

Urban community regeneration and community vitality revitalization through participatory planning in China

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ABSTRACT

Urban regeneration has been a major concern in urban studies globally. China's urbanization is transitioning from a growing space to regenerating existing communities, which calls for reevaluating the newly emerging trend of urbanization in China. This study aims to investigate China's increasing focus on urban regeneration through the practice of community redevelopment, with an emphasis on public participation in community planning and how communities re-archive vitality and public favor. Considering the *Shapowei* community in the city of Xiamen, Fujian province as a case, we introduced a method to progressively rebuild local residents' confidence and obtain local government support and public engagement where participation planning has been considered an effective method of regeneration, rather than demolishing old buildings and constructing new, large-scale buildings as in the previous state of urbanization. The findings suggest that local resident participation plays a crucial role in urban planning and regeneration. Micro-construction and fishing-port culture can be catalysts in reproducing local community vitality; public consensus and participation are deeply-rooted in community regeneration with multi-stakeholders' involvement; and third-party stakeholders like scholars, local resident volunteers, and social groups contribute to the overall success of local community regeneration. The implications of this study are of great value to community planning, and planners must perform necessary actions to regenerate China's deteriorated communities.

Keywords:

Urban regeneration
Participatory planning
Urban vitality
Community *Shapowei*

1. Introduction

In the context of rapid urbanization, urban regeneration has become the main paradigm for urban and rural development (Li, Cheng, et al., 2014; Hui, Liang, et al., 2018). Since socio-economic prosperity promotes urban diversity and the awakening of civil awareness, top-down planning approaches may no longer be suitable in the current urban regeneration process (Li et al., 2019). In the face of diverse and complicated planning realities, policymakers must pay more attention to public participation in the city (Taylor, 2007). Participation planning with multi-stakeholders has become a hot topic in the urban planning domain (Creighton, 1994). Particularly, practices of urban regeneration and micro-transformation in China offer lessons on how to motivate diverse stakeholders with active involvement to participate in urban redevelopment projects (Li et al., 2019; Lang et al., 2020). Our research team has engaged in similar projects in other cities, for example, Xiamen (Lang et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2018), Guangzhou (Guo et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019; Zhang & Li, 2016), Zhuhai, and Shenyang.

As a basic unit of modern society, an inner-city community serves as an effective carrier for experimenting with community participation. However, the idea of community participation has been so widely expressed that it does not seem to clearly define anything. Community participation planning in China is still in a nascent stage (Tian, 2016). In terms of interaction of traditional subjects, such as the local government and residents, it is difficult to resolve the predicament of passive public participation. In 2008, the Urban-Rural Planning Law was enacted. This law evidently creates fundamental requirements for public participation in the urban and rural planning process. In addition, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the establishment of a social governance structure for public participation, which provides institutional support for third-party forces in community planning. Then, the Chinese central government unveiled a New-type of Urbanization Plan (2014–2020), which prioritizes public participation; strengthens and innovates social governance at the community level; and achieves positive interactions between the government, society, and public (State Council, 2014). However, little is known about what exactly public participation is supposed to accomplish in the urban regeneration process and the specific impacts of public participation (Day, 1997).

Urban vitality is a term used in city performance assessments. In *Good City Form*, Lynch (1984) defines urban vitality as the degree to which urban form supports vital functions, biological requirements, and human capabilities. It is considered to be an authentic power and energy of urban development (Landry, 2000), reflecting the level of human activity with different spatial and temporal features (Li et al., 2020)—a commitment of urban space's vitality and advancement of urban function development (He et al., 2018). It springs from good urban form, well-developed urban functions, and competent urban activities (Oakes, 2006). With the new urbanization theory as a backdrop, the significance of urban vitality to sustain urban development becomes remarkable, particularly taking into account the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Economically and environmentally, numerous cities around the world are facing a recession in well-being and quality of life, energy attenuation problems, and unsustainable urban development (Montgomery, 1998). These lessons are learned from Detroit, Glasgow, Liverpool, Leipzig, Germany, etc. For China, as a representative of developing countries, methods to make cities more vibrant and recreate urban vitality pose challenges in addressing urban transformation socially, economically, and environmentally. Within the city, community vitality between different urban communities is apparent. However, little has been found on reproducing neighborhood vitality in the inner city.

