

## Glimpses of Historic Urban Landscapes (HULs) Strategies: Preservation Framework and Practice of Shophouse Townscape in Taiwan, China

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**Abstract.** It is widely recognized that conditions in many historic blocks in the Asian region have rapidly declined for the majority of the population, over commercial development, supposedly homogenizing processes of modernization and globalization. This study endeavors to analyze the HUL conservation work concerning shophouse blocks and overall townscape in Taiwan under the timeline, examined the preservation framework, legal framework, policies and methods in Taiwan. It is motivated by a desire to understand what is the current HUL strategy in the conservation process of built heritage (shophouse) or townscape in Taiwan and how much efforts have done regarding the townscape.

### 1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that conditions in many historic blocks in the Asian region have rapidly declined for the majority of the population, over commercial development, supposedly homogenizing processes of modernization and globalization. HUL is the abbreviation of “historic urban landscape”, it is an important aspect in the built heritage preservation field and offers scientific approaches to solve the issues mentioned above. As the UNESCO Vienna Memorandum (2005) stated, the historic urban landscape is embedded with current and past social expressions and developments that are place-based. It is composed of character-defining elements that include land uses and patterns, spatial organization, visual relationships, topography and soils, vegetation, and all elements of the technical infrastructure, including small scale objects and details of construction (curbs, paving, drain gutters, lights, etc.). Six years later, UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) stated that the historic urban landscape approach considers cultural diversity and creativity as key assets for human, social and economic development, and provides tools to manage physical and social transformations and to ensure that contemporary interventions are harmoniously integrated with heritage in a historic setting and take into account regional contexts. This study endeavors to analyze the HUL conservation work concerning shophouse blocks and overall townscape in Taiwan under the timeline, examined the preservation framework, legal framework, policies, and methods in Taiwan. It is motivated by a desire to understand what is the current HUL strategy in the conservation process of built heritage (shophouse) or townscape in Taiwan and how much effort has done regarding the townscape.

### 2. Methodology

This paper uses the exploratory and qualitative method for data collection and analysis to provide a clear and general overview of the preservation framework and Practice of shophouse townscape in Taiwan, China. The exploratory and qualitative study employed a constructionist and interpretive approach. The constructionist approach affirms that human beings are active agents and create meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting, while an interpretive approach is used to provoke thought about preservation, restoration, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and adaptation or any combination and their relationship to the townscape. Generally, the interpretation of legal texts

such as public policy and the official document has presented problems from the earliest times to the present day. To some extent, it encompasses interpretive studies with a comparative and historical bent in the timeline, offer us a chance to review or inspect the legal framework, policies and methods, even the results and the possible trend in the future, thus, changes or adjustments will be made to lead a scientific and reasonable way in practice.

### **3. The Context Of The Study:Shophouse & Townscape**

Rows of shophouse buildings with the two-three storey in the townscape of Taiwan province had been influenced by the urban vernacular architecture of southern commercial towns in China mainland, this building type had a mix-used function, both shop space and dwellings are contained in this “mixed-use” structure, and both commerce on streets and living style in houses are well arranged here. Generally, this building type can be found in most Chinese and Southeast Asian areas, especially in those commercial cities with hybrid culture. On the one hand, residents who migrated from the mainland to Taiwan would bring their hometown's lifestyle, traditional customs, and living environment to a new settlement. On the other hand, in the Japanese Colonial Period, especially before 1930, urban planning had not been well developed, so the Japanese government encouraged street building and remodeling of houses along the streets. The local rich class began to build shophouses with facades influenced by those of western countries; the changes in houses have made the townscape show colonial characteristics. From the perspective of typology, this building type in Taiwan had the same evolution process as the shophouse buildings built by Chinese immigrants and Peranakan in the early period of the Nanyang region, the main building form adopted by Chinese settlements was similar to Tik ko tshu, for instance, shophouse blocks in George Town, Pulau Pinang and Kreta Ayer in Singapore.

In the field of architecture studies, this building type is usually named “Qi Lou” in most parts of China mainland and “Tong lau”, “Kee Lau” in Hong Kong, Macau, Kwangtung and “Ngo ka ki”, “Tiam chhu” in Fukien and Taiwan. However, here, this study refers to “shophouse” and “five foot way” as the basic terminology to replace all the names which were mentioned above. “Five footway” was originally a building code in British colonial cities in the 19th century, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1920s and 1930s, a large number of overseas Chinese from Fukien and Kwangtung brought the so-called new shophouse building “format” return to their hometown to “reconstruct or copy it in the different places” and transformed the new shophouse building into residential building and shophouse with local characteristics in the commercial districts of the town. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western-style shophouse buildings were constructed in Taiwan and reached its peak during the Japanese colonial period. The shophouse was an important townscape during the Japanese colonial period. Meanwhile, it was an important parameter of industrial and social development from the recent past, thus, as-built heritage, it obtained an important status in the architectural development history in Taiwan province. Most shophouses in Taiwan were equipped with a corridor on the ground floor, but the facade was different from shophouses in British straits settlements. The existing shophouses in Taiwan were distributed in Dasi, San Xia, Wan Hua, Dadaocheng, Tamsui old street in the north part of the island, Hu Kou and Taichung in the central region of the island, Tai Nan and Lukang in the southern regions of the island.

