

THE RHETORIC AND REALITY OF CULTURE-LED URBAN REGENERATION – A COMPARISON OF BEIJING AND SHANGHAI, CHINA

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ABSTRACT: It did not take long for Chinese cities to embrace the fashion of culture-led urban regeneration. Forerunner is Beijing 798, wherein a semi-abandoned factory was gradually turns to an artistic production base by spontaneous agglomeration of artists. The Shanghai municipal government showed a more entrepreneurial mind by announcing the Cultural Rehabilitation of Industrial Buildings plan in 2004. The first project initiated by the government is Shanghai Sculpture Space, which is envisaged as a role model for heritage rehabilitation and an incubator of creative industry. Driven by global city making, both two cities see culture as a key to bolster a new economy and to deal with decayed urban sites. Meanwhile, differences are detectable due to the various roles assigned to culture by the two cities respectively. When Beijing has long claimed its orthodoxy of Chinese culture, taking art production as one pillar industry; Shanghai hardly hides its absorptive and sometimes eclectic nature, caring more on global standard of art consumption. This paper attempts to analyze the differences of the two culture-led regeneration projects, the spatial outputs of which stem from different cultural circumstances and, respond to power relationships of a variety of actors in the urban regimes.

KEYWORDS: industrial heritage, culture-led regeneration, authentic conservation, cultural industry

1 INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization reinforced the widespread promotion of culture-led urban regeneration [1-3]. Culture is suggested to be the solution to all, serving not only as “a source of prosperity and cosmopolitanism”, and also “a means of defining a rich, shared identity and thus engenders pride of place” [4]. Mainly, the mission of cultural policy normally falls into hosting international hallmark events and constructing flagship architectures, development of cultural industrial sectors from the perspective of production, and strategic means of city brandings to increase profile and name recognition [3].

Argument in favor of cultural-driven economic growth is a response to the intensification of inter-city competitions, for highly mobile investors, professional talents and élites and visitors by many policy-makers. Advocators suggest the urgent issue is to attract the Creative Class as “capitalist development today has moved to a distinctive phase, in which the driving force of the economy is no more technological or organizational, but human” [5]. To achieve this goal, it is thus imperative to forging an inclusive and rich multi-cultural air that is claimed to be valued by the creative class. The idea has gained prominence among many entrepreneurial mayors who attempt to accelerate economic growth and finally project their cities to higher tier in the global city hierarchy. For many, decision makers resort to local culture, tradition and history to produce a distinctive hybrid identity with a promise to offer a unique living or visiting experience.

Critics mainly approaches two perspectives, the conscious and deliberate manipulation of culture and tradition in the simplistic and stereotyped hard-branding [2], and the social consequence of creative policy [6]. Many scholars doubt the motivation behind the rush to commodification and exploitation of culture and history, after many culture-led urban regeneration projects might merely “begin with poetry and ends with real estate” [7, cited by Evans, 2005, p959]. The promotion of a particular set of values through themed built environment and spectacles reflects social divide and unequal relationship [6]. The aestheticization of archaic buildings in the picturesque style of heritage conservation is often claimed to be a new type of space tailored for a creative group. Meanwhile, neglecting uncreative class is sanitized and social inequity is legitimized.

As Bourdieu points out, “art and culture consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences” [8].

In the wave of cultural-led urban regeneration, regional practices differ [6]. Beauregards and Haila commend that, actors are not “simply puppets dancing to the tune of socioeconomic and political logics but rather relatively autonomous agents” [9]. Cities are governed by regimes, as put by Stone [10], an internal coalition of socioeconomic forces pulls the strings in the urban regime. These influential actors with direct access to institutional resources hold a significant impact on urban policymaking and management, and this often results in the urban landscape’s contingent spatial transformation. The spatial outcomes of development and policy spawn continuing social and material consequences infused with the coalition’s vested interests. The power relationships among different agents within a governing regime vary and are usually dynamic. In this light, the transformation of urban landscapes needs to be explored from the internal structure of socioeconomic actors and their negotiations in the process.

Now, culture-led urban regeneration spreads beyond the original circle of advanced cities in North America and Europe [3, 5]. It did not take long for the two Chinese megacities of Beijing and Shanghai to embrace the fashion. Forerunner is Beijing 798, where former semi-abandoned factory compound started its transformation when lecturers from the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) reused one plant as temporary classrooms. The process never runs smoothly as this zone is planned as high-tech industrial zone according to the comprehensive plan. During the past years, artists petitioned for preserving the factory, claiming that the preservation is significant in conserving historical buildings and sustaining the only and largest ‘artists’ village’. The cultural group in Shanghai is comparatively lucky as the municipal government promptly announced the plan of cultural rehabilitation of industrial buildings in 2004. Within 4 years, around 80 dilapidated industrial sites have been converted to cultural infrastructures. The first project initiated by the government is Shanghai Sculpture Space, which is envisaged as a role model for heritage rehabilitation and an incubator of creative industry.

