

Research on Place-Making from the Perspective of Healthy City - Take Guangzhou Pantang Village as a Case

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Abstract. With the rapid development of cities and in response to the challenges posed to human health by urbanization, the 1980s saw a new connotation given to healthy cities by academics and a global drive to build healthy cities. As the basic unit for implementing the healthy city strategy, place-making has a close relationship with the construction of healthy cities. Based on theories related to healthy cities and place-making, and the changes in urban regeneration models in China and the West, this paper investigates how the place-making approach of Pan Tang Village in Guangzhou has contributed to the healthy urban development. The research finds that by tapping and integrating the community's cultural resources, activating the community's historical spaces and places, while improving community functions and innovating and developing cultural industries, the Pan Tang Village effectively improves the regeneration of the community's living system, forming a rational means of urban regeneration and promoting healthy and sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Healthy city, place-making, urban renewal, Pan Tang Village.

1. Introduction

Cities are places of high concentration of population, economy and culture. Urbanization is the general trend of human social development all over the world, and it is the objective requirement and inevitable result of the development of social productivity. Although the rapid development of urbanization has given a strong impetus to the development of the world economy, it has also made human beings and the urban environment on which they depend to survive face severe challenges.

In China, since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, local governments have often overemphasized the construction of new urban areas and urban image projects and lacked attention to public issues in old areas, resulting in many old areas facing urban health problems such as environmental pollution, traffic congestion, poor living conditions, and weak infrastructure. Admittedly, Chinese cities and neighborhoods in the past were scaled by human reference, and small-scale neighborhoods were suitable for pedestrian activities and could maintain a harmonious relationship with people, and the street space formed by them was full of health and vitality. Today, the historic districts in contemporary cities are an integral part of the city and a microcosm of the macro society. The health of historical districts not only involves public health issues, but also important to create a livable living environment and enhance the sense of belonging in the community through place-making.

This paper takes the place-making of Pantang Village in Guangzhou as a case, by exploring how the village can improve the living environment and spiritual needs of villagers from a microscopic perspective while preserving local characteristics and local traditions, thus promoting the sustainable and healthy development of the whole Pantang Village community.

2. Healthy cities and place studies

In the 19th century, along with rapid industrialization and urbanization, serious urban health problems ensued. In the 1840s, the British government established the Urban Health Commission, which promoted the formation of the world's first public health policy, and the major issues it addressed fall within the scope of today's urban planning. Benjamin Ward Richardson developed the

first healthy city model. The city in this model has low-density land development, well-developed public transportation, ample parkland, good drinking water supply and sewage systems, and a health center in every neighborhood [4]. Later, Ebenezer Howard and Frederic James Osborn attempted to address the problems of urban depression and sprawl through integrated urban planning in the garden cities model [5]. The 1980s were a time of booming healthy cities. In 1984, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), the "Healthy Toronto 2000" conference was held in Toronto, Canada, where the concept of "New Public Health" was introduced. Subsequently, WHO made the first comprehensive elaboration of "healthy city", which is a city that continuously creates and improves the natural and social environment and expands community resources so that people can be supported to enjoy life and realize their full potential [1].

Healthy urban planning differs from traditional urban planning in that it focuses on the activities of people, meeting their needs for housing, safety, and participation in social activities, while avoiding damage to the ecological environment by people. Jill Grant, Patricia Manuel and Darrell Joudrey pointed out that a good urban plan is not one in which we manage or dominate the ecosystem, but one in which we intervene in the impact of human activities on the ecosystem [3]. Thus, from an urban planning perspective, a healthy city can be understood as one that focuses on "human health" in all aspects of urban planning, construction, and management. Similarly, the study of place is also based on the "human" dimension, linking the city with human identity, memory, imagination, and attachment.

