Historical Memory and Cultural Nostalgia of Longtang’s Rebuilt in Shanghai

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Most cities in China have experienced dramatic changes during the systematic progress of modernization and commercialization. Rebuilding residential space into heritage preservation is popular in Chinese urban planning. Yearning for modernity generates a policy of cultural protection which is transformed by the public spaces within which people carry out daily lives. However, heritage preservation in these cities is in a dilemma. On one side, with the opening up, Chinese society toward modernization has been accompanied by large-scale urbanization, rapid commercialization and a booming consumerism. The Chinese capital has forced people to face the challenge of urban environment management and adaptation to a new city. The traditional streets in big cities are destroyed first and then rebuilt to turn the capital into an international metropolis. On the other side, heritage protection needs its historical roots as the authentic cultural features. To some extent, the process of urban landscaping stimulates people’s nostalgia tie. Although it seems to be individual, it is also a link of one’s historical memory of sentiment with the development of social construction. Hence, collective urban nostalgia that emerged through the rebuilding of heritage in urban China can promote nationalism from the governmental perspective. Further, it can also lead people face the life itself but neglect the social tensions around them. Meanwhile, rebuilding mode of Longtang also elaborates the power structure existing among state, capital, intellectuals.

Keywords: rebuilding mode of Shikumen Longtang, urban landscaping, nostalgia

Introduction

Shikumen longtang is a typical local dwelling form in Shanghai, which has combined local culture and foreign culture since modern China. As a product of that time, Longtang houses have absorbed the style of European architectures and style in regions south of the Yangtze River, and been turned into a symbol of the mixture of Chinese and European architecture and culture. But hitherto existing studies on historical preservation mostly focus on World Natural and Cultural Heritage while neglecting other kinds of heritages, such as urban heritages and dwelling architecture heritages in modern times. As the city develops and the process of modernization accelerates, the residential spatial structure of Longtang cannot satisfy modern citizens and Shikumen gradually faded out of public’s mind. The residential Shikumen refers to the place where civilians live. Shikumen houses of this kind make up the major part of the overall Shikumen houses. Although there are still some residents living in Shikumen, most of the Shikumen houses haven’t received due attention.
Not until 2009 has Shanghai listed Shikumen as a historical protected area. From 1990 to 2003, Shanghai has pulled down old houses of 38 million kilometers in all, in which Shikumen houses constituted a large percentage (FENG, 2005). There are three ways dealing with dwellings in the old longtangs, (1) demolition of houses; (2) reconstructing it into a new liveable lane in the original location; and (3) transforming its function, such as developing business and replacing its residential function. The contradiction that the city wants better development but at the same time the historical scenes need preserving makes it a dilemma for the development of Shikumen longtangs. Under the circumstance of market-oriented economy, it has become an urgent mission for Shanghai to find out how to protect Shikumen longtangs so that it can get better preservation in the process of renewal, and how to deal with the contradiction between public interest and urban heritage protection.

Each city has its unique memory which is borne by physical and virtual public spaces and arts. In the process of urbanization that involves urban and rural development, many issues have emerged and cannot be ignored. First, the continuous population influx into cities has intensified the conflict between urban resources utilization and local cultural heritage preservation. A large number of cultural legacies have disappeared amid the renewal of old towns. Many old historical buildings have been torn down for community rebuilding, which led to the disappearance of traditional streets, names of old places and historical neighborhoods. In the new communities, traditional features have been changed.

Second, the cultural exchanges between regions and ethnic groups accelerated by globalization and urbanization have made cultural independence or insulation impossible. Different cultures are merging into a homogeneous continuum. In China, national identity is being challenged by cultural assimilation driven by globalization and cultural discontinuity in the process of industrialization and modernization. In Pierre Bourdieu’s view, cultural differences are manifested as a vital subject in the struggles between the dominant and the dominated constituents of a society (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 5). The paper mainly takes Bourdieu’s concepts as theoretical framework. His theory on class, especially the part about how agents distinguish themselves from other classes by consuming style and tastes, is illuminating for understanding the differentiation of class/stratification in China, although it is originally aimed at the developed capitalist society. By analyzing the development model of Shanghai’s urban culture, this paper aims to discuss the way in which urban culture plays its part in the social governance of China and reveal how individual agents under the national will interact with the urban space and urban society, when local governments focus on reshaping the “symbolic culture”. Urban space reflects a city’s social relations and social structure, and at the same time restrains their respective regeneration. Different social groups construct their social relations within the urban space while urban space is created by social relations. The change of social relations in a city is a key factor behind the evolution of its spatial form. By focusing on Shikumen longtang houses where civilians live, and discusses the problems brought about by the reconstruction of Shikumen, providing a new perspective of how is cultural sustainable development possible in the process of urbanization. The methodologies conducted here include literature research, ethnographic field study with residents in longtangs.

