a shared rhythm.

This art project uses an exploded isometric illustration to visualize the sonic and spatial composition of Weavers' Colony [15]. Through a layering of color-coded elements, it highlights the inherent integration of workspaces and living quarters. When viewed through color filters, the illustration separates these interwoven realms, providing a clear view of their overlap. This visual technique also reflects the cyclical, almost

symbiotic nature of the colony's heterotopia: by day, it vibrates with industry, while by night, it softens into a quieter, more residential atmosphere. This rhythm underscores the fluid boundary between work and rest, creating a perpetual interplay between the two. The cosmopolitan of cities such as Bengaluru allow for different forms of urban living, where boundaries are less fixed, and life flows naturally between different domains.
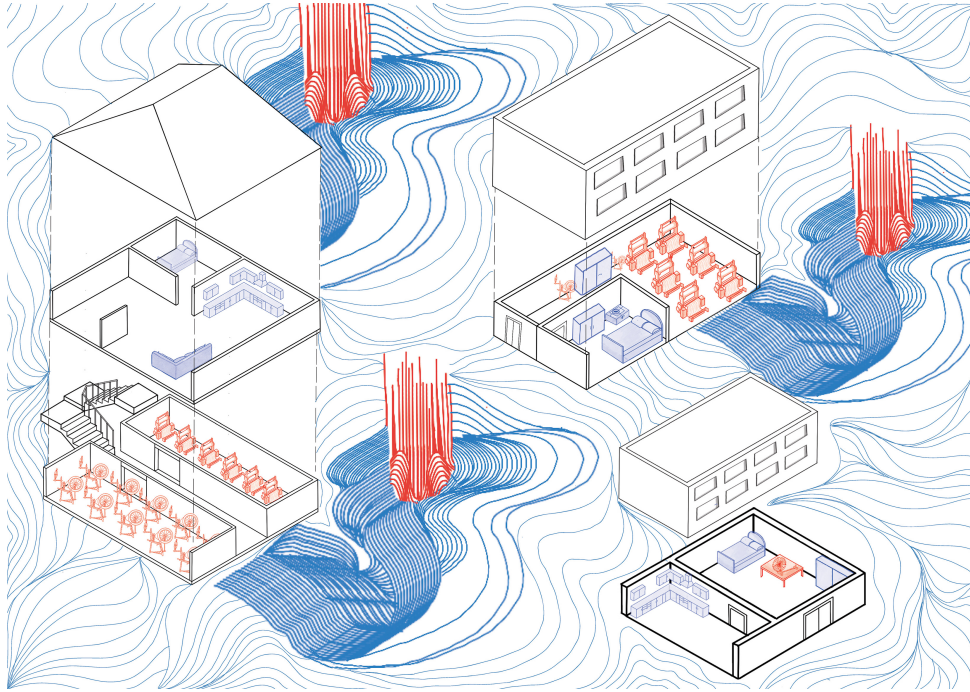


Fig 9: Vasanta Vemuri's art for the project 'Heterotopias of Bengaluru. Source: General Studies Class 2024, SMI (Source: Author 2024).

Another art project based on the theme of Heterotopia, elaborated the Malleshwaram Market and depicted its heterotopic qualities through what the student-artist called 'circular crescendos' [16]. Through Circular Crescendos, the artist captured the duality of order and chaos—a collage of circles that symbolize the continuous rhythm of life in the market. In the artwork, vibrant circles display snapshots of Malleshwaram's energetic streets—vendors selling flowers, autos buzzing through narrow roads, and crowds bustling with life. These colorful fragments reflect the market's dynamic energy and the fluidity of everyday interactions, where each element contributes to the lively atmosphere. Amidst these bright circles are darker, muted ones—tinted in deep blues—depicting quiet, empty spaces in the same market. These moments of stillness are often overlooked, drowned out by the surrounding chaos. Yet, in the artwork, these darker circles carry visual weight, drawing attention to the quieter aspects of Malleswaram. A heterotopia within the flower market, these circles of calmness suggest that even within the most crowded places, there are pockets of solitude— small moments of quiet wait to be discovered. This artwork invites viewers to first notice the deeper-toned quiet circles before they take in the vibrant ones. The contrast between the vibrant and dark circles reflects

the interplay between noise and silence, chaos and calm. Just as ripples spread across the water, every interaction in the market creates movement that influences the next moment. The seemingly disordered arrangement of the collage mirrors the market itself, where life thrives its messiness. These empty spaces, much like the heterotopic market, provide a necessary counterbalance, revealing the harmony hidden within the chaos. Art, in the two examples becomes a medium to articulate this heterotopic-cosmopolitanism of the city and to understand varied and nuanced definition of cosmopolitan that could emerge with the help of art.



Fig 10: Manal Nazer's art for the project 'Heterotopias of Bengaluru. Source: General Studies Class 2024, SMI. (Source: Author 2024).

## 5.   CONCLUSION

The ideas presented in the paper concerns with the precarious spaces of a city, within the larger idea of cosmopolitan, in the global south. The increasing control and restrictive policies of a populist government, provoke exclusion which creates an urban which is exclusive, which limits and creates 'outsides'. Micheal Agier in his work; *Camps, Encampments, and Occupations: From the Heterotopia to the Urban Subject* [17]also talks about contemporary 'out-places' or concrete 'heterotopias' and how they are linked to one another by policies of exclusion, organization, control and subjective experiences. Agier says, "The formation and proliferation of heterotopias become an ensemble of margins and precarious spaces, turning visible as a global political fact the question of (in)equality."

Often Bangalore is just understood as an IT city, but it has many layers to it populace and citizenry. It is a cosmopolitan with multiple layers of people and spatial ecologies. To realize the city in its true cosmopolitanism, we need to unravel its various spatial layers consisting of varied people and plotting its unconventional elements, through unconventional methods, which may be provocative art, text, mapping or other ways of articulating the cosmopolitan that is different from the west. Acknowledging and addressing its caste hierarchies, its work imbalances and its order in its chaos is a progressive, deviant way of analyzing the city, as compared to many prevailing urban design practices. Cities such as Bengaluru must be viewed from different imaginaries than the neo-liberal ones. Few cities may be perceived as more 'modern' and cosmopolitan than Bengaluru, in the imagination of the Indian. It is seen the first city to get electrified in India and then an epicenter of Information technology, higher education and more and always aspirational. But the actual Bangalore may resemble none of these or contradicting, parts of the city in its silos may resemble some of these. The glass buildings of the IT parks resemble a little of the high-rise, high-tech buildings of the Silicon Valley and Singapore but the Dhobhi ghats and the local markets, though an integral part of Bengaluru, don't find a place in its imaginary. On the contrary what makes Bengaluru cosmopolitan is not the resemblance to other cosmopolitan cities but the many small pockets of the city, that are 'othered' and bring immigrants and other communities of different regions into the city. Like the dhobis of Madiwala, the toy sellers of Rajasthan, the African middle eastern students, the farmers from Andhra Pradesh, and the Masons from Tamil Nadu.

> "What it (Bangalore) actually resembles in reality and lived experience, however, is a typical fast growing second tire classic industrial city in Latin America or Southeast Asia, hosting a hub for low paid garment production, countless small workshops catering to localized economies, a burgeoning informal sector and an electronics industry with only a minority of it firms actually specializing in computer system."
>
> Heitzman 2004. p.4 [18]

The earlier neo-liberal imaginaries of the city if anything, only aided in the divide between the urban rich who created silos in exclusive, gated living quarters, shopping areas in the form of malls, where there is discrete exclusion based on dressing and just being and the urban poor being left out of this. Urban Bengaluru is filled with unequal and uneven experiences, giving in to neoliberal urbanism. Cosmopolitanism is also marred by neoliberal urbanism and its banes. This tension between the inclusion that cosmopolitanism asks for, and the exclusion based on class and capital biases is an everyday lived experience of Bengaluru and many cities of the global south. The imaginaries of this type of Bangalore, excludes, while the opportunities that come to various immigrant communities is a form of inclusion in someways, a refuge.

As in the idea of the revanchist city, associated with the neoliberal working, the idea first offered by Neil Smith [19] based of the study of New York and its century exclusions, parallels to Bengaluru could be drawn. Smith used the idea of revenge of 'revanchist' to understand the almost revengeful reclaiming of the city spaces from its 'others', such as immigrants, women, homeless, sexual minorities, people in 'indecent' work and so on. It was an idea based against the progressiveness. A progressiveness, multiculturalism, that we associate with the term cosmopolitan. (example of African and Arabian immigrants in Kammanahalli). Such examples of revanchist city ascertain that in some time and space Bengaluru is cosmopolitan, only then the re-claiming can happen, if there is a claim of various heterogeneous groups of populaces. [20]

The consequence of this is that the design of the city, mostly done by urban designers are corporate led, which create an uneasy reality, based on a neoliberal imaginary. This creates unease, equitability, isolation and deliberately othering the many marginalized groups. This is as anti-cosmopolitan as it could get. For example, the design of parks. [21]This has been generally elitist throughout the world and becomes even more apparent in a city such as Bengaluru, where the neoliberal imagination allows the parks and spaces around water bodies such as lakes and tanks gentrified, making space only for the local middle class, heterosexual (mostly male) users for walking, jogging or leisure.

To move away from this notion of the neo-liberal Bengaluru would mean redefining what constitutes the cosmopolitan of the global south, in a city such as Bengaluru and adopt a framework or method that is unconventional. This is where the arts and design should collide, almost aggressively, using the theoretical frameworks that allow for the 'others' to be included. As Partha Chatterjee, elaborates on the differences between citizens and populations, only when we could have *citizens* that enjoy, mix and accept the cosmopolitan and not just *populations* that survive, barely, could Bengaluru be a true cosmopolitan.

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**Traditional Dwellings and Settlements**

Working Paper Series

# BEYOND THE EVENTAL (I): URBAN ART INSTALLATIONS AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AT DUBAI DESIGN WEEK 2023

*Jasmine Shahin*

# BEYOND THE EVENTAL (I): URBAN ART INSTALLATIONS AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AT DUBAI DESIGN WEEK 2023

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*"An event can be an occurrence that shatters ordinary life, a radical political rupture, a transformation of reality, a religious belief, the rise of a new art form, or an intense experience such as falling in love."[1]*

*Zizek's definition of an event, as an occurrence that shatters ordinary life, brings about a complementary view regarding the meaning of everyday experience that George Perec refers to as 'infra-ordinary,' hence "banal, quotidian, obvious, common, ordinary."[2] The intent of this juxtaposition is not to conjure a classification of various event types, but rather to question the very essence of event-ness, particularly in the context of urban experience. For, urban experience could be considered a transformative event if taken from the viewpoint of a tourist of traveller. Contrastingly, that same experience is considered banal and infra-ordinary from the viewpoint of a city dweller, who is habituated to the scenes of his everyday metropolis. Does such differentiation then extract event-ness from everyday urban experience, in order words does habituation dissolve the city from its eventfulness? While we could agree that habituation, defined as the absence of an urban visual stimulus by Simmel,[3] renders the city with a sense of greyness, it is also possible to reckon that occasional urban events, such as expos and festive markets, which are usually overloaded with visual stimuli, have little transformative impetus since they present little beyond an intensification of everyday occurrences. Still, such occasional events are critical instances that can reveal much about the nature of urban experience at a specific place and time; and are events in their own right given their intensification characteristics. So, this paper will attempt to explore this proposition through the specific case study of Dubai Design District (D3) and its 2023 urban art installations for Dubai Design Week that took place between 7th to 12th November 2023.*

## 1.  INTRODUCTION: THE EVENT IN-BETWEEN HORIZONS

According to Simmel, the metropolis is an amalgam of visual stimuli that are endorsed by particular political and economic orientations.[4] Accordingly, he claims that the nature of experience in metropolitan urban settings has a direct impact on people's emotional and haptic sensibilities, where habituation not only refers to the lack of visual stimuli but also to the lack of personal attachment to them. Accordingly, if we are to investigate the notion of event-ness in urban experience, the aim here is not to look for new, disruptive of transformative occurrences but to seek the meaning out of such occurrences and their effects on people's conscious engagement with urban events.

On the one hand, it could be argued that an urban event, such as the building of a monument or the destruction of another, is assumingly triggered by a shift or transformation of the 'ordinary' visual stimulus, hence requiring some form of re-assessment to the change, or a reorientation of consciousness towards it. Influenced by Heidegger's idea that an Event is more than a "departure from a historiographic and objective understanding of historical events," Zizek argues that an  event is "a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage in it."[5]  In turn, he proposes the triad of "framing, reframing, enframing," as a model to discover the meaning of such change and its effects on future possibilities.  Yet, such approach

is not unprecedent, where Ricoeur's concept of Threefold Mimesis also assumes that urban experience is characterised by "prefiguration" related to "the act of inhabiting"; "configuration" that refers to "the act of building"; and "refiguration" that institutes a level of exchange between the "act of inhabiting" and the "act of building" through an opposition of the first vis-à-vis the second.[6] Granted, it could be understood that the Zizek's frame, taken from an urban point of view, relates to the act of dwelling, in the Heideggerian sense, as well as inhabiting, as defined through Ricoeur's trilogy, becoming a method through which the intertextuality of urban experience unfolds.

On the other hand, it could also be argued that occasional urban events, like D3's Dubai Design Week, are little beyond symbols of an already existing dialogue that is intensified through the recurrence of such events. The point of disparity here is that Heideggerian events, or *locales* in an urban sense, transform the space of urban experience rather permanently and in turn lead to the transformation of collective consciousness and possibly extend to include the future of urban behaviour too.[7] In contrast, occasional urban events, such as Dubai Design Week, could be paralleled to Gadamer's festivals, whose very occasionality does not assume permanent change but rather participation in a temporal situation. A critical implication here is that occasional urban events become a suspension of ordinary everyday experience. But does this mean that such suspension incurs a detachment of the festival from real life events? Gadamer's ideas here are of special importance, shedding light on the nature of the festival and possibly on the meaning of urban event-ness too. Such meaning according to Gadamer is hinged on participation and dialogue, disclosing something of the nature of what is shown through festive events. This implies that festive participation is itself mimetic, opening up more than is available to us in our everyday experience of the space.[8] The "as if" nature of occasional events, in turn, suggests the playfulness of social participation, where *play* becomes the primary frame through which dialogue and communication take place. Similar to festive experience, an artistic event also possesses such mimetic impulses, requiring "constructive activity on our part."[9]

Using the above theoretical arguments as backdrop of investigation, the following will attempt to understand the evental nature of Dubai Design Week and its transformative effects, if any, on social participation. The paper focuses strictly on the external art installations that were accessible to all D3 goers before and after the event, questioning "what occurs in the presence of static works of arts, and what occurs in the festival-like event of theatre." To do so, the following will examine the value of urban art installations at D3 and will enquire whether such installations instigated a meaningful dialogue among the different players of the event. First the paper will describe the setting of the event—Dubai Design District—and will identify the different art installation present on the urban scene and their physical relationship. Then the paper will analyse the observations and feedback received from 100 event participants, seeking as such o reveal the meanings disclosed through their experience of the art installations.

## 2.  DUBAI DESIGN DISTRICT (D3)
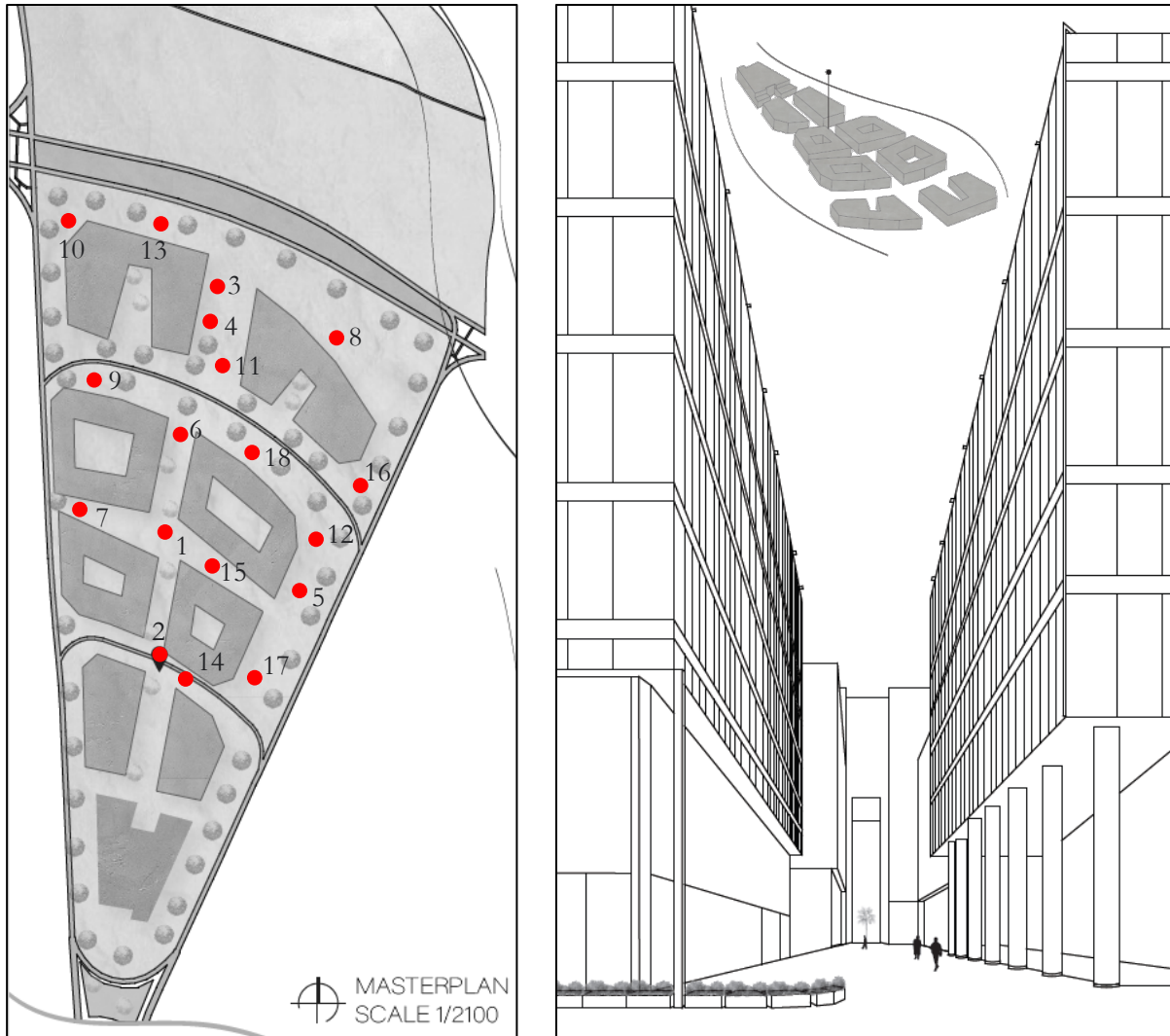


Fig. 01 – Left: Urban Map of D3 with red dots marking the art installations during Dubai Design Week. Right: Perspective of pedestrian street between buildings 1A, 1B, 2 and 3, portraying the area's architectural style. Diagrams by author.

