

Study on Urban Renewal Policies for the Urban Renewal Strategy Review

HKU Research Team

Progress Report 1

As of October 4, 2008

Inception Report

1. The Final Inception Report was submitted and uploaded to the Urban Renewal Strategy Review website on 29 September 2008.

Literature Review

2. Literature and document search related to the cities of Singapore, Taipei, Shanghai, and Guangzhou was mostly completed. However, literature related to Seoul and particularly Tokyo was still limited to academic publications and official documents were still lacking. We expected that there would be substantial translation of documents to and from Japanese required in the process of the study.

Study Visit

Taipei (Sub-team: Joseph Chan, Feon Chau & a local research assistant)

3. Visit to Taipei was arranged on 12-17 October, 2008. The tentative schedule included:
 - NGOs including the Secretary General of Community Development Institute (社區營造學會秘書長), Chairman of the Taipei City Beitau Culture Association (臺北市北投文化協會), Taipei Urban Renewal Fund (臺北市都市更新基金會), and Taipei Professionals for Urban Redevelopment Society (臺北市專業者都市發展協會)
 - Academic including: China Culture University Urban Administration and Environment Planning Department (中國文化大學市政暨環境規劃學系), and a dinner meeting with a number of Taiwan academics.
 - Government including: Taipei Urban Development Bureau(台北市政府都市發展局).
 - Possible site visits might include: Red House(紅樓)/Hwa Shan Cultural District(華山藝文特區, 台北酒廠)/Beitau Urban Renewal Project(北投文化基金會的社區更新個案).

Seoul (Sub-team: CK Law & Vincent Lee (RA) +Translator)

4. A visit to Seoul was scheduled on 14-18 October, 2008. With the assistance from the Seoul City Government, the preservation of Bukchon Hanok Village (北村韓屋) and one Substandard Housing Redevelopment District would be visited.
5. A visit to Seoul Development Institute (SDI) and an interview with Professor Won-Yong Kwon, President of SDI, and Professor of urban planning at the University of Seoul was being arranged.

Singapore (Sub-team: C.K. Law & Cherry Chan (SRA))

6. Study visit was arranged on 29-31 October, 2008 with the assistance from the Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA).
7. A visit to the Far East Square (a privately led conservation project) was arranged and briefing would be given by the ex-Financial Executive Officer Mr. Chia Boon Pin, and the current project director Ms Serene Oon of the Far East Organization, a subsidiary of the Sino Group. Another briefing by Mr. Ong Lay Hua, Senior Architect of Urban Planning & Design Division of URA would be made in the context of the China Square conservation where the Far East Square conservation project was just part of it.
8. With the assistance from the Singapore URA, a redevelopment site was being identified. The Singapore URA usually allows lease to expire and would consider extension of lease on a case-to-case basis subject to the assessment of whether the proposal of lease extension is consistent with the development or concept plan in the area. Thus, we would prefer to study a case where land lease has been extended and in such case the proposal and the development plan in the area can be readily identified and studied. The preference in site selection was, therefore:
 - First priority: a completed private redevelopment project where, a few years ago, the land lease with existing residential buildings on the site had expired, the URA allowed the lessees to extend the lease and subsequently redeveloped the site and buildings.
 - Second priority: Before the expiry of a land lease, the lessees applied to redevelop the site, subsequently approved and redeveloped.
 - Third priority: a completed private redevelopment project where a few years ago the land lease with existing residential buildings on the site had expired, the URA had subsequently resumed the land and sold it to developers for redevelopment.

9. Another meeting with the Singapore URA on the current issues of urban renewal in Singapore was currently under arrangement.

Shanghai (Sub-team: Wong Yu-cheung, Carmel Lee KM & a local Research Assistant)

10. A visit was paid to Shanghai during 19-23 September 2008 in the course of a Financial Times Urban Regeneration Summit held in Shanghai during the same period. Two visits were paid. One was to Dr. Xiao Da from Tong Ji University, and the other is to the Shanghai Development Reform Committee.
11. Arrangement of site visits and further interviews with government officials were still in the process of arrangement. The tentative plan was to select a Lilong (里弄) preservation project and a privately led redevelopment project. Assistance was obtained from the Liaison office of the Central People's Government in HKSAR, academic colleagues at Tong Ji University and a local research assistant.

Guangzhou (Sub-team: Wong Yu-cheung, Carmel Lee, and Anna Ng (RA))

12. With the assistance from the Liaison office of the Central People's Government in HKSAR, visits were still under arrangement.

Tokyo (Sub-team: Ernest Chui, Lisa Ho, Peggy Ko (RA) + translator)

13. With the assistance from the Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong, contact was made with the Tokyo city government. Owing to the recent changes in the Japanese Government, arrangement was still in progress. Our part-time research assistant Peggy Ko was in Tokyo since late September to assist arrangement. As communications between the research team and the corresponding parts in the Tokyo city government required translation from time to time, progress was slower than expected.

Invitation of Speakers to Urban Renewal Seminar

14. Overseas speakers are being identified in the course of arranging for the study visits.

Focus Groups Participation

15. The research team will have one member attending each focus group session. Up to October 4, 2008, the research team had participated in the focus groups held on September 17, September 24 and October 2, namely, the focus groups for academics and professional groups (Science & Works), academics and professional groups (Arts & Humanity), and advocacy groups respectively.