As economy develops rapidly, urbanization becomes a Chinese dream in many areas. But the meanings of urbanization in China are gradually being modified. The emerging homogenous and monolithic phenomenon in urban construction makes ethnicity and regionalism a topic that should be thoroughly discussed. But there are

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few studies focusing on living culture and how living culture is transformed into landscape, and the paper provides a preliminary exploration. Existing literature is still in the preliminary stages, some describing the historical change and development of Shikumen and collecting longtang patterns, such as A History of Shanghai architecture in the past 100 years (WU, 2008); others studying the strategies of protection and renewal of Shikumen, such as The Protection and Renewal of Shanghai Lilong (FAN, 2004). Studies on the historical and cultural values of longtangs and its social and humanistic elements center on the protection of cultural heritage. RUAN (2005) argues that governments should protect urban heritages and recognize the protection and development of urban heritage as a part of public interests. ZHANG (2006) analyses the effective protection of urban heritages in Shanghai by virtue of formulating social policy beneficial to urban heritages protection and adopting protecting means in accordance with the principle of market economy. In terms of reconstruction of old districts, XU (2004) takes Luwan District as an example to analyze the formation of old districts and renewal of the center district in Shanghai. Also, there were plenty of journal articles arguing that at a time when manufacturing and reconstructing historical architectures are seen as ways of protection, so as to strengthen the linkage between urban heritages and cultural diversity.

Existing studies in China focus on the historical protected areas in old district, discussing about the protection, development, renewal and reconstruction of these areas, while paying limited attention to the development and protection of residential districts. Existing literature about tourism development of historical districts is mainly at the macro-level, adopting monotonous methodology while lacking field study.

Longtangs Rebuilt as Imagined Cityscape

Xintiandi and Tianzifang, which had been traditional mid-19th century Shikumen (“stone gate”) neighborhoods, are the most well-known urban renewal projects in Shanghai. They are the first successful examples of development of creative spaces in the city. As China’s reform and opening-up program and industrial restructuring proceeded, many old factories, which had made a phenomenon in China’s industrialization in the 1950s, have been demolished and rebuilt since the 1990s. The destiny of these buildings and the evolution of space are closely related with the interactions among different groups in these areas. By gaming interests and comparing power, these groups will determine the transformation of the spatial forms of these old communities. The existing issues and conflicts in the communities are correlated with the conflicts of interests among the groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that a study of resources, power and status of all groups and their interactions and the evolution of spatial forms is essential for redeveloping old urban communities and resolving conflicts in these communities. Xintiandi was a major project of urban redevelopment and involved a number of Shikumen buildings. It is divided into South Block and North Block. The South Block consists of modern buildings while the North Block mainly contains traditional Shikumen buildings to be preserved as cultural heritage. Two spatial forms are claimed to be perfectly integrated as a new form. There are two opposing views about the Xintiandi’s development model. Some scholars hold that the claimed “nostalgia” was a mere disguise for some other interests, or in other words it was a big lie made by cultural scholars, government authorities, and the general public. It created an improper “nostalgia” which refers to the colonial past of Shanghai. It is widely claimed that the renovated Shikumen buildings in Xintiandi are the most typical embodiments of Shanghai’s local culture in the past. But in fact it is not true” (ZHANG, 2006, pp. 14-15). In short, Xintiandi is a simulation created in the false name of nostalgia. It argues cultural heritage rebuilt as a colonizing project alienating the local knowledge from its own cultural resources. The
emergence of the rebuilt traditional streets in urban planning is as a project of governance with geographical or ideological imagination of nationalism. In contrast, as a representative of the opposing view, Leo Lee (2012) mentioned that after the Longtang houses were demolished, small plazas and yards would be built. They are a far cry from the former Longtang houses but they did produce a cultural image, which at least reminds us of the Longtang houses”. In their view, Xintiandi, the rebuilt Shikumen neighborhood, represents a memory of Shanghai. Its cultural significance has transcended its simple architectural functions.

However, the view that Xintiandi could arouse memory is based on western-centrism. To some extent, the cultural nostalgia for the past of Shanghai, created by Shikumen neighborhoods rebuilt in the image of Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s, suggests the history of colonialism in China. This urban landscape was imagined, however, according to creative and profit-making desires. The policies for rebuilding old buildings are not really intended to preserve the past but to create an image in accordance with imagination and to seek commercial value from it. These new landscapes built in the process of urban renewal are closely linked to people’s fantasies and imagination of cities. Old buildings have their cultural significance in the process of urbanization. They are spectacles that are more and more popular in the community now. “Spectacle” literally means a sight of modern cities which is an exhibited visual object, inspires people’s imagination and is an experience-based, behavioral and materialized reality. Cities are landscapes created by human beings. Because landscapes are partly natural, their signs are frequently long-lasting, and because landscapes are the homes of women and men, they are particularly suited to the ideological task of framing social images. By recreating landscapes, filling them with signs carrying ideological messages, images are formed of past and future realities. Landscapes reflect the understanding and cognition that people have of the place they live in. In addition, they also reflect the view and imagination of immigrants and tourists of the place. Imagination and architecture combine to form a landscape reality. In addition, the native people and immigrants gather in the imaginary global vision, neglecting the differences of their identity and life experience. “Landscaping” is a particular form of the urban cultural and political aesthetics in China. It has become a collective imagination of culture or homeland that will never exist or have never existed. When people live in such a spectacle that seems like a landscape, they will live in an artificially designed way consciously or unconsciously with great pleasure. But this landscape itself is an objective existence that does not need to serve the people. When they become objective existences and do not serve the real inhabitants, cities will turn into mere and meaningless “spectacles”.

