

Formulating Social Indicators of Revitalizing Historic Buildings in Urban Renewal: towards a Research Agenda

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- **Aim of the research study**
- **Urban renewal & revitalization of historic buildings**
- **Research method**
- **Preliminary Results**
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Aim of the Study

- **Develop a set of social indicators for the revitalization of historic buildings in urban renewal**

(GRF project - funded by RGC 2011-12)

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Urban renewal

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Revitalization of Historic buildings in Urban renewal

What is revitalization?

- “The process through which the mismatch between the services offered by the fabric of the historic quarters and the contemporary needs can be reconciled” (Tiesdell et al., 1996).

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Historic Buildings

‘Built heritage’

- part of our tangible cultural heritage which can be physically touched and stored, including monuments, group of buildings, archaeological sites, religious buildings. It should have aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value (Australia ICOMOS, 1999).

- small selected groups of monuments or sites that have exceptional value” (ICCROM, 2010)

Focus on historic buildings which are designated as monuments or listed as historic buildings

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Heritage Conservation and Urban Renewal

The challenges

- Balance between economic priority and social considerations of the community
- What is the role of heritage conservation in urban redevelopment?
- How to identify the social impacts of heritage conservation?

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Revitalization of Historic buildings in Urban renewal

- conservation of historic buildings in urban renewal can embrace the *social* and *cultural* benefits (Chan and Lee, 2008).

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Urban Renewal Authority (URA)

-“a process of regenerating decaying buildings by means of Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, pReservation, and Revitalization...”
(*Towards Urban Renewal 3.0*, URA, 2011)

privately owned buildings, shophouse, tenement buildings, markets...etc.

Revitalization of historic buildings in urban renewal in Hong Kong

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the Development Bureau

-government owned historic buildings

[Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme](#) launched in 2008

Batch I, II, III

Revitalization of historic buildings in urban renewal in Hong Kong

- bundle small scale individual historic buildings with large scale redevelopment.

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Social Issues:

- displacing the existing local inhabitants creates discontinuity of neighbourhood and the social network (Lai, 2010).
- commercial redevelopment which claims to subsidize the revitalization of the historic buildings, has often destroyed the local characteristics of the district.

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Social Issues:

many traditional trades and businesses had always disappeared from the streetscape in the past history of Hong Kong.

preserving local characteristics and social networks has been increasingly advocated in urban renewal (Development Bureau, 2011),

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Urban Renewal Strategy 2011

- initiates a social impact assessment for all the renewal projects
- assess a list of socio-demographics factors, local and cultural characteristics and social needs of the people affected by the proposed project.
- However, the impact of preservation and revitalization of historic buildings has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

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Methodology

- 1) Identification of major attributes for social impacts of revitalization of historic buildings in urban renewal
- 2) in-depth interviews with experts panel
 - validate and refine the preliminary list
 - identify contented issues
- 3) Public participatory approach to develop social indicators
 - on street surveys

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4) Case study

Validate and refine the list of social indicators through applying to two cases.

1. Blue House Cluster, WanChai



2. Lui Seng Chun, Sham Shui Po/
Yau Tsim Mong



Results

Table 1 Profile of the expert's panel

| Name | Field of expertise | Affiliation |
|-------------|--|---|
| Prof. A | Urban design and architecture | Professor, The University of YY, Hong Kong |
| Prof. B | Heritage Conservation | Professor, The University of YY, TPB |
| Dr. C | History | Associate Professor, The University of ZZ, AAB and TPB |
| Dr. D | Planning, urban renewal and social impact assessment | Research Institute on Sustainable development, The University of WW, Hong Kong,, |
| Prof. L | Architecture, Urban Planning and urban renewal | The University of WW, Hong Kong , TPB |
| Mr. E | Heritage conservation | Member of Heritage and Conservation Committee of a Professional Institute, AAB, active critics and journalist |
| Mr. F | Town Planning and heritage conservation | Senior manager, Community development, Urban Renewal Authority |
| Mr. G | Social work | Senior manager, Community development, Urban Renewal Authority |
| Dr. H | Urban Design and urban renewal | Professor, The University of WW, Hong Kong, |
| Mr. J | Urban development | CEO of an NGO- Designing Hong Kong |
| Mr. K | Architecture and sociology | Architect of several revitalization of historic buildings in Hong Kong |

Aim of the study
 Rehabilitation of historic districts
 Concept of social sustainability
 Rehabilitation in China
 Research method
 Case Study
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Results

| Social impacts |
|--|
| 1. Sense of place |
| 2. Collective Memory |
| 3. Cultural identity |
| 4. Local characteristics and Uniqueness |
| 5. Educating the present and future generation |
| 6. Cultural diversity |
| 7. Community interaction and social cohesion |
| 8. Accessibility of use |
| 9. Social inclusion and gentrification |
| 10. Developing skills in heritage restoration and related activities |
| 11. Public involvement opportunity |

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Developing indicators

requirements as shown below should be fulfilled (Sors, 2000; Blair et al., 2004; Häkkinen, 2006).

1. **Significant** –reflecting the major characteristics of individual social impacts
2. **Relevant** –to the local conditions
3. **Valid** –meaningful, credible, conceptually sound and theoretically valid.
4. **Representative** –represent important concerns, and reflect the interests and views of different stakeholders.
5. **Reliable** –provide information that can be trusted.
6. **Understandable** –clear, simple, unambiguous and easily and readily understandable to everyone
7. **Measurable** –even the qualitative ones should be able to be measured systemically with reference to an appropriate scale,
8. **Flexible** –adaptable to future political, economic, environmental, social changes;

Issues of assessing social impacts

- ambiguity and difficulty in defining sense of place and cultural identity
 - **whose heritage, whose identity?**
 - **propaganda for heritage conservation**

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Issues of assessing social impacts



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- integrating the historic buildings into the new context after urban renewal

- diversity of streetscape and townscape
- fast changing development

Issues of assessing social impacts

- the controversies of gentrification
 - **Forced eviction, change of social composition of the existing community**
 - **A natural and necessary process in urban development**

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Issues of assessing social impacts

- effectiveness of public involvement
 - Depends on the future reuse
 - Accessibility
 - Structural bias of participants
 - Inadequate understanding on the concept of heritage conservation and heritage value
 - Deriving consensus among different stakeholders

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Preliminary Implications

- Advocate conservation of a broader context, setting rather than a single building
- Education, communication and mechanisms for effective public participation
 - How to educate the laymen about the values of heritage?
 - How to involve the public in the planning and decision-making process?
- Who should be involved?
 - Assessed by different groups of people
- the final list of indicators should be used as a template, the list of social indicators will vary slightly among different projects in different districts

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Ongoing progress

- Structured questionnaires has conducted on streets since July, 2013 in WanChai
- Developing an appropriate point scoring system for each indicator



Thank you!

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