

## HERITAGE AS THE BEGINNING OF DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CONSTRUCTING LOCAL IDENTITY

*Exemplified by a Cultural Project, "Old House with New Life," in a Historical City of Taiwan*

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**Abstract.** Focusing on the "Old House with New Life" project, this paper discussed its impacts on the cultural heritages and tourism development in Tainan City of Taiwan. First, we described the urban transformation of Tainan. Then, we introduced this project and validated the importance of this cultural project in developing sustainable tourism and constructing local identity.

### 1. Introduction

Taiwan, an island located between the Ryukyu isles in the north and the Philippine archipelagos in the south, displays cultural diversity which is the result of racial merges of indigenous peoples, Spain, Dutch, China, and Japan since the ancient times, leaving behind rich cultural heritages. In particular, Tainan, a historical city of Taiwan, not only possesses a unique urban context, but also has a variety of cultural heritages. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, Taiwan's rapid economic growth resulted in the continued expansion and development of cities. The cultural heritage was massively destroyed, so the traditional urban context was on the verge of collapse. Since the 1990s, the government began to promote the urban conservation and regional regeneration project in order to prevent the aforementioned crisis.

Nearly one decade later, the non-governmental civil society became a new force for conserving the heritage and developing tourism. Among them, the Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration (FHCCR), a non-profit organization founded in 1999 in Tainan, began promoting a series of cultural projects, including the "Old House with New Life" project. This project gives the public a new understanding of the cultural heritage and reformed the relationship of the local residents, operators, and tourists, all of which have a direct impact on the sustainable tourism development.

In this regard, first, we will describe the urban transformation of Tainan. Then, we will introduce this project and validate the importance of this cultural project's impacts on cultural heritage. Finally, we will point out that heritage is a driver of developing sustainable tourism and constructing local identity.

### 2. Urban Transformation of Tainan City

In general, the frequent transfer of political regimes in Taiwan is regarded as a major feature of the island's history and influenced the urban transformation of the cities in Taiwan. Tainan City, the oldest city in Taiwan, possesses this kind of character. From the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, Taiwan, located near the southeastern coast of China, has been under the rule of the Dutch (1624-62), the Spanish (1626-42, in northern Taiwan), the Koxinga (1662-83), as well as the Qing Dynasty (1683-1895) from China, the Japanese (1895-1945), the Chinese Nationalist Party's authority regime (1945-1996) and Taiwanese democratic regimes (1996-present).

#### 2.1. CITY CONTEXT BEFORE 1895

Originated from a harbour settlement in the latter half of the 17th century, Tainan gained a clearer town structure during the Qing Dynasty and was given the core of its current urban pattern during the Period of the Japanese Occupation.

In 1623, Taiwan was under Dutch's rule and the urban landscape of Tainan City of present day started to develop. Since 1661 when Koxinga Zheng Chen-Gong took over Taiwan, Tainan City was had been chosen as the island's chief political and economic center. In 1683, the Qing Emperor Kangxi conquered Taiwan and ended the Zheng family's forty-year rule. In the following year, the Qing government formally annexed the island as her territory.

Over the years, the city developed within its definitive boundary. Streets connecting the city gates were formed with long narrow street houses on both sides. Of these historic streets, quite a few are still Tainan City's major roads today. The scale of public buildings increased during this period and some had grown into courtyard complexes, such as the Confucius Temple. After the calming of a rebellion in 1788, the palisade was allowed to be replaced by a cement wall. Eight gates were renovated in the late 1780s. Later on, two extended walls and three gates were added to the former structure.

The most characteristic building types during this period are the street houses, the courtyard houses, and public buildings. Street houses flanked both sides of busy streets and extended further behind their fronts. Larger courtyard houses that were more exquisite in materials and design were constructed by high-level civil servants and successful merchants. Though much bigger houses were seen in northern and mid Taiwan, Tainan owned most and best quality public buildings, especially temples, in this period.

## 2.2. URBEN TRANSFORMATION UNDER JAPANESE RULE (1895-1945)

Taiwan and the Penhu Archipelago were receded to Japan after the Qing regime was defeated by the Japanese in 1895. The Japanese reign changed Taiwan's political as well as social, economic, and cultural environment. Taiwan's modern planning system was founded by the Japanese during their occupation. The Japanese had experimented and transplanted in Taiwan what they had learned from Europe--techniques of both planning and building control in conjunction with western architectural styles. The former organic patterns of most towns and settlements were substituted by grid patterns. New plans and building standards were employed to shape the profile of Taiwan's cities.

