

Comparative Research on Culture-Led Regeneration across Cities in China

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Abstract— Post-industrial sites in Chinese cities are being redeveloped as catalysts for the regeneration of urban areas. Successful examples of urban transformation projects provided exemplars of this strategy, tuning into the creative cultures of these cities to provide platforms for creative enterprises to flourish. However, the success of these projects in driving the development of China's creative economy has led to a number of copy-cat redevelopment projects, creating a blueprint for the format of industrial zones and cultural parks in cities. Many urban renewal projects have focused more heavily on commercial and practical aspects of implementation and creative practice, but have however failed to respond to the different contexts of each location within the design and planning, and therefore performed poorly in providing opportunities for developing local enterprise, or addressing social welfare needs.

Recent funded research has been conducted by this abstract proposal team. This international cross-disciplinary team has been seeking different opportunities for developing relevant creative industries whilst retaining cultural and industrial heritages. This paper will explore the research conducted so far and offer initial findings. The research has utilised ethnographic studies and participatory design methods to investigate alternative strategies for sustainable urban renewal of China's post-industrial areas. Additionally, it has undertaken comparative studies of successful examples of European and Chinese urban regeneration cases. The observations and research are generating innovative design solutions in terms of ascertaining essential site components, layouts, visual design and practical facilities for regenerated sites.

Findings point out the development challenges of cities respecting protection of local culture/heritages, history of the industries and transformation of the local economies. China calls for strategies for regenerated post-industrial buildings and sustainable development of cities. The preliminary results and pilot analysis of the current research have demonstrated that local government policy holders, business investors/developers and creative industry practitioners are the three major stakeholders that will impact on city revitalisations. These groups are expected to work together with a synchronous vision in order for redevelopments to be successful. Meanwhile, local geography, history, culture, politics, economy and ethnography have been identified as important factors that impact on project design and development during urban transformations.

Data is being processed from the team's research conducted across the focal Western and Chinese cities. This has provided theoretical guidance and practical support to the development of significant experimental projects. Many were re-examined with a more international perspective and adjustments have been based on the conclusions of the research. Two significant projects undertaken by this project team have been nominated by the central Chinese government as most successful exemplars. They have been listed as outstanding national industry heritage projects; in particular, one of them was nominated by ArchDaily.com as Building of the Year 2019, and so this project outcome has made a substantial contribution to research and innovation.

Keywords— Cultural & industrial heritages, ethnographic research, participatory design, regeneration of post-industrial sites, sustainable.

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