The concept of place was first proposed by John Kirtland Wright, who believed that place is an area that carries subjectivity [9]. According to Yifu Tuan, "place" emphasizes the meaning of human emotional experience and is alive, while "space" refers to pure, physical, natural, abstract and geometric space, which is inanimate [6]. A space can only be called a place when it is given cultural meaning [8]. Place is a center of meaning and a social construct, a field of care, containing complex social relations. Humans generally share a "topophilia," a deep emotional connection to a particular area, and personal experience is central to the creation of place [7]. John Kirtland Wright summarizes this as *geopiety*, a belief in and worship of the natural and human environment [10].

Therefore, the reproduction of urban space in the past three decades has begun to consider its relationship with society, its relationship with human spiritual emotions, and its potential symbolic meaning.

3. Changes in urban renewal models

Since World War II, developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States have carried out a series of urban renewal practices based on physical space, including slum elimination programs, urban center redevelopment and new town expansion. However, the housing-led urban regeneration in this period also led to a lot of urban problems, such as the rigid function of central areas, suburbanization of population, and impoverishment. Subsequently, under the influence of neo-liberalism, the urban renewal model moved from government-led to capital-driven real estate market-led stage, which regarded cities as economic and social containers and neglected human emotions and historical veins, resulting in the gradual loss of citizens' collective memory and local identity. The values and goals of urban regeneration have changed significantly since the 1980s, with an increasing focus on the needs of the micro-entities, especially the preservation of historical and cultural heritage, community networks and local characteristics. The scale and approach of urban renewal have changed significantly, replaced by small-scale, incremental regeneration. As a result, place-making has become a universally accepted goal [2].

In 1978, the Chinese government officially implemented the policy of reform and opening up. Under the "investment-led" rapid construction and high reliance on real estate, many local governments in China redeveloped old areas that did not match the economic growth on a large scale. In this phase, the renewed old areas ended up with high-rise buildings replacing the low-rise and high-density urban fabric, resulting in a complete market-based restructuring of the urban fabric of the old

areas. In the early days of the reform and opening-up policy, Guangzhou's urban renewal was mainly unit-led or government-contracted. Since the 21st century, Guangzhou has adopted the idea of redeveloping the whole area and has achieved certain practical results in the urban construction campaign before and after the Asian Games in 2010. In recent years, under the background of "revitalizing the stock of land", Guangzhou has taken the lead in exploring innovative models of community regeneration in order to cope with the real dilemma of intensifying community participation and highlighting social conflicts. On January 1, 2016, the "Guangzhou Urban Renewal Measures" was officially implemented, and Guangzhou urban renewal reversed gradually from a full demolition and redevelopment model to a place-making model exploration. Among them, Pantang Village became the first example of Guangzhou's place-making regeneration approach.

4. Pantang village and place-making

4.1. Introduction of Pantang Village

Pantang Village, located in Liwan District, Guangzhou, has a history of more than 900 years since its foundation, with a current population of about 6,000. It is the only vernacular settlement in the old city of Guangzhou that retains a complete Qing Dynasty pattern, texture and typical simple features of a clan living together with many surnames. In October 2007, due to the expansion of the Liwan Lake Park, the first round of expropriation and demolition of the village of Pantang was launched. In September 2013, the construction plan of "Xiguan Square" was proposed, which involved the demolition of about 13,000 square meters in Pantang Village, but for various reasons, the plan was shelved soon after. The second round of demolition work was also stopped in 2013. After two rounds of demolition and stagnation, the village has become an urban ruin. The northern side of the village was turned into a logistics depot for the surrounding wholesale market, leaving the entire village showing a dilapidated, disorganized, lack of facilities and prominent hidden dangers. Meanwhile, the continuous disorderly transformation within the village has led to the loss of local historical values, while the impact of complex property rights and the migration of non-villagers has led to the functional decline of the village (See Figure 1 to 2).

Faced with the gradual disintegration of the traditional village spatial form and the significant decline in the quality of living space, the need for regeneration to improve the livelihood conditions has gradually formed a social consensus.