The reason why cities become “spectacles” is that they inherently simulate people’s imagination and cultural perspective. In the case of China, such imagination finds its root in people’s imaginative aspirations for cities in the modern discourse. By means of space arrangement, it imperceptibly generates a common imagination for the people who are visiting such space. Therefore, the major function and significance of urban cultural landscapes represented by Xintiandi lie in that those rebuilt landscapes bestow on all people, either native or not, a common experience, or in other words, a combination of past memories and imagination both aroused by the landscapes themselves. In fact, the demolition and reconstruction of old urban neighborhoods led by governments have always been controversial. Architects and urban planners have criticized that reconstructions that thoroughly changed the original buildings have destroyed the urban space pattern, because traditional streets have vanished wherever the roaring bulldozers go. Relocation of residents resulting from reconstruction of old urban neighborhoods has transformed their social relations, as well as their way of life and identity recognition, and has resulted in the change of social classes in the cities and social inequity. Foreign
scholars have defined urban renewal in Shanghai since 1990s as a path that has realize market-oriented neoliberalism and gentrification, and contributed to both the rise of Shanghai as an international metropolis and lack of sociality and humanity (Peet, 1996, p. 23).

Unlike the redevelopment of Xintiandi which has been based on the cooperation between the government and businesses, the renewal of Tianzifang is performed by businesses which rented one house after another from the local residents and turned them into stores. Therefore, this project has been carried out without a master plan. The residential neighborhood has been converted into a commercial block, and the residents who have leased their houses to businesses are directly involved with a considerable economic stake in the commercial development. Of the two major models of commercial development of old neighborhoods, one is led by governments and driven by partnership between governments and businesses, and on the other hand Tianzifang is obviously a private project with grassroots residents directly participating in the renovation and reconstruction as beneficiaries. It has a different political significance. While both cultural elites and the government have agreed on such reconstruction, Tianzifang has served several purposes at the same time: first, it is intended for protecting the traditional neighborhood and the nostalgia which is popular nowadays; second, it brings economic benefits to the local residents. After all, the commercial success of the Xintiandi mode has undoubtedly won support for the redevelopment of Tianzifang.

However, rebuilding old-fashioned houses into buildings with new features is a result of urban imagination. Landscape is in itself a national and cultural symbol. The transformation of a city’s image demonstrates the State or governmental authority to convert what previously belongs to public space into a simulated spectacle where the local people will no longer live (Don, 2008, pp. 101-112). In front of the materialized modern feature presented by the landscape, imaginers or simulators will replace their real past memories with the cultural imagination stimulated by the new landscape, turning themselves into “strangers” in their modern city. Urban redevelopers employ powerful aesthetic tools to make residents feel as if they were living in a different place, so residents desire to assimilate into such a place but still keep the sense of alienation. In the process of redevelopment, local residents generally become the “others” in the postmodern sense of cultural identity. People living in cities where communities are rebuilt will have to look at such spectacles where they cannot live as “strangers”. Moreover, only by the sense of continuous attainment and pride for living in the city can they accept and identify themselves with the modern urban mythology.

Though seemingly a label for fashion, urban nostalgia, in fact, is a symbolic value artificially generated by the mainstream discourse community consisting of power exercisers and intellectual elites. Developers will first identify their targeted customers and promote the “taste” or value in accordance with the identity and social status of such customer group shortly after the commencement of redevelopment. For the new buildings, nostalgia has served mostly as an attraction for customers as well as a means for urban renewal. As consumption is a symbol of lifestyle and taste, tangible goods reflect the intangible ideological matters. Bourdieu believes that a certain spatial form reflects a pattern of consumption, i.e. a lifestyle distinguishing one class from the other. As a preference and capacity, taste has the features of a certain social class and practical implications. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu vividly reveals the class distinction or class essence behind any taste. By catering to certain identity, attitude or values, consumption creates a community consisting of homogeneous members like intellectuals (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 466-467). However, nostalgia is a sentiment manifested both in time and space. In the dimension of time, it represents deep memories of the past and involves inheritance from and recollections of historical culture; and in the
dimension of space, it is a desire for feeling at home. Apparently, Xintiandi and Tianzifang, popular among consumers, have differentiated social classes. Formerly old towns and neighborhoods, they are transformed into shopping centers for the class of elites and exclude the previous residents for their low economic status. But, combing nostalgia and modern features in urban landscape construction has some positive significance. This mode of development is helpful for the continuity of the local Shanghai culture as it is based on both imaginary landscape and collective memories. More importantly, it is a necessity for Shanghai as it desires to present itself as an international metropolis.

