

The Preservation and Adaptive Re-use of the Treasure Hill Settlement

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Abstract. A settlement is a dwelling place where cultural groups can settle down and establish their own way of life. The formation of the settlement is also the process of shaping space in the settlement. The settlement represents a landscape that is a bounded geographical space. Identity is viewed through the construction of space and social interaction. This study explores the contemporary meaning of the preservation and adaptive re-use of settlements by looking at the history of Treasure Hill.

Keywords: Treasure Hill Settlement, Urban Topography, Community Development

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition of the Settlement

The settlement space is where the formation of space and traditional life practices are fully integrated. This space can include physical (material) space, but can also be the space of certain activities or transmission of cultural meaning.

Martin Heidegger's *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1971) regarded the "dwelling" as the essence of human existence, proposing "existence" as a phenomenon of "dwelling." People use the practice of "dwelling" to reveal their fundamental nature. Heidegger has previously analyzed human dwelling in depth. The location produced by a building gives space to the "site;" in other words, "space" cannot emerge from nothingness, but only from its location. Hence, human dwelling must combine all these elements. The relationship between people and "space" is formed through the "space" that is constructed by people at a particular location. "Space" is an intrinsic quality of dwelling.

Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) constructs the link between people and "space" using the "spirit of the place." Norberg-Schulz stress that all concrete things have their own material substance, shape, texture, and color. Since the appearance of these things constitutes a "place," each "place" feels different and has different environmental features. This is what we mean when we talk about the intrinsic qualities of a place.

Hiroshi Hara places great importance on the settlement in architectural design. The settlement has a profound influence on the both existing and future changes in the "appearance" (space-time) of a building. Abstract theory and terminology are used to raise these perspectives to a philosophical level of conceptualization to examine the relationship between people, between people and the land, and between nature and everyday life. The settlement and family home are simply containers for this form of survival relationship as well as providing the tools and shelter necessary to survive in the harsh natural world.

1.2. The Value of Preserving Settlements

The settlement is a system of relationships across space. Through complex economic, social, and cultural phenomena and the development process, the settlement is a specific space where survival activities, including production, group relationships and interactions, and religious rituals are carried out. The settlement is a concrete representation of historical processes of expansion, transmission, and development.

In a settlement, the relationships between people and the land and people and the environment are clearly revealed. Each settlement also has its own unique features, people, and customs. However, in the process of modernization, such settlements are often seen as a backward phenomena representing the old past. Such

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settlements occupy large slices of urban space, but can support relatively low populations despite their overcrowding. Such areas also suffer from a lack of public infrastructure and an aging population. For these reasons, during the process of urbanization, many such settlements across the world have been demolished and rebuilt.

Many such settlements were built to give people a place to live but not designed to last for a long period of time. The buildings in these settlements are therefore neither sturdy or robust. Settlements are adapted to local conditions. Since resources are limited, local materials are used in construction. This expression of the way of life of a group of people in a particular time and place is worthy of protecting and preserving.

2. The Preservation and Re-use of the Treasure Hill Settlement

2.1. Background

Treasure Hill is located in the Zhongzheng district of Taipei City, Taiwan on Dingzhou Road, Section 3. The settlement is located at a Buddhist Mountain temple (Treasure Hill temple) at the northern foot of the 80 meter high Hukongshan with the Xindian River on the other side. Treasure Hill is designated as a municipal historical site. The historical settlement in the area was located between Little Guanyinshan and the Xindian River and dates back to the 1940s. In the early days, the area supplied drinking water for Taipei City and a water protection area was set up guarded by the military. Originally, only six Hokkien families lived in the area for religious reasons due to the presence of the Treasure Hill temple. In the 1960s and 1970s, restrictions were gradually removed as water supply facilities were moved upstream. With the rapid economic modernization of the 1980s, a number of disadvantaged groups, including retired soldiers and their families and migrants from the countryside moved into the area. Over a long period of construction without outside help, the size of the settlement expanded, and a way of life based on a rich and mature network of mutual self-help emerged.

Aside from the Treasure Hill temple (known locally as the Guanyin Pavillion), which is designated as a municipal historical site, the settlement consisting of a number of illegally constructed buildings in the vicinity of the temple is also designated as a municipal historical site known as the Treasure Island historical settlement. The illegal houses were built according to the lie of the mountain, forming a compact community. Although Treasure Hill only covers an area of 3.97 hectares on a mountain facing a river, its heritage includes a Zhang-Quan temple and an illegal military dependents village.

In the 1970s, increasing numbers of rural migrants moved into Taipei City, and by the end of the 1980s, Little Guanyin Mountain was almost entirely covered with houses. In order to improve the cityscape and preserve water resources, in 1980 the Taipei City government started to plan the demolition of Treasure Hill. Facing the threat of demolition, Treasure Hill's sense of community collapsed. At this time, a group of scholars and civil society organizations tried to promote a "settlement preservation policy," taking on a civil society partnership role in community work and calling on the government to designate Treasure Hill as "settlement preservation area." A "disadvantaged community exhibition" was held at Treasure Hill, beginning a discourse and action to preserve the community and prevent demolition. In 1990, the government changed its policy and decided to preserve the settlement as an "arts community exhibition area." In December 2011, a meeting of the Taipei City Bureau of Culture Cultural Heritage Evaluation Committee decided to designate the Treasure Hill settlement as an "arts community exhibition area." In May 2003, the "Art Village Plan for the Treasure Hill Historical Settlement" was put in place with the aim of revitalizing this historic community. In 2006, the Urban Planning Committee, Ministry of Interior approved changes to the urban plan to create a "Historical Settlement Preservation Zone," planning a new vision for preserving and finding new uses for the settlement. In 2006, the New York Times rated Treasure Hill as one of Taiwan's most unique sites.