4.2. Place-making in Pantang Village

In 2016, the place-making project in Pantang Village was officially launched, covering an area of about 32,128 square meters and involving 165 requisitioned houses, which is the first place-making project in Guangzhou with the purpose of "preservation". Place-making for the purpose of "preservation" is to maintain the current pattern of Pantang Village, under the premise of maintaining the status quo, specific transformation strategies for specific environments and problems, from the micro level to solve the problem precisely, and gradually improve the overall habitat and spatial quality of the village (See Figure 3 to 4).

Among them, the public space design process of Pantang Village is an attempt of "participatory place-making". As the Beitei Festival is a traditional folklore event in Pantang Village, the planners used the festival as an opportunity to engage with the community for the first time in 2017. At that time, the planners used the festival as an opportunity to enter the village for the first time in 2017, trying to establish a first step of trust with the community. Later, the planners insisted on visiting Pantang Village at least once a week each, and through continuous face-to-face interviews and collective communication and consultation, they eventually sorted out the traditional clan system and traditional historical landscape of the village, while tapping into the real needs of village life.

On the basis of establishing mutual trust, the planners gradually carried out public participation activities, convening residents to hold public space discussions, photo exhibitions, etc. Once, the discussion on the restoration design of the only remaining ancestral hall in the village, Li's Dunben

Hall, opened the door to discuss public space planning and design with residents. As a result, the planners were able to discuss specific planning proposals with residents of different ethnic groups, and used the discussion of the ancestral hall as an opportunity to discuss the planning and design of other important public spaces in the village.

Furthermore, the planners also attempted to restore the "Historical Memory Map of Pantang Village", in which the traditional ceremonial paths, historical heritage repositories and other key points were implemented into the conservation plan to protect them from destruction. At the same time, they also sketched out a "Map of the Future Vision of Pantang Village" for the residents, including a food market, public toilets, a canteen, a health station, an activity center for the elderly, an exhibition center, and a library.

In addition to the regeneration of the relatively introverted and closed traditional village living space, Pantang Village has been revitalized by placing new businesses and functions, allowing more than 40 new tenants to move in, with a regeneration rate of 85% and attracting a total of about 1.12 million visitors (See Figure 5 to 6). At the same time, the village will continue to introduce traditional and modern business resources such as artists' workshops, new youth art creation studios, traditional culture exhibition and exchange space, and strike a balance between preserving the privacy of the aboriginal life and publicizing the village, creating a diversified business environment in which traditional and modern cultures coexist, making the village as a sustainable living settlement that is compatible with the modern city.