Narrative of Local Identity in Longtang Renewal

Besides the mode of purely commercial redevelopment of Xintiandi and the mixed cooperative mode for renewing Tianzifang, some Longtangs in Shanghai have adopted other modes such as total demolition and reconstruction in Jianyeli and reparation and improvement in Bugaoli. The four modes have not maximized protection of traditional neighborhoods from the perspective of the residents. The choice of mode for renovating traditional Longtongs is actually an exercise of multiple powers within the space. The discourse about the space as well as the things and people in the space reflects the interventions of powers, including the government, the civil society and the elite class in their own ways. According to Michel Foucault, power arranges and reshapes space; in turn, space is an indispensable tool for the exercise of power and power is able to exert its functions in a certain space. The exercise of power in the space of Tianzifang involves the conflict between the civil power and the administrative power over the preservation of heritage. Scholars and artists form the civil power, as opposed to the governmental power. Power operates through various power agents and their interactions. In the process of power operation, different agents adopt different techniques and strategies concerning the detailed arrangement of various spatial elements. The government and developers keep pushing for and accelerating the demolition and relocation process while scholars and artists give full play to their cultural assets. They tried to win more social support by carrying out a series of campaigns against demolition and relocation and widely promoting the historical significance of traditional buildings. But the core problem of all strategic interactions is whether traditional architectures should be demolished or preserved.

Scholars including Prof. RUAN Yisan have reproached the massive demolishing-and-rebuilding model for old town renewal, arguing that it would deprive the old Longtangs of their heritage and cultural content. What is left behind is only its framework after such reconstruction. That would destroy the Longtang Culture the local Shanghai residents used to know. Longtangs would keep only their exterior architectural features while there are all modern facilities and lifestyles inside them. Longtangs are symbols of Shanghai’s history and witnesses of its changes. It should be preserved for the integrity and continuity of Shanghai’s culture, but now is being demolished and rebuilt, an approach most other cities of China are using to renew their old towns. According to criticisms of capitalism, pure commercial exploitation could undermine a city’s culture. Thus it is more reasonable to protect the cultural legacies in old towns and develop their full economic potentials at the same time. Renovation projects could combine traditions and innovations, i.e. fully developing economic potentials of old architectures on the basis of preservation. Soon after the founding of PRC, there were 9214 Longtangs in the old towns of Shanghai, housing a total of 200,000 neighborhoods at 1949 (ZHENG, 2013, p. 118). Their total floor area was 193.72 million square meters, accounting for over half of Shanghai’s total residential buildings. But its number is decreasing year by year. The Longtangs in Shanghai, however, are facing a dilemma of globalization and heritage protection. On one hand, Longtangs are unfit for modern
residents in part due to its limited living space and supporting facilities; therefore it has been the desire of Longtang residents to improve their living conditions. On the other hand, land in Shanghai is very expensive, so the government must be prudent in planning which determines its development and functional reorganization. About the fate of Longtangs in Shanghai, Prof. Leo Lee wonders whether life in Longtangs is still meaningful in today’s Shanghai. In an article published on Jiefang Daily, Prof. RUAN Yisan notes that

There were 12 heritage areas with distinctive historical cultural features including historical buildings on the Bund, in Longhua and Tilanqiao, but Shikumen houses are not included. Five years ago, I conducted a survey on Shikumen houses. I had raised some proposals, such as expanding the list of heritage areas. According to the survey, there were over 150 Shikumen lanes needing protection urgently. Now five years have passed, and I find one third of the lanes have gone, such as the west side of Siwen Lane on the south of the Suzhou River, one of the oldest Longtangs in Shanghai. Fortunately, its east side remains intact, but it still faces the danger of demolition. Shanghai Municipal Administration of Planning and Land Resources has been informed of the situation and has decided to stop the demolition plan. I would feel satisfied so long as the lanes remain there.2