This article aims to use the *Shapowei* community in Xiamen to explore the application of participation planning in urban regeneration, and the impact of a collaborative mechanism for different social groups on reproducing urban vitality. This study is informed by literature on urban vitality, cultural-led urban regeneration, and public participation. Stories of the *Shapowei* community advance a perception of challenges and complexities of community empowerment in the city—those involved in community empowerment, where they come from, and how these people recreate vitality through activities and planning. These insights explain how the reproduction of vitality is articulated through participation planning and how local residents, social groups, and local governments reuse

and renovate existing buildings and public spaces as processes that contribute to it. The contribution of *Shapowei's* regeneration to urban vitality goes beyond the representation of the fishing community as an attractive object of entertainment and collective memories.

2. Literature review

2.1. Community and urban vitality

"Community" is a complicated word. Researchers (see Ptzyk et al., 2018; Putnam, 2000; Titz et al., 2018) have questioned and parsed its meaning from social, cultural, political, historical, and environmental dimensions, and a common interpretation emphasizes human connections and interaction in a particular geographic location or physical space (e.g., MacQueen et al., 2001). This notion of community offers a visible spatial dimension that illustrates a concept grounded in geographic terms. Community, in this research, is defined as a group of people with different backgrounds who engage and interact in structured social ties, share common perspectives, some form of identity, and/or connection to a defined area.

The urban vitality of a neighborhood is defined by its diversified population participating in various social, economic, and political activities that vigorously form lively streets of distinctive identity (Chion, 2009). Since the 1950s, scholars and practitioners have argued that urban vitality is a key component of urban planning, and it has evolved as a concept of diverse meanings. Urban scholars like Jane Jacobs (1993) have emphasized the importance of diversity and heterogeneity for community and street vitality. Actually, urban vitality includes urban, physical, economic, and cultural aspects. Physical vitality refers to the needs of urban residents that provide a good physical environment, daily order, and the spatial nature of memory (Chen et al., 2016; Chen & Tao, 2017). Conversely economic and cultural vitality refers to science and technology innovation, enterprise innovation, and the creativity of arts and culture (Edward et al., 2006; Montgomery, 1998; Sasaki, 2010). However, a dramatic increase in population and land use led by the acceleration of industrialization and urbanization caused serious damage to the quality of the physical environment and neighborhood vitality. Since the 2000s, the revival and reconstruction of urban vitality has received significant attention from international academic researchers (see Chen et al., 2019; Chion, 2009; Hillier et al., 1993; Hui, Li, et al., 2018; Sasaki, 2010; Park et al., 2012).

2.2. Cultural-led urban regeneration

Culturally creative development generates post-productivism urban communities. Confronting the changes caused by rapid urbanization and social transformation, parts of cities employ culture creativity to bolster urban regeneration and reshape the collective memory that is the source for the local characteristics and landscape which can evoke people's past memories (Roza, 2016). The combination of urban regeneration and cultural creativity dates back to the 1970s and early 1980s, at a time when cities were undergoing impressive economic restructuring (Lin & Hsing, 2009). Stimulated by a culture-led scheme, decision-makers and urban planners have disclosed the muscular power of culture in urban regeneration (Peck, 2005). Culture creativity regeneration is not only a physical and spatial regeneration practice, but also takes into account the reshaping of social and cultural diversity in local communities (Li, Lin, et al., 2014). In China, cultural creativity is becoming a significant scheme, and constituting beautification initiatives in urban regeneration (Lang et al., 2016; Wang, 2009). However, little research focuses on cultural creativity for urban regeneration at the neighborhood level.