It is interesting to see both two cities deploy culture as a key to bolster economic growth and to deal with decayed urban sites, during which each selectively learns from the other. Outputs in these two cities look familiar physically. Meanwhile, differences are detectable due to the various natures and meanings of culture recognized and therefore different roles of culture assigned by the two cities respectively. In a very concise sense, the key difference may lie in the different attitudes towards culture and marketization. When Beijing has long claimed its orthodoxy in representing Chinese culture, always attempting to keep its status as a source of cultural products, with a vision to project Chinese culture to the world market; Shanghai hardly hides its absorptive and sometimes eclectic nature, caring more on economic restructuring through inviting influx of investments, firms and international élites with a global standard. By comparing two representative cases in the two cities, this paper attempts to analyze the spatial outputs by putting them back into their cultural circumstances and dynamic relationships of a variety of actors in the urban regimes, which, again, function in respective urban culture whilst also influence the urban culture in return.

2 BEIJING’S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: UNDERGROUND CULTURE AND URBAN SPACE

2.1 The rise of underground culture

In 1271, the most prominent and arguably the most influential emperor Kublai Khan selected Beijing to be the capital of his empire. Since then, this city has retained its status as the political center of China through all the dynasties that followed. As capital, Beijing’s position in the hierarchical administrative system makes it the center of cultural institutions at the top tier [11]. This is also the place where intellectuals who wanted to become officials must come to attend the final stage of the imperial examination system (keju). The old education system was challenged by the Late Qing Reform movement, but to start another era of setting up universities in this capital. The first university in China, the Peking University was also then the highest administrative institution in education [12]. 10 years later, the Imperial Government set up the Tsinghua Imperial College (later changed to Tsinghua University). After 1949, more state-level universities were set up to uphold education in a wide variety of disciplines, such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts, China University of Geosciences, Central University of Finance and Economics, and so on. It is thus natural to see congregation of renowned scholars in Beijing along with the forming of cluster of top universities, cultural authorities and institutions at the highest tier. Although the keju exam was abolished a long time ago,

Beijing has kept its charm as a magnet for talents, intellectuals, and artists of all kinds. There is a huge cultural community whose members struggled to make their dreams come true. These individuals constitute a social group known as *Beipiao* (literally, people floating in Beijing) who come to the city from all places hoping to have their talents discovered and recognized by authorized institutions or individuals, and consequently to have a promising future.

As a capital, it is not surprising then the culture of Beijing has always been stamped with orthodoxy, classicism, high culture, solemnity, aristocratism, authoritativeness, and bureaucracy for the past 800 years [11]. The ethos of Confucianism and Chinese imperial value has penetrated into the urban landscape and everyday lives of the people inhabiting it. The layout of the city is planned in a hierarchical way, where concentric city-walls demarcate the inner zone as the location of the Forbidden City. Overall, the urban landscape explicitly sends out an image of order and obedience through the clear demarcation of the class of the spaces and the hierarchical power attached to them. The focus on ideology pulls culture away from the modernization of a society characterized by industrialization and commodification. Nevertheless, different genres emerged from the overwhelming power and influence of classic high culture. It is difficult to explain why Beijing, under the nose of the Central Government, has become a magnet of various off-mainstream culture and art. Wu [13] suggests that this may be due to multiple reasons such as the congregation of “universities and art schools that attract the rougher edges of Chinese culture”, coupled with the looser political atmosphere because the “ministries overseeing cultural activities are perhaps more preoccupied with running the country” [13]. Tension between art and politics became slack to a certain extent, because since the 1980s, a growing openness to Western contemporary art, especially avant-garde art, has become apparent. A series of cultural exchanges were carried out, from inviting foreign artists to exhibit their works to people actively exploring the Western world to study. The rise of the art market is also another factor that frees artists from their financial dependence on bureaucratic institutions, which keep a tight rein on the nature of arts. Furthermore, an intimate relationship between artists and embassy members established a platform to promote the Chinese contemporary art world [14]. China’s contemporary art scene soon found its popularity amid international arts collectors who sensed the exotic aura from socialist legacies. Contemporary art mushroomed but mainly in the form of underground culture.

2.2 From YuanmingYuan Village to Beijing 798

The “Artists’ Village,” a kind of artist enclave that houses artists, has gradually emerged in remote areas in Beijing since the early 1990s. The nickname indicates the isolated situation of the art community, both tangibly and intangibly. Its story can be traced back to the mid-1980s when a group of university and art school graduates gave up their officially assigned jobs and decided to become freelance artists. They went to Fuyuanmen village beside the ruins of Yuanmingyuan, and started their “bohemian” life relying merely on selling their paintings. Choosing Fuyuanmen Village might be partly linked to the previous artistic functions held around Yuanmingyuan, and this somewhat reflected the need for low-cost living essential for struggling painters. However, to a larger extent, it might have been its remote location that made these painters feel as if they have escaped from the city. This bohemian enclave was not welcomed by the government, who saw these artists as a group of rogues that had no stable jobs, led alternative lives, and could start riots. In 1995, the local government eventually “persuaded” all the artists to leave the village with the aid of the police [15].

In the same year, the Central Academy of Fine Arts was given 200 acres of land in Huajiadi, then a patch of less developed suburban land northeast of Beijing, to relocate the whole campus from its original site in Wangfujin – the famous commercial core of Beijing. Before the new campus opened, an old factory in Huajiadi was used as the temporary base. However, the Department of Sculpture found the temporary base not proper for teaching and learning sculpture, which needed a large space with a high ceiling. The Department Head, Sui Jianguo, then had to search nearby for a studio. Eventually, he found an abandoned workshop in Factory No. 798.