Zhao-Li Kuo's *Traditional Settlement Space Research Method* (1994) shows that settlement is defined as a social, spaced, ecological, and culturally self-evidential living community. Settlement, may be a city, village, or even simple community, is a significant collective living unit which has no range of the size difference. Relating to the sympathy and the regional culture development, settlement constructs the

establishment of communication pathway, social ethics, and the role of relationship preservation in this life community. The whole concept of this piece is accomplished; but lacks the formation of settlement.

Yun Wang's *Study from the World Settlement* (2010) points out that a settlement is refer to the humanity congregation of life aggregate. The concept extension of settlement contains two parts: Village and City. A village is "the older humanity congregation of life aggregate"; on the other hand, a city is "today's humanity congregation of life aggregate". From the essence point of view, city is the identical characteristic that most people act during the process of accumulation and accomplished by restrains through legal form. Alternatively, a village is "spontaneously" constructed based on village user's own request. In compare, both city and village are the community that humanity lives and produces based on the reciprocity; which constructs the concept of "settlement". In contrast, a city is formulated, but a village is spontaneous. This article expresses the thought of settlement architectural design and the exploration between human and land vein, but lacks attention of the cultural spirit of settlement.

2.2. Special Features

The features of Treasure Hill's cultural landscape can be divided into two major dimensions. The first is a spatial form constructed without outside help. As an underclass limited by their economic capabilities and land use regulations, they adopted a gradual approach to construction, building houses brick by brick on different levels according to the lie of the land. Over time, this produced the rich, mismatched style that characterizes the settlement. Second, although Treasure Hill lacks the cohesive identity derived from religious belief or clan kinship found in other traditional settlements in Taiwan, facing the need to survive, the community developed into both a place to stay for a short period but also a home in which to live. Facing with poor living conditions, the residents fostered a feeling of shared living and jointly produced a history of urban development that should not be forgotten.

The Treasure Hill settlement preservation plan was based on ecological conservation and humanitarian considerations. In terms of the preservation of historical sites in Taiwan, the Treasure Hill preservation plan was unusual in that it aimed to preserve an entire settlement and the community living there based on its spatial and social context. The project hoped as far as possible to achieve "the resettlement of disadvantaged groups on the original site," and on the basis of the new status of the "Treasure Hill shared living community", apply innovative and sustainable development goals to create a "living, producing, and ecological" shared living space.

2.3. Preservation Mechanisms and Groups

Between 2001 and 2012, some of the illegal buildings nearest the river were demolished. During protests against the demolitions, the National Taiwan University planning team discovered that when faced with swings in state policy, and issues surrounding the preservation or demolition, and adaptive re-use or development of disadvantaged communities, effective resistance is only possible when the social practice of group participation in the subjective community is realized. At the same time, this form of participation can rebuild community cohesion that was previously breaking down under the pressure of demolition and bring about effective grassroots publicness. With the aim of encouraging participation among disadvantaged groups, a "Treasure Hill working group" made up of around twenty people including students in different departments and National Taiwan University, the National Taiwan University Graduate Institute of Building and Planning, and various foundations was set up. Upholding the spirit of community building, the group tried to get involved in communities as a civil society partner. The group's short-term goal was to encourage residents to participate in public affairs through regular community activities. Actual measures included turning vacant space in the community into a community lounge and reading room. The group used participatory design and planning as the basis for planning a pergola, public toilets, outdoor movie theater, and grocery store. A weekly Treasure Hill newspaper was issued, outdoor movie screenings arranged, the life stories of residents written, and residents who were moved away from the area next to the river followed up.

Aside from holding community building activities within the settlement, the team also began work on policy promotion and building links with other civil society actors. The group used their intellectual and

popular influence to promote the institutionalization of settlement preservation within government departments. At the same time, they tried to link together with civil society organizations, including student groups, community schools, and non-governmental organizations. The aim was to secure more resources to look after and revitalize the community, laying the basis of the preservation of the settlement. From the above, we can see that the preservation group and mechanisms operated with a community building spirit, and took a civil society partner role when participating in community work.

2.4. Preservation Method and Adaptive Re-use Plan

The ideal, sustainable community is planned by bringing together settlement preservation, social welfare, exhibitions by resident artists, a place for young people to stay, environmental conservation, appropriate technology, green architecture, and cooperative management. Future spatial planning of Treasure Hill will mainly take place across four operational dimensions: "Treasure Hill home," "artists in residence," "youth activity center" and "ecology and environment learning center." After restoration of the settlement was completed in 2008, its day-to-day management was contracted out, with the Bureau of Culture, Taipei City setting aside an annual budget to subsidize the running costs. The Treasure Hill shared living settlement restoration project (third phase) currently underway was put out for tender on November 20, 2008. The estimated completion date of this work has already been delayed.

2.5. Case Assessment

The work to preserve Treasure Hill is ultimately the result of a series of social protests. The preservation and restoration work is already underway. Looking at cases of preservation of historical sites in Taiwan, the vision for the future preservation and operation of Treasure Hill has already revealed a new way of thinking. It is hoped that the Treasure Hill can act as a successful example of preservation and adaptive re-use of historical space.

3. Conclusion

At present, most efforts to preserve historical space in Taiwan are limited to the preservation of the actual historical site, and are relatively weak on conserving the neighboring space as well as the style and appearance of the city. The change in the spatial appearance and local cultural meanings that come when modern society enters traditional communities reflects a gradual loss of a way of life and pattern of thinking from local society. We should understand the process where by local knowledge is constructed and how local residents experience and feel the vicissitudes of life. Appropriate community preservation and development should be carried out to allow communities to become relevant to the times, and allowing the next generation to learn about the genesis of and changes in their community.

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