Culture is the agent, and the space of community is the medium, the result of cultural landscape (Sauer, 1925). Attention to Lefebvre's (1991) theory on the production of space has been given in the social sciences and extended to urban geography. Given the complex process of emerging urbanization and globalization, space and time do not exist (Goonewardena et al., 2008). The new space-time configuration or restructure of cultural landscape is determined to integrate city, space, and time in a single, comprehensive theory, enabling the understanding of spatial process at different levels. Recent research regards urban vitality as part of the creative class concepts and gentrification. Studies of creative cities and cultural geography have underlined the position of cultural production in neighborhood upgrading (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000). In an explanation on economic inequality, cultural-led regeneration has been highlighted by numerous studies on gentrification (Ley, 2003). Recently, the challenges for human geographers producing narratives of cultural landscape and memory have been highlighted in one crucial topic, which is the amnesic phenomenon during urban redevelopment (Foster, 2004; Roza, 2016). Many studies have found that due to design disorder and a lack of collective memory during the urban regeneration process, the culture of cities and neighborhoods tended to be similar (Guo et al., 2018). Neighborhood spaces are products created by groups of residents; yet, how space (neighborhoods) is produced or reproduced is worth investigating from diverse, dialectically interconnected dimensions.

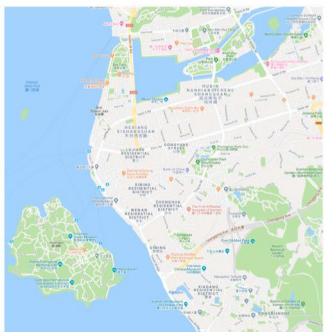
2.3. Citizen participation and participation planning

Amidst globalization and urbanization, rural and urban spaces are continuously being integrated (McGee, 2008). The market economy constantly impacts traditional social relations, and consequently traditional top-down planning methods have gradually become divorced from reality, rendering them difficult to implement (Allen, 2003); this is in addition to several other issues. Meanwhile, with an increase in residents' awareness, there has been a rise in demands for rights to participate in community discussions, decision-making, and community affairs. Traditional planning approaches may no longer be suitable for community recognition, and thus participatory planning approaches are beginning to gain larger applicability.

Incorporating citizens in planning is the bedrock for good urban regeneration practice (Li et al., 2019). Citizen participation has a long history in western countries; the most famous research work was the publication of Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" in 1969.



(a) Xiamen Island



(b) *Shapowei*'s surrounding
environment **Fig.**

(c) *Shapowei* site

1. Location of *Shapowei* community in Xiamen city.

Adapted by the authors from Google Maps in 2018.

Citizens have crucial "ordinary knowledge" that can facilitate planners' understanding of local values and resources that might not be distinct to an outsider (Innes, 1998). Searching for public participation can also shed light on the desires and needs of the community to certify that neighborhoods are well-built and developed (Gans, 1993). Various subjects are represented by governments, planners, the public, and social organizations to express their interest and demand in the process of participation to ensure fairness and enhance citizen buy-in and trust in the process (Burby, 2003; Creighton, 2005). Through review of international scholarship, we may argue that citizen participation is not merely one practice, or one initiative related to planning. Rather, citizen participation is a range of practices and approaches associated with important decision-making and opinions embodied in the whole planning process. However, in China's current urban regeneration planning process, the public frequently lacks opportunities to be involved in planning design and planning decision processes (Zhai and Ng, 2013), or planners fail to adequately incorporate public concerns into the final plans (King et al., 1998; Lowry et al., 1997). Given the significance of citizen involvement, it is necessary to build a communication platform for residents, the government, and planners. This approach facilitates residents to participate in various aspects of community construction,

enhances development in an equal manner, and revitalizes neighborhoods (Ryu et al., 2018).