Like many state-owned factories in Chinese cities, Factory No. 798 was also close to bankruptcy at that time, with many nonfunctional workshops. This dilapidated factory, however, had a unique history. In the late 1950s, a big project called “Joint Factory No. 718” was proposed as a joint project with direct involvement and assistance from then East Germany in its design, construction, and production line. In 1964, the giant plant was divided into several factories that ran independently, namely, Factories No. 718, 798, 706, 707, 797, 751, and the Research Institute No.11. Naming the factories by numbers in the socialist China indicated an *ad hoc* military nature of the factory or hidden links to national defense. This unique history did

not stop the decaying of this plant, whose employees dropped from over 10,000 at the peak time to around 1,000. In 2000, except for Factory No. 751, the rest of the factories and research institutes were merged to form the Seven Star Group, with the goal of reorganizing the industrial resources for a better performance. While The Group worked to keep some workshops running by introducing products like the latest technical equipment and military industrial electronic products, it had to lease out idle workshops owing to the great burden that arose from its responsibility to support social welfare input for the huge community of employers.

The workshop found by Sui used to be the Workshop I in Factory No.798. The building had everything a sculpture studio needed: vast cathedral-like space, high ceiling, and abundant and stable daylight from high clerestory windows along with dormers running across the whole workshop. The department thus rented two workshops with an area of 1,000 square meters. After years of working in this plant, Sui was so used to working in the large workshops that he came back again in 2000 after the new campus was opened because the “spaces (in the new building) were not as large as those in Factory No. 798” [16]. This time, he rented a place to open his personal studio. Other artists followed his move. That same year, designer Lin Jing and publisher Hong Huang also moved in. One year later, the number of artists occupying the workshop increased. There were established artists like Professors Yu Fan and Jia Difei from art schools, famous musician Liu Suola, and struggling contemporary artists as well. Followers who joined the bandwagon also included artistic organizations in different forms, ranging from art galleries like Season Gallery, to bookstores like “Timezone 8,” and to complexes like “Time Space,” which offers an exhibition space and a café. In 2003, around 30 artists and organizations set up studios or offices in the area, while 200 more were reported to be on the waiting list [17].

Just like their predecessors in the Yuanmingyuan Village, artists, mostly in the genre of contemporary art or avant-garde art, were frowned upon by the government. The community thus followed the tradition to seek places in the fringes of the city, expecting to establish an enclosed colony of their own. However, the artists in this era developed more mature skill in networking, not only within their own art realm but also far beyond. They were quite active in organizing exhibitions of all kinds. At the same time, they also showed their talent in managing and expanding their social networks. In 2003 alone, five exhibitions were held: the “Trans-border Language” in March, the “Reconstruction [of] 798” in April, “Blue Skies Exposure - Anti-SAS Exhibition” in May, and the “First 798 Biennale” in September together with the “Left Hand Right Hand.” Aside from the efforts targeting the artists and their peers, almost equal endeavors were put on social events targeting foreign politicians, celebrities, and royal members. From 2003 to 2004 alone, banquets, tours, and exchanges were offered to French Musician Jean-Michel Jarre and then French minister of Culture Jean-Jacques Aillagon, European Union Commissioner of Culture and Education Ms. Vivienne Reding, French Minister of Culture Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, and former German Chancellor Gerhard Fritz Kurt Schröder. Factory No. 798 became the focus of media spotlight, and stories about it were featured in many influential newspapers like China Youth Daily and even the so-called party mouthpieces China Daily and China’s Central TV (CCTV). Eventually, news about 798 traveled abroad and appeared on overseas newspapers like the New York Times and South China Post in 2003 [18]. Its frequent appearances in the media was also a sign of the transformation of the artists themselves, from “escaping from the city” to being proactive, while having selective exposure to the public, particularly those with international influence.

The instant creation of a popular art zone worried the property owner of the Seven Star Group who started to take action to drive out these artists or at least get them under control. Beginning June 2003, the Group froze the rental of new spaces and prohibited all renewals, as the compound had been planned to become a high-tech industrial base in 1993. Threatened by the fact that their safe haven would be demolished, artists petitioned repeatedly to preserve the factory, exploiting every element to make a compelling proposal. Half a year later, the artistic community “consigned” tenant sculptor Li Xiangqun, professor at the School of Fine Arts at Tsinghua University and deputy of Beijing Municipal People's Congress, to submit a bill to the annual congress on 14 February 2004 [19]. The bill, which called for “a re-evaluation of the area's potential worth as a cultural centre instead of a copied Zhongguancun electronic zone on the basis of extensive investigations” [20], listed the value of the compound from five perspectives, namely, scientific, historical, cultural, economic, and the potential impact on the forthcoming Olympic Games. The bill was approved one month later. Further, a special committee was set up to carry out the investigation [19]. The following month happened to be the time for the artist community to host the first month-long Beijing Dashanzi International Art Festival. Just three days before the opening ceremony, the Seven Star Group posted a public notice to

announce that the festival would be banned. The artists fought back quickly. They sought help from the Chaoyang District Government and sent out a public letter three days later. In the letter, the artists reminded the Seven Star Group that the forthcoming festival had been “widely known and was paid close attention to by global mainstream media, government, NGOs, artists, and the populace”. In this light, they further questioned whether the Seven Star Group was capable of “tak[ing] the responsibility for [any negative] *international impact* of their sudden measures”[18]. It was a political trick to deploy the term of “international impact,” which is an umbrella term commonly used by China’s bureaucratic system that works almost every time. As such, the festival was held smoothly.