The place people live in is a kind of field according to Pierre Bourdieu which means the place where one lives is a marker of his social status. Here “field” is not only a physical space, but also a cultural sphere which forms and disintegrates as people (participants) walk in streets and interact with the ambience. Entering this “field”, the participants will be reshaped by its culture, understand and pass down the culture. Place making or place identity is correlated with the habitus in a specific field. Bourdieu thought that habitus represents the transposition of objective structures of the field into the subjective structures of action and thought of participants, and regulates the way participants or things exist. Therefore, residents living in Longtangs in Shanghai would, of course, develop place making or a sense of identity in the field where they have long stayed. Place making is field-specific, and the external and internal structures of the specific field would influence the decisions and choices of the residents who live in such a field. Subject to the influence of local governments, social and spatial participation, and geographical backgrounds, the definition of place making differs in different cities, but it can be explained by Friedrich Baerwald’s concept of coexistence: “a process in which insufficient individuals are linked together by extending through manifold methods of cooperation their respective individual time and space frameworks into larger systems of social time and social space, which form the background of their existence” (Baerwald, 2009, pp. 238-240). Creating consumption is to provide the experience of place making. What historical rules shall urban planners abide by? Shanghai was once a prosperous city, and there were an assortment of stalls and shops inside the limited space of Longtangs. Deals are made after comparisons and bargains, so the goods were always cheap and good. This is the unique Longtang Culture. Longtang residents in Shanghai live a different life from Hutong residents in Beijing most of whom were lazy and passed time drinking tea and watching drama. For the Shanghai Longtang residents, work to make money was the key goal of their life. Their values developed in the era of industrial prosperity make an inalienable part of the local Longtang culture of Shanghai. The Longtang houses, as cultural symbols, carry Shanghai’s history and bring about cultural proximity, which is closely relevant to whether demolition is ethical.

These old neighborhoods are also venues for practicing Chinese traditional virtues, including cordial family and neighborly relations. Although residents in old Longtangs agreed on the demolition and resettlement project so as to improve their housing conditions in interview, they also showed their sense of belonging to, or

place making of, the old Longtangs. As the owner of one 30-plus-year-old Longtang store on Changle Road said, though his sales may not be very large, the neighborhood relations in the Longtang are really cordial, which is rarely seen elsewhere nowadays. Although there are many new and modern stores along Ruijin Road, Longtang residents would still visit the previous Longtang stores, which are more considerate and intimate.

According to some interviewed residents, some stalls and stores in Longtangs are no longer what they were even though the buildings in Longtangs are preserved. These days, Longtang residents mostly rent their houses to modern shops, which is the main source of their income. Longtang residents themselves yearn for modernity, but still have some concerns that they may feel unfit with the new environment and especially neighbors when they are relocated to apartments in the suburbs. Urban renovation in the 1990s gained its momentum and resources from market development, but also impacted people’s well-being and social values. Economic growth and capital gains were then placed before and above the residents’ interests. Social policies including massive demolition and reconstruction and relocating residents from the inner city to the suburbs and exurbs have deviated from the overarching policy that puts people’s livelihood first and the principle of justice. In fact, people’s livelihood has been taken into consideration, as their housing conditions are improved, and relocated residents gained property rights during the process. Governments and officials see these improvements as their key accomplishments and a confirmation of the social and ethical values of demolition and relocation, but they dismiss the losses incurred by relocating all residents from the old towns to the suburbs. These losses include the inconvenience in finding jobs, the availability of transportation facilities and public services, the right to live in the city center, fond memories of life in Longtang, damages to the city fabric and social network, and historical and cultural continuity and heritage. Most officials give priority to the mere materialistic improvements rather than the overall value.

Many people miss the previous interpersonal relations in Longtangs which are missing even if the Longtang houses are rebuilt with the same external features. Some elderly residents have moved away from Longtangs in the preliminary phase of relocation, and their houses are inhabited by migrant workers. There is a large migrant population in Longtangs, and they know little of each other due to their high mobility. Disputes often arise between the newcomers and the local residents, so relations between the new longtang residents are not good as before, though architectural forms have been kept. The cordial neighborhood relations no longer exist. Shikumen is one of the traditional residential patterns in China, like Hutong in Beijing, which are formed by courtyard houses. The cordial neighborhood relations have contributed to the formation of a Longtang complex. As WANG Di says in his book Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics in Chengdu, “street is the public space people share… Street, neighborhood and community are similar in meaning… If a street is construed as a materialistic space, neighborhood and community also have the shared meaning of space, but reflect a kind of social relations” (WANG, 2013, p. 13). In WANG Di’s sense, Longtangs also have the features of generic community culture as they are the venues for residents’ daily routines and commercial activities. Although Shanghai’s urban culture has been, to a large extent, influenced by the West, residents in Longtangs in Shanghai still lead the traditional Chinese way of life.

At present the urban planning conducted by government is in the model of free-market liberalism but not market fundamentalism. The Chinese model is not merely liberal, but with the emphasis on achievements of governments. The development of city is dominated by capitals rather than equality. Michael Herzfeld put forward the concept of “gentrification” to analyze this phenomenon, arguing that it’s the consequence of global hierarchy of value. Gentrification refers to a situation where mostly because of unaffordable housing prices, the
poor are forced to move out from where they used to live, especially in urban area, to provide places for people from higher classes (Herzfeld, 2010, pp. 259-267). In the process of urban renewal, the government and developers don’t mean to improve the environment and living conditions or tastes of residents. As a result, the former residents are evicted from the places. Michael Herzfeld indicates that it’s not mere “urban renewal” but the representation of class struggle (Herzfeld, 2010, pp. 259-267). People are not open to the real “free choice” because the ability of practicing freedom is not equal. In the case of eviction, that some people are driven out of the houses where they’ve lived for generations is the consequence of a structural violence influenced by economic factors. The eviction cannot be seen as a practice of free choice. Under the violent system, there are more and more people losing homes. Worst still, the violent system is being constantly reproduced and passed on to the next generation. Generally, it plays a role in the lower class society by producing a new class structure, which changes and reshapes the old value system. When we look into the modified architectures and living spaces, it can be found that the hierarchy of value under western ideology still plays an important part.