Community participation planning has been progressively recognized as a consistent system of decision-making. Participatory planning is frequently considered a part of community development (Creighton, 1994). However, community participation is yet to translate into a “revolution in practice” (Davies, 2001), especially in developing countries, where citizens’ awareness of participation is low (Khwaja, 2004; Mohammadi, 2010). Traditional participatory planning theory typically ignores the potential influence of political, social, and economic contexts on individuals (Jones, 2003; Mostert, 2003). Internal factors, such as an individual’s environment, economic status, race, family, and faith potentially affect the degree of people’s active participation (Baum, 1998). From this perspective, increased attention must be accorded to the possibility of “institutional background” in community participation. A participatory community planning method suitable for developing countries would be constructed by combining participatory planning theory with a political and social background (Kotus & Sowada, 2017; Mattila, 2016).

3. Reproducing urban vitality for urban regeneration in China 3.1. Data collection methods

As part of the empirical analysis, in-depth interviews with local residents and different social groups were conducted in 2016. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant officers from different government levels, directly involved in the formulation and implementation of the plan, between July and December 2016. Five interviewees from the Xiamen Planning Bureau, Xiagang Street Office, *Shapowei* neighborhood committee, and Xiamen Urban Planning Institute were involved in the research project. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of the urban regeneration process.

To better explore the rationale for the *Shapowei* community, multiple visits were made to gain a more thorough understanding of public participation and the process from planning to the final stage of enforcement, from 2016 to 2019. Participant observations of various community activities were undertaken during 2016 and 2017. In addition, considerable efforts were made to obtain relevant news reports from the government’s official website, news portal websites, secondary data from planning and community organizations, and academic journals to learn about the historical development of the *Shapowei* community. Photographs were also taken at various spots within and around the selected case areas.

3.2. Historical context and landscape in the *Shapowei* community

The *Shapowei* community is located in the southwest of Xiamen’s *Siming* District. It faces the South China Sea to the southwest, is bordered by the Xiamen Island *Huandao* Road, and is near the intersection of *Chenggong* Avenue and *Lujiang* Road. This area has a natural sheltered dock. In the early period of China’s republican era during the rise of fishing ports, *Shapowei* became an important fishing port for Xiamen and China’s southeast coastal region. But with the completion of the *Yanwu* Bridge in 2003, larger fishing boats were unable to enter the sheltered dock. While *Shapowei* retains a lot of community value because of its geographical characteristics, it has gradually lost its commercial value and has transformed into a traditional residential district of old Xiamen near the sheltered dock. According to the statistics of the publication recorded the history of *Xiagang* Street, named *Xiagang Zhi*, in 1937, the number of registered fishing boats was 597, and the total fishing population was 5189, of which 2490 relied on fishing (Zhang et al., 2018). In 2011, the total number of households in the community was 2070, of which 222 lived on the sheltered dock side; the permanent population was 4998, nearly half of which were considered to be a floating population (Fig. 1).

Shapowei’s vitality comes from street activities and the fishing-port culture. Due to its unique street landscape, *Shapowei* not only functions as an old Xiamen residential area, but also has commercial value in leisure and entertainment sectors; it is an excellent place for sightseeing in Xiamen. When viewed two-dimensionally, it is apparent that in addition to being a residential area and a leisure destination, the ground level of the street along the sheltered dock has many commercial offerings, with the highest proportion being food and beverage (F&B) and shopping. On the whole, traditional business functions such as residential facilities, religious buildings, traditional fishing ports, and shopping still occupy an important position, indicating that *Shapowei* still retains a traditional way of life and culture. Simultaneously, its distinctive geographical location and streetscape attract creative and entrepreneurial youth as settlers, who bring several emerging businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, dessert shops, and modern creative shopping and exhibition halls; such businesses account for nearly 50% of commercial activity in the city. Some buildings serve residential purposes in the day and commercial purposes (e.g., seafood stalls) at night. This reflects that modern *Shapowei* is in the process of gradual commercialization. The meeting and integration of tradition and innovation has brought vitality to the streets of *Shapowei*—and exposed new hidden dangers.