After several rounds of similar confrontations between the two sides, The Group eventually gave up after official voice was released through the report by the Beijing Municipal Tourism Bureau, who suggested a solution called “Cultural Tourism and Consumption Zone.” In September of the same year, the Seven Star Group signed a contract with Ullens Art Foundation, making the largest deal of renting out a 5,000-square meter space to a single tenant. This deal was interpreted as a compromise made by the property owner, who realized that how to treat the compound was already beyond their control. They had to accept the fact of an established art district and more important, the greater power possessed by the determined campaign that made good use of the local and international media, and of the accessibility to higher level of government organizations. Factory No. 798 became more and more popular; thus, people began to refer to it as encompassing all the six factories inside the compound.

2.3 From practicality to heritage conservation with a BoBo style

Although it is easy and fairly natural to connect artists’ actions with appreciation for industrial heritage, the transformation of these spaces may have been motivated by practicality. These decrepit buildings command a small price for such a large space, which is imperative for struggling artists needing flexible space in an expensive city. In his book, Huang Rui was introduced as the first person who paid serious attention to the visual beauty of the physical structures and also as the first person who classified them into the architectural genre of “Bauhaus” [19]. The whole compound was planned and designed by German architects in the late 1950s; Germany was where the Bauhaus architecture originated, and it was the Germans who popularized the Bauhaus style worldwide. The label stuck by Huang seems natural. In line with the key concepts of Bauhaus architecture, the design of the workshops was characterized by radically simplified forms, rational functionality, and the promotion of standardized forms by mass-production [21]; but these key concepts had already been partly developed before the founding of the Bauhaus and were widely adopted afterwards in Modern Architecture [22]. At the same time, it should be noted that the factory was an industrial complex built during the socialist era, which was depicted by the slogan “Production First, Life Second.” It is no wonder then that the manufacturing compound bore a certain spirit of the “forms follow[ing] functions” [23], but it was far from enough to make itself a representative of Bauhaus. The conclusion that Factory 798 is one of the few remaining Bauhaus buildings’ clusters may be a little bit hasty, and the motivation behind the hard branding remains questionable.

Nevertheless, its branding as “Bauhaus Architecture” was immediately cited as truth without cautious challenges¹. This declaration spread out via newspaper articles, personal blogs, and even the mouths of professionals and officials [24]. The measures and interventions conducted by these artists to renovate the old structures were cheered upon, frequently advocated as proof of heritage conservation. Further, the campaign of historic conservation was pushed further by the participation of architects and architectural organizations. Professors from architecture schools such as Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Southern Californian Institute of Architecture proposed various development plans for the area involving the preservation of the buildings, even if it was not especially profitable financially. In 2006, the 3rd Dashanzi Art Festival set aside a session for Architectural Design involving the participation of many architects with global reputation.

However, the majority of the artists were greenhorns when it came to heritage conservation. The design plans were mainly derived from personal appreciation of history, and they aimed to personalize the space for

¹ Architect Chang Yung Ho might be the only one who publically challenged the classification of “Bauhaus” in his interview by Shu Kenwen 24. Shu, K., *"Factory 798" and Urban Landscapes*, in *Sanlian Life Week*. 2004, Joint Publisher (China): Beijing..

concise distinction. Constrained by their economic capability, most artists did more reduction than addition. In other words, their frequent way of renovation was nothing more than garbage clearance and division of interior space to demarcate living and working zones [17]. Many artists collected and reused junk material and subsequently transformed “junk into antiques, rubbish into something rich, strange, expensive, and amusing”. Architect Chang Yung Ho was commissioned to design the place for Xinchao Magazine. Stemming from his respect for the building, Chang limited his additions to a minimum level, that is, what were only necessary for functionality. For some comparatively wealthier tenants, alternations were made on the physical structure. In 2003, artist Huang Rui designed the 798 Space Gallery that was located in the workshop whose multiple-arched ceilings and skylights sustained its status as the symbolic center of the compound. In the vast space of the 1200 m² floor, prominent Maoist slogans on the arches were preserved at the artists' request. Several machines that were part of the production line during the socialist era were kept, and a glass-fronted café was set up in the former office section at the end of the galley, adding an air of hybrid and ironic “Mao kitsch” [25]. On the same day of the opening ceremony, the two artists initiated the “Reconstruction [of] 798” involving all the artistic studios in the compound. The previous concern on the functionality of space gradually shifted to rhetoric and aesthetic aspiration of the built environment.