Planned urban reform took place immediately after Japan took over Taiwan, for the former urban environment with its narrow streets and bad sanitary conditions was considered unhealthy and backward. In 1899 Tainan City's Urban Planning Board was established for the 'regularisation' of Tainan's urban structure. The demolition of Tainan's city wall started since 1907, four years ahead of the enactment of Tainan's 'regularisation plan.' Statutory plan was modified in the following decades, paralleling the gradual demolition of the city wall that continued till 1941. 1929 and 1935 saw respectively the expansion of 'planned areas' of the city.

The expansion of the city beyond its former boundary had made possible the provision of new urban facilities and the development of a modern city. However, the employment of western gridiron road system with circles at nodal points did great harm to the existing urban fabric. Public buildings and the new generation of street houses were soon built according to the new city plan, leaving behind the main streets former urban fabric. Governmental buildings were built according to western classical architectural norms giving a sense of austerity, modernity, and ruling authority. In the meantime, quite a few churches were constructed in this period helping create a specific townscape in certain areas.



Figure 1. Tainan's street scene during the Period of the Japanese Occupation.

## 2.3. AFTER WORLD WAR II (1945-PRESENT)

In 1945 Taiwan was under the rule of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and in 1949 the KMT regime retreated from China to Taiwan. The need to recover from World War II, the crisis of the civil war, the boom of refugees, and the neglect and insufficient preparation caused a period of stagnation and recession in planning till the late 1950s.

From the late 1950s to 1980, the government successively promoted six Four-Year Economic Development Plans and one Six-Year Plan. From 1970 on, a series of 'grand constructions' were put forward to support the economic and industrial development. This cast strong impact on Taiwan's urban development. It is during this period Taiwan's cities started to experience a drastic change along with the economic 'take off'. In late 1950s, many street houses were rebuilt to two to four storeys employing the style of modern architecture and from late 1960s on, major public buildings and big commercial buildings were built creating a new urban scene. The major roads built or widened within many cities in this period introduced traffic problems and out-of-controlled development and destroyed quite a few historic buildings and streets.

In the late 1950s Tainan developed some public buildings exquisitely designed with much less decoration than their counterparts in the period of the Japanese occupation. The new generation of street houses gave special attention to façade design and Tainan's local climatic conditions. Finely proportioned and meticulously composed wooden window frames became characteristic of street houses constructed during this period. The late 1960s started the construction of some important public buildings, such as the city library, the city hospital, main post office and the gym. They were measures responsive to the need of the growing population, but no urban design considerations were taken into account. In the 1980s and the early 1990s Taiwan's major cities witnessed a steady growth of the property market that produced a large quantity of housing and office buildings, resulting in serious urban sprawl and the deterioration of townscape and general urban quality. Tainan did not manage to avoid this adversity. During the same period, Tainan developed a large new district and moved its administrative centre, paralleling the gradual development of this district that was given much more public facilities than other areas.

### 3. The Cultural Project "Old House with New Life"

#### 3.1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TAINAN'S HISTORIC URBAN FABRICS

Tainan's historic urban fabrics concentrate chiefly in the An-ping district and the old city centre. Characteristic are the geometric-patterned streets with traffic circles flanked with shop houses developed mainly during the Period of the Japanese Occupation and organic lane patterns with temple courts defined by small plot developments formed during the Qing' Dynasty or perhaps earlier.

Historic commercial streets are composed chiefly of low-rise shop houses (mainly two to three storeys, with few exceptions up to five). Built during the Period of the Japanese Occupation, these shop houses normally create a coherent street scene. The elaborate architectural composition (such as the differentiation of different levels, the fenestration, the employment of shading devices and the design of balustrades), the treatment of materials and details (such as the graphic effect of wooden window frames and simple, delicate decorations on parapets) and the fine craftsmanship make them stand out on the street.