### **4. Legal Frameword Regards To The Townscape Preservation**

For a very long time, the evolution course of Taiwan's cultural heritage preservation framework has been affected by political and economic factors, and it has experienced several different stages in history. There is a debate among citizens, governments, academics, and designers relate to what is considered historical, what is valued, and whose history should be preserved in Taiwan under the background of colonial history and the Chinese Civil War. The preservation process under the timeline can be divided into four phases: the Japanese colonial period (1895-1944), the post-war period (1945-1970), the “awakening” period (1970-1981), and the improvement period (1982-Present). There are three types of heritage preservation system adopted by different countries

worldwide. The first one is the designated system, the second is the registration system, and the third is the combination of the designated system and registration system. In this case, Taiwan's cultural heritage preservation is a combination of the designated system and registration system, and it is used differently for different types of cultural heritage.

Designate preservation areas or historic districts is a general means to preserve historical townscape around the world. Taiwan has also adopted historic designation and dedicates to preserve or maintain heritage values in preservation areas. Regardless of whether it is designated or registered, it is not a "system of life tenure", when the essence of built heritage or related environment changes or greater impact happened on the heritage and the dilapidation reaches a certain level, its qualification as cultural heritage will be eliminated. For example, for shophouse blocks, the qualifications will be repealed when one of the following three conditions arises: "First, Loss or change of the overall environment due to some reason, loss of local characteristics; Second, due to damage or change in historical context and texture, those which loss preservation value; Third, the design pattern has lost the characteristics of art". Except for the heritage grade change, such as upgraded to monument sites, the abolition of historic buildings includes two situations: "the loss of the original features due to the destruction of the building, the dismantling or loss of the main components" and "the other reasons for the loss of historic buildings". For historic sites, the qualifications will be repealed when "First, the historic sites are destroyed due to some reasons, and people lose their original features. Second, the disintegration or loss of the main components of the historical site is caused by natural disasters such as fire, flood, and earthquake disaster. Third, the other reasons cause the value loss of the monument".

From Japanese colonization, Taiwan's built heritage preservation experienced four stages of the legal system: preservation of Historical and Natural Monuments Law (1922-1945), Law for the Preservation of Antiquities (1945-1982), and Cultural Heritage Preservation Law (1982-2005) and Cultural Heritage Preservation Law (2005-Present), however, the Law for the Preservation of Antiquities (1945-1982) had not been implemented. The Cultural Heritage Preservation Law promulgated in 1982 was a milestone for the establishment of a cultural heritage preservation system. On July 27, 2016, Taiwan local departments promulgated the new edition of Cultural Heritage Preservation Law, which adjusted the tangible cultural heritage into the following nine categories: (1) relics; (2) historical buildings; (3) memorial buildings; (4) settlement buildings; (5) Archeological sites; (6) Historic sites; (7) Cultural landscapes; (8) Antiquities; (9) Natural landscapes and natural monuments.

In Taiwan, the privatization of properties has brought many negative effects on the preservation of built heritage, it is crucial that the heritage building is personal property, but the townscape is a public interest. Since the late 1960s, Taiwan's economy had risen rapidly with the support of the United States, and urban land prices experienced a rising stage. If all old urban areas were classified as preservation areas at this time, it is bound to directly affect the vested interests of residents. The homeowners in small cities are worried about the restrictions brought on by conservation since they expect the same kind of land price boom as appeared in large cities, they also cherish the tourism that conservation has brought for its economic benefit, such a contradictory mood has made it even harder for local governments and residents to make decisions in Taiwan. As a result, there was a conflict between short-term and long-term interests, scholars, and residents. Some well-preserved historic districts which would be listed in the preservation of cultural heritage plan were suspended, such as San Xia old street, LuKang street, Dasi old street, Dihua street, etc.