Figure 2 Interior space of Time Space

Time moved on, and the advocacy of historical conservation gradually shifted to another fancy action of forming a *BoBo* (Bourgeois-Bohemian) community [26]. Artists were no longer underclass or proletariats. Artist Zhao Bandi, who was called the Starving Zhao because of short of food, purchased the first Alfa Romeo convertible in Beijing. Some resident artists became comparatively more affluent than the other struggling ones were. The former somewhat criticizes the latter, despising their commercial manner driven by the desire to copy the success of the former. The charm of these industrial facilities became more grounded in their deviation and distance from the present. Through the eyes of BoBo artists, the swooping arcs and soaring chimneys had an uplifting effect, a kind of post-industrial chic. Nonetheless, the resulting space married aesthetics with functionality, housing such works of art as avant-garde sculptures and paintings. Lending more charm to the place were randomly placed pieces that were both finished and unfinished, and the walls, floors, and doorways served as canvases for graffiti. Its renovation work was commissioned to professional architects, who regarded the endeavor involving such alternative concepts as *experimental*, playing with different shapes and materials that extremely contrasted with one another visually. Expensive materials were introduced, from structural glass curtain walls to aluminum surfaces.

3 SHANGHAI'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: COMMERCE, COSMOPOLITAN AND URBAN SPACE

3.1 A review of culture and derivatives in Shanghai

In comparison, Shanghai is a metropolis whose urbanization process was accompanied by commercialization and a fusion of a wide variety of forces and population segments. Before the signing of the Nanking Treaty in 1842, Shanghai was merely a remote county. After the county was opened as a free trading port, the colonial powers sent their representatives to grab tangible roots of this land through joint authorities and establishment of foreign concessions. The Western market mechanism was applied to this new colonial city, and the logic of capital accumulation was burgeoning. During the early period, the comparatively loose governance and the emphasis on free trading and marketing developed this place into a

“wonderland for adventurers”, as well as a home for all races. The city soon earned its reputation as a paradise for immigrants: the pioneer group was mainly composed of merchants who were later joined by former farmers coming to seek jobs and new lives in the instantly modernizing city; colonialists made up another major force that intruded the land, including foreign diplomatic officials, entrepreneurs, and merchants.

The semi-feudal and semi-colonial characteristic of that time played an important role in forming the so-called “*Haipai*” culture (literally sea-culture or Shanghai School), which roughly outlined the fusion of Western and Eastern cultures, as well as a joint culture of varying domestic traditions [13]. Continuous absorption of, and prompt adaption to, the market demands were the second character of the sea culture in this market-driven city. For instance, novelists often produced romantic love stories to meet the demands of the readers, and magazines released photos of charming movie stars on the cover page to attract the potential buyers [27]. These commerce-oriented characteristics were evident in the urban landscape of Shanghai as well. Showing the face of a modern Shanghai, art deco buildings in monumental dimensions were constructed along the Bund, where foreign commercial ships would enter and have their first sight of the city along the Huangpu River; industrial facilities were clustered along the Suzhou Creek, the back lane functioning as the main transport corridor for raw materials, products, and immigrant labor from the hinterland. Commercial streets with modern department stores stretched from the Bund towards the west and constituted the main fabric of the foreign concessions. Filling the blocks in-between were the Lilong House (*shikumen*) that evolved from a Chinese traditional courtyard house to an efficient form of residential real estate development. Pragmatism penetrated the spatial layout of the city as well as the building design.

3.2 The story of Shanghai: from Suzhou Creek to Red Town

The mid-1990s witness a series of spontaneous rehabilitations of dilapidated production facilities and warehouses in Shanghai. One of the pioneers is Taiwanese Architect Teng Kun-Yen who rented a warehouse at the south bank of Suzhou Creek and refurbished it as his studio in 1998 [28]. Teng’ attempt seems to be resonated by UNESCO, which gave him an award for demonstrating what an individual can do by recycling a building for new uses. Following Teng’s case, similar cases sprouted, albeit inadvertently, such as Tianzifang and M50.

It is also the same period when conservationists who have been long struggled for legislation on conservation finally see fruition. Despite this achievement, which in their eyes remained merely paperwork, conservationists held admiration for the artists’ concrete works and resulting influence. The popularity of these spaces provided hope to conservationists who had long lobbied for legislation on conservation. Ruan Yishan, another leading scholar in conservation of historical cities in Tongji University, set up a center entitled “National Research Center of Historic Cities”. His team is an active player in the battle against the demolition of M50, benefited from his connection with officials at both the local and central levels, intentional individuals and authorities like UNESCO; and more importantly, his smart deployments of these connections to provoke public attention through a wide variety of channels, from academic conferences, meetings with senior officials and party members, workshops with artists and communities, to publishing newspaper articles and books (interview with professors in his team, 2009). Knowledge is power, conservationists’ high profile actions demonstrates it by transferring the piecemeal reuses of archaic industrial buildings to a heritage crusade.

The mushrooming of cultural rehabilitation of industrial buildings also caught the attention of the municipal government, who detects the economic potential. After ‘closing, terminating production in, merging or transforming’ polluting enterprises in inner city in the 1990s [29], the municipal government was burdened by the slowly decaying mammoth structures. The reuse of abandoned plants and warehouses sparked a host of possibilities. Not satisfied with the discrete effect, the government pondered ways to generate employment and higher gross domestic product [30]. To achieve this goal, the Shanghai Municipal Economic and Information Technology Committee (SHEITC) proposed the creation of the Creative Industrial Agglomeration Area, a zone which restores and reuses industrial legacies to accommodate creativity-based firms [31]. To facilitate the project’s promotion at the city level, the Shanghai Creative Industry Center, a semi-governmental organization, was established in 2004. Further, the Three Unchanging Principles were proposed [31] to iron out legislative hurdles. Under the principle, the rehabilitation of nonfunctional production and warehouse facility may be conducted if “ownership of Land Use Right,” “the major structure of the building,” and “nature of the land use” remained unchanged [31].