The majority of Tainan's historic shop houses continue their traditional use pattern- shops at ground floor or lower levels and residential uses above. Most of them are well integrated in the whole streets or districts in terms of land uses. A significant amount of traditional businesses are preserved in such streets, for example, shops for traditional biscuits and cakes, sculpture studios, embroidery studios, and food stands. Organic patterned lanes flanked by small scale, irregular developments are behind main shopping streets. Their human scale, irregularity, integrity of secular spaces and neighbourhood spaces etc. form a fabric of valuable townscape

and spatial quality totally different from newly developed areas. Their physical characteristics and complicated land ownership render it difficult to redevelop comprehensively, but help to retain its quality- daily spaces away from busy traffic, interesting spatial series and townscape.

Also significant to the character of these urban fabrics is their long lasting use pattern. Although most of such areas had been designated for commercial use, they are generally residential communities with high population density. Retail shops and factories are seen scattered along main lanes or around temple courts. The diverse daily activities, in conjunction with spatial qualities, help create a sense of place.



Figure 2. Shop houses and temples in Tainan's street.



### 3.2. PROMOTING THE CULTURAL PROJECT “OLD HOUSE WITH NEW LIFE”

Since 2008, FHCCR began to promote the “Old House with New Life” program, through the introduction of cases in re-utilizing the old houses, making the general public to focus on the value that historical space has created, in order to arouse the public concern about the preservation and regeneration of old buildings. “Old House with New Life” could be interpreted as “the historical house with the potential to be developed sustainably”, where “old house” refers to a building that has at least 30 years of history, and has been properly preserved and maintained, “New Life” means that the building should be able to meet contemporary requirements to have achieved the positive transformation effects of specific expression of the old and new convergence.

Based on the above, the FHCCR first selected 19 houses with the convergence of the old and the new as the high-quality examples of the regeneration. Then, the foundation invited the visitors and the operators to participate in the activities of “Popularity Award” of the public voting and the “Model Award” of expert evaluation. Through the dialogue with scholars and experts, these activities enhanced the public preferences of the urban history and explored the diverse value of the preservation and regeneration of the old house. Wherein, the assessment of the “Model Award” is to be observed on basis of five indicators: “conservation idea”, “creativity management”, “space aesthetic”, “humanities spirit” and “ideal concept”(Table1). In the past two years, new cases of the creative transformation and management of the old buildings have sprouted in the historical city and become a movement to rethink the relationship between heritage and tourism.



Figure 3. Cases of the “Old House with New Life”

TABLE 1. Rating Criteria for Selecting Examples

Item	Rating Criteria
Conservation Idea	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The maintenance of the existing cultural landscape.</li> <li>2. The prevention of interferences from the original structural system.</li> <li>3. The proper storage or use of the existing structures and materials.</li> <li>4. The rational use of the existing space allocation.</li> <li>5. The adoption of the existing techniques and materials for refurbishment and maintenance.</li> </ol>
Creativity Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appropriate old house management as to industry type (conception).</li> <li>2. Putting to good uses the old houses and surrounding features.</li> <li>3. The creative design of the space creation (spatial reuse).</li> <li>4. The creative ingenuity of operation and promotion (software planning).</li> <li>5. The creative design (related propagandas, store products, use of space and furniture, etc.).</li> </ol>
Space Aesthetics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The aesthetic pleasure of the overall space environment.</li> <li>2. The high-quality design of materials, colours, shapes, and light.</li> <li>3. The appropriate dialogues and exchanges between the old and new elements.</li> <li>4. The management that conveys the pursuit of a better life.</li> </ol>
Humanities Spirit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The humanistic implications of the management philosophy.</li> <li>2. The cultural values or historical context represented by the old houses.</li> <li>3. The expression of the positive cultural essence of the contemporary society</li> <li>4. The enhancement of the spiritual culture.</li> </ol>
Ideal Concept	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The enthusiasm (passion) for the preservation of old houses.</li> <li>2. The willingness to resolve the problems or difficulties arising from the preservation and management of old houses.</li> <li>3. The adherence to the spirit of old house re-use operations.</li> <li>4. The old house re-use business continuity planning.</li> </ol>

Since the planning and implementation of “Old House with New Life”, it has a preliminary achievement in the “fostering of interest”, in particular, in guiding the general public to experience the pleasure and surprise to see re-use of the old house; and multi-cultural interpretation the old house presented has received widespread positive response. In addition, in the promotion activities, students’ competition events were carried on, providing subject guide and curriculum services, but also actively contributed to the linking of stores. In the future, on the aspects of rooting, promotion and marketing, it will be continued to take alliance with other folk organizations, enterprises and operators, and striving for public sector resources, to invest in the management of the brand of “Old House with New Life”. The plans for the next stage are as follows:

*a. Promotion of social education*

To deepen the ancient capital life (or “The Night of the Old House”) experience, cooperated with universities in Tainan Community and other social education groups, associating operators of the old houses to organize “the courses for experiencing in depth of Tainan old houses through study tour: to expand the public “delighted awareness” of the old houses.