Until the 1970s, with the rise of the tourism industry, the preservation of the historic urban landscape was re-emphasized. According to the statistics, there were 297 built heritage sites in Taiwan until 1997, including 24 first-class cultural relics, 50-second class cultural relics, and 223 third class cultural relics. This heritage were mainly residential buildings, temples, gardens, old seowon (academies), churches, castles, gate tower, mausoleums, stone archways, light towers, relics, old bridges, and other buildings. Most of these monuments were created in the late Ming and early Qing dynasty, and they had important cultural value in the overall townscape. In the preservation of urban cultural assets, various land development and large-scale construction projects which were

triggered by modernization have brought new threats to the built heritage. Taipei local government implemented “Regulation on Motorcycles in Shophouse Blocks and Pedestrian Ways” in 1999. In 2001, the “Shophouse Blocks Improvement Plan” was promoted to create a public space with a high-quality environment, safety, accessibility, and aesthetic feeling. Taipei has completed many shophouse streets to meet the civic need of barrier-free access, living comfortably, and providing the general public with more opportunities for aesthetic experience. It could enhance the townscape of the city and activate local business opportunities.

## **5. Main Methods Regard To the Townscape On Preservation Planning Agenda**

### **Systematic Policies: From Urban Regeneration to Built Heritage Preservation**

The Urban Renewal Act, Land Law, and Urban Plan Law are the three major laws for Taiwan’s urban construction. Urban Plan Law is the “parent law” of the Urban Renewal Act which is the urban renewal policy. Under this act, there are 10 documents such as “Urban Renewal Implementation Rules” as the supporting items. Local government sectors then formulated urban renewal regulations following this act. According to the Urban Renewal Act, the renewal process is divided into three types, more exactly, reconstruction, construction, and maintenance. Today, urban renewal is mainly carried out in two ways: construction and maintenance. In practice, renovation refers to the reconstruction, construction, or upgrading of old buildings, and improvement of public facilities. Maintenance refers to the improvement of land use and construction management and the improvement of public facilities to maintain its good condition. Renovation and maintenance are mainly used in western countries to preserve and repair historical and cultural heritage, to achieve comprehensive goals such as protecting local culture and activating a resurgent city. This is not only for the improvement of the physical environment, but also to produce more social and economic significance. The supreme decree for the preservation was the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law in 1982. It stipulated that the preservation of monuments should be based on the original appearance, cultural features, and changes are not allowed. The Cultural Heritage Preservation Law was amended for the third time in 2000, adding registrations and subsidies for historic buildings, and incorporating historical buildings into the scope of cultural heritage preservation, the amendment was passed in 2005. It indicates that affairs such as the construction of monuments, management, land use, and fire safety were not subject to the restrictions of the Urban Planning Law, Construction Code, Fire Services Ordinance, and other related acts.

The legal documents concerning the preservation of cultural heritage, involving many aspects of built heritage preservation. These acts based on the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law as the parent law, such as Measures Governing the Commissioning of Non-governmental Organizations to Manage Historic Monuments, Implementation Rules for the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law, Historic Buildings Register Plan, Measures Governing Applications for Authentication of Privately-owned Antiquities, Measures Governing Emergency Measures for Historic Buildings Affected by Major Natural Disasters, Measures Governing Historic Buildings Registration and Subsidies, etc. To some extent, these public policies play a positive role in townscape preservation and management. Other preservation activities like vacant spaces reusing, “discovering the beauty of historic buildings” activities, the conference on the legal framework, basic techniques renovation, re-purposing of historic buildings can facilitate the townscape preservation from various perspectives and keep pace with social or preservation concept change.

Because of the frequent earthquakes in Taiwan, the local government formulated the “Measures for Major Disaster Responses to Historic Sites and Historic Buildings”. In the event of an earthquake, flood, fire, or another disaster, it can formulate emergency response plans in response to prescribed procedures and respond quickly. Article 25 of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law (2016) emphasizes that “a building block should preserve the original architectural characteristic, style or landscape if it is damaged for some reasons, but the main textures and architectural structures still exist, it should be restored based on the preservation of cultural heritage values. In

accordance with its nature, a plan may be proposed by the residents or groups of the locality, and after the approval of the heritage management authority, it shall adopt appropriate repair or reuse methods.”

For the contradiction between land development, urban construction, and built heritage preservation, corresponding special laws and regulations have also been formulated. The method of Building Capacity and the Transfer of Land Ownership proposes a solution to this problem. The landowner can apply for a transfer of land ownership in other areas under these measures. This policy will reduce or mitigate the adverse impact of land development on the preservation of built heritage. For the preservation, restoration, and reuse of monuments, historic buildings, and settlements, special attention is also paid to the management, design, and qualifications of construction project managers. It has specially formulated the Measures Governing the Procurement for Restoration or Regeneration of Historic Buildings and Settlements for related activity management. It specifies the actual operating procedures and requires the restoration or reuse of the project anchorperson to be qualified as an architect or college staff and have practical experience in undertaking repair or reuse projects. Through strict requirements on management and designers, this promotes the implementation of preservation, restoration, and regeneration to meet the requirement of urban scenery quality.