The historical fishing port is an important “catalyst” of *Shapowei*’s community vitality passed down the generations. The traffic, commerce, and social-life scenery surrounding the fishing-port culture, such as fish markets and fishing-boat displays, were once highlights that invited people to stop and linger (see Fig. 2). Today, cyclists, cart pushers, and pedestrians pass through the streets; children play; residents rest; neighbors stop in small groups to chat; vendors sell goods; people choose goods and negotiate prices; and tourists observe these street scenes. The fusion of these scenes constitutes the vitality of the streets of *Shapowei*.

The original area of the harbor in *Shapowei* exceeded 30,000m², with 7 urban sewage outfalls connected to the dock. The silt was 0.5–6 m thick and was left uncovered after the daily ebb (see Fig. 3). During the summer, people were put off by its strong odor. In 2013, the Xiamen Water Authority completed sewage disposal and considerably reduced the silt’s foul odor. However, there was still a large amount of silt in the harbor. In 2015, the Xiamen government planned to close and repair the harbor. According to the government, most local fishing boats anchored to the dock were no longer engaged in fishing operations, and the remaining motorized fishing boats were polluting the harbor. Therefore, in addition to following a desilting process, fishermen were also guided to work on the land, and fishing boats were transferred to other ports.

The “dredging” project in 2015 forced the fishing community, and their boats, to be evacuated. The traditional, culturally oriented streets and scenes gradually disappeared, and only modern elements of business and life were retained. Now, the active population of *Shapowei* is diversified—mostly young workers from other provinces, and tourists. In addition, groups of fashionable young people—who enjoy the unique culture of *Shapowei*—have been residing there for a long time, and are mainly engaged in work related to historical and cultural record-keeping, conservation, and preservation. It is clear that young locals are leaving the community, and those who remain are generally the elderly.

3.3. Challenges and difficulties in the *Shapowei* community

3.3.1. Traditional communities destroyed by modern culture

A community is described as a subset of nodes within a diagram wherein correlations between nodes are more close-knit than conjunctions with the rest of the network (Radicchi et al., 2004). As per this definition, an urban community must possess at least two basic elements: they must be a group of nodes (such as

people), join in a network, and must share a common cultural and psychological bond, called a dendrogram in social sciences. Traditional communities have harmonious neighborhoods and a strong sense of belonging, and determine a



(a) Fish market



(b) Fishing-boat displays

Fig. 2. The fishing-port culture of *Shapowei* community. Source: taken by the authors in April 2014.

stratified formation of communities fixed within each other. The fishing port of *Shapowei* is that kind of traditional community. Streets and alleys are the main places where people interact. People walking, children playing, and the elderly sitting and chatting on the streets—these are the key elements that constitute *Shapowei*'s community.

However, urbanization and modernization have significantly damaged the traditional community of *Shapowei*, and the lifestyle of local residents has gradually changed. As a result of its inferior living conditions and poor employment opportunities as compared to the surrounding areas, *Shapowei* has experienced an ever-increasing outflow of population. Most middle-income and high-income individuals and families have migrated for work. A majority of the permanent residents are the elderly, children, and low-income individuals and families. In *Shapowei*, the phenomenon of population-aging is even more evident. In addition, commercialization has led to a population inflow, mainly consisting of investors and professionals, who have brought their modern lifestyle with them. This has rapidly altered the social atmosphere and neighborhood culture of *Shapowei*'s traditional communities.

Demographic changes have greatly affected interpersonal relationships and social interactions within traditional communities. There is now even less communication among residents, weaker relationships among neighbors, and greater emphasis on privacy and security. In addition, the rapid inflow of population makes establishing neighborly relationships difficult. The resulting weak sense of belonging has caused many social conflicts. Traditional street scenes that once existed have now disappeared, and the vitality of the traditional community has been gradually lost (see Fig. 4).