The term of ‘industrial heritage’ spread like wildfire, oft-quoted by both politicians and the media. It likewise shone the spotlight on the creative industry. In 2004, the plan for the Shanghai Sculpture Space was put on the table. It was an offshoot of the Shanghai Municipal Planning Bureau’s urban sculptural development promotion for Expo 2010, which was based on the Master Plan for Urban Sculpture approved in the same year [32]. The idea of building a Shanghai Sculpture Space by renovating a non-functional industrial building thus emerged, as the bureau is tasked to manage the heritage buildings and sites. Through creative salvaging of old industrial structures, the government aimed for the site and neighboring areas’ transformation into “a public art center with the most dynamics” in the urban area. For the project, the former cold rolling workshop in the No. 10 Steel Factory was chosen for its accessibility. The compound, established in 1956 as a branch of the Shanghai Steel Company, was situated in the eastern part of Changning District, occupying a sprawling portion of the downtown area on West Huaihai Road. The site was in close proximity to such establishments as the Hongqiao Economic and Technical Development Zone and the Xujiahui business and commercial center. It was likewise adjacent to the Xinhua Road Historical and Cultural Heritage Area. The plant was abandoned following the company’s restructuring in 1989.

Tender was called shortly in September 2004. After nine months’ evaluations and modifications, Dingjie Investment Ltd bested nine aspiring developers. Interviews with a Municipal Planning Bureau official (interview, 2008) and company chief executive Mr. Zheng (interview, 2008, 2009) revealed varying reasons for the winning bid. While the official attributed it to the developer’s eagerness to embark on heritage conservation, Zheng credited the success to financial resources. For example, other bidders such as Shanghai Grand Theater and Shanghai Art Museum were ruled out because these state-owned enterprises relied on government funding. Among the private developers, Zheng’s firm boasted of readily available capital resources. Further, the developer was backed by experience in heritage renovation projects and the CEO’s personal background in stage design. Zheng taught at two universities before moving to Hong Kong, where he shifted to the Department of Investment at The Xinhua News’ Hong Kong branch. Prior to the Red Town project, he was involved in a series of conservation projects such as Sinan Garden on Mid Huaihai Road, Meiquan Villa inside the Xinhua Road Historical and Cultural Zone, and the municipal historic building No. 201 on Anfu Road. In November 2005, the Shanghai Sculpture Space (Zones A and B on the master plan) was completed and opened to the public. Later on, the company won the contract to renovate further all the buildings left in the compound to develop a relatively private project, which is known as the Shanghai Red Town International Cultural and Business Community (Zones C to H). The team, constituted by Dingjie Investment Co. Ltd., Shanghai Realize Consulting Co. Ltd., W & R Group and some other assisting institutes, formally changed the company name to Red Town Property Management Co. Ltd in 2006.

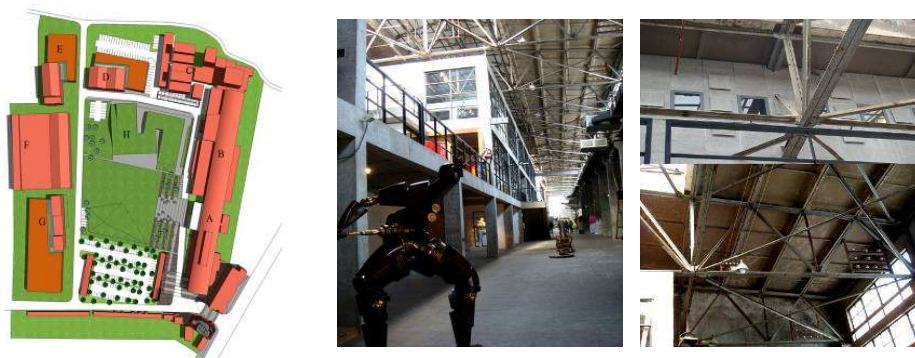


Figure 3 (Left): The master plan of the project [source: 33, 34]

Figure 4 (middle): A view from the corridor;

Figure 5 (right): Most weight was accorded to those that collectively forge an atmosphere of the past like an aged industrial structure that has experienced a series of ongoing movements, including attrition and decay.

3.3 Playing the Cards of Industrial Past in the Era of Deindustrialization

Prior to rehabilitation, the building structure in question must first be established as an industrial heritage. The fact that the building is not considered a historical site [35] renders the approach of historical

value or architectural value difficult. The project then resorted to social value, a spotlight in media nowadays. Advocates argue that industrial legacies form an honest reflection of the way a community lives and grows. This comment certainly makes sense, but, it is not welcomed by the developer. The community, if referred to the physical labors who used to working in the factory, has been laid off and left this compound in 1989 when the factory was closed. Instead of adding merit, such a history might taint the rehabilitation project's image and rouse social concern. The final solution is then a link made to the steel industry sector, which is emphasized as the main revenue generator in the socialist period. In effect, the Red Town project's Web site waxed poetic in depicting the "red" era, marked by red-hot flames on the stove glowing in the faces of stout-hearted workers. The buildings thus were depicted as a vessel of a glorious era. Working within the frame of value-centered conservation lends freedom in restoring an industrial building, with no strict rules for physical design. Nevertheless, the renovation of the cold rolling workshop demonstrates professional ways to treat a historical building but further, may goes to unnecessary excess. For most parts, preservation and restoration are deployed for architectural fabric, particularly the attrition and decay. On the other hand, eclectic attitude is evident when one looks at the renovation of the space. The giant interior space of the plant, which may bear the ethos of muscular industrialization and the efficiency of the utilitarianism of mass production, was altered boldly and roughly.