These preservation laws and regulations are constantly revised. Judging from the current situation, although the latest revision of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law was in November 2011, the revision of some special laws and regulations under this parent law has lagged. However, in general, Taiwan’s preservation laws and regulations reflect the development of adaptive preservation concepts and intrinsic motivation to solve new issues that are emerging in preservation practices.

## **6. Supervision and Management Mechanism**

In the deliberation process of government agencies, the context of the historic building, the texture of the original facade, the constituent elements, and building language are required to give the full interpretation. On the one hand, it is hoped that buildings will not lose their original features after rebuilt in the future. On the other hand, it is also possible to make records as an archive for a single old building and facilitate the construction of the historical background and evolution data in the scope of the whole preservation area. Except for general application cases, to reduce the distortion of authenticity in the future, the deliberation process needs to examine according to the standards when restoration or regeneration projects are completed.

From the comparison between the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law in 1982 and 2000, Taiwan’s management concept of privately built heritage has undergone several major changes. Article 28 in the old Cultural Heritage Preservation Law stipulates: “historic sites are managed and maintained by the government department where they are located. Public monuments are authorized by the competent authority to the government agencies, natural persons or juristic person.” But, for private monuments, it stipulates that “when necessary, the competent authority shall authorize a natural person or juristic person to conduct management and maintenance”. In the new Cultural Heritage Preservation Law, Article 18 stipulates: “Monuments are managed and maintained by owners, users, or managers. Public monuments may be entrusted or appointed as necessary by their affiliates (organizations) or other organizations, registered groups, or individuals to manage and maintain.” Article 24 stipulates that: “After reviewing and confirming the monuments by the competent authority if there is a value loss or derogation due to improper management, the competent authority may notify the owner, the user, or the manager to make improvements within a certain period. If it makes any improvement during the period, the competent authority would replace the owner and performance management, maintenance and restoration rights, besides, charge fees which required for the preservation work of competent authority, or regulatory taking the historic sites and land.” Article 26 stipulates: “the funds which used for maintenance, restoration, and regeneration of private monuments, historical buildings, and settlements, the competent authority can offer discretionary assistance”.

Generally, private heritage is privately owned property, but it bears a special social responsibility. Compare the changes between the old and new Cultural Heritage Preservation Law, it is clear that the government department has made great efforts to respect the rights of owners of private monuments. The new Cultural Heritage Preservation Law has undergone a change in concept and more respect for the rights of private owners in the management and maintenance and the government only provides necessary guidance and assistance in the preservation process. Besides, the revised Cultural Heritage Preservation Law encourages flexible use of cultural heritage and the private use of historic sites is allowed. For cultural exchanges, it can meet the needs of the people's spiritual life, and it creates a beneficial source for the heritage owners to support their management and maintenance motivations.

## **7. Discussion and conclusion**

In summary, townscape conservation, viewed as the most relevant way to sustain historic cities, has achieved some results in the preservation of built heritage and accumulated a series of preservation experience, especially in terms of community participation and industrial revitalization in Taiwan. There were several reasons for this: First, perfect cultural inheritance theory, healthy inheritance mechanism, and diversified investment channels ensure the normal operation of cultural heritage. Second, local governments pay more attention to cultivate cultural heritage awareness and actively guiding non-governmental forces to participate in cultural heritage activities. Third, the multi-innovation of cultural inheritance methods has successfully achieved the transformation of historic sites and reconstruction of cultural inheritance, adding new elements and fresh air to the HUL. While these preservation activities are being carried out, through the understanding of the historic shophouse building, townscape, contexts, ways of life, traditional events, regional characteristics, and heritage significance, local people are given a sense of identity and pride in their built heritage.

Although preservation of shophouse blocks in recent decades has brought good results, the focus on the overall townscape is still leaving a gap in the effective management strategies and processes for the protection and enhancement of its built cultural heritage in a sustainable way in Taiwan province. The significance of the HUL lies in its ability to retain the authenticity of its heritage value and the uniqueness of its townscape character. Preservation framework and practice of shophouse blocks regard to the townscape should move the focus on landscape elements (symbols, landscape language), whereas these landscape elements are significant aspects that constitute the overall townscape, the landscape elements must be protected in the legal framework, policies, and methods to preserve the character of shophouse blocks. The preservation of the HUL elements can facilitate the possibility of sustainable development and maintain the character of the locals. Townscape preservation of shophouse blocks is a multi-disciplinary field, which involves inputs from various professionals including politicians, architects, planners, engineers, historians, archeologists, chemists, environmentalists, and other experts. However, the current political situation in Taiwan, increasing the uncertainty of the built heritage preservation which has characteristics of Chinese culture. As such, there is still a long way to go when the HUL preservation work mix with ideology, political propaganda, and cultural prejudice.

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