3.3.2. The shock of commercialization on the traditional fishing-port community

Since its beginning, *Shapowei* has been an important fishing port, not only for Xiamen but to China's entire southeast coast. In the early 20th century, *Shapowei's* fishing industry experienced unprecedented prosperity, and the sheltered dock attracted many fishing boats. The fishing industry has driven the development of the shipbuilding industry and allied manufacturing industries, resulting in a unique fishing-port



Fig. 3. The harbor with exposed silt at low tide before the desilting process. Source: taken by authors in April 2014.



Fig. 4. Before (left) and after (right) progressive regeneration. Source: photos taken by authors in November 2016.

culture in the area. This includes a ship-building culture with activities such as fishing-boat production; a do-it-yourself (DIY) culture with activities such as a traditional fishery plant, dyeing and weaving for fishing, rope-making for fishing, traditional clothing, and headwear; a unique clothing culture; and a unique food culture with dishes such as clam porridge, whitefish bone, and fish floss etc. In addition, there is folk music, such as the Taiwanese opera, and the *Wangchuan* boat-burning ritual, as well as the local language. In the long term, the important intangible cultural heritage of Xiamen—its traditional fishing-port culture—has become key to maintaining the quality and vitality of *Shapowei's* streets.

As of the late 2000s, the wave of commercialization and globalization rapidly introduced several commercial activities. Simultaneously, a large number of tourists, investors, professionals, and other groups arrived in *Shapowei*, attracted by its beauty, culture, and atmosphere. This triggered a series of significant changes and interaction between newcomers and local residents in the neighborhoods and affected its traditional fishing-port culture. Amidst challenges of the mega-event (the G20 BRICS Summit held in Xiamen), the local government became concerned with large-scale urban regeneration and redevelopment to modernize the urban landscape, infrastructure, and economy for the host city (Smith, 2012). In June 2015, “dredging” activities, as one initiative of regeneration and urban landscape improvement, forced fishing boats to relocate and threatened the area’s unique marine cultural landscape, including its docks, fishing boats, and anchors. This will lead to the disappearance of the last “living” fishing-port culture in the inner city of Xiamen, in addition to the culture- and landscape-loss of the fishing community. Similar to past redevelopment initiatives in which land was reclaimed for new development, in this case the “dredging” activity called attention to the reproduction of urban vitality and reshaping of *Shapowei's* collective memories in the urban regeneration process.

3.4. Utilizing participation planning for reproducing urban vitality

3.4.1. Participation planning workshop

The urban regeneration project of the *Shapowei* community was undertaken by our research team between September 2016 and March 2017. With the promotion of the government and demand from the public, representatives (including professors and students) from four universities, namely Sun Yat-Sen University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Huaqiao University, and Xiamen University jointly organized the *Shapowei Participation Planning Workshop* on December 6, 2016 at the *Xiagang* District Office (see Fig. 5). The workshop aimed to encourage the public to participate in the urban regeneration process, such as designing open spaces, creating community organizations, proposing community activities for protecting local culture, etc. The public includes local residents, ordinary citizens who are concerned about *Shapowei* regeneration, shop owners, and tourists. The involved third parties are the *Shapowei* merchants committee, *Shapowei* cultural and creative committee, some religious committees, the media, etc. University representatives as neutral moderators built an interactive platform for the government, public, and community organizations in *Shapowei*, and instructed various groups to participate in several aspects of urban regeneration planning, including design, management, and institution. About twenty interested local groups and forty representatives from the social groups mentioned above joined enthusiastically the *Shapowei Participation Planning Workshop*. The second workshop was held at the *Shapowei* cooperation workshop building (*Gongtong dizao gongzuofang*) on March 19, 2017. Approximately fifty people participated in the workshop and shared their opinions on planning design and future development with people of various backgrounds.