Dubai Design District is a business park located in Dubai, near Business Bay district on the waterfront of Dubai Creek. The site comprises of 8 buildings, forming together an elongated triangle with plaza-like open spaces and pedestrian shafts connecting them to each other. The buildings extend from the floor through concrete colonnade that are topped with glass curtain walls. The park is traversed horizontally with two main vehicular streets that in turn divide the district into 3 zones. The art installations during Dubai Design Weeks were dispersed along the pedestrian shafts and at the corners of the main vehicular streets. The map on the

right (Fig. 01) and the following diagrams portray the movement systems of the district (Fig. 02) and its architectural style (Fig. 01).

The external urban space infiltrating the buildings was demarcated by a series of art installations, as shown by the red dots numbered in Fig. 01, including 1. The Palm Gazibo, 2. Designest, 3. Flowing Threads, 4. Naseej, 5. Floating Tekkas, 6. Trouble Statue, 7. Cycle, 8. Sustainability Dome, 9. Icebergs in the desert, 10. Reality Check, 11. Urban Hives, 12. Edge Morph, 13. North Star, 14. No Free Ideas, 15. The Ping Pong Table, 16. Peace, 17. Who do You Trust?, 18. Pulp Fractions. Many of these installations required some form of physical participation or engagement, such as the Ping Pong Table and Urban Hive, while others remained limited to visual appreciation, such as the Trouble statue and Peace.
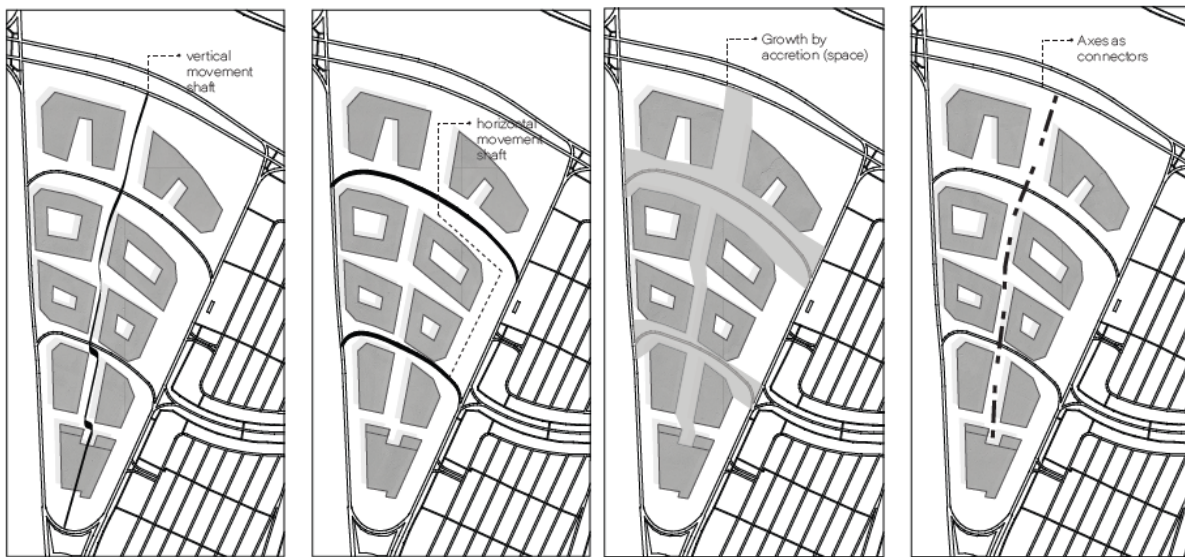


Fig. 02 – Urban analysis of movement shafts and growth connections of Dubai Design District. Diagrams by author.

## 3.  DUBAI DESIGN WEEK (DDW): URBAN EVENT ANALYSIS

In order to understand the phenomenon at hand, the author depended on three methods for data collection. First are personal observations, which were recorded during the duration of the event, and second are photographs, which were taken during and after the event to document the changes in urban behavior and/or engagement with the different art installations. Third are surveys conducted with randomly chosen event participants.

The event days were heavily packed, with pedestrians filling almost the entirety of the pedestrian movement shafts, and cars eating up all the vehicular streets. Dedicated parking spaces both outside and inside the buildings were fully occupied during the day. Time was a backhanded gift herein, where long waiting lines

cuing for valet parking, allowed the author to observe different forms of behavior. These included people capturing photographs with the artworks, most of which were used as a backdrop for *Instagram*-able moments; others walking hastily towards indoor display areas to attend workshops; and many strolling along the streets with drinks and food, while gazing at the scattered artworks. While this was indeed a joyful experience, it was not without pain since it interfered with my everyday routine going back and forth to work, which happens to be at Dubai Design District. In a way, D3 was my habitual infra-ordinary space, where 'business as usual' meant witnessing different design related exhibitions, observing people filling up *trattorias* during break times and of course enduring packed parking lots. So, how was Dubai Design Week different? The answer, it seems, resides at the very essence of occasionality, or festivity, that encircles the recurrence of this event, which invites not only local but also foreign visitors, artists, suppliers and influencers. D3 as a habitual everyday experience conjures the idea of art and artistic play, yet during the event such experience is amplified and intensified through the different activities associated with Dubai Design Week.
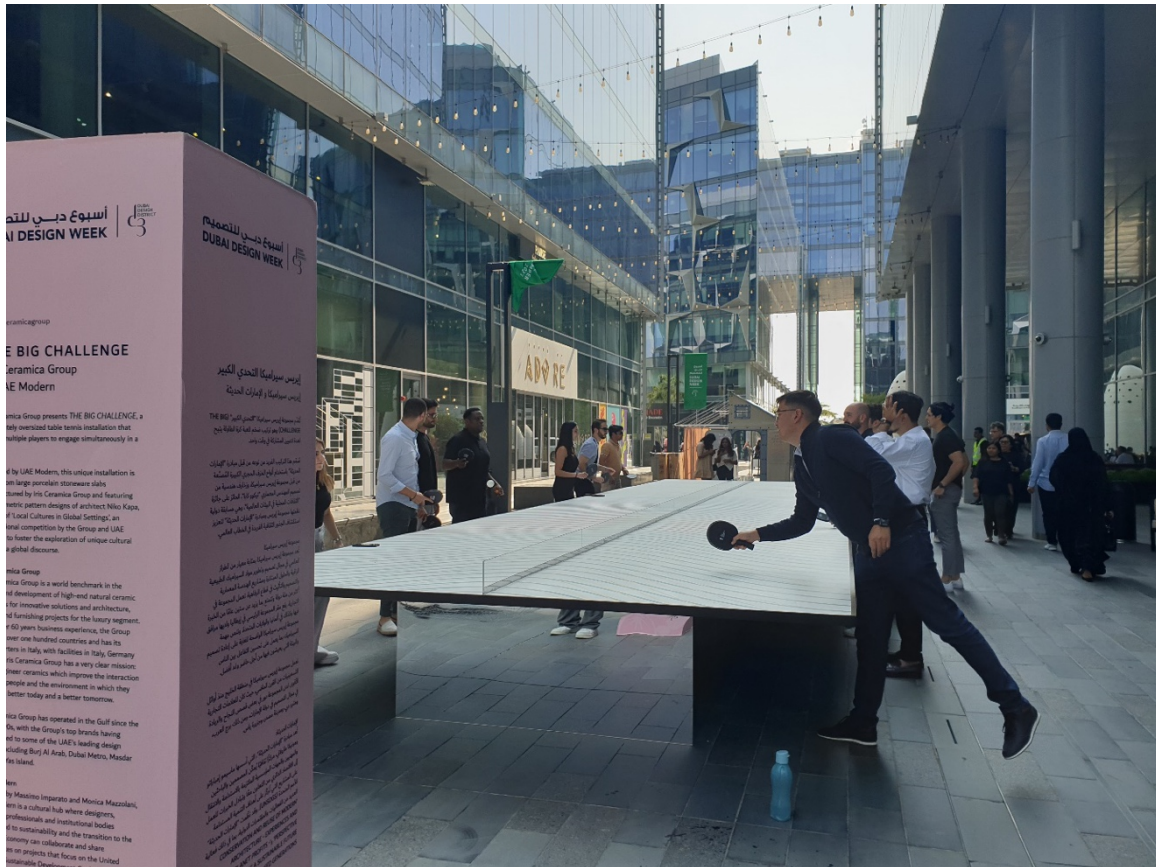


Fig. 03 - Communal Ping Pong Table at Dubai Design Week 2023. Photograph by author.

Fig. 04 - The Palm Gazebo at Dubai Design Week 2023. Photograph by author.

To understand how and why such amplification occurs, a survey was distributed to over 100 people at D3 after the event, and 6 students from DIDI (Dubai Institute of Design and Technology) volunteered to assist in the distribution of the surveys. The students were briefed about the collection method and their role as detached facilitators. Participant responses were directly entered into an online engine (Survey Monkey) and results were directly dispatched to the researcher, who categorized the results into two sections, quantitative demographic entries and qualitative experience-based answers. In terms of demographics, survey results showed a dominant young participant pool, whose ages are between 18-35 years of age. The sample also showed a higher female population with many being of Middle Eastern and Indian backgrounds. Similarly, the professional affiliation of most participants fell into the category of Advertising, Art, Design and Architecture.

While most of this demographic information played little role in the response of the qualitative questions, it has been noted that age, particularly among older participants, affected the perception of the art installations. For example, IRA (45 years) claimed that the event was "boring and lacked rigor," with no view regarding the social value of these installations during or after the event. Contrastingly, it has been noticed that most of the younger respondents saw the event as fun and socially engaging yet still claiming that it was interesting during the occasion but with little effect afterwards. In a way, these responses hint at a *'du pareil au même'* situation,

where the festive nature of the Dubai Design Week event seems to reside inherently in its ability to evoke the everyday artsy nature of the space through the intensification of social participation around art installations, workshops and public talks. This mode of social participation, which was best demonstrated through the communal Ping Pong Table installation (Fig. 03), seems to have diminished and even disappeared after the event. This was concisely described by IRA (25 years), who noted that "During [the event] it was crowded, and I saw people playing ping pong but afterwards, everything went back to normal as if it never happened."

A similar example is The Palm Gazebo installation (Fig. 04), which was favorably described by many respondents, who saw in it a testimony of cultural awareness. According to UAE (18 years), the Palm Gazebo—also known as Of Palm—helped increase the frequency of social engagement, where people gathered under the thatch roof and discussed different aspects of Emirati culture. While this was again strongly experienced during the event, the gazebo lost its visitors shortly after the event, standing as a silent testimony of the occasional nature of the Dubai Design Week. Here, it is important to pause and ask an important question. Has the D3 population never felt the need to discuss issues of cultural heritage prior to the event; and if so, then why was the event an instigator of such discourse?

To answer this question, it would be useful to visit another installation through which a possibility of an answer could be formulated. The installation titled Blessings of Iridescence (Fig. 05) was a favorite among few respondents, with one finding in it some poetic resonance that has allegedly changed their life perspective. According to USA (23 years),

> "This installation had quite the mass impact on the viewers as it made us reflect on the cultural heritage of the UAE and using in an artistic sense helped communicate the importance of doing so. Personally, this installation had a philosophical impact on me, as this can be applied in real lite too. In a sense, in our lives, we are always focused on the big final goal and forget to appreciate the process, the same way in which the mother of pearl oysters is often discarded. We tend to discard certain fragments of our lives in a similar manner… This reflection had helped me to understand a viewpoint in life. First, to apply this principle as a designer myself and second, to appreciate our cultural heritage and honor them to bring them to life constantly for our future generations to cherish it."

Here the ideas of fragments and process can assist in making sense of the Dubai Design Week as an urban event. In a way, the scattered artistic fragments present little beyond disconnected creative sprees that are only intelligible through their intensification, in other words when seen together through the festive 'frame' of the event. The journey of scouting each artistic station 'refigures' the overall spatial experience along D3's pedestrian streets, infusing meaning to the next installation even if such meaning is enforced through the very temporality of the event. In turn, the need to discuss culture, participate in ping pong table games, or even stroll along capturing *Instagram* photos becomes an integral part of 'playing along' the event's game.

According to Gadamer, this form of festive participation, "allows the perceivers, or the audience of the show, to be fully immersed in its yet-to-be revealed meaning."[10] So, what is this yet-to-be revealed meaning if any?



Fig. 05 – Left: *Blessings of Iridescence* at Dubai Design Week 2023. Middle: *Designest* by Ahmad Alkattan. Right: *Edge Morph* installations at Dubai Design Week 2023. Photos by author.

This requires yet further investigation of other art installations, particularly those that were thought to be important in fostering communication and in enhancing awareness. The surveys suggest that the North Star installation (Fig. 06) succeeded in "winding people to explore different sections of this project and in promoting future collaborations with designers from around the world" (IND21). This installation is described in the event's website as follows:

> "The walls of this installation is 3D printed using recycled PETG, promoting the use of recycling technologies for architecture… The walls are connected at the top and open at the bottom in some moments. The contraposition of S-shaped curves generates the openings as an homage/recall to the ogee arches of Islamic architecture."[11]

The aspect of innovation and collaboration is apparent in this particular example, which is a product of 4 different D3 based companies. In a way, the installation not only reinforces innovation and haptic sensibility but also promotes small businesses at their local home in D3. The 'homage' to Islamic architecture plays yet another pivotal role in infusing it with meanings beyond the temporality of the event. A similar idea is expressed in two other installations, namely the award-winning creation of Ahmad Alkattan titled Designest, and Edge Morph.

Fig. 06 – *North Star* at Dubai Design Week 2023. By author.

As for Designest (Fig. 05), which will be permanently displayed in D3, it is "a fusion of minimalistic design and advanced construction techniques, poised to redefine the district's identity. Designers craved spaces where they could gather, exchange ideas, and foster micro-communities."[12] The design pays tribute to pigeon towers, an iconic element in Arabian architecture and uses sustainable materials in its construction. Edge Morph (Fig. 05) presents a similar concept of sustainable building materials, yet this time through an undulating curvilinear interior that allows its visitors the chance to experience some unique geometric transformations within a square wooden box.

While most of these socially engaging examples relied primarily on architectural forms, there were other artistic installations that had a strong impact on event participants. One such example was The Tyres (Fig. 07), which consisted of series of stands made of used tires, where each stand is painted in a different pastel color. While the function of the installation is vague to the distant passerby, such as myself in a car, when getting a closer look, I realized that the stands acted as scribble boards for people to make dedications to those they trust the most. The number of inscriptions increased each day, becoming a space of free

expressions of Dubai Design Week's collective memoires. Most of the inscriptions reveal the importance of family ties, whether direct or distant, such as the following entry by a signatory named Laurice that states, "Uncle Ike, he's my 'father' who only does and knows what's best for me." A more conscious statement by a signatory named Zain states, "Myself. It's really important to trust yourself first, to be able to trust and lean on others." The content of these *Facebook*-like comments was not devoid of romanticism, like Shabeer's statement, "My lovely wife – she knows every secret of mine;" or painful memories, like Natalia's statement, "My friend David. He stood for me when the class was spreading rumors." The poetic resonance revealed through these inscriptions is possibly one of the strongest human-centered signals present throughout the whole event, in spite of its simple form and rather crude execution. On the one hand, the sustainable undertones enveloping the stand and its reused tires act as a reminder to the whole community that they belong to something bigger than themselves—and possibly even bigger than the event itself. Such sustainability reaches beyond the direct nature of materials and objects used towards the shareability and universality of human values (encapsulated through the ideas of trust and love), memories (encapsulated through the ideas of gratitude and psychological pain) and self-worth. On the other hand, the stand design also points to the individuality of human experience through its different colors, each of which has probably drawn one individual rather than others to it, becoming hence an unconscious expression of his/her identity.