In the case of cold rolling workshop, treatment of the building's fabric was professionally accomplished, owing to the experience of both designer and builder. Typical elements that distinguish industrial buildings from others are identified and conserved: from the big steel truss and the light pitched roof above, to pillars with concrete brackets to support the moving vehicle for manufacturing process. Original components and materials are preserved without effort to make them tide and neat. However, the attention on the authentic texture seems exceeding its value. Almost all materials are left in a way that they show their surfaces and textures as they were. The rough surfaces of concrete pillars are left nude; many dirty patches on side walls are not cleaned; the rots on steel trusses are not polished; the brick walls, which used to be covered by paint, were scrubbed to reveal the texture of red brick inside. The employment of preservation of these fabrics, as argued by the author, is to forge a distinctive visual impact of 'the past'. It is not the scientific or architectural beauty of these structural components that is respected; rather, it is the characteristic of dilapidation, agedness, and decay that are appreciated. The estimation given to traces left by time even spreads to cover many small installations: for instance, rotten steel nails on the concrete pillar are left untouched, non-functional electrical appliances installed on the truss remain, and other similar situations.

Meanwhile, the cautious attention on authenticity fades when it comes to the interior spatial organization. A large internal space with a long-span steel truss supporting the light roof is one dominant feature of manufacturing plants, which may be the primary base to support the ethos of the industrial architecture and its "muscular modernism," "glorified in the efficiency of utilitarianism of mass production" [36]. This is also the case for the cold rolling workshop in No.10 Steel Plant, which used to be a giant space 180 meters in length, 35 meters in width, and 15 meters in height before drastic alterations were made [34]. This huge plant was divided into two parts, Zone A was designed to keep the original interior spatial structure, and zone B is being divided further to sub-levels. A series of rectangular shaped concrete boxes are constructed along the long axis of the workshop right in the middle, dividing the whole space into three subzones horizontally. The monster-like addition that dominates the interior space was reserved for office use whilst the corridor and pocket spaces are left for sculptures. As it is, only small sculptures can be accommodated by these small, discrete, and mostly dim and negative spaces, where artificial lighting is necessary. The re-organization of the space is more like inserting a box which offers ordinary office-scale spaces into the so-called 'inspiring' large industrial space, leaving the latter serving as a decorative canopy or man-made landscape for the former.

Upon the complement of the construction work, spaces for creative industry were about to put into the market. The Red Town Company launched a branding campaign to attract the intended market. For this purpose, the company leveraged print media by publishing its own magazine called "Red Town" and arranging interviews with newspapers. A website was also established to introduce the place from all perspectives, highlighting its history and its function as a center of art. Obviously, the difference between Red Town and Shanghai Sculpture Space is blurred in both the magazine and the website, wherein Red Town is described to be the overall development, within which Shanghai Sculpture Space is merely one phase. The articles focused on how Shanghai had joined the global trend in industrial building rehabilitation, joining the ranks of such icons as the Tate Modern in London, Musée d'Orsay in Paris, and the Massachusetts Museum

of Contemporary Art. Such projects, which involved the conversion of old industrial buildings and railway stations into functional spaces, are globally renowned for demonstrating a sustainable way of urban development while preserving history. Association with the said structures infused the Red Town project with global flavor, strongly suggesting its adherence to international standards. In addition, the quarterly magazine disperses comments on culture-led rehabilitation of industrial sites to a much larger field, such as review of art development, offering its readers general pictures of China's contemporary art, biographies of artists, and key individuals and authorities in art auctions. The magazine also involves shots of avant-garde garments with models wearing weird and heavy makeup standing in the cool setting of aged and archaic production plant. The audience who read hard copies or online versions is delivered a variety of pragmatic knowledge of what is happening in the field of contemporary art and related. As expected, these media idealize the transformation of the former industrial site to a hub that welcomes creative class, naming it "progress and advancement of civilization" [37]. Fancy slogans like 'moving back to industrial sites in the era of de-industrialization', or terms like 'post-industrial space' and 'post-modern' are introduced to the general public, who is educated that this is the trend of urban development and inevitably the direction of Shanghai [38].

4 SOCIAL DIVIDE AND GENTRIFICATION

Regeneration is beyond bricks and mortar. It pertains to an area's physical, social, and economic well-being [39]. If the spontaneous rehabilitation of old industrial buildings in 798 is a process wherein the artists' distinctive taste "cappuccinos" the physically dilapidated structures, making the latter fancy and valuable in the eye of the populace, the action taken in Red Town is an inverted process, wherein decay is cautiously preserved and then packaged as a tailored product to meet the distinctive cultural demands of artists. Once the link between artists and archaic industrial buildings is underscored and legitimized, the resulting space becomes commercialized and, to an extent, discriminatory. The transformation of a place may generate economic returns, but in the process it results in gentrification and social exclusion.