In this process, the appeals and ideas of various stakeholders were considered in detail and effectively communicated, which helped create common ground regarding the future development of *Shapowei* and the establishment of cooperative relationships among various entities. Participants involved in this workshop achieved three kinds of agreements. First, fishing boats should be allowed to return and be used as carriers of the fishing-port culture. Second, improving the vitality of the *Shapowei* neighborhood is not an effort in static protection, but a dynamic process of urban regeneration. Third, the importance of place attachment should be considered in community empowerment, in that it motivates cooperative efforts for different interest groups.

3.4.2. Promoting fishing-port culture and reviving street vitality

Culture is the foundation of making the city more attractive; it brings uniqueness to its streets and contains the city’s collective memories (Zukin, 2012). As such, in order to improve the quality and vitality of a traditional street, one must protect its culture while revitalizing development. In this regard, in-depth excavation and display of the traditional culture of *Shapowei* highlights its cultural charm as a traditional port of Xiamen. Not only does *Shapowei* possess a material cultural heritage, such as arcade buildings and unique fishing boats, but it also distinctively possesses intangible cultural heritage, such as a fishing-port culture, an allied ship-building culture, a DIY culture, and a folk culture. The returned fishing boats help re-create a living fishing-port culture through rich and diverse displays and activities, such as traditional fishing displays and fishing-boat keel displays, thereby improving the public’s identification with *Shapowei* and reshaping the quality of the streets of this traditional fishing port.

It is also important to keep pace with time and allow the modern development of fishing-port culture while protecting its tradition, thereby maintaining the vitality of the streets. The fishing port is the soul of *Shapowei's* streets and provides vitality to the neighborhood. The improvement of the quality of traditional

streets is closely tied to characteristics of the fishing port. It emphasizes the integration of “traditional” and “modern” elements to protect *Shapowei*’s fishing-port culture and regeneration of the street quality. Therefore, a modern lifestyle and the attraction of fishing-port culture will be enhanced on the sheltered dock. Using public spaces, traditional port scenes will be reproduced through the use of fishing boats and their construction, and creative photography experiences, facilitating the maintenance, development, and passing-on of the fishing-port culture.

3.4.3. Creating place-attachment for street-reshaping activities

Urban communities are not only physical spaces, but also contain rich and complex social relationships, and significant social and cultural identities of residents (Smith et al., 1997). The recreation of an urban community occurs by transforming a static physical space, creating emotional connections between people and various experiences and collective memories in the community. For *Shapowei*, the spatial transformation of the architectural landscape, traffic corridors, and public spaces are essential elements to revitalizing its streets (see Fig. 6a).

A wide range of *Shapowei*’s valuable architectural elements—various forms of traditional red-brick walls, stone walls, modern granitic plaster, brushed walls, in addition to ceramics and red bricks from the last century, decorative wrought iron, and traditional round Chinese windows that play-off one another—can be found on a single street. One may see decorative shell-stone column fences, modern openwork stone columns, and iron bars that complement each other, in addition to doors made of different materials in different periods, and diverse shop signs all on the same street. *Shapowei* protected its historical and architectural landscape, such as its ancient *Minnan* courtyards, residences, and buildings. With a focus on protection, the design practiced modern and rational development, forming a composite landscape with a blend of history and modernity, providing a rich, lively, and interesting street experience (see Fig. 6a).

The flow of traffic in the neighborhood is said to be well-organized, and entrances and exits are thoughtfully designed to create comfortable and winding pathways. *Shapowei* is hidden behind an urban road, and has only a few lanes that connect to the outside area. Although *Shapowei* has an enigmatic atmosphere, the environment and size of the alleyways provide a poor experience to the public. Therefore, to organize existing traffic routes, impressive and accessible entrances and exits are suggested to be built in the north and south of the area. The local government has launched a policy of “awards in place of subsidies” motivating residents to reform independently. Local residents may use this policy to decorate and clean existing alleys and buildings on either side, or repair the pavement on the main street along the sheltered dock, thereby providing a pleasant street experience to visitors and residents (see Fig. 6b).