Fig. 07 - Used Tires installation at Dubai Design Week 2023. Photograph by author.

## 4.  CONCLUDING NOTES

Going back to Zizek's definition of an event as an occurrence that shatters ordinary life, the above analysis portrays that while Dubai Design Week—and possibly many other similar events—create little long-term transformations to ordinary life, they do indeed reframe its ordinality. For, the temporality, as much as the occasionality, of Dubai Design Week present D3's everyday dwellers with alternative modes of engaging with the urban space, revealing possible potentials of collaboration, communication and expression. This is best portrayed through the examples of The Plam Gazebo and the Ping Pong Table. These two installations have been removed one week after the event, yet observations demonstrate that engagement with these two installations waned significantly once Dubai Design Week was concluded. This suggests that the significance of such installations, despite their centrality as instigators of social discourse and participation—as suggested by the surveys—is directly associated with the event itself. In other words, it seems that these installations have no meaning in themselves away from that of the event, hence univalent, in the sense that they possess no complexity or offer no paradigmatic shifts—as Charles Jencks would describe them.[13] The same could be ascribed to other installations, such as Blessings of Iridescence or the North Star, both of which have little meaning in themselves beyond the descriptions provided by their creators or people's seemingly awakened experience of them, as suggested in USA (23 years) quote.

These examples reveal an important aspect of occasional urban events, like Dubai Design Week, where the emphasis is not on what is physically present—or its content—but rather on the occasional nature of the event itself and its ability to instigate a 'playing along' scenario through "an experience of community [that] represents community in its most perfect form."[14] This proposition could be understood through Gadamer's argument that 'playing along' moves beyond the confinements of the everyday, allowing communities to present themselves as contributors to the playing act, first through their own expectations and cultural prejudices—such as the need for *Instagram*-able moments or *Facebook* posts; and second through the installations' purported dialogical capacity, which imposes a sense of 'sacred seriousness' that necessitates participation.[15] Such dialogical capacity lies not in the mere appearance of the installations, "but lies in the fact that one is touched by a proposition, an address, an experience, which so captures us that we can only play along."[16] Still, it could be argued that such experience is controlled by some specific spatial and temporal guidelines, as well as the participants' willingness to partake in the 'playing along,' allowing the process to bridge "a not yet semantically articulated form of communication and world communication."[17] This possibly explains how and why Dubai Design Week's experience was mediated through a multiplicity of 'floating signifiers,' in here the urban installations, all of which present little beyond urban props that could be filled with any such meaning related to the larger aspiration of what a Design Week can offer—in terms of physical

appearance and social engagement.[18] In this way, it could be further argued that the aesthetic experience's goal is to not uncover the original intentions of the artist or to critique an artwork's method of production through a set of conventional guidelines, given that all the former elements constitute the 'playing of' the game, expanding the participants' horizon in order to "collect together utterly separate sensory impressions," while simultaneously establishing the truth dimension of objects as they enter their visual and cognitive horizon.[19]



Fig. 08 – Art installation Silhouette of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. Photo by author.

These phenomenological and semiotic interpretations bring forth important ideas relating to the other installations, like Designest and Edge Morph, which became permanent displays at D3. Just like the other examples described above, these two installations attracted very little physical engagement after the event, becoming decorative items at D3 business park. Still, it was intriguing to discover that their physical permanence today—almost four months after the event, turned them into physical markers or navigation signs. For example, D3 dwellers describe the way to parking 2 (for Buildings 4-7) as "take the left turn after the Morph structure." Similarly, when deciding to meet for lunch break, people suggest "let us gather near the pigeon nook." The spatial relationships implied through 'turn after' and 'meet near' reveal that there seems to be a diminishing interest in these once *Instagram*-able installations, turning them into ordinary, banal and quotidian urban markers. Accordingly, it is understood that the event, as a temporary frame, bestowed on these installations a certain meaning that was intrinsically bound to the values of the event itself. The detachment of these installations from the event's temporal frame, in other words de-framing them, revealed

their banality and possibly their symbolic emptiness, emphasizing that "the symbolic does not simply point towards a meaning, but rather allows that meaning to present itself."[20]

In conclusion, it could be argued that the meanings of the D3 installations lie beyond the temporal event of Dubai Design Week and even beyond its recurrent occasional experience, pointing towards the larger 'frame' of Dubai's socio-political reality. Such reality unfolds through another installation that is placed at the exit point of D3 business park, presenting itself as a silent gesture that 'reframes' the meaning of many such Dubai based events (Fig. 08). This installation takes for its form the silhouette of Dubai's ruler, HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, with his emblematic hand gesture that signifies "Win, Victory, Love." The front of the sculpture is a cave like inundation of the silhouette, suggesting the infinite resonance of the gesture. So, it could be understood that Dubai Design Week is an event that intends to symbolize Dubai's continuous 'race for excellence,' as suggested by HH in his book *My Vision* (2013).[21] Such imaginary 'race' translates itself into a plethora of urban, architectural and social events, most of which intend, through their very occasionality, not a shattering transformation nor a rupture in meaning but rather an intensification of Dubai's everyday life—including its political and economic agenda—and its *Instagram*-able urban experience. In a way, this installation, which is permanently placed at the exit of the business park, presents itself as a fixated self-image of HH Sheikh Mohammed and his vision, which together shape, let alone govern, all urban relationships, discourses and events in the city.

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# REIMAGINING JINAN'S SPRING-CENTERED COMMUNITIES: COSMOPOLITANISM, GOVERNANCE, AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

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# REIMAGINING JINAN'S SPRING-CENTERED COMMUNITIES: COSMOPOLITANISM, GOVERNANCE, AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

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*This study examines how state-led and market-driven models reconfigure public spaces and cultural diversity in Jinan's spring-centered settlements, China. Through spatial analysis, archival research, and fieldwork (2021–2023), the paper reveals tensions between globalized urban development and local cultural resilience, proposing a "state-market-community" framework to decode hybrid governance and resource conflicts. The findings challenge Pogge's dichotomy by highlighting institutional-market interactions in achieving cosmopolitan values. The research underscores sustainable strategies for heritage conservation and equitable resource allocation, offering insights for global waterfront communities navigating modernization pressures.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The interplay between globalization and local identity has become a critical issue in urban studies, especially for historical communities in China's second- and third-tier cities. Jinan, a city renowned for its 300 natural springs, presents a unique case where spring-centered settlements have evolved from enclosed family-based spaces to cosmopolitan hubs shaped by state-led and market-driven forces. Despite extensive research on spring hydrology [1] and traditional architecture [2], few studies have explored how these communities negotiate cosmopolitan values (e.g., resource equity, cultural diversity) during modernization.

This paper addresses two research questions: (1) How do different development models (state vs. market) reconfigure the publicity and cultural diversity of spring settlements? (2) What conflicts arise when spring resources transition from private/local to public/societal ownership? By integrating spatial analysis with cosmopolitanism theory, we propose a "state-market-community" tripartite model to decode the tension between globalized urban development and localized cultural resilience.

Our findings contribute to both theory and practice. Theoretically, we challenge Pogge's dichotomy by highlighting hybrid governance in Chinese contexts. Practically, the results inform policies on heritage conservation and equitable resource allocation, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 11. The following sections detail our methodology, case comparisons, and implications for global waterfront communities.

### 1.1. Research Site

Jinan is a third-tier city in northern China, close to the Taishan mountain range, with a distinctive geological structure that provides the city with abundant underground water resources. Since the Ming Dynasty in 1371,

151 springs and ponds of various sizes have sprung up naturally or been artificially dug in the 3.2 square kilometers of Jinan's old city, overflowing to form a network of various watercourses and ponds. This diversity of water system expansion creates the diversity and complexity of the spatial system of Jinan's spring water community.
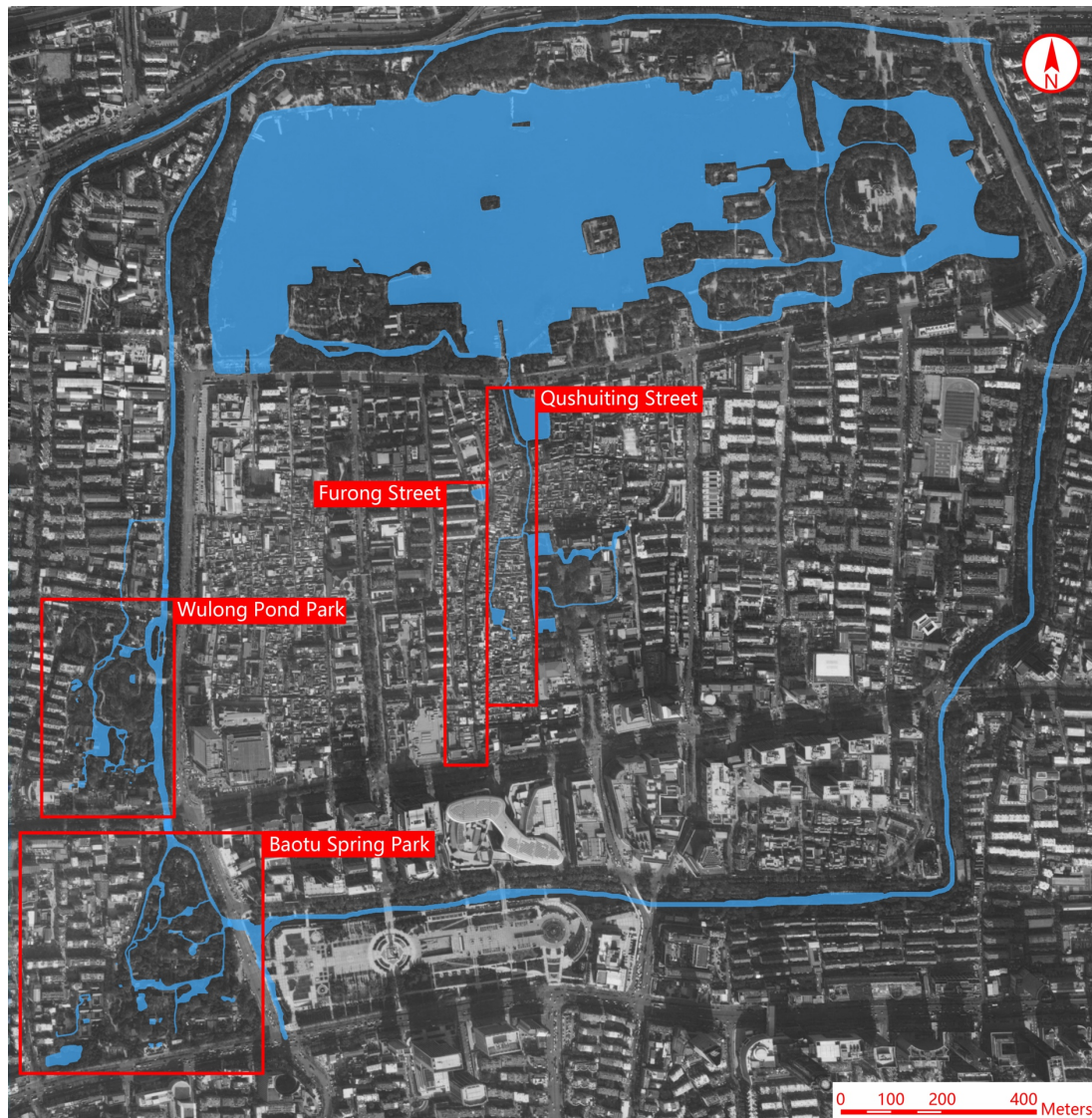


Fig. 1. Satellite image of Jinan Old City and the Locations of Four Cases (Source: Drawn by the author).

In this paper, four cases are selected from the two most densely distributed spring areas in the old city of Jinan, comparing the government-led spatial transformation of spring communities during the socialist period of China in the second half of the 20th century with the market economy-led spatial development of spring communities in the beginning of the 21st century (Fig. 1). The two development paths, spanning half a

century, have produced two urban public space characteristics, reflecting the transformation process of traditional urban space in northern China from the official-led urban development model to the market-economy development approach. The development of Jinan's spring water community space from the pursuit of egalitarianism through centralization to the spontaneous formation of multiculturalism through the market provides a useful research example of the concrete manifestation of cosmopolitanism in Chinese urban development.

## 2.    LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The Complexity of Cosmopolitanism

Thomas W. Pogge[3] argues that cosmopolitanism is based on human rights, comprising three essential elements: individualism, where the ultimate units of concern are human beings or persons; universality, where this status of ultimate concern applies equally to every living human being; and generality, meaning that this special status has global force. He further classifies the realization of these elements into two pathways: interactional cosmopolitanism and institutional cosmopolitanism. The former emphasizes fulfilling human rights through individual or collective agents, whereas the latter focuses on achieving these goals through institutional schemes.

Evidently, the former recalls China's mid-20th-century political and economic attempts to realize egalitarianism through the extension of state power, a process that reflects how socialist cosmopolitanism was employed as a mechanism for social transformation in modern China.[4] However, as Chen points out, China and the Soviet Union both encountered significant setbacks in their mid-20th-century pursuits of egalitarianism.[5] While Pogge does not deny the legitimacy of interactional cosmopolitanism, he argues that "making the institutional view primary leads to a much stronger and more plausible overall morality."[6] In other words, a highly centralized interactional cosmopolitan agent—namely, sovereignty—does not align with a morality that takes individual human beings and all human beings' fundamental needs and interests as its standpoint. Instead, the institutional approach to distributive justice focuses more on "choosing or designing economic ground rules, which regulate property, cooperation, and exchange…".[7]

Furthermore, Appiah introduces the concepts of substantive individualism and ethical individualism to explain the origins of multiculturalism.[8] The former equates human rights with individual rights rather than community rights, whereas Appiah aligns more with the latter, arguing that defending individual rights should not be limited to a narrow conception of human rights but must also consider the individual's community group and specific identity background: "A homology between identity groups and persons is a staple of certain forms of multiculturalism."[9]

The community groups that align with the multiculturalism of Jinan's spring settlements originate from two sources. Gellner observes that in pre-modern agrarian societies, "culture tends to be branded either horizontally (by social caste) or vertically, to define very small local communities."[10] Meanwhile, Holt argues that in contemporary society, individuals are reconstituted into various subcultural groups of consumption.[11]

## 2.2. Water Sources and Urban-Rural Spaces

Throughout history, spring water has played a significant role in shaping human settlements and architectural spaces. In Kashmir, the presence of water bodies has influenced the spatial structure and urban morphology of Srinagar, particularly along the banks of the Jhelum River.[12] Similarly, in Mito, Japan, spring water has been utilized for various purposes, including drinking, agriculture, and religious activities, with recent efforts dedicated to developing water-friendly parks.[13] In ancient Rome, the distribution of community populations and social classes in Pompeii was closely linked to the presence of artificial fountains of varying scales throughout the city.[14]

Over time, the relationship between water and architecture has continued to evolve. Contemporary design seeks to restore harmony between natural and built environments.[15] In ancient Greek settlements such as Selinunte, water installations within urban sanctuaries played a crucial role in rituals and social activities, contributing to the formation of a collective community consciousness.[16] Kondolf et al. have discussed how waterfront spaces along major rivers such as the Colorado, Amazon, and Isar foster diverse social connections.[17] These studies underscore the enduring significance of water in shaping human settlements, influencing architectural design, and facilitating cultural and social interactions.

Spring water and its hydrological network have also exerted a profound impact on urban and rural communities in northern China, particularly in Jinan. Zhao conducted a systematic study of various types of spring settlement forms in northern China and classified their morphological characteristics.[18] Zhang Jianhua categorized Jinan's old city into three spatial levels—urban, street and alley, and courtyard—based on the impact of spring distribution on urban morphology.[19] Zhang Lei carried out a typological analysis of the relationship between spring water and public spaces in Jinan's spring communities.[20] Li Xintian focused on the architectural styles reflecting the multicultural characteristics of Jinan's old city since the modern era.[21] Meanwhile, Tian Zhina examined the participatory mechanisms of multiple stakeholders in the recent development of Jinan's old city from an urban governance perspective.[22]

## 3.  METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating historical archival analysis, spatial mapping techniques, field research, and cross-case comparisons to uncover the spatial evolution of Jinan's spring settlements and their relationship with the theory of cosmopolitanism. A systematic literature review was conducted to construct a three-dimensional research framework focusing on space, institutions, and culture. A comprehensive examination of historical documents, including the records of Jinan Prefecture and Licheng County, as well as urban planning archives including, the 1958 Jinan Master Plan and spring protection policies, including the 2005 Jinan Famous Springs Protection Ordinance, was undertaken to trace the institutional transformation of spring settlements from family-based management to public ownership and market-oriented development. Cross-disciplinary validation was conducted by comparing historical records on spring management with contemporary policy documents, allowing analysis of how institutional shifts have influenced spatial transformations.