That year 2006 witnessed the formal establishment of the Beijing 798 Art Zone Administration & Development Office, which then took the charge of organizing cultural functions and events. In September 2007, the festival called "In Memory of the 50th anniversary of Joint Factory 718" was kicked off. At the same time, international big names were also welcomed despite their commercial nature. The opening ceremony for the "Nike 706 Space" that featured the "25th Anniversary of Nike Air Force" was held on 5 January 2007. Two days later, BMW Concessionaires Ltd. displayed four models in their Art Car Collection in 798 at the same site where five artworks on the "Automatic Transmission (Auto) in Aesthetic" were displayed. In July 2008, Hong Kong's biggest IT fashion group initiated a show for "Comme des Garçons", the off-beat but established fashion label by Rei Kawakubo.

Thousands of tourists are lured in every day, and the total number reached 1.5 million in 2007 alone. On 798's Open Day for the Olympic Games, Chen Gang, general secretary of the Chaoyang District Government, introduced his slogan "Beijing - The Great Wall, Peking Duck, and 798!" [40]. The tide of tourists hardly shows signs of ebbing. The number of visits leaped to more than 10,000 per day during the Olympic Games, including many important personalities. Security guards working in 798 proudly claimed, "I met three presidents in one single day" [41]. On the contrary, artists started a different wave of retreat. As early as 2004, the very pioneer Sui Jianguo removed his studio from 798. Three years later, the other leading personality, Huang Rui, left as well. By March 2009, the number of artists among the pioneer group was lower than 30. Aside from the complaint that the district became "more about a show rather than serious art," another fundamental factor that drove the artists out was the rise in rent, which ranged from 2 to 7 RMB per sq.meters per day, more than doubled that in 2002. The frequent interruptions by increasing amount of tourists are complained as annoying. Artists, who used to actively seek public attention during the battle against demolition, now see it a burden. After all, there was a part for private life and a part for private working place in the semi-opened SOHO model. Tourists usually took for granted that every room there was open for visits. Thus, the artists opted to shut their doors and turn their backs on the public again.



Figure 6 commercialization in Beijing 798(left: A café house at 798, upper right: Nike Space at 798, lower right: BMW show at 798)

In the case of Red Town, the renovated space does not offer an appropriate spatial setting for artists, and it is not designed to do so. In fact, the project targets at building an up-market of office stocks, together with the so-called associated spaces of wine-and-dine and retail-and-entertainment. Before the implementation of Phase 1, Redtown Company has already foreseen a promising future, with office space rent at Zones B and C pegged at 6.8 RMB per m² per day, even higher than the average rent of Shanghai’s class-A office towers, which was pegged at 6.73 RMB per m² per day [42]. Zone A, a large exhibit hall, is offered for a fee commensurate to its “distinctiveness.” Zone A may be rented for 10,000 RMB per day, with a minimum period of 15 days. Functions may be staged for 120,000 RMB on the day of the function and an additional 20 RMB per m² per day for ingress and egress. Collectively, these firms belong to the very loosely defined creative industry, including architectural design, information technology, education, mass broadcasting, and advertisement, among others, who are mostly established in the industry but desperately need an identity to join the so-called reactive industry. Electrolux, a company producing electric appliances, is a tenant as well. Another character of intended targets is that most of them are local branches of Multi-national Companies. Tenants include Singaporean firm Amoeba Digital Technology Co. Ltd., Italian brand Leissie, and Spanish-operated Art in Capital, as well as those belonging to the category of cultural consumption such as art galleries, bookstores, and tutorial schools. The plant serves as venue for the “annual release of international brands” such as automotive giants BMW and Porsche, and hosts such events as the “Anniversary of Omega,” “Celebration of Swarovski,” and “Chivas Milan Fashion Party”. With its motley attractions and high-profile tenants and visitors, Red Town is naturally a place for entertainment where people can wine and dine. In fact, it is advocated to be reminiscent of Moulin Rouge, which in the 1820s served as a gathering place for Europe’s impressionists. Following the logic, Red Town is likewise depicted as a salon to exude a casual atmosphere to encourage gathering of artists. Red Town thus features a culinary ensemble ranging from Hong Kong-based nightclubs such as CICI Club and Children’s Club to Swedish Fan Town, to French restaurant BECA.

The influx of established creative firms guaranteed a steady revenue stream, and “[their] taking over the space after the rehabilitation work”, as phrased in the Red Town magazine, “might provide a vivid testimony of the continuing evolution of urbanization, from industrialization to deindustrialization” [34]. However, such *advancement in civilization* distracts the public from the occurrence of social displacement. History and memory are romanticized and sanitized, and the concept of art and artists is redefined. The irony is that while the project was initially based on artists’ space consumption, these artists themselves – particularly the struggling ones – were not truly welcome in the new creative community. The project, which might be an application of Florida’s thesis on how to forge an air that is attractive to the Creative Class, reveals itself the consequence of social divide and social exclusion. Not only the whole society is divided into creative group and non-creative group, the category of creative class is further divided by the market, that is, those who industrializes creativity and make it profitable through massive consumption, and those who are not yet.

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