Next, a public space that contains memories of the alleyways has been created. The fishing boat was once the symbol of *Shapowei*, and lively public spaces were formed around the fishing boats. Thus, the sheltered dock created a public space around the fishing boats, including the *Shapowei* Living Museum, a fishing-boat display area, and a hydrophilic platform (see Fig. 6c). These can serve as a fishing boat exhibition site, fishing industry craft education, and space for creative photography, while also recreating street scenes of the traditional fishing community life (see Fig. 6d).



(a) Group 1 discussion



(b) Group 2 discussion



(c) Group 3 discussion



(d) Group 4 discussion

Fig. 5. The *Shapowei* Participation Planning Workshop was jointly organized by four universities.

Regarding reactions from the local community, the return of fishing boats was enthusiastically welcomed by residents and fishermen. The residents have voluntarily made a proposal for a collaborative workshop in *Shapowei* regarding the use of fishing boats and their stop places. When boats were returned to the harbor, the old fishermen were eagerly waiting on the shore, as if awaiting their children's return home. By virtue of the workshop activities "One Day Curator," six elderly fishermen explained the history of the *Shapowei* fishery's development, introduced the characteristics of the eight fishing boats that had been returned, and shared experiences of fishing in the sea (Fig. 7a and b). Mr. Yuan, one of the elderly fishermen, said "The fishing boat represents life in *Shapowei*. I hope to add more fishing boats and balance their distribution to ensure that all areas can exhibit these boats that are characteristic of the island and its history" (interviewed on December 22nd, 2018 at the *Shapowei* collaborative workshop). Additionally, since *Shapowei* became a critical local point of society, the *Xiagang* district is actively developing vibrant and diverse travelling experiences for this neighborhood in the long run.

Shapowei's local residents often make comments and suggestions, and have also established a cultural and ecological volunteer protection team to plan special hand-made crafts and public welfare lectures related to the *Shapowei* fishing port, in addition to publicizing traditional operation methods of *Xiagang*'s fishermen. They also conduct activities such as research and promotion of *Shapowei* fishing port culture. Some older fishermen have donated items related to the fishery to allow younger generations to understand their way of life in the past. Private collectors want to exhibit the items related to the *Shapowei* neighborhood at the *Shapowei* Living Museum to allow more people to understand *Xiagang*'s past and share their nostalgia.

4. Discussion and conclusion



(a) A vision of community design



(b) Waterfront wooden walkway (c) Revitalizing existing unused buildings to *Shapowei* Living Museum



d) The *Shapowei* community after regeneration

Fig. 6. *Shapowei* community before and after urban regeneration.

Sources: *Shapowei* Participation Planning Workshop, 2016; taken by the authors in December 2016 and October 2019 respectively.

The question of how to improve the quality and vitality of urban space through scientific and rational planning and design is an important research topic in the field of urban planning. Considering the case of Xiamen's *Shapowei* Community from the perspectives of public participation and cultural-led regeneration, this study explained the process of loss of vitality of the old city's street space. Since urbanization and

commercialization have destroyed *Shapowei's* unique charm, the shortage of public space has led to a gradual decline in the vitality of *Shapowei's* streets. "Dredging" activities have forced the fishing community to migrate, threatening and destroying unique marine cultural landscapes and scenes. The traditional community of *Shapowei* has been significantly damaged by modern culture. Likewise, the lifestyle of local residents has gradually changed, and so has the vitality of the community. We utilized a participatory planning workshop to incentivize different stakeholders to get involved in the urban regeneration process, and thereby proposed two main aspects of planning to reproduce the vitality of the *Shapowei* community: namely, (1) creating spaces for street-reshaping activities, as they can revitalize streets and create public spaces with street memories; and (2) promotion of community identity to revitalize the community and evoke memories