In addition, fieldwork (2021- 2023) included participatory observations and semi-structured interviews (N = 48) to explore community interactions and conflicts. Daily practices, including water collection rituals and tourism activities, were meticulously documented, while conflicts, such as disputes over Furong Street's wastewater issues and protests the expansion of Wulong Pond Park, were systematically recorded and analyzed. In-depth interviews were conducted with long-term residents (n = 20), business owners and tourists (n = 15), government officials (n = 8), and NGO representatives (n = 5) to explore changes in spatial rights, perceptions of commercialization and governance strategies. Ethical safeguards, including anonymized coding and member checking, were implemented to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

A mapping-based analysis was employed to visually represent complex spatial relationships, patterns and transformations in Jinan's spring settlements. This method integrates multiple data sources to create a comprehensive picture of spatial dynamics. The multi-layered integration approach included four key data layers: (1) environmental (the shape and pattern of the water body); (2) social (resident's utilization, commercial zones, tourist routes); (3) institutional (government planning boundaries, heritage protection zones, policy interventions); and (4) cultural (the traditional water collection points, the new landscape nodes). Historical map overlays were conducted, combining cartographic datasets from 1931 (Jinan City Streets and Alleys Map), 1985 (aerial photographs) and 2023 (GIS maps) to track boundary shifts and changes in water bodies. Case studies were selected to reflect state-led (Baotu Spring Park) and market-driven (Furong Street) development models, and to examine their impact on community structures and spatial functions. The thematic analysis identified three dominant themes: 'power intervention' (67 references), 'cultural identity' (53 references) and 'resource conflict' (42 references). Triangulation was carried out by cross-referencing

interview data, historical descriptions and mapping results to ensure the reliability of the findings. Finally, a typological framework was developed, integrating nine different spatial types of sources to compare the manifestations of cosmopolitanism under state intervention and market-driven development models.

## 4.  FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Springwater communities are artificial settlements organized around the distribution of spring water bodies and shaped by the logic of water resource use and allocation. In Jinan, the spatial structure of these communities exhibits two distinct types of urban spaces that transcend the conventional urban spatial patterns of agrarian society: urban parks and traditional streets. These forms reflect how differing cosmopolitan ideals between egalitarianism and consumerism influence both water distribution and spatial evolution.

As groundwater transitions into surface water, it gives rise to various exposed forms—such as spring wells, spring pools, and spring ponds—each varying in size. These features are connected through linear spring channels or artificial conduits, forming a hydrological system that links underground sources with rivers, farmland, and lakes.[23] In traditional Chinese urban settings, spring systems are often embedded within the courtyard housing networks. This structure is comparable to northern Chinese communities built around wells, typically organized by familial or neighborhood units[24], with spatial forms often arranged in a grid-like pattern centered on the water source.[25] However, as spring water flows into streams or artificial waterways, it forms elongated spatial systems that extend beyond the confines of traditional courtyards, facilitating broader social connections.[26]

In traditional Chinese courtyard dwellings, the façade width of individual buildings and the length of the courtyard perimeter are typically less than 10 meters. Consequently, water bodies exceeding this scale cannot be enclosed within a single courtyard, creating the potential for community-level utilization. Based on the spatial scale and morphology of exposed spring water features in Jinan's old city, these can be classified into: (1) spring wells or small spring pools with dimensions under 10 meters that may be enclosed by traditional courtyards; (2) large spring ponds with at least one side exceeding 10 meters, which extend beyond a single household unit; and (3) linear spring channels or waterways that traverse multiple courtyards and communities.

Interviews from long-term local residents lived in Jinan's old city categorizes the uses of spring water into three main functions: water collection, washing, and visual enjoyment. The first two are typically domestic activities that require direct physical interaction with the water source. In contrast, viewing or appreciating the springs extends beyond the household context and allows for greater spatial flexibility in terms of proximity.

Accordingly, the waterfront spaces surrounding springs can be classified using the traditional courtyard dwelling's approximate boundary of 10 meters. Small-scale waterfront spaces (under 10m) are primarily used for water collection and washing; medium- to large-scale waterfront spaces (over 10m) accommodate more expansive viewing experiences; and linear waterfront spaces serve as connective corridors that integrate spring water resources with the broader community fabric.

The spring water communities in Jinan's Mingfu District can be broadly categorized into nine spatial types, formed through permutations and combinations of three types of spring water bodies and three corresponding types of waterfront spaces. These spatial configurations have undergone varied processes of transformation and development during the socio-economic shifts from the mid-20th century to the early 21st century, each embodying distinct interpretations of cosmopolitanism (Fig. 2).
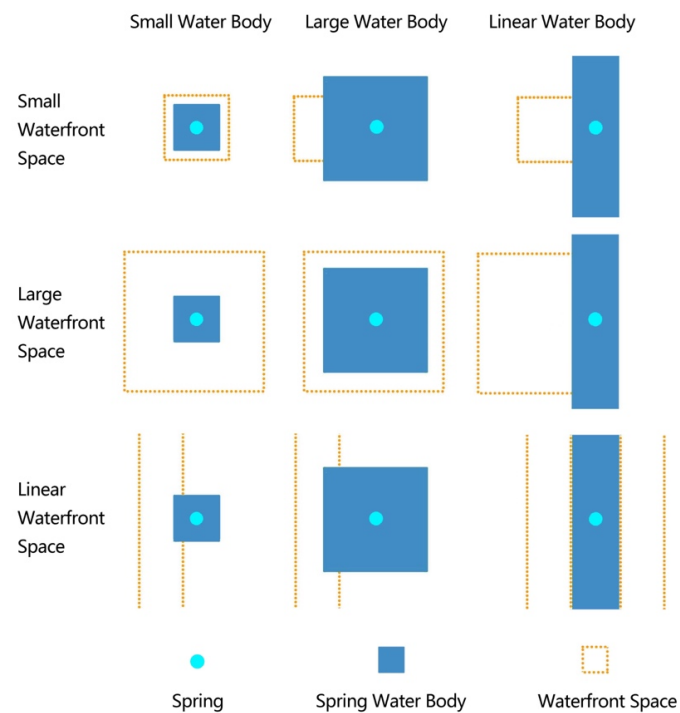


Fig. 2.Permutation and combination of water bodies and waterfront spaces (Source: Drawn by the author).

## 4.1.  State-led Spring Water Urban Parks

State-led development refers to a governance model in which the government acts as an agent of the public, redistributing social resources through top-down mechanisms with the aim of promoting egalitarianism. This approach characterized urban spatial development in China during the planned economy period of the latter half of the 20th century.[27]

Located just outside the southwest corner of Jinan's old city moat, Baotu Spring Park and Wulong Pond Park are representative examples of state-led spring water urban park development. The former has long been the most iconic scenic site in Jinan and has undergone several rounds of expansion since the mid-20th century, all initiated by the municipal government. These projects involved the public acquisition of adjacent residential properties, which were subsequently converted into a park designed in traditional Chinese architectural style. Similarly, Wulong Pond Park was developed during the same period through state-led expropriation of residential land, followed by large-scale demolition and park construction. While most local social media platforms express support for these transformations, praising the enhanced public amenities, some independent commentators have raised concerns that the original courtyard-based urban fabric—and its unique relationship with the spring water environment—has been significantly disrupted. (Fig. 3).



**The Development History of Wulong Pond Park**

**The Development History of Baotu Spring Park**

1910

1920

1930 — The spring reformation was completed in 1931.

1940 — The Establishement of People's Republic of China in 1949

The Xianqing Spring Gourp was named in 1948.

1950 — The site of the springs group was tranformed into Baotu park.

Wulong Pond park was named and desigend as a park in 1959.

1960 — Baotu Park expanded southward to include Cang Garden in 1965.

Small-scaled renovation work was completed in 1965.

1970

The relocation of surrounding residents began in 1985

1980 — Baotu Park expanded southward to include West Garden in 1985.

The construction of Wulong Pond Park was completed in 1987.

1990 — Baotu Park expanded southward to include Wanzhu Garden in 1996.

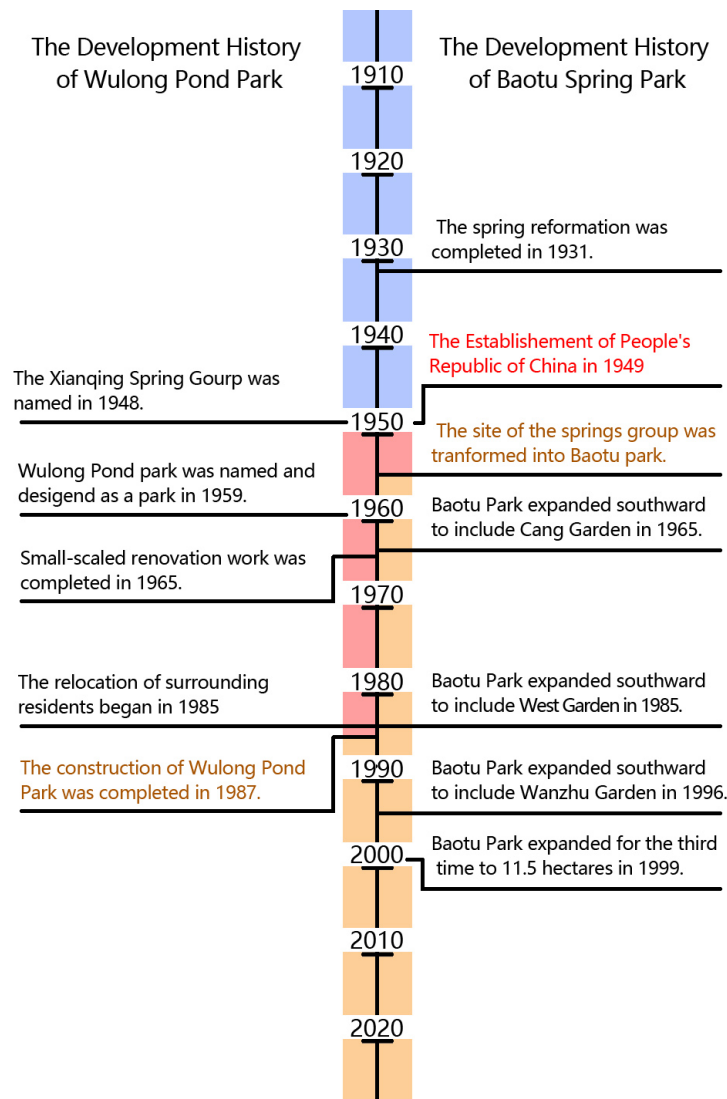2000 — Baotu Park expanded for the third time to 11.5 hectares in 1999.

2010

2020

Fig. 3.The Development History of Wulong Pond Park and Baotu Spring Park (Source: Drawn by the author).

This redevelopment process involved the removal of dozens of spring wells and pools from residential courtyards and alleyways, effectively detaching them from the traditional urban grid formed by courtyard dwellings. It also connected fragmented spring ponds and streamside spaces that had previously been segmented by small-scale residential plots, thereby enlarging the original waterfront areas. Through this process, the private or semi-private nature of spring water access was eliminated, and a new function—primarily for public viewing—was introduced and made accessible to the general public.

A long-term resident, who has grown up in the northern site of Wulong Pond Park, stated that 'while the park's expansion brought compensation from the government and improved his housing conditions, it also led to the loss of everyday convenience and weakened former neighborhood ties'. From a sociological perspective, such redevelopment has dismantled the existing community group structures that were historically organized around the familial or neighborhood-based distribution of spring water resources. In its place, a state-led model of socially redistributed spring water access has been instituted, transforming local hydrological heritage into a collective urban amenity (Fig. 4).



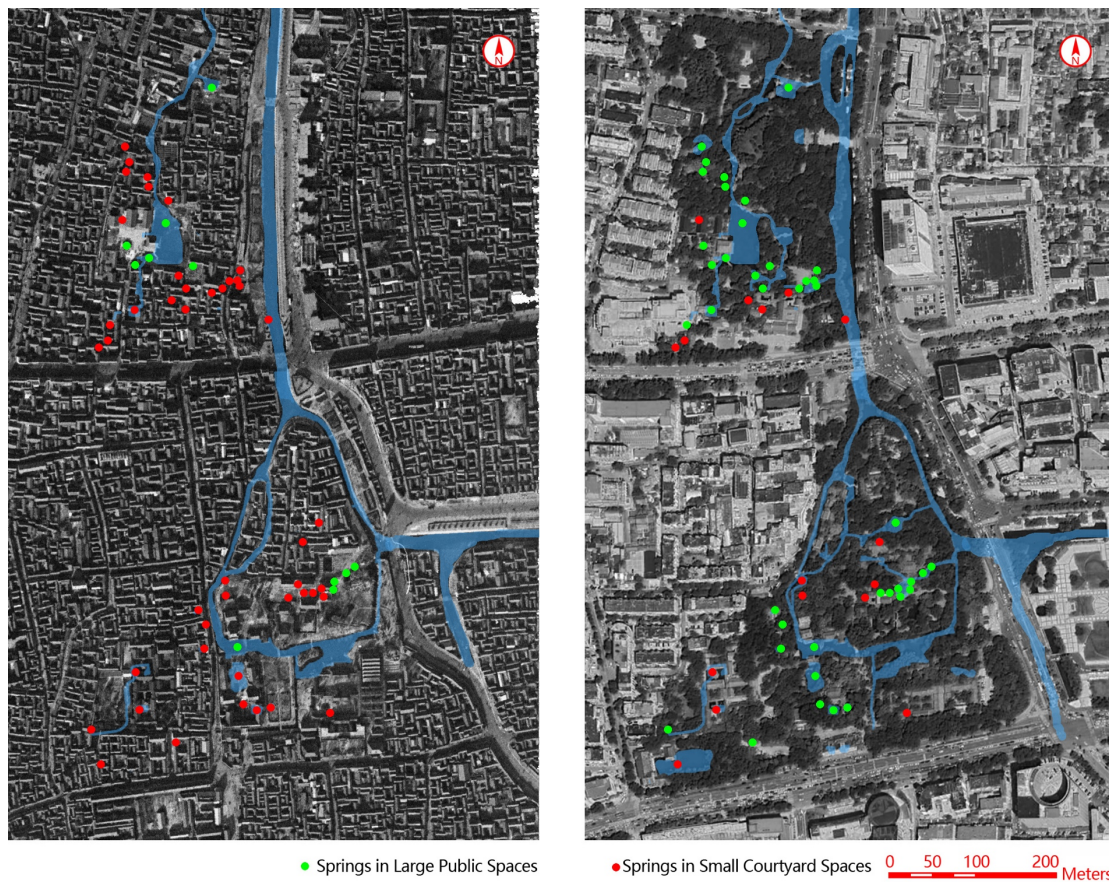● Springs in Large Public Spaces    ● Springs in Small Courtyard Spaces    0  50  100  200 Meters

Fig. 4. Aerial Comparison of the Two Parks between 1966 (on The Left Side) and 2024 (on The Right Side) (Source: Drawn by the author).

The state's use of public authority to redistribute access to spring water spaces reflects the egalitarian intent characteristic of what Pogge defines as interactional cosmopolitanism.[28] However, this approach also entails the dismantling of traditional spring water community group structures, which appears to contradict Appiah's vision of ethical individualism.[29] Nevertheless, in the broader context of mid-20th-century China, this top-down redistribution of formerly kinship- or bureaucratically-controlled resources enabled ordinary citizens to gain access to urban public assets—thereby fostering a sense of identification with the newly established state. Urban parks, as a quintessential form of public space, became an important medium through which the urban citizenry experienced the egalitarian benefits afforded by sovereignty.

Importantly, Appiah's ethical individualism does not advocate for the wholesale abandonment of the state or national frameworks but rather promotes a form of rooted cosmopolitanism.[30] From his perspective, ethical obligations lie in ensuring the well-being of individual, rather than in pursuing an abstract or extreme cosmopolitan ideal. Therefore, the cosmopolitan significance of state-led spring water redevelopment projects should not be judged solely by their mechanisms or outcomes. Instead, attention must be paid to whether all stakeholders—including displaced residents—had their individual needs met, either directly or through community-based representation.



Fig. 5. Example of the Spring Ponds with a Large Public Space in Wulong Pond Park (Source: Photo by the author).

From a contemporary perspective, the construction and expansion of these two parks have enhanced the public character of Jinan's spring water landscapes and increased their visibility as urban attractions. At the same time, these interventions have weakened the spatial interdependence between the spring water system

and the traditional community structure. As a result, the distinctive identity of these historic spring clusters has diminished, making them more difficult to distinguish from conventional urban park water features (Fig. 5).

### 4.2. Market-led Springwater Cultural Streets

In the early 21st century, market-led development in China has operated through a tripartite mechanism comprising government guidance, state-owned enterprise initiation, and market-based operations. Within this framework, the preservation and redevelopment of spring water communities have been undertaken through the Jinan Cultural Tourism Development Group—an entity established by the Jinan municipal government—to manage the old city's revitalization under market principles, seeking a dynamic balance between heritage conservation and urban growth.



The Development History of Furong Street

The Development History of Qushuiting Street

1910

Street-front businesses rised in the early 20th century

1920

1930

1940

The Establishement of People's Republic of China in 1949

The street-front business types converted to residential and light industrial uses in 1950s

1950

The street was renovated in 1958.

1960

1970

China began to deepen the reform of the market economi system in 1992.

1980

The street-front business was restored to commercial uses in 1990s.

The booming of the restaurant industry in the 1990s, which also brought serious environmental pollution.

1990

The street was incorporated in the Protected Historical District in 2000.

2000

Official environmental enhancements were implemented between 2009 and 2012.

In 2017, the street was transferred to the Jinan City Cultural Tourism Development Group.