*b. The store Exchange Network and the establishment of Information Platform*

We observed from the “Old House with New Life” that in the future if stores of different nature can be re-united and do marketing in the way of cross-industry alliances, perhaps it may contribute to the development of old house living area of Tainan in travel market and the “delightful performance” in local living experience.

*c. Training of professionals*

Coping with the school curriculum, make the seeds of the concept of conservation of cultural assets be localized and specific, and to train the relevant professionals for the space design and building to open the practical courses for re-use of old houses (not renovation of historic buildings) to nurture the “Delightful factors” for the future urban preservation.

*d. Professional technology services*

Taiwan in preservation and maintenance of historic buildings has accumulated considerable experience and examples, in the future it will transfer through the information platform experience and knowledge, or provide the old house health clinic services, offer to operators or users of the old houses proposals in the planning, design and routine maintenance, to condense “Delightful knowledge” for re-building the old houses.

*e. Tourism Brand and City Marketing*

“Stopping by the old house” activities have provided a new concept to the existing patterns of tourism in Tainan, namely, to use “Old House with New Life” to reshape the local cultural characteristics, and promote a series of “Delightful route” and “Delightful spots” for people to re-understand the ancient capital. In the future it may co-operate with the local government putting forward a city marketing proposal with ideal, competitiveness and vision, so that to make Tainan a genuine “Delightful ancient capital”.

#### **4. The Driver to Tourism Development and Constructing Local Identity**

##### **4.1.1. THE THEME OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN TAIWAN- DISCOVERING THE NEW CREATIVITIES OF THE OLD CAPITAL**

Tainan City boasts a wealth of heritage accumulated throughout Taiwan’s development history as well as the diverse and rich cultures of the ordinary people. In addition to the historical sites, old stores, and local snacks, to guide visitors to experience the essence of the old capital, the contemporary value and the new creativities of the historical preservation displayed can better enable visitors to understand the local characteristics and vitality. Therefore, in terms of tourism planning, the “Old House Workshop,” “Look At Me,” and “Old House-Auditorium of Life,” and other educational activities promoted in the past by the Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration, as well as the “Craft Tainan” map and related book publications currently undergoing planning shall serve as references for the tourism theme. In addition, Tainan, known for its historical and cultural characteristics, will escape the limited imagination of “trafficking history” and “nostalgia” by displaying how it puts forward “new ideas” as objects for the traditional cultures through “new creativity.” Tainan’s cultural and creativity and design-based friendly atmosphere will in turn increase the tourism appeal.

With urban culture as the tourism theme, in addition to discovering the cultural resources, one should be more concerned about the management of the cultural environment; otherwise, cultural resource depletion or cultural atrophy will eventually lead to the loss of the cultural tourism market. Taiwan’s tourism industry and the NGO and NPO management in the cultural environment setting had little in common in the past. There tourism and cultural resources combined had one-way relationships (sometimes even to the point of infringement!), thus the lack of feedbacks and cooperation attempts. In addition, issues such as how to clarify the position of cultural management, preventing the over-commercialization of the culture itself or becoming a representation of tourism consumption, and even tourism interfering with the essence of the local culture are worthy of study and thought.

Therefore, this project is not just about the collection and planning of itinerary locations; it is about achieving the purpose of sustained cultural environment management. Under the premise of the cooperation and mutual benefits of the tourism industry and non-profit organizations, the irreplaceable roles of the NPO or NGO were mentioned. Meanwhile, a creative and forward-looking cultural tourism model was proposed. In the model, in addition to the proposal of the specific itineraries in line with the Tainan cultural travel concepts, the model also served as a platform for cross-industry match and cooperation. More importantly, such a win-win model can be used to further establish the “social enterprises” that adhere to the concept of “cultural welfare” so as to manage the cultural environment in the freely competitive tourism market, provide the capital needed to compete, and obtain the necessary resources.