Professor ZHENG Shiling once said, “Shanghai would lose its local characteristics if these Longtang houses were demolished and rebuilt into fashion, entertainment and cultural centers in the style of Xintiandi. The historical and cultural continuity would be sacrificed. Even if the old features are preserved, everything in such neighborhoods would be affected including the neighborhood culture, commercial pattern and interpersonal relationships between neighbors” (ZHENG, 2013, p. 118). Nowadays the local people begin to miss their life in Longtangs where they have lived for almost a century. Longtang houses are witnesses of Shanghai’s growth and are the most important part of Shanghai’s local culture. However, the culture of the past does not exist in the Longtangs. Longtang is now a popular notion. We cannot find any unique element of a special lifestyle there, like private space, simple and crude life. Longtang culture reflects the old fashion of life in shanghai, which could only be revisited through simulation and imagination, and is recorded in literature and museums.

Contradictions Behind the Renewal of Longtangs

Culture is created through inter-subjective interactions. Buildings can express how such interactions work, and the construction of a city is a process of such interactions among citizens, communities and governments. The government has absolute administrative power and control over urban planning, because power works in a top-down manner. The dominant administrative power, however, would be boycotted by diversified social powers and they interact with each other in this process. The top-down decision-making structure becomes dynamic, and social groups could also have a say. The traditional government-decides-all pattern does not work as it did before and the government also needs to negotiate with pertinent social groups. To some extent, the rise of social groups undermines the government’s administrative power. There still exist, however, differences between these social groups in their appeals. Residents seeking for modern life hold different views towards new buildings from intellectual elites who are committed to protecting the cultural and historical heritage. On the one hand, Longtangs representing cultural continuity must be protected, while on the other hand, the residents there also have strong and rightful desires to live in better houses. Besides, commerce has also become an important factor that could determine the fate of Longtangs. Driven by profits, many Longtangs which are once historical and cultural legacies under protection have been turned into commercial buildings. The alleyways of Qianmen of Beijing, a Xintiandi-style neighborhood, has been completely commercialized where residents are relocated and no signs of history could be spotted (Shepherd & Yu, 2013). Tianzifang holds
both modern commercial facilities and Longtang remains where residents stay as “old-fashioned” inhabitants. In short, the fate of Longtangs is undetermined and no plan seems to be good enough to satisfy every social group.

In landscape architecture, it is important that urban landscape should be diversified and has its unique characters (Burk, 2008, p. 12). Urban renewal, however, has been making everything homogeneous and familiar. Urban development is faced many challenges including the loss of its uniqueness and cultural homogenization when it comes to a certain stage. Therefore, urban planning and renewal is not merely about the preservation of historical relics and the development of these sites for tourism, but also about the recovery, development and continuation of cultural heritage (Burk, 2008, p. 12). Urban development costs not only what we have in traditional communities including relationships between residents and neighborhood culture, but also leads to rigid patterns which René Descartes called the duality between official culture and civilian culture, elite culture and popular culture. The current trend of modernization influences urban renewal. Urban planning is focusing on tourism and consumption, compelling residents to imagine living in a city featuring high culture. Urban culture, whenever it becomes the topic, always means an urbane life. The character of a city is synonymous with urbanity (ZHANG, 2011, p. 132). In this context, international metropolises are increasingly becoming similar, because their designers adopted similar design patterns and modern styles catering to tourist psychology. Lives, emotions and experiences would always be similar or related. People see homogeneous buildings and feel that their separated worlds are connected and there is a shared world of space and time in which people truly know each other. The shadow of politics could be seen in these renovated buildings as well. Both locals and immigrants need to face daily life problems brought by urbanization during which social contradictions come second. It is true that people pay less attention to political power of local governments. While they forget about politics in the traditional sense, nevertheless, people are creating new cultural politics in the designed space to feel their existence in an imagined new life and forget to reflect what they really are and should do.