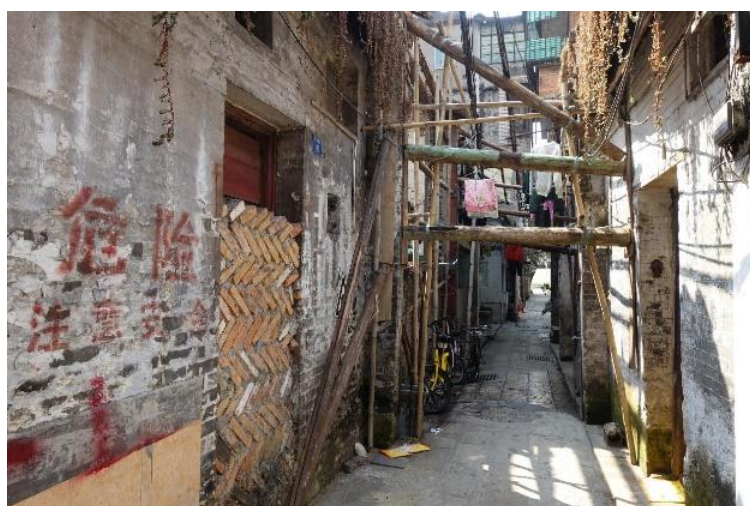


Figure 1. Pantang Village before place-making

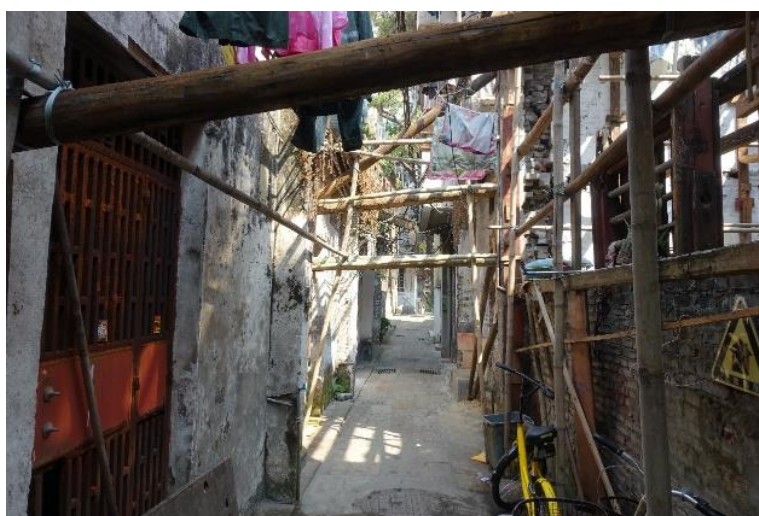


Figure 2. Pantang Village before place-making

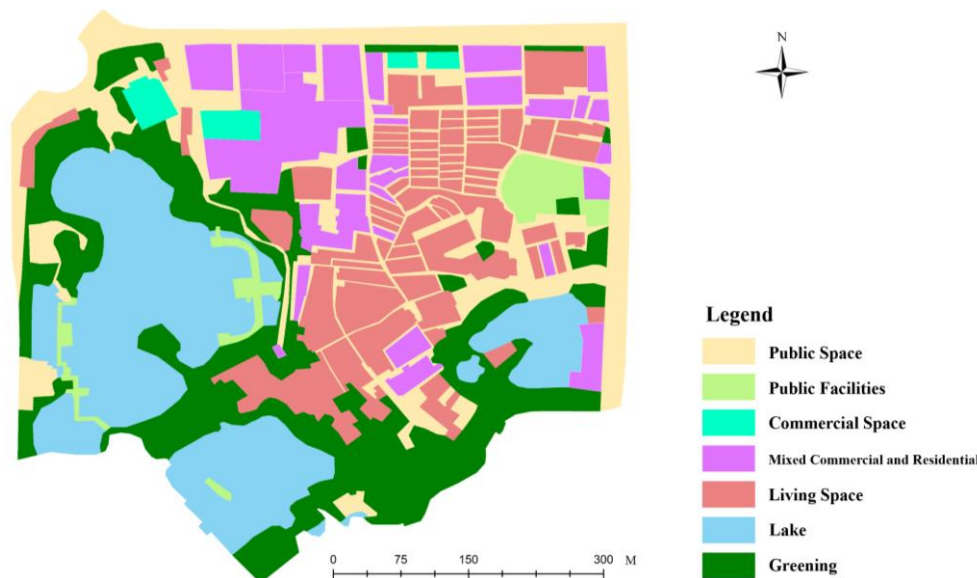


Figure 3. Urban function distribution map of Pantang Village in 2005 (It is drawn through documentation and field inspections)