2010

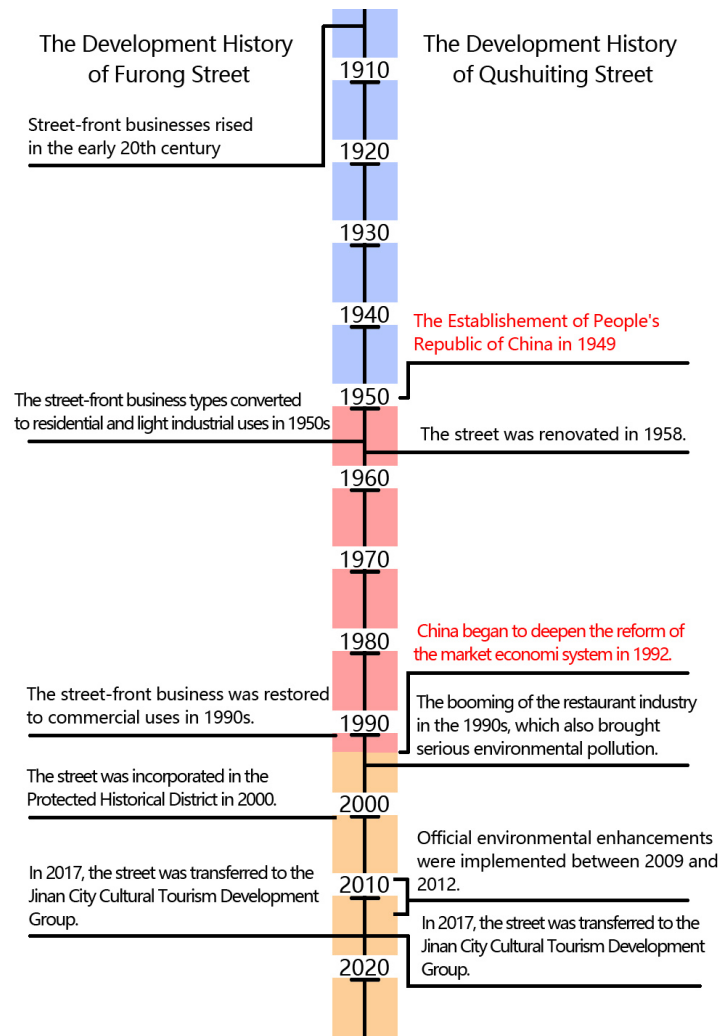In 2017, the street was transferred to the Jinan City Cultural Tourism Development Group.

2020

Fig. 6. The Developing History of Furong Street and Qushuiting Street (Source: Drawn by the author).

Furong Street and Qushuiting Street, both located at the heart of Jinan's old city, serve as primary thoroughfares connecting the central spring water clusters. Furong Street was originally constructed in the early 17th century as a waterside street running north along the overflow of Furong Spring, forming what was historically known as the Tiyun Stream. Over time, this stream became a hub for commercial activity, and the open-air spring channel was gradually converted into an underground conduit. In contrast, the spring-fed waterscape of Qushuiting Street, situated just to the north of Furong Street, has largely retained its original linear form. Although the functional configuration of both streets underwent changes in the mid-20th century—shifting temporarily towards residential and industrial uses—the overall spatial pattern of the communities has remained largely intact to this day (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7).



● Springs in Large Public Spaces   ● Springs in Linear Alley Spaces   ● Springs in Small Courtyard Spaces
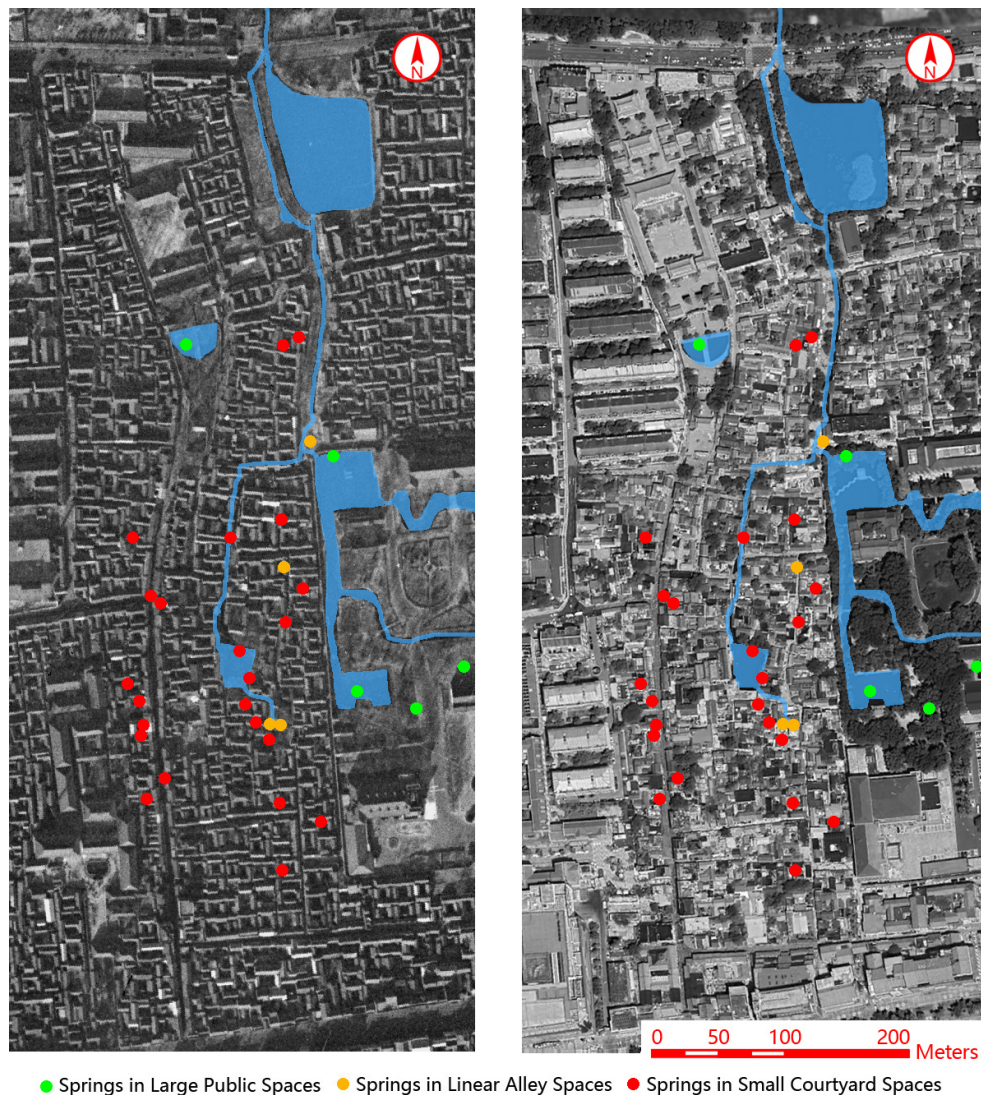
Fig. 7. Aerial Comparison of the Two Streets between 1966 (on the left side) and 2024 (on the right side) (Source: Drawn by the author).

An examination of the development trajectories of these two spring cultural streets reveals that the government has not been absent from the process. While some scholars question whether state-sponsored collective projects can embody cosmopolitan values[31], the transformation of these areas has not entailed state-led expropriation or large-scale remodeling of the community fabric. Most notably, the government did not alter the ownership structure of properties surrounding the spring water landscapes under the guise of renovation or regulation. Its role has instead been limited to overseeing the architectural style of the district and managing tourism branding through investment firms. A property owner near Qushuiting Street reported that the influx of tourists initially disrupted their daily life. However, after renting out their home to a photography studio specializing in traditional clothing themes, the rental income not only covered her living costs but also helped ease the financial burden of purchasing a new flat in a different part of the city. The government's protection of property rights has promoted the diversification of functions and business formats in the spring community.

In these cases, individualism is most tangibly expressed through the protection of private property rights. As Dobrinescu notes, "the exclusive right to property, precisely because it is conceived as exclusive, presupposes an individual owner. In doing so, it precludes any form of collective".[32] Private ownership thus allows for individual discretion in determining both the form of spatial expression and the aesthetic style of buildings—decisions rooted in the property holder's own valuation. Prior to the emergence of market interest in the consumerist value of these spring water neighborhoods, their architectural and spatial characteristics adhered to the construction logics of traditional Chinese dwellings, reflecting the cultural features of a pre-modern agrarian society by Gellner.[33] However, with the rise of tourism, homeowners began reassessing the commercial potential of their properties. This diversification of market demand provided fertile ground for multiculturalism, wherein even the continued use of regionalist, traditional Chinese forms is no longer tied to local heritage but instead reflects a conscious identification with specific subcultural consumerist preferences.[34]

In this model, the state no longer acts directly as the redistributor of social resources but instead establishes tourism development companies to regulate and support the market on behalf of property owners. This approach to spring water community development aligns more closely with Pogge's vision of institutional cosmopolitanism[35], and in doing so, facilitates the emergence of cosmopolitan, multicultural urban districts—including those characterized by regionalist architectural expression (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Multicultural Architectural Styles on Qushuiting Street (Source: Photo by the author).

## 5.  DISCUSSIONS

Due to the spatial extensiveness and typological diversity of its water bodies, the traditional spring water community in Jinan has, over time, exhibited an emergent form of publicness that transcends the kinship-based spatial logic typical of agrarian societies. This tendency has encountered two principal forms of external intervention during the process of modern urban development: (1) state-led redevelopment, particularly the creation of urban parks through the nationalization of community land; and (2) market-driven regeneration, exemplified by the transformation of spring water neighborhoods into commercialized cultural streets. In the former, the spring water space is fully opened to the public, realizing radical egalitarian ideals but simultaneously erasing the fine-grained spatial distinctions born of diverse spring water forms. This reflects a form of interactional cosmopolitanism rooted in socialist ideals. In contrast, the latter gradually reshapes spring water communities via institutional mechanisms typical of market economies. This process transforms traditional, kinship-based community structures into consumer-oriented social groups, generating a form of multiculturalism underpinned by ethical individualism—but at the cost of substantive individual egalitarianism.

As the fundamental bearers of human rights—the core of cosmopolitan theory—individuals experience divergent degrees of agency and benefit within these two models. In the state-led approach, residents surrender their original dwellings and community affiliations in exchange for government-allocated housing. Urban citizens gain nearly unrestricted access to spring water spaces previously monopolized by kinship-based ownership, but both groups do so without actively exercising individual choice. This reveals a certain coerciveness embedded in the state's role as an agent of redistribution. By contrast, in the market-led

approach, residents retain far greater decision-making autonomy. They may preserve traditional courtyard forms and community identities or choose to cooperate with capital interests, renting or developing their property to generate income. While this enables the emergence of diverse consumer subcultures, it also restricts public access to spring water resources, which remain partially monopolized by private owners and commercial actors.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The spatial evolution of Jinan's old city reflects a dynamic interplay between its urban form and the diversity of its spring water systems, resulting in nine distinct spatial typologies along spring water corridors. Traditional community structures in Chinese cities were historically hierarchical, shaped primarily by kinship-based authority.[36] However, in Jinan's spring water communities, the logic of water distribution has challenged this hierarchy, giving rise to self-governed community groups that, to some extent, echo Pogge's concept of "widely dispersed authority or sovereignty in the vertical dimension".[37] This is why the mid-20th-century transformation of spring water communities into public parks is characterized in this study as a form of interactional cosmopolitanism, whereas the 21st-century market-oriented development of cultural streets is viewed as a form of institutional cosmopolitanism.

Pogge's cosmopolitanism primarily addresses the relationship between human rights as an ethical aim and the mechanisms required to realize them at a global scale. Applying this framework to Jinan's spring water communities inevitably encounters limitations, particularly in accounting for local cultural traditions, historical trajectories, and governance systems. This highlights the need to draw from a broader theoretical spectrum of cosmopolitanism to meaningfully interpret such context-specific urban phenomena.

Appiah's conception of cosmopolitanism distinguishes between substantive individualism, which emphasizes individual autonomy and rights, and ethical individualism, which situates individuals within broader community structures. Extreme cosmopolitan positions tend to prioritize the former, but the lived realities of spring water communities—especially those with preserved communal ties—reflect the latter. Moreover, the recent emergence of consumer-oriented subcultural communities in these areas signifies a shift from lineage-based structures to lifestyle cosmopolitanism[38], which van Hooft argues reflects substantive individualism and falls short of the ethical individualism Appiah advocates.[39] Individuals in Jinan's spring water communities operate between these two extremes, navigating both individual autonomy and community belonging.

The theoretical divergences revealed in this study reflect the value of Jinan's spring water urbanism as a lens for exploring multiple trajectories of urban transformation and cosmopolitan expression. By applying cosmopolitan theory to the spatial development of northern Chinese cities, this study moves beyond urban

design strategies and offers a universalist framework for understanding how individuals, communities, and the state negotiate the balance between egalitarianism and individualism. In doing so, it contributes to the broader conversation on how cosmopolitan ideals might be locally reinterpreted and realized.

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# UNBOUNDED BUT BINDING: AN ADVANCED COMMUNITY-SPACE-EVENT PATTERN TRANSFORMING HISTORIES INTO CIVIC SOCIETY ESSENTIALS

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# UNBOUNDED BUT BINDING: AN ADVANCED COMMUNITY-SPACE-EVENT PATTERN TRANSFORMING HISTORIES INTO CIVIC SOCIETY ESSENTIALS

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*The key challenge and opportunity facing contemporary Tainan lies in transforming its rich historical legacy into a foundation for strengthening civil society, while simultaneously supporting tourism and technology industries. This dual development trajectory has reshaped urban governance by integrating the vibrancy of the historic city center with newly developed districts. In 2025, Tainan City will commemorate the 300th anniversary of its city walls and gates—an opportunity to unite diverse communities and revitalize historical traditions for future generations.*

*This study highlights a collaborative model involving NGOs, academia, and government entities aimed at integrating diverse communities and enhancing civic resilience. The Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration (FHCCR, est. 1999) spearheads this initiative through the 'TNiF300 CCCCC Project.' This paper introduces the community-space-event framework implemented by FHCCR, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering public participation and community cohesion.*

*First, the framework tailors activities to spatial contexts associated with the historic city walls—parks, roads, gates, streets, campuses, heritage sites, and vacant lots—activating them as platforms for civic engagement. For example, parks established on former wall sites serve as venues for student sketching, supported by FHCCR's walking tours and studio sessions that creatively reinterpret the walls.*

*Second, the diversity and fragmentation of contemporary communities present significant challenges. FHCCR collaborates with NGOs such as Tainan Sprout and Tou-Southwind to engage neighborhoods and district offices in community-building. Religious groups, rooted in Tainan's historical fabric, integrate modern perspectives into traditional practices. The development of school curricula depends heavily on the disposition of the Tainan City Education of Bureau. Additionally, longstanding businesses and commercial districts, along with younger generations drawn to local heritage, are key stakeholders.*

*While the TNiF300 CCCCC Project proposes flagship events like commemorations and civic forums, it is the proliferation of smaller, community-based activities that truly builds public connectivity. FHCCR plays a facilitative role, fostering interaction across public, private, and third-sector domains. It highlights the role of historical environments in urban planning, daily life, and youth development. These seemingly modest interventions contribute meaningfully to the multilayered historical landscape, transforming the city wall from a symbolic boundary into a platform for inclusive civic engagement and resilient community building.*

## 1.  INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXTS OF TNiF300 CCCCC PROJECT AND RESEARCH PURPOSES

### 1.1. Contextualizing The TNiF300 CCCCC Project as a Civil Society Movement

The TNiF300 CCCCC Project—where "CCCCC" stands for City, Culture, Community, Celebration, and Coming (i.e., future generations)—is a collaborative initiative jointly launched by academic institutions and NGOs in Tainan City. In commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Tainan City Wall in 2025, the project brings together schools, communities, religious organizations, private-sector entities, and, where feasible, the

public sector. Its central aim is to collectively envision a future blueprint for Tainan through five thematic priorities: urban environment, cultural heritage, community engagement, civic celebration, and intergenerational dialogue.



Fig. 1: The CCCCC diagram

To contextualize the emergence and trajectory of iF300, this section outlines a unified long-, mid-, and short-term timeline, integrating both deep historical roots and recent civic dynamics.

### 1.1.1.  Long-term Context: Enduring Historical Structures and Cultural Traditions

The construction of the Tainan City Wall in 1725 marked a significant milestone in Taiwan's early urban development. Occurring nearly a century after Taiwan entered recorded history with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company in 1624, the city wall signified both the Qing dynasty's administrative commitment to the island and the maturity of local governance and community organization. In parallel, religious institutions—particularly traditional Han Chinese temples and Christian churches—have played an enduring role in shaping Tainan's cultural and social landscape. These religious organizations, embedded in the city's everyday life, continue to participate in contemporary civic initiatives while carrying centuries of accumulated tradition and influence.

### 1.1.2.  Mid-term Context: Institutional Foundations and Socio-Spatial Reconfigurations

The Japanese colonial period brought significant transformations to Tainan's urban form, including the large-scale demolition of city wall segments to accommodate modern planning. However, postwar heritage policies gradually began to revalue these remnants. In 1985, fragments of the wall and its gates were designated as protected cultural assets under the Republic of China's legal system. Yet, their scattered distribution led them to be perceived as isolated monuments rather than a coherent historical system.

This began to change in the 1990s with initiatives such as the Confucius Temple Cultural Park Plan, which reimagined historical environments as integral parts of urban life through a combination of preservation and community engagement. At the same time, schools informally aligned themselves with the wall's geography, forming networks of heritage-based education.