The past 20 years witness the sea changes of Chinese social structures, including the structure of class/stratification. The condition of the class is the material condition of a group, which determines the lifestyle or the immaterial existence of the group to a large extent. It contributes to the distinction of lifestyle, and is always in the network of economic power. The newly-emerging unequal class relationship is in the making by dividing different classes according to consuming styles. Bourdieu argues that in aesthetic field and cultural field, distinction makes it possible for agents to divide ‘I’ and ‘the other’ by adopting a special lifestyle in order to distance themselves from “the masses” (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 221-223). In the case of Xintiandi in Shanghai, the aesthetic subjects are detached from consuming subjects, which gives us an insight into the essence of the popularization of aesthetics that the freedom and democracy on the surface are in conflict with the authoritarianism below the surface. To the middle class, the aesthetics in urban consuming spaces is meaningful, but to the common people in China it is only an illusion. Bourdieu concentrates on the socio-political patterns that incur taste’s distinction, pointing out that the distinction of tastes is on the same configuration with the distinction of education and of being governed or not. Bourdieu stresses out that aesthetics expressed by theory, or in other words, the high-brow culture theory, is an idea in close relationship with the ruling class. The social use of culture, at the same time, serves as capitals and symbol-dominated instruments (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 154).
As Bourdieu indicates, a field is “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions”, in which agents in different positions fight for their interests (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96-97). Structure limits the agent, but agent is not always being structured. Agents can change the configuration by practice and strategy. In the practice of reconstruction of longtangs, there were government’s top-down actions as well as social actor’s down-top practices that reconstructed spaces. Take Tianzifang for example, as an urban community, it serves as a historical cultural area, a cultural industrial area and a residential district. Agents including scholars and cultural elites used strategies such as negotiating with governments and capital with the help of cultural capitals to influence the spatial configuration. But in the view of Bourdieu, cultural elites still remains the ruled among the ruling class (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 104).

However, it’s worth noting that in China political power is the dominant power, even if power of market is on the increase. Under the control of political power, scholars and cultural elites tend to manifest their independence by resisting economic events rather than political persecutions. But economic power is not the actual ruling power in China, and therefore this resistance cannot be counted as political action. Under this circumstance, Bourdieu’s socio-political criticism cannot be roughly applied to the Chinese context. Bourdieu is directed against Kantian view of pure art, arguing that whether the aesthetics is ‘pure’ and elegant or not reflects a much more fundamental distinction in tastes in much closer relationship with economic conditions, which explains why tastes in arts and culture products reproduce the social hierarchy. This insight helps us understand the elite’s and popular culture in China, but its French context also reminds researchers of the limits of theory. Researchers are supposed not to reduce the different between elegance and vulgarity to the distinction of tastes and not to bracket superiority of culture and supremacy of society and politics together. In China, cultural elites are not necessarily political elites. However, the elite culture doesn’t accept the ideology pushed by political elites entirely, which makes it possible for cultural elites and civilians to get together to resist political power.

The State, local governments, local elites, social media and the general public are involved in a conspiracy about urban renewal and the new landscape has been completed through the compromise between the State, local governments and the mass. But such a compromise is changing. The creation of a nostalgic landscape is also the result of imagination about geographic space. In the context of globalization and urbanization, the creation of nostalgia depends on memory which is an integral part to win people’s trust. According to Maurice Halbwachs (1992), collective memory is dependent upon the “cadre” or framework within which a group is situated in a society. It is deeply rooted in the local history carried by the cultural landscape. There are contradictions in the process of urban renewal, however. Old buildings hold the collective memory as places for commemoration, but the preservation of memory contradicts with profit-making attempts and the will of the State to advocate social equality and collectivism.

According to Marxism theory, landscaping society must create the illusion of the visional prosperity and equality (Turner, 2005, pp. 118-119). In James Scott’s perspective and analytical frame in Seeing Like a State, well-intentioned plans for improving the urban condition in urban planning are distorted by the diverse everyday practices of residents. Large-scale authoritarian plans go tragically awry in the result of catastrophes. From the cases Scott discusses, it can be seen that how the state use authoritarian state power to control grassroots, and how this control is in conflict with the practices of grassroots. In the view of the state, each project is splendid, but in the view of grassroots they are disasters. Scott argues that the failure comes partly from the ignorance of practical local knowledge called “metis” that underlies the complex action system. Scott
indicates metis, the knowledge that’s implicated with local practices and hard to learn, can only be acquired by firsthand experiences (Scott, 1999, pp. 426-459). Simplified and standardized principles cannot reach a satisfactory outcome because the artificial and official rules simplify the complicated social contexts, and ignore practical difficulties that are difficult to consider comprehensively. From the point of view of Scott, metis is a kind of open and ongoing knowledge. Although preservation of Chinese traditional culture has already become the mainstream notion, the boundaries of International metropolis and the urban China appears more and more blurred, space hosting city memories become increasingly homogenized during the modern transformation. Instead, metropolises in China become increasingly similar to those in other countries. Old buildings that could remind people of the cities’ unique history have been gradually modernized as commercial centers in the style of Xintiandi which you could find in every first-tier cities. Collective memory is losing its carrier—old buildings and neighborhoods—in the process of urban renewal. As a perceptive experience of space and environment, the city’s memory also involves the history of city’s landscape changes. The city’s space and its formation represent a unified historical understanding. But no legitimate word can describe Shanghai alone which has gone through colonialism and nationalism over the past century. It is an international metropolis, but it is also a Chinese city.