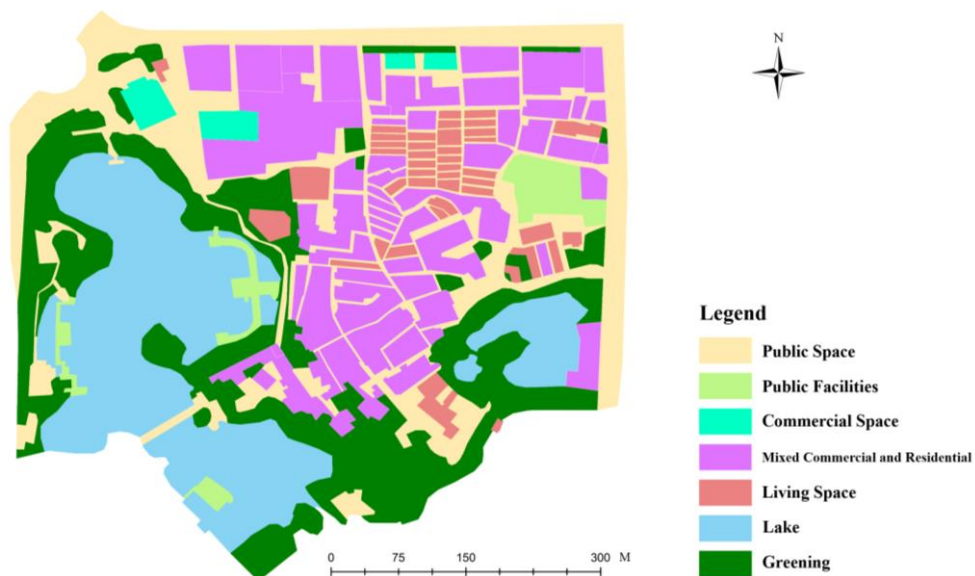


Figure 4. Urban function distribution map of Pantang Village in 2021 (It is drawn through documentation and field inspections)



Figure 5. Pantang Village after place-making



Figure 6. Pantang Village after place-making

5. Conclusion - the role of place-making in the healthy urban development

As one of the first pilot cities in China to carry out the regeneration of old communities, it is evident from the place-making of Pantang Village in Guangzhou that the core of the village regeneration involves the comprehensive coordination of different interests in economic, cultural, social and environmental aspects. In general, the role of place-making for healthy urban development can be reflected in the following aspects.

(1) Pantang Village carefully understands the various details of residents' lives in the process of place-making, so as to gradually improve the corresponding supporting facilities of public services and effectively improve the living environment of the residents. In addition, after the planners have functionally upgraded and spatially reshaped the old buildings in the neighborhood, it meets the living and consumption needs of various people in the society, enriches the humanistic connotation of the historic district, and truly achieves a balance between conservation and regeneration of historical culture, turning the past static and rigid conservation into dynamic and flexible conservation.

(2) Community public space is a place of daily life, which is endowed with the process of daily life meaning. The place-making of Pantang Village can deeply explore the common values formed by those homogeneous people who are interrelated in life, culture and psychology in the process of living. Then, the subsequent design focuses on the emotional connection between people and the community space to restore the residents' sense of place, maintain the traditional community network, and preserve the rights of the original residents to live in Pantang Village.

(3) The place-making in Pantang Village does not rely entirely on the local government, let alone on commercial capital, but rather inspires more residents to pay attention to public affairs by collecting their voices, offering planning advices, and creating a communication platform. This not only helps to highlight the subjectivity of residents in community regeneration, but also helps to create a place that truly meets the needs of residents' identity and emotional attachment, reflecting the transformation of the roles of the three main actors: government, market and community.

Overall, the place-making of Guangzhou's Pantang Village follows the concept of a healthy city. The core of this project is oriented towards humanistic care and equity and justice, and the bottom-up model of public participation is adopted in the implementation process. By effectively sorting out the historical connotations of Pantang Village and understanding the modern needs of each individual in the village, and then with the professional vision of the planners, a community space with a sense of place is created and a healthy community living system is reconstructed.

In the long run, the place-making of Pantang Village will not only improve the living environment, but also attract young people who have moved away or migrated workers to return to participate in place-making activities, thus resolving the conflict between conservation and development,

promoting the appropriate regeneration and rational operation of Pantang Village in the future, and achieving a healthy and sustainable development.

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