A notable turning point came in 2008 with FHCCR's "Delighting Old House Movement." Unlike efforts that focused solely on officially protected monuments, this campaign encouraged private citizens to adaptively reuse old buildings with contemporary functions. The result was a dynamic reactivation of historic urban fabric that appealed especially to younger generations. It also gave rise to small, lifestyle-oriented social networks that helped to shape Tainan's contemporary cultural and economic identity[1].

In 2017, following sustained academic advocacy, seven dispersed wall and gate segments were officially reclassified as a single cultural heritage site and elevated to national status. This milestone reinforced a more integrated understanding of historical spatial systems and their relevance to current urban development.

### 1.1.3.  Short-term Context: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities for Civic Imagination

The years 2024 and 2025 have emerged as competing commemorative moments in Tainan's history. While the 2024 "Tainan 400" celebrations, anchored in the Dutch East India Company's arrival in 1624, received substantial governmental funding and promotion, they were widely perceived as top-down, tourism-oriented spectacles. By contrast, iF300—positioned in 2025 as a civil society-driven initiative—emphasizes sustained community engagement and long-term visioning.

The 2025 city wall anniversary has been met with ambivalence from municipal authorities, partly due to political concerns. The Qing-era wall represents only a small portion of the contemporary city and is largely rooted in Han Chinese narratives, raising questions about inclusivity and representativeness. Moreover, confusion among the public about the difference between the "400" and "300" anniversaries has led to skepticism about the rationale for state-sponsored festivities.

Despite this, the iF300 initiative has gathered momentum by mobilizing grassroots support across diverse sectors. It proposes a forward-looking, inclusive framework that links historical consciousness with contemporary urban challenges and intergenerational dialogue. Through forums, festivals, walking tours, and educational programs, iF300 positions itself not merely as a commemorative project, but as an evolving civic platform—one that draws on history to co-create a more participatory urban future.

### 1.2. Research Objectives

The iF300 initiative seeks to engage citizens through a range of participatory activities—forums, festivals, walking tours, and other interactive formats—that encourage the rediscovery of the city's lost wall structures, the cultivation of care for the urban environment, and the expression of civic perspectives. More importantly, the initiative emphasizes the active roles of communities, schools, religious organizations, businesses,

associations, NGOs, and NPOs in translating collective visions into tangible actions through dialogue and collaboration.

The long-term goal of iF300 is to foster enduring partnerships among diverse organizations and community actors over the next two decades. By facilitating ongoing public dialogue, shared learning experiences, and regular annual events, the project aspires to establish a resilient and sustainable platform for civic participation and cultural development in Tainan.

Aligned with the multi-layered aims of iF300, this study adopts a participatory research approach that critically examines the interactions between civil society, government, and private sector actors within the framework of NGO-led advocacy. Specifically, it aims to define the operational practices of cultural adaptation and inclusion in the context of cultural resilience. The research focuses on how third-sector organizations mobilize social and cultural resources, build strategic alliances across stakeholder groups, and leverage advocacy platforms and commemorative milestones—such as the pivotal year 2025—to foster collective engagement and long-term community development.
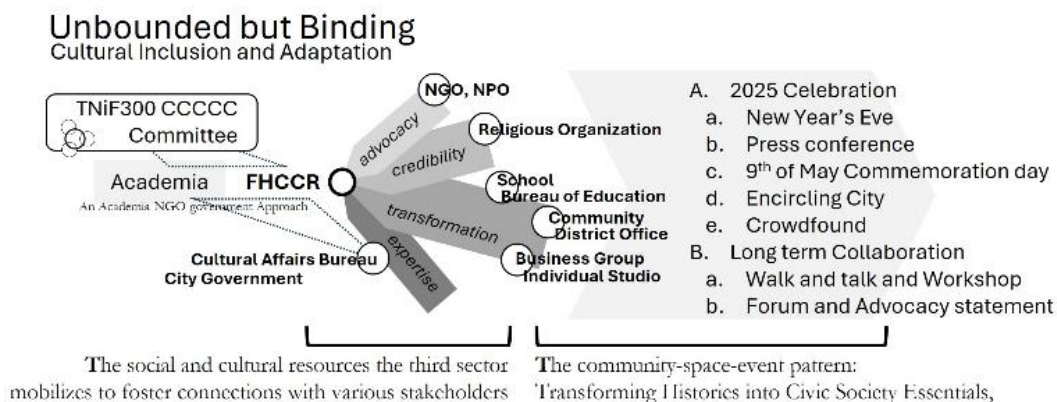


Fig. 2: The conceptual framework

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in the "three-sector model of civil society" and begins by drawing on literature concerning cultural resilience and cultural sustainability. These frameworks underscore the critical role of cultural heritage and local resources in fostering sustainable social development. Building on this foundation, the research extends the notion of cultural resilience into a working concept of "cultural adaptation and inclusion," which is integrated with the three-sector model of civil society—comprising the public sector, the private sector, and the third sector.

This study proposes an operational definition of cultural adaptation and inclusion as a process led by third-sector organizations that mobilize socio-cultural and environmental resources to facilitate connections among individuals and communities. In this context, cultural adaptation is not only about preserving heritage but about reconfiguring it as a tool for civic participation, social integration, and collective imagination.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, centered on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in iF300 activities. Particular attention is given to the Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration (FHCCR) and its collaborative interactions with other actors in the community. Through these interviews, the study examines how socio-cultural and environmental resources are mobilized in practice, with the aim of identifying concrete strategies and mechanisms that enable civic engagement and cultural innovation.

## 2.1. Literature Review: Cultural Resilience

The relationship between cultural heritage and cultural resilience has been extensively discussed in recent scholarship. Holtorf (2018) emphasizes the role of cultural heritage in strengthening cultural resilience, particularly in the context of post-disaster recovery.[2] He argues that heritage is not only a symbolic reference to the past but also a vital asset in community adaptation and recovery processes.

Fabbricatti, Boissenin, and Citoni (2020), drawing upon the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, further highlight how cultural heritage fosters community resilience.[3] Their work points to the "Heritage Community" model (Council of Europe 2005, Article 2b), in which diverse stakeholders—residents, private entities, businesses, research institutions, and public agencies—participate in heritage-based actions. These actions promote a strong people–place connection through local festivals and shared urban narratives, ultimately supporting local development and social cohesion. In this framework, cultural heritage is conceptualized as an active component of the urban fabric, grounding collective identity and continuity.

This study builds on these perspectives by extending the notion of cultural resilience into the working concept of cultural adaptation and inclusion, defined as a process initiated by the third sector to mobilize socio-cultural and environmental resources in ways that connect individuals and communities. This formulation is especially pertinent to contexts such as Tainan, where civic organizations play an expanding role in shaping spatial and cultural dynamics.

In Taiwan's context, Hsin-Huang Hsiao (2017) outlines how the country's socio-political structure evolved from a dominance of political power over society and economy (1945–1960s), to a growing influence of

private capital in the 1970s, and finally to the emergence of social power in the 1980s–2000s during the democratization process. This trajectory reflects a shift from a binary state–market model to a tripartite system, where civil society is increasingly recognized as a distinct and influential sector.[4]

Hsiao et al.'s edited volume Nonprofit Organizations: Structure and Function (2017) elaborates the potential of Taiwan's nonprofit sector by integrating perspectives from economics, political science, and sociology. Politically, nonprofit organizations are seen as essential partners to the public sector in delivering public goods that reflect collective needs and preferences. Economically, they respond to market failures with structures that prioritize accountability and public trust over profit maximization. Sociologically, nonprofit organizations are key to the vitality of civil society; they empower atomized individuals through associative life, fostering a synergy between personal development and collective welfare.

Through the lens of this three-sector model, the transformation of Tainan's built and socio-cultural environment in the postwar period can be understood as a coordinated evolution. The first sector (the municipal government) led early preservation and planning efforts; the second sector (commercial actors) contributed through adaptive reuse and heritage-oriented economic revitalization; and the third sector (notably the FHCCR, founded in 1999) emerged to integrate cultural advocacy with grassroots civic action. Over time, the concept of the "historic environment" has evolved into a shared concern that transcends sectoral boundaries—mobilized not only by government policy but also through market innovation and civil society participation.

## 2.2. Researching Methods: Participatory Observation and In-Depth Interview

This study adopts a qualitative methodology centered on in-depth interviews and participatory observation. The primary objective is to identify key actors involved in the iF300 initiative and to analyze the interaction processes between the Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration (FHCCR) and various community groups. In particular, the study aims to understand the mechanisms and strategies through which socio-cultural and environmental resources are mobilized.

As previously discussed, FHCCR is a non-governmental organization with a long-standing focus on the historic urban environment and cultural heritage. Within the iF300 initiative, FHCCR plays a pivotal role, leveraging its institutional neutrality, subject-matter expertise, resource networks, and accumulated public trust. These attributes position FHCCR as the primary coordinating force and a credible intermediary among diverse stakeholders.

Given the study's clearly defined target population, purposive sampling was employed to select interviewees.

The interviews were conducted during the early stages of the research, allowing for timely insight into ongoing processes. In-depth interviews constitute a form of face-to-face social interaction, with the data emerging as a co-constructed product of this dynamic exchange. In this context, both interviewers and interviewees are situated within the local socio-cultural fabric of Tainan, and their shared experiential background enhances the depth and relevance of the interactions.

Rather than passively recording respondents' views, the interviews are designed to foster mutual interpretation and reflection. To facilitate this, an unstructured to semi-structured interview format was adopted, allowing for flexibility in navigating the complexity of individual experiences and institutional relationships.

This methodological approach enables the researcher not only to document perspectives but also to gain insight into the underlying logics, values, and relational dynamics that shape civic engagement within the iF300 initiative.

## 3. CIVIL INTERFACES IN PRACTICE: ORGANIZATIONS, RESOURCES, AND ENGAGEMENT MODELS

Between the conceptual core of the iF300 initiative and the broader realm of civil society, a range of intermediary organizations operate as functional interfaces. These can be conceptualized as a concentric network of actors connected through a sequence of relationships: from the advocacy concepts—primarily formulated by FHCCR and academic collaborators—to FHCCR as the coordinating actor, and subsequently to a constellation of NGOs, local communities, independent studios and business groups, religious institutions, and schools at various levels. This ultimately extends to engagement with the general public.

This concentric-circle structure not only facilitates pragmatic collaboration by aligning with each actor's respective "comfort zone," but also reflects iF300's strategic response to the increasing atomization and individualization characteristic of contemporary social networks and media cultures. By leveraging the relational spaces already familiar to each stakeholder group, the initiative extends its reach in ways that resist purely commercial logics or top-down messaging. The connections and alliances formed among these diverse organizations are essential to building the cross-sectoral trust and cohesion needed for sustained civic engagement.

In a fragmented civic landscape where organizations often operate autonomously within their own institutional subsystems, these inter-organizational linkages become a crucial foundation for long-term civil society vitality. Rather than enforcing a uniform structure, the iF300 model promotes flexible yet coordinated

collaboration through shared goals and spatially anchored interventions.

Within this framework, the study identifies a viable community–space–event approach as a practical mechanism through which different organizations interact with the general public. By programming diverse activities in historically and socially meaningful urban spaces, this approach enables civic actors to engage communities through localized, participatory experiences. The activation of space becomes not merely symbolic but functional—serving as a platform for social connection, cultural continuity, and civic imagination.

### 3.1. Key Organizational Interfaces in the iF300 Network

### 3.1.1. Non-Governmental Organizations: FHCCR, Tainan Sprout, and Community University
### FHCCR

As previously introduced in the research methods section, the Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration (FHCCR, established in 1999) is the central organizational actor in the iF300 initiative. FHCCR is a long-standing civil society institution dedicated to the promotion of cultural heritage, the historic urban environment, and civic engagement in Taiwan. Its activities primarily include site investigations, reuse planning, and capacity building in the field of cultural heritage. These practical efforts also serve as a platform for cultivating a new generation of professionals.

A major contribution of FHCCR is its development of the concept of "conservation and regeneration" for historic environments. Since launching the "Delighting Old House Movement" in 2008, it has established the "Old House School," which offers both introductory and advanced courses to the public. In 2015, FHCCR initiated volunteer training programs to conduct long-term surveys on everyday life and cultural practices in urban settings. These projects aim to lay the groundwork for intergenerational civic consciousness and engagement. In recognition of its contributions, FHCCR received the 13th Tainan Cultural Award in 2024—the first organization ever to be honored with this distinction.

As noted in Cheng A.Y.et al. (2024), the alignment of academic discourses on urban issues, FHCCR's role as a third-sector actor, and its long-term collaboration with the public sector—especially with the Tainan Bureau of Cultural Affairs—constitute a model of effective governance for cultural heritage and historic urban environments in Tainan.[5]

In this study, we analyze the interactions between FHCCR and its collaborative partners, including NGOs, local communities and district offices, local business groups and independent studios, religious organizations, and schools in cooperation with the Bureau of Education. Within this advocacy structure, FHCCR serves as a

crucial interface between abstract advocacy concepts and practical grassroots mobilization.

The collaborative framework of iF300 is built upon a concentric-circle model in which different types of organizations—NGOs, local associations, independent studios, religious institutions, and schools—engage with one another and with broader civil society. This structure allows each actor to operate within its respective comfort zone while maintaining meaningful links to others. Such a model is particularly effective in counteracting the atomization and individualization characteristic of modern digital and social media environments. Moreover, the alliances among otherwise autonomous organizations create inter-organizational linkages that form the backbone of a resilient civic ecosystem. FHCCR's recent inclusion of two representatives from partner organizations into its board of directors illustrates how this alliance-building is embedded in the organization's structure.

The following sections highlight the collaborative dynamics between FHCCR and other NGOs in the iF300 initiative, and the types of public services NGOs can deliver through such advocacy-driven efforts.

**Tainan Sprout**

Established in 2016, Tainan Sprout is another significant NGO partner in the iF300 project. As a relatively young advocacy group, it has been driven largely by the personal initiative of its founding chairperson. Its activities have primarily focused on implementing government-commissioned projects such as workshops and public hearings, while also pursuing its own agenda in issue-based advocacy.

In contrast to FHCCR, which self-finances its participation in iF300 without reliance on external contracts or government funding, Tainan Sprout continues to operate within a project-based framework. On one hand, it functions as a government contractor for the Bureau of Cultural Affairs; on the other hand, it participates in iF300 as an NGO partner. As a result, its involvement in iF300 is often closely linked to the scope of its commissioned projects rather than broader independent civic action. Due to limited personnel and organizational capacity, Tainan Sprout has remained cautious in balancing advocacy with contractual obligations. Nonetheless, it remains one of FHCCR's most committed and responsive collaborators, having established mechanisms for regular dialogue and joint planning.

Fig. 3: Gradually building relationships of mutual trust in both formal and informal settings.

**Tainan Community University**

Founded in 2001, Tainan Community University has maintained a generally amicable but relatively autonomous relationship with FHCCR, operating within its own institutional subsystem. In recent years, the university has undergone a generational shift, with younger members participating more actively in iF300 initiatives.

The collaboration between FHCCR and Tainan Community University exemplifies the application of the community–space–event approach. With its focus on the built environment, iF300 emphasizes the use of historical urban spaces as settings for community-based engagement. Tainan Community University contributes through arts-based learning programs—such as oil painting, photography, watercolor, and urban sketching—where students and community members explore the city's spatial history through creative expression. These walks and workshops not only deepen historical awareness but also result in artistic works that are shared with the public, thereby fostering new forms of civic storytelling.

Moreover, younger members of Tainan Community University have gone on to establish independent studios that participate in iF300 through innovative formats such as real-life puzzle games, tabletop board games, and Vtuber content. This generational engagement—particularly among participants aged 20 to 40—is vital to the sustainability of the initiative and is also reflected within FHCCR itself.

### 3.1.2. Local Communities and District Offices

Community development in Taiwan has been actively promoted for over three decades, with institutions like Tainan Community University emerging from this broader movement. Community development in this context transcends traditional social structures, forming networks that typically include village heads, neighborhood leaders, and community development associations. These actors occupy a unique position, maintaining direct relationships with local residents while interfacing with public institutions.

Community development workers often collaborate with universities under initiatives such as the Healthy Cities framework and University Social Responsibility (USR) programs. They also engage with various government departments, including fire stations, civil affairs offices, and police precincts. Despite this broad network of partnerships, however, the dimension of "historical and cultural transformation" occupies only a minor portion of their activities. For most communities, the third sector's most tangible contribution to cultural engagement is the provision of local historical knowledge—often delivered through walking tours and similar interpretive formats that are accessible to the general public.

In Tainan, district offices have recently begun establishing cultural affairs units. Although typically understaffed, these units have increasingly taken part in community-building efforts, often in coordination with the Tainan Bureau of Cultural Affairs. District offices also serve a representative role, compiling and presenting the outcomes of various community development projects within their respective jurisdictions.

Within the iF300 framework, the project office has maintained consistent interaction with neighborhood offices and community development associations through district-level intermediaries. These channels have helped facilitate grassroots participation and localized program implementation. Notably, the involvement of individuals in their twenties to forties has become increasingly visible in this sphere of work, reflecting a generational shift and signaling long-term potential for sustained civic engagement at the neighborhood level.

### 3.1.3. Local Businesses Groups and Individual Studios

Local business groups constitute another critical category of civil actors that maintain direct engagement with the general public. The organizational capacity and cohesion of such groups vary widely; while some operate with a high degree of coordination and strategic vision, others remain loosely structured and informal. For many, history and culture serve as marketing resources—used to attract customers and elevate brand identity within the historic city context. However, beyond commercial motives, many business groups, individual shops, and local entrepreneurs demonstrate a genuine commitment to translating historical and cultural knowledge into accessible formats.

When organizing public-facing activities—such as stamp rally campaigns, real-life puzzle games, or

neighborhood business networks—these groups often consult third-sector organizations or academic institutions to ensure content accuracy and cultural relevance. These collaborative efforts reflect an emerging culture of civic-commercial hybridity, in which local businesses function not only as economic units but also as cultural intermediaries.

Within this landscape, one finds both long-standing family-run businesses and newly established ventures. The former includes century-old enterprises, such as traditional pastry shops or Chinese medicine stores, often led by second- or third-generation owners adapting to contemporary demands. The latter consists of newer enterprises such as independent bookstores, lifestyle shops, and creative studios—typically founded and operated by members of younger generations.

It is worth noting that many of these newer businesses operate independently from formal commercial associations and tend to maintain a high degree of autonomy. To better understand their contributions, it is helpful to view them through the lens of the "Delighting Old House Movement." As Cheng et al. (2024) have noted, this movement—initiated by FHCCR in 2008—has inspired a growing number of young entrepreneurs and urban returnees to repurpose old buildings, blending lifestyle, livelihood, and spatial creativity. The result is a unique urban ecology defined by small-scale, historically embedded, and culturally expressive business operations.

These independent studios and shops often operate on the periphery of formal organizational networks, including FHCCR, yet maintain a positive orientation toward city-focused civic initiatives such as iF300. While they may not serve as core institutional actors, they are frequently open to collaboration and willing to participate in meaningful and context-appropriate ways.

In addition to small- and medium-scale businesses, larger private-sector enterprises have also engaged with the iF300 initiative, albeit to a lesser extent. In such cases, partnerships are typically structured around the third sector's provision of historical research and interpretive content. This knowledge is then integrated into product development, branding, or public programming, illustrating another dimension of how civil society actors mediate cultural resources within the broader urban economy.

### 3.1.4. Religious Organizations

Religious organizations in Tainan have histories that are nearly as long as the city itself. Whether rooted in traditional Han Chinese belief systems or in Western religious traditions, temples and churches have developed longstanding networks of community engagement. Temples, in particular, have maintained multi-generational connections to the city's social, political, and economic systems, serving not only as spiritual centers but also as civic institutions with deep cultural resonance.

Compared to most civil society organizations, religious institutions typically command significantly greater cultural and financial resources. Perhaps owing to this strength, they tend to maintain cordial, yet somewhat autonomous, relationships with the third sector. While these relationships are generally positive, they have not yet matured into formal partnerships or sustained collaborative structures.

This dynamic may be attributed to fundamental differences in organizational logic and operational modes between religious institutions and third-sector organizations. Religious groups often operate within highly stable institutional patterns, with rhythms and priorities rooted in ritual calendars, spiritual mandates, and long-term stewardship. As such, while their capacity for mobilization—especially during large-scale citywide events—is considerable, their engagement in advocacy-based initiatives tends to evolve more slowly and incrementally.

In the context of iF300, no predetermined alliance or structural partnership is assumed. Rather, cooperation is envisioned as an open-ended process, contingent on mutual understanding, respectful dialogue, and meaningful interaction over time. The initiative acknowledges the institutional autonomy of religious organizations and approaches them not as instruments for mobilization, but as cultural actors whose involvement, if realized, should emerge organically from shared values and collaborative intent.



Fig. 4: A stamp-collecting activity organized by Fu Chenghuang, the deity traditionally responsible for overseeing security and order within the city and its walls.

Fig. 5 A workshop organized by the church's artifact conservation team.

### 3.1.5. Schools and the Bureau of Education

Schools represent one of the most crucial target groups within the iF300 initiative, closely aligned with the project's emphasis on intergenerational continuity and the cultivation of future civic consciousness. Engagement with the educational sector primarily revolves around the development of curricular programs—

including pedagogical strategies, teaching materials, and supplementary resources—all of which must conform to the national educational policy framework in Taiwan.

The creation of these programs requires not only the careful transformation of historical and cultural content into educationally viable formats, but also the tailoring of this content to different educational levels. Teachers often organize into informal working groups to develop lesson plans, but sustained, personal relationships with key individual teachers have proven especially essential for successful collaboration. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis in lesson planning on incorporating students' ideas and feedback.
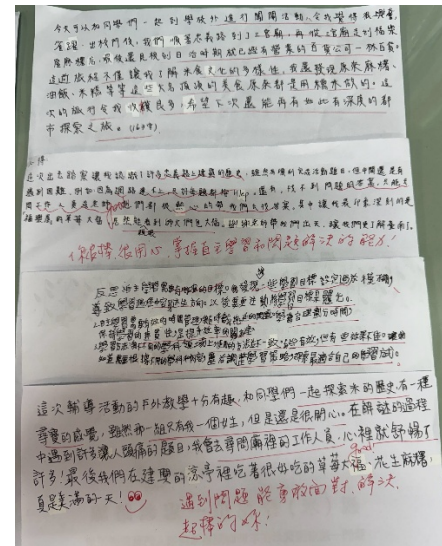


Fig. 6: Junior high school students engaging in immersive puzzle-solving activities and providing feedback

This teacher-led model also reflects a structural fragility inherent in school-based partnerships. Tensions can arise between school administrators—principals and department heads—and teaching staff, leading to instability in collaborative arrangements. In some cases, school leadership initiates partnerships between teachers and third-sector organizations via formal channels such as workshops or government programs. However, when imposed from above, such initiatives can be perceived by teachers as additional burdens, thereby diminishing motivation and engagement. Conversely, collaborations that develop organically with individual teachers can be undermined or halted if they lack institutional support from school administrators. Teachers often find themselves caught between personal enthusiasm for civic or cultural engagement and the institutional constraints of aligning with broader school policies.

Around two decades ago, with support from both the Tainan Bureau of Cultural Affairs and the Bureau of Education, schools located near the historic city wall area formed an informal alliance. This network included universities, high schools, and elementary schools, and aimed to foster heritage-based learning and

community engagement. Although this alliance eventually dissolved due to the cessation of public funding, many teachers have continued to pursue urban history and cultural education through personal initiative and long-standing commitment.

Within the iF300 framework, educational engagement is not conceived as a short-term intervention but as part of a broader, long-term vision. This vision includes the gradual establishment of an integrated cultural heritage education system encompassing early childhood, primary, secondary, university, and adult/community education. In this context, higher-level authorities such as the Bureau of Education play an important, though often passive, role. It is generally difficult to expect proactive engagement from the Bureau, given its institutional dependence on national Ministry of Education directives and its alignment with broader municipal policy orientations.

In the case of iF300, the Tainan City Government's ambiguous stance toward the initiative has led the Bureau of Education to adopt a cautious and noncommittal position. This bureaucratic conservatism has limited the extent of formal collaboration. Nonetheless, long-term engagement at the level of individual educators continues to provide meaningful entry points for heritage-based civic education and offers promising avenues for sustained future development.

### 3.1.6. The Municipal Government and The Cultural Affairs Bureau

It is essential to contextualize the roles of the Tainan City Government and its Cultural Affairs Bureau within the ecosystem of the iF300 initiative. As noted earlier, many civil society organizations—particularly NGOs and community groups—rely heavily on government subsidies or commissioned projects to sustain their operations. This dependency has led to long-standing cooperative relationships between the Cultural Affairs Bureau and various third-sector entities.

However, in 2025, when both the City Government and the Cultural Affairs Bureau employed similar commissioned project frameworks to implement activities commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Tainan City Wall, they encountered growing scrutiny from the City Council. This skepticism was partially rooted in the 2024 "Tainan 400" celebrations, which were led by the City Government and largely oriented toward tourism and public spectacle. As Cheng et al. (2024) note, many civic actors criticized these events for being visually impressive yet substantively ephemeral—likened to fireworks that left little of enduring value for the city.

As a result, although the Cultural Affairs Bureau has continued to support iF300 through selected commissioned projects and maintains a generally favorable stance toward the initiative, the City Government as a whole has exhibited a more cautious and reserved approach in its dealings with the iF300 committee.

This hesitation underscores the tension between state-driven commemorative narratives and grassroots civic advocacy.

For FHCCR and the iF300 committee, financial and operational independence from government funding and project commissions has proven to be a strategic advantage. It has enabled the initiative to operate autonomously and to articulate advocacy goals without the need to conform to existing policy frameworks or political agendas. The relationship between iF300 and public authorities has thus undergone a significant evolution: from an initial emphasis on organizational autonomy, to a more proactive phase in which the third sector has expressed openness to collaboration and sought to address coordination gaps across government departments.

This shift reflects the maturation of the third sector as a substantial and constructive force within Tainan's civil society. It also illustrates the dual imperative of maintaining independent advocacy while building productive relationships with public-sector institutions.

Indeed, in Taiwan—and particularly in Tainan—the public sector retains considerable resources and institutional legitimacy. This reality underscores the importance of initiatives like iF300, which strive to chart an alternative civic trajectory while reducing dependency on governmental structures. Such independence is not merely ideological, but functional: it safeguards the capacity of third-sector actors to propose bold, future-oriented civic interventions that may diverge from official priorities yet resonate meaningfully with community values and long-term urban development goals.

## 3.2. Public Services and Cultural Resources Provided by The Third Sector

Revisiting the three-sector model of civil society, this section expands upon the operational definition of cultural adaptation and inclusion as proposed in this study—specifically, the role of the third sector in mobilizing socio-cultural resources, fostering inter-sectoral connections, and utilizing advocacy and commemorative events—such as the landmark year 2025—as platforms for collective engagement and long-term community development.

Drawing from the interactions primarily led by FHCCR with NGOs, community groups, schools, local businesses, religious institutions, and public agencies, this research identifies four categories of public services provided by the third sector that actively contribute to sustainable cultural adaptation and inclusion:

### Institutional Credibility of NGOs

The long-term trust and neutrality maintained by third-sector organizations, such as FHCCR, provide a

foundational layer of credibility. This enables them to act as reliable intermediaries between citizens, experts, and governmental entities, allowing for consistent engagement across diverse social groups.

**Cultural Heritage Expertise**

NGOs contribute substantial professional knowledge and field-based experience in heritage conservation and cultural regeneration. FHCCR, in particular, has developed advanced capacities in heritage research, spatial analysis, and program design, which serve not only technical purposes but also civic education and engagement.

**Knowledge Verification and Transformation**

One of the key services provided by the third sector is the ability to mediate between expert knowledge and community understanding. This includes verifying historical and cultural content and translating it into accessible, participatory formats—such as walking tours, games, exhibitions, and curricular materials—thus bridging academic knowledge with public application.

**Linking Advocacy and Practice**

Third-sector organizations often function as the connective tissue between conceptual advocacy and concrete implementation. Through long-term projects and networks, they translate abstract civic ideals into actionable initiatives, ensuring that the energy generated by commemorative events like iF300 is not ephemeral, but embedded in sustained place-making and policy discourse.

Through these functions, the third sector not only supplements public-sector efforts but also reshapes how heritage and civil participation are conceived, practiced, and sustained. Their public service role lies not in replacing government or market functions, but in facilitating the emergence of new civic imaginaries rooted in historical consciousness, community agency, and spatial justice.

### 3.2.1. Institutional Credibility as Civic Capital

Credibility represents a subtle yet powerful form of socio-cultural capital—often unspoken, but deeply consequential in shaping trust-based relationships. As the leading organization behind the iF300 initiative, FHCCR contributes not only its institutional resources and professional expertise, but also the social capital it has cultivated over the years through sustained public engagement, most notably through efforts like the Delighting Old House Movement. This accumulated credibility plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining participation from a wide array of civic actors.

While some groups demonstrate closer alignment with FHCCR's values and collaborate through well-established partnerships, the broader willingness of diverse stakeholders to engage with iF300 is rooted in the public legitimacy of FHCCR as a third-sector organization. The public-oriented nature of NGOs and NPOs—defined by principles of transparency, civic-mindedness, and institutional trust—constitutes the foundation upon which collaborative dynamics are built.

This credibility is particularly salient in interactions with religious organizations. While these groups possess their own historically entrenched networks and relatively autonomous institutional logics, their engagement with iF300 is often predicated less on shared advocacy objectives and more on their recognition of FHCCR's integrity and reliability. In this way, credibility functions as a bridge: not merely aligning interests, but enabling participation across sectors with differing operational cultures and civic priorities.

### 3.2.2. Cultural Heritage Expertise

One of FHCCR's core competencies lies in its professional expertise in cultural heritage. While much of Taiwan's formal authority over heritage conservation remains concentrated within public institutions, FHCCR has established itself as a leading civil society actor in this domain. Its technical knowledge, accumulated over decades of fieldwork, academic engagement, and project implementation, provides a strong foundation for credibility across sectors.

Although this expertise is less frequently mobilized in direct interactions with private-sector actors or grassroots community groups—where engagement tends to prioritize accessibility and relational trust—it plays a crucial role in shaping institutional alliances. In particular, FHCCR's longstanding collaboration with the Tainan Cultural Affairs Bureau has created a foundation of mutual respect and reliability. This relationship has been instrumental in maintaining the Bureau's generally supportive stance toward the iF300 initiative, even amidst broader political ambiguities.

For many civic and institutional partners, trust in FHCCR's leadership is anchored not only in its civic mission, but also in its demonstrated capacity to navigate the technical and interpretive complexities of cultural heritage work. This blend of professional legitimacy and third-sector positioning allows FHCCR to serve as a credible intermediary between bureaucratic heritage authorities and more informal networks of cultural actors.

### 3.2.3. Knowledge Transformation and Educational Outreach

The generation, transformation, and dissemination of reliable cultural heritage knowledge represents one of the most critical resources contributed by the third sector within the iF300 initiative. Whether the task involves local business groups designing puzzle-based games, kindergartens developing thematic lesson plans,

or community members constructing story maps, many stakeholders depend on NGOs such as FHCCR to verify content and ensure historical and cultural accuracy.

FHCCR's research output—particularly its emphasis on everyday life and the built urban environment—forms the basis for translating complex heritage knowledge into accessible and context-sensitive formats. This work is especially impactful in educational settings, where students are introduced to historical material through locally grounded narratives and spatial experiences.

Effective knowledge transformation requires close collaboration with educators, who contribute insight into student learning needs and curricular objectives. iF300 has already partnered with schools at every level—from kindergarten to university—to co-develop educational materials and lesson plans. Historically, such lesson plans were rarely archived or shared beyond individual classrooms. In response, iF300 aims to create an open-access digital platform to document, preserve, and distribute these materials, thereby laying the groundwork for a cross-institutional heritage education framework.

Traditionally, heritage education in Taiwan has been housed within disciplinary silos—primarily language arts, history, geography, and civics. In contrast, iF300 promotes an interdisciplinary and site-based approach, using urban spaces as living classrooms. This model not only bridges subject areas but also connects formal education with place-based civic learning, reinforcing the integration of heritage, pedagogy, and public life.

### 3.2.4. Advocacy to Action: Structuring Civic Platforms

Establishing meaningful linkages between advocacy and its practical implementation lies at the heart of effective collaboration within the third sector. For NGOs and NPOs, the ability to translate abstract ideals into sustained action is both a strategic challenge and a civic responsibility. In local cities like Tainan, however, social advocacy continues to face structural limitations—most notably, the absence of robust platforms for information exchange, resource-sharing, and cross-sector dialogue.

This gap was prominently highlighted during the 2024 Tainan 400 and Then symposium, where participants repeatedly emphasized the urgent need for a shared "platform" to support civic engagement. In response, the iF300 initiative has sought to operationalize this vision. Rather than merely advocating for civic participation, iF300 functions as an active platform that facilitates coordination among NGOs, NPOs, and other stakeholders.

The platform serves multiple purposes: it enables transparent communication across institutional boundaries, supports the alignment of complementary resources, and fosters long-term collaboration through both formal and informal channels. By doing so, iF300 redefines advocacy not as a one-time act or campaign, but as a

continual process grounded in civic infrastructure and collective capacity-building.

### 3.3. Navigating Institutional and Personal Interfaces

While the previous section outlined four key types of socio-cultural resources—credibility, expertise, knowledge transformation, and advocacy—it is important to recognize that, in practice, the boundaries between sectors and institutions are often fluid. Collaborative efforts within the iF300 initiative frequently rely not on rigid organizational structures, but on informal interpersonal relationships and trust built over time.

It is not uncommon, for example, to see public officials participating in iF300 activities as private citizens, or private-sector actors with close ties to NGOs executing government-commissioned projects. These overlapping roles underscore the porous nature of sectoral divisions and highlight the importance of individual agency in shaping collaborative outcomes.

Over time, such interactions tend to be sustained or fractured based on personal dynamics. While this fluidity may pose minimal challenges within single organizations, it becomes far more complex when civic initiatives scale up to address broader, city-wide issues—such as commemorative events or public advocacy campaigns. In these contexts, the key challenge lies in negotiating among diverse perspectives, maintaining inclusive dialogue, and forging consensus across organizational lines.

Navigating between institutions and individuals, therefore, is not merely a logistical task but a civic practice in its own right. It involves balancing formal affiliations with informal networks, aligning strategic goals with personal motivations, and building coalitions that can accommodate both structural capacity and human relationships. Within iF300, this negotiation has become a central aspect of its approach to civic activation—affirming that lasting collaboration often begins not with institutions, but with people.

### 4.  FROM CELEBRATION TO INFRASTRUCTURE: SHORT-TERM EVENTS AND LONG-TERM COLLABORATION

As previously discussed, the year 2025 marks a significant milestone that has enabled FHCCR and the TNiF300 CCCCC committee to broaden their network of collaborators and reach a more diverse public. Through this process, two distinct yet interconnected types of initiatives have emerged: public-facing events tied directly to the 300th anniversary of the Tainan City Wall, and longer-term initiatives grounded in ongoing interaction among FHCCR, partner organizations, and community stakeholders.

While the former are more ceremonial and temporally bounded, the latter emphasize sustained relationships

and enduring engagement. Regardless of duration, all such activities are structured through the dynamic interplay of space, community, and event—the core triad of the iF300 framework.

Urban spaces—such as those built along or over the historic city wall—embody the evolving layers of the city's built environment. What are now perceived as parks, alleyways, city roads, or school campuses often conceal earlier functions and meanings. These spaces interface with communities through their everyday use, but also serve as sites of historical memory and cultural expression.

Take, for example, Tainan Park. Many residents gather there to paint beside the pond, often unaware that this water feature once lay adjacent to the city wall. Its current contours still bear traces of its original form. Today, the park has also become a site for cultural events organized by migrant worker communities, adding new layers of meaning to an already complex space.

To activate such latent histories and spatial memories, the iF300 committee has collaborated with local art studios to organize walking tours and plein-air sketching events. These activities weave together physical space, historical narrative, and personal experience. They also provide opportunities to engage marginalized communities—such as migrants—whose presence is increasingly visible but whose historical agency often remains unacknowledged. In this way, the iF300 initiative not only commemorates the past but also invites a re-reading of the urban present through inclusive, creative, and participatory forms of civic engagement.

## 4.1. Navigating Institutional and Personal Interfaces

The 300th anniversary of Tainan's city wall presents an ideal opportunity to increase public awareness of the urban environment and cultural history, not only among heritage organizations and institutions but also across broader segments of the population. Recognizing this potential, the iF300 committee designed a series of commemorative activities that sought to break out of the usual echo chambers and engage diverse audiences through both traditional and innovative formats.

Conventional events included press conferences and New Year's Eve gatherings, which offered visibility and ceremonial significance. At the same time, the committee experimented with more targeted outreach strategies. For example, they created LINE messaging groups specifically for participants over the age of 40, while also launching crowdfunding campaigns to attract younger demographics in their 20s and 30s. These differentiated approaches reflected a nuanced understanding of generational communication preferences and civic engagement styles.

Among the many initiatives undertaken, the proposal to establish an official city commemoration day proved to be the least controversial and garnered the widest public support. To mark the occasion, the iF300

committee organized a public event titled "Encircling City, Diversifying Unity". This event invited residents to participate in a flash mob-style gathering along the historic city wall, culminating in a large group photograph. The format was intentionally simple and inclusive, lowering the barrier to participation while emphasizing collective presence and symbolic re-connection with the city's historical geography.

### 4.1.1. Walk and Welcome: New Year's Eve and the March Press Conference

Typically, NGO-organized events in Tainan attract around 30 participants—a turnout generally considered successful given the limited resources and outreach capacity of most civic organizations. However, such initiatives often remain confined to familiar networks, making it challenging to engage wider publics. One of the core aims of iF300 was to overcome these limitations and expand its reach beyond established circles.

On December 31, 2024, the iF300 committee hosted a special "Walk and Talk" event to welcome the arrival of 2025. The program featured four thematic walking routes, with participants beginning their journey outside the original city walls, passing through historical gates, and entering the inner city. In a historically rich and tourism-oriented city like Tainan, walk-and-talk formats offer an accessible and experiential way to explore urban memory and spatial continuity.



Fig. 7: A walk and talk on New Year's Eve.

To design an immersive experience, the committee collaborated with local historians, neighborhood businesses, soundscape artists, documentary filmmakers, and audiovisual professionals. The event engaged

participants with the city's layered narratives—combining history, space, memory, and everyday life. Around 200 people attended, including many first-time participants and families with young children. The scale and demographic diversity of this event marked a significant milestone in iF300's outreach and reflected its core civic values.

Unlike professionally managed events organized by government-contracted PR firms, NGOs typically lack the expertise and capacity to stage large public events. The success of this initiative therefore depended heavily on collaboration with partner organizations and represented an important learning experience for all involved.

Building on this momentum, a press conference was held on March 7, 2025, to formally launch the iF300 event series. Given Tainan's regional position and the limited presence of national media outlets, the event was strategically framed as the unveiling of the entire iF300 initiative, with a special preview of the Encircling City, Diversifying Unity event planned for May 9. Although local journalists and independent media attended the press conference, the preview event itself had greater resonance with the public.

Thanks to earlier outreach efforts, the press conference and preview attracted a wide array of participants—including new immigrant communities, independent business owners, art societies, and academic scholars. There was broad consensus around the idea of establishing an official city commemoration day.

In addition, iF300 facilitated a creative collaboration between a university fine arts workshop and a kindergarten field trip to Nanfang City Wall Park. The event merged environmental education, art practice, and historical reflection, exemplifying the iF300 model of community–space–event integration. Significantly, the involvement of children helped engage parents, expanding the scope of civic participation through intergenerational interaction.

### 4.1.2. May 9: Commemoration Day and "Encircling City, Diversifying Unity"

Although the March 7 press conference was not intended as a forum for public debate, many participating groups expressed strong support for the idea of designating an official city commemoration day. While the concept itself is not entirely new, iF300 has begun preparing to formalize the proposal through institutional channels, including the Tainan City Council. Nevertheless, from the perspective of iF300, genuine civic participation—not just symbolic designation—is the cornerstone of any meaningful commemoration.

This commitment underscores the central role of grassroots advocacy within the iF300 framework. In Taiwan, private sector support for third-sector organizations remains limited, and many community-based or school-affiliated cultural projects are heavily dependent on public funding. While government support can

provide essential resources, it often comes with expectations for policy alignment or performance metrics that may not fully reflect the values, needs, or aspirations of civil society. An over-reliance on such funding can compromise the autonomy of third-sector actors.



Fig. 8: New residents also participated in the city-wall-circling event preceding the press conference.

iF300 responds to this dilemma by actively cultivating organizational agency and diverse strategies for civic engagement. Many of its initiatives are guided by the principle that third-sector identity must be grounded in independence, inclusivity, and adaptability—not institutional subordination.

With this in mind, iF300 organized the event "Encircling City, Diversifying Unity" on May 9, 2025. Designed to maximize accessibility and participation, the event invited citizens to gather at 5:25 p.m. along the historical trajectory of the former city wall for a flash mob-style group photo. This seemingly simple action was the result of months of outreach, mobilization, and alliance-building.

The event was not only commemorative but also performative—it aimed to embody iF300's core values in public space and everyday life. These include civil society participation, environmental consciousness, historical awareness, community cohesion, and celebratory expression. At the time of this writing, the event is approximately one month away. Its outcome, reception, and impact will be further explored during the IASTE 2025 conference presentation.

### 4.1.3. Media Strategy and Crowdfunding: Expanding the Public Interface

Despite a steady increase in participation, expanding iF300's visibility through mass media has remained a persistent challenge. In Taiwan's highly decentralized and diversified media landscape, the iF300 committee

employed a combination of traditional and contemporary channels to extend its outreach. Alongside conventional platforms such as newspapers, radio, and television, the initiative also collaborated with YouTubers and independent media outlets to tap into more fragmented yet influential digital audiences. Notably, LINE—a widely used messaging app in Taiwan—was strategically adopted for the first time by many third-sector participants, signaling a shift in communication norms among civic organizations.

Through event registration data and post-event feedback, iF300 identified three primary demographic groups of participants:

A.    Individuals over the age of 40

B.    Adults between the ages of 20 and 40

C.    Families with young children

Among the 40+ demographic, retirees around the age of 60 emerged as a particularly responsive subgroup. LINE messaging groups were primarily designed to engage this cohort, although their long-term effectiveness is still being assessed.

Conversely, crowdfunding efforts were targeted at the 20–40 age group. For this demographic, crowdfunding is often perceived not merely as charitable giving but as a form of curated consumer behavior—where supporters contribute by purchasing cause-related goods or services. For FHCCR, which had traditionally avoided commercial activities due to its nonprofit identity and mission, this was a significant and strategic experiment. The crowdfunding campaign served not only as a fundraising tool but also as a platform for broadening the initiative's reach beyond Tainan and fostering national awareness and support for the iF300 vision.



Fig. 9: Crowdfunding platform page

This multichannel, multi-demographic strategy reflects iF300's broader commitment to civic innovation—testing new outreach techniques while maintaining its core values of community empowerment, historical engagement, and inclusive cultural participation.

## 4.2. Toward Institutional Continuity: Building Collaborative Mechanisms

For FHCCR—and for most organizations involved—iF300 is not conceived as a one-year initiative limited to 2025. Rather, it represents the beginning of a long-term civic effort aimed at transforming how history, space, and society intersect in Tainan. Core activities such as community engagement, educational program development, platform-building for civil society, data collection, and cross-sector collaboration require continuity, adaptability, and strategic vision. The year 2025 is merely a launch point.

To sustain and expand this momentum, iF300 is currently experimenting with two primary mechanisms for long-term engagement: "Walk and Talk" and the forum. These formats serve complementary purposes.

Walk and Talk events focus on engaging the general public through site-based participation, encouraging civic awareness by linking everyday experiences to spatial histories and cultural narratives.

The forum format emphasizes deeper dialogue among participating organizations. It provides a space for reflection, exchange, and coordination—helping to align shared goals, consolidate knowledge, and generate future strategies.

Together, these mechanisms form the foundation of an evolving civic infrastructure—one that aims to carry the spirit of iF300 well beyond its commemorative origins and into the broader project of building a resilient, participatory urban culture.

### 4.2.1. Walks and Workshops: Grounded Civic Learning

FHCCR is an NGO with a longstanding affinity for walking—both as a method of inquiry and a mode of civic engagement. The walk and talk model offers an accessible and flexible format for engaging diverse communities. By physically moving through the urban environment, participants are able to absorb, interpret, and exchange knowledge through multiple sensory and communicative channels. This approach is well-established in the fields of cultural tourism and "deep travel," but within the iF300 framework, it takes on a more participatory and locally grounded character.

Complementing these walks are workshops, which often involve hands-on activities and issue-based discussions. This dual structure—experiential walking paired with reflective dialogue—allows for a deeper engagement with urban space, history, and collective memory.

FHCCR's past experience with the Delighting Old House Movement illustrates the value of such pedagogical formats. Following the success of that initiative, the organization established the Old House School, an ongoing program that offers both introductory and advanced classes in heritage conservation and urban regeneration.

Third-sector organizations are uniquely positioned to offer educational programs that are independent, interdisciplinary, and responsive to community needs. However, for such programs to remain effective, their formats must continue to evolve. This involves not only updating content and theoretical frameworks but also incorporating new technologies, tools, and participatory techniques to enhance accessibility and relevance across generations.



Fig. 10: A workshop integrating the Department of Fine Arts and kindergarten students.

### 4.2.2. Forums and Advocacy: Institutionalizing Dialogue

As previously noted, one of iF300's long-term goals is to expand its reach beyond Tainan and connect with broader civic and institutional resources. In 2025, the initiative plans to organize a grassroots forum, inviting participants from other Taiwanese cities and towns with historic city walls to engage in dialogue around urban historical environments, cultural heritage conservation and reuse, and the development of inclusive public policies. While the forum is still in the planning phase, the vision is to establish it as a biennial platform for sustained intercity dialogue and shared learning.

Forums and other structured forms of discussion are essential mechanisms for civic engagement. Many innovative or valuable ideas remain isolated as personal insights simply because they are not brought into collective deliberation or transformed into shared action. While organizing such events entails logistical and financial challenges, they are indispensable to iF300's mission of fostering participatory, reflective, and collaborative civic culture.

To institutionalize this process, iF300 intends to publish a civil society advocacy statement at the end of 2025. This document will synthesize the key discussions, insights, and policy recommendations emerging from the year's forum and related events.

Furthermore, May 9, the annual Commemoration Day, will serve as a recurring mechanism for dialogue between civil society and the public sector. Each year on this date, the previous year's advocacy statement and the corresponding response (or inaction) from government authorities will be jointly reviewed. This cyclical structure provides a means for sustained accountability, intersectoral communication, and long-term visioning—ensuring that civic voices do not dissipate after singular events but instead contribute to an ongoing process of democratic engagement and urban cultural resilience.

### 4.3. The Community–Space–Event Model: Spatializing Civic Belonging

Facing a concept of the city shaped by history and narrative frameworks—such as that of the walled city and the historical environment—diverse communities can gain a sense of belonging by **participating in, organizing, or executing activities**. Their involvement acknowledges their place within a city with walls. Moreover, the diversity of participating communities leads to a more tangible and expansive definition of **"Tainan identity"** through action.

In the long run, activities need not be limited to areas around the city walls. Through the **community-space-event** approach—particularly by developing programs rooted in **cultural heritage and historical spaces**—we can foster connections between the **past and present**.

In this approach, the **individual's bodily engagement** is critically important. Personal **memories and emotions**, and how they become collectively shared, often determine the success or failure of each implementation. As previously mentioned, personal-level interactions and inter-community or cross-sector collaboration are essentially two sides of the same coin.

Using appropriate methods to allow as many people as possible to **truly share experiences, discuss ideas, and form consensus**—that is the primary goal of the community-space-event approach.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: CULTURAL RESILIENCE THROUGH CIVIC PRACTICE

In traditional Taiwanese settlement studies, scholarly attention has long focused on how people survive and form communities under historical and geographic constraints. In contemporary urban contexts, these same concerns are reframed through the concept of cultural resilience, which emphasizes how individuals and groups navigate and endure adversity. Building on this framework, this study introduces the concept of cultural adaptation and inclusion—a lens through which we can understand how identity, lifestyle, and cultural production intersect in evolving urban spaces.

A key example is the Delighting Old House Movement in Tainan City, which enabled old-house operators— including shop owners from Hong Kong who relocated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cheng A.Y. & Wu P.S., 2022)—to transform cultural identity into both livelihood and local engagement. This illustrates how cultural resilience is not merely reactive but generative, producing new forms of community, commerce, and meaning.

Using the three-sector model of civil society, this study offers an operational definition of cultural adaptation and inclusion: a process through which third-sector actors mobilize socio-cultural resources and build horizontal connections across a wide array of stakeholders. Through the case of iF300, we examine how such efforts generate new forms of bonding and belonging in an increasingly individualized and atomized society. While digital technologies may accelerate social fragmentation, they also present new possibilities for interaction, participation, and community-building.

The study centers on the iF300 initiative and its primary organizing body, FHCCR. Five core themes guide the initiative: the urban environment, culture and heritage, civic celebration, community networks, and intergenerational continuity. These themes are operationalized through a model we refer to as the community–space–event pattern, which engages citizens through events that connect space, history, and imagination of the future.

According to Cheng A.Y. et al. (2024), the origins of iF300 lie in a distinctive academic–NGO–government collaboration in the field of cultural heritage in Tainan City. Building upon this foundation, the initiative has expanded to include a wide range of organizations and publics through the implementation of the community–space–event model. This study has examined FHCCR's interactions with NGOs, local communities and district offices, business groups and independent studios, religious organizations, schools and the Bureau of Education, and the municipal government and Cultural Affairs Bureau.

Specifically, the study identifies four key socio-cultural resources mobilized by FHCCR: credibility, expertise, knowledge transformation, and advocacy. These resources not only strengthen inter-organizational relationships but also shape how civic actors co-produce urban meaning and memory.

The study also documents the iF300 activities of 2025 and outlines future directions. Based on FHCCR's experience, the following conclusions are offered:

Credibility is foundational. Public trust is essential to any advocacy movement. While interpersonal relationships often shape collaboration, organizational credibility must transcend individual ties to serve as the structural basis for legitimacy.

Expertise initiates trust. Professional knowledge is the gateway to building trust and credibility. As civic initiatives grow and intersect with other fields, open, interdisciplinary dialogue becomes increasingly necessary.

A civic information and data platform is urgently needed. FHCCR's experience highlights the lack of a centralized, accessible platform for resource sharing, data integration, and public transparency. Such a platform should draw from civil society, academia, and government, and must resist monopolization by individual interests.

Advocacy must be institutionalized. Good ideas alone are not sufficient. The translation of advocacy into sustained practice requires organizational infrastructure, continuity, and commitment. NGOs are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap between vision and implementation.

The younger generation is vital to cultural resilience. The majority of active participants in iF300 initiatives are between the ages of 20 and 40. Their involvement not only provides formative experiences but also reflects iF300's commitment to education and intergenerational dialogue. Positive engagement across age groups will be one of the most important pillars in sustaining long-term cultural resilience.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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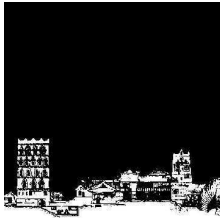
# BRANDING, IDENTITY, AND SPATIAL NARRATIVES

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