**Conclusion**

This study analyzes the spatial and social elements so as to explore the social, economic and political factors behind the evolution of urban forms and the factors that affect the shaping of urban space, including power, capital and class distinction. It also suggests creating memory or nostalgia so as to revive the city’s old neighborhoods. It also elaborates on the way people use the space and in particular focuses on how urban space is rebuilt to create nostalgia and adapt to modern consumer culture. It examines the nostalgia for urban space and analyzes local cultures.

At the present time, only in the central district of Shanghai are there a small number of residential houses in longtangs. Zhang Xuemin (2014) said: In these years people pay attention to the protection of old architectures, especially those old foreign houses. But it’s worth mentioning that Shikumen is the unique architecture style in Shanghai. If Shikumen vanishes in our time, a living style of human being will be extinct. He pointed out that Shikumen houses in Shanghai are mainly located in the reconstructed districts in central Shanghai except those scattered in 12 historical protected areas. As the reconstruction of old districts goes on, the number of Longtang will decrease day by day. But those residential buildings come from civilian’s daily life, it can reflect lived local experience and should be protected more. Unlike the official buildings are well maintained by the government, residential buildings usually in lack of subsidy from the state, are likely to be first to be destroyed. The majority of longtang buildings are regarded as dwellings so that their historical, cultural and artistic values are neglected. Besides, the positions of longtang buildings are vague, which makes it difficult to protect them.

Making use of the city environment with a long history by protection and adaption does good to the living conditions of residents. It can strengthen resident’s sense of belongings and the social cohesion by providing them with a comfortable living environment, and also help reduce over-urbanization. As mentioned above, residential Shikumen longtangs are treated as dwellings so that their historical, cultural and artistic values are neglected. Besides, that the position of its function is so ambiguous that it’s difficult to protect them. The model of Tianzifang adapts to the local conditions to improve the living conditions of Longtang and protects the
residential culture by conserving living spaces, therefore reaching the goal of sustainable development. Regarding the case of Tianzifang, culture plays a fundamental role, but residential function, which represents the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage, is also indispensable. Only by keep preserving the residential function of Tianzifang can we protect the authenticity and integrity of Longtang.

Cultural industries and creative industries play an important role in the reconstruction of the city, for they help improve the image of the city and contribute to the development of society and economy, which results in the improvement of living conditions of residents. Investment in cultural institutions and cultural events can support the creative economy and promote sustainable development. In 2013, UNESCO hold the International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” on new ideas and new approaches of protection of cultural heritages in the area of “Historical Urban Landscape” (HUL) and on the promotion and implementing of applying for World Cultural Heritage, and released the Hangzhou Declaration at the end of the congress. The participants pointed out that in the process of urbanization, the protection of cultural heritages is in the face of economic, cultural and environmental pressures. The idea of “destroying the old and building the new” damages the characters of the city, leading to the phenomenon that all the cities look the same and cultural homogeneity, which does harm to sustainable development of the city. The approach of HUL focuses on natural and cultural factors including current environment, intangible heritages, cultural diversity, economy, environmental factors and local values, aimed at setting up a series of practical principles to make sure that historical values, traditions and environments are respected and the city find the common factors between protection and development and get benefits from it. The unique history and folklore of a city underlie the cultural background of a city, which distinguishes the city from the others.

Culture, which encompasses both tangible and intangible heritages and creative industry, is crucial as a non-renewable resource to the city and its identity and has supported them as the pivot of economic development. Shikumen longtang can be identified as both material and intangible heritages. The longtang residents is under the category of tangible heritage, and the culture of Shikumen longtang is under the category of intangible heritage, which reminds us that the protection and development of Shikumen longtang should be on the premise that different means should be applied to different types of heritages. Bourdieu’s term Cultural capital may help to explain this phenomenon. As an economic form that embodies the cultural values and cultural formation in the shape of material wealth and spiritual treasure (Bourdieu. 1986. pp. 241-258). It generates economic value via the market and stimulates the ongoing circulation of goods and services. Cultural capital produces cultural products that have economic and social value by means of cultural accumulation and wealth, and at the same time produces added-values, such as aesthetics, by being integrated into the process of production in the form of creativity. Tangible heritages show up as the material form of cultural capital. As bearing witness to the historical culture and tradition, Longtang is a heritage of cultural value, an important form of cultural capital which encompasses folklore, aesthetics and technology and can be transformed into a more valuable capital by market. On the premise that the resources are utilized properly, we should ensure the sustainable development of cultural heritages and extend the forms of value. Only in virtue of national characteristic and cultural achievement is it possible for a city to have a place in the world. The characteristics of a city are the products of a history of hundreds and thousands of years. A city without memory and history will lose its soul.
References


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