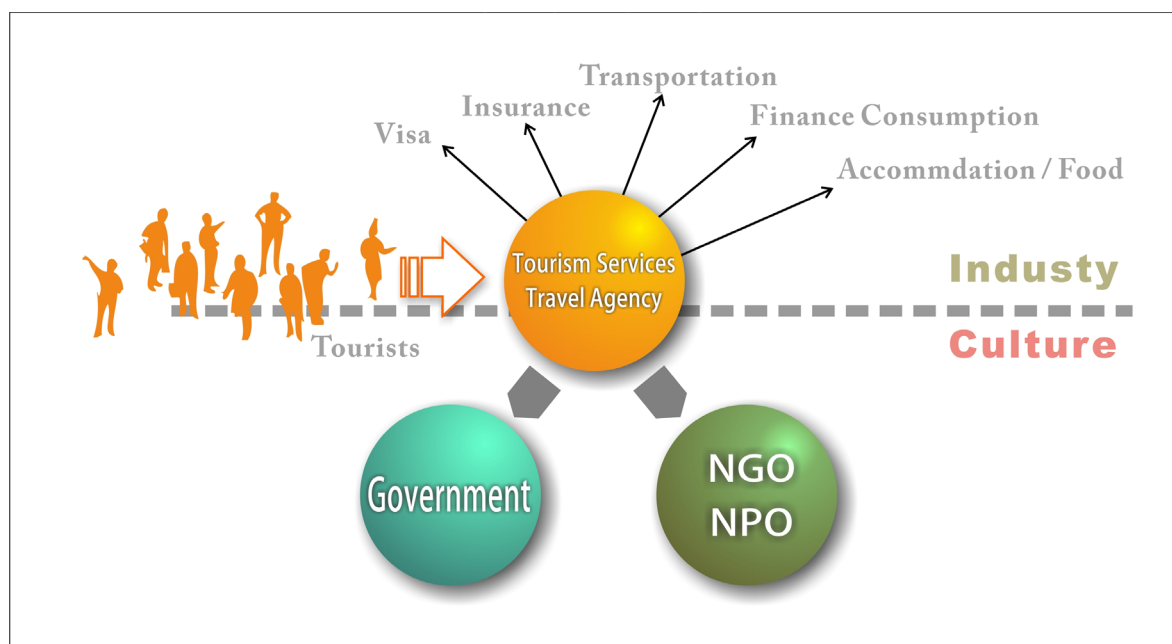


Figure 4. Present model of Promoting Cultural Tourism in Tainan

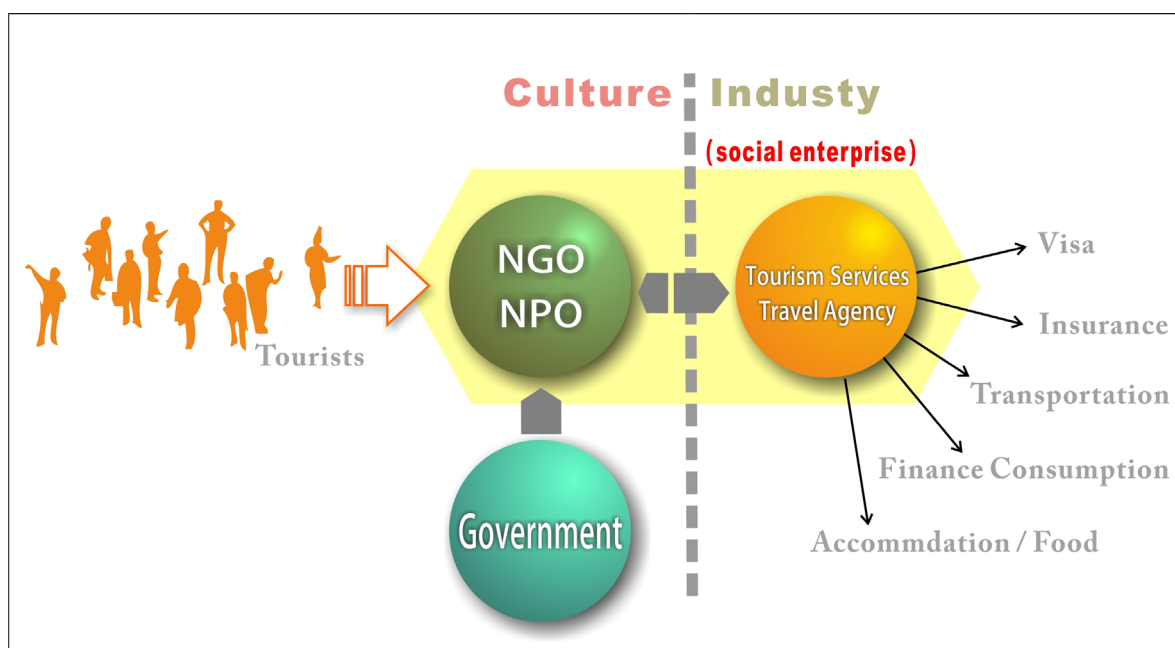


Figure 5. New model of Promoting Cultural Tourism in Tainan

#### 4.1.2. THE CONSTRUCTING OF LOCAL IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN TAINAN CITY

Used throughout the social sciences, identity is a term for an individual's comprehension of him or herself as a discrete, separate entity. In the cultural field, identity indicates the feeling of a group or culture or of an individual as far as she/he is influenced by her/his belonging to a group or culture. Dolores Hayden, an architectural historian, emphasizes the relation between memory and identity. In *The Power of Space* (1995), Hayden corroborates the view that space is harbouring memories, this sustaining identity. She observes, "Identity is tied to both personal memories (where we come from and where we have dwelt) and the collective or social memories interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbours, fellow workers, and ethnic communities." (Hayden, 1995:9) She also states that urban landscapes are "storehouse of these types of memories", because of the natural and built environment such as harbours as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement frame the life of people as a whole (ibid.).



The sense of belonging to places involves complicated interactions between the material and mental world. In modern society, people are usually kept isolated and separated from each other and this has caused social atomization. George Simmel is seen as one of the influential urban sociologists who have viewed the city in cultural terms. Particularly, he was concerned with fragmented subjectivity growing in city life. In his famous article, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), he emphasized the effects of modernity on the nineteenth-century social life, the struggle of modern individuals to maintain their own social individuality. In fact, Frisby notes that Simmel was "the first sociologist to reveal explicitly the social significance of spatial contexts for human interaction." (Borden, 1997: 313) He did not mainly examine buildings and specific places of the city, but was more interested in the tension between social and individual lives and experiences, the objective and subjective culture.

Since the promotion of the "Old House with New Life" concept by FHCCR in 2008, an amazing design method that intervened with the old house became a new pattern for space reuse. Moreover, Tainan's unique city atmosphere formed a special kind of spatial atmosphere. In the process of spatial development in Taiwan in the 1990s, the "Eslite Bookstore" took Taiwan by storm through its simple Taipei metropolitan style. Hence, the "Eslite Bookstore" was developed into a specific type of consumer identity and cultural identity. The "Old House with New Life" concept formed with Tainan City as the basis has gradually been transformed into a reformed space in appearance, which has been extended to other cities. Compared to the "Eslite style" that features the commercial and elite characteristics, the "Old House with New Life" conceived in the south has had the chance to return to the "ensconced" essence of life. After this cultural project became a growing trend, it was more important to rethink about the fundamental spirit.



Figure 6. One case of "Old House with New Life"

In particular, the "Old House with New Life" proposed involves the substantial inclusion of the old house with the local spatial texture. In the past, walls had been used to express the physical boundaries. The scenarios seen within and without the walls were entirely different, while the gates and walls became the areas of the keenest interest. Now, the city is already without walls, but many old buildings that provide distinctive features for identification are still in all the corners around the city, waiting to play the important role of being identified as the city characteristics.

## 5. Conclusion

Summarizing all the discussion, we can say that through the concept of the "New Life Old House," the old houses in new forms spread out one by one in the city in order generate new life in the city. Meanwhile, in the process that the residents and visitors come and go, one should quietly contemplate on the design intervention and the moderation of "excessive: and "inadequate" so as to carefully maintain the most appropriate relationship between the buildings, local residents and visitors. The so-called "appropriate" relationship should be discovered from the aspects of life, which are important resources for constructing local identities. Just imagine the scenario described by a famous writer Wang Wen-Hsing from Taiwan: "In the autumn time, the bedroom facing the east is like the banyan tree outside the window. ...The tree has numerous light yellow leaves. As the wind blows, the yellow leaves fall as if they are pieces of scattered strings." (Wang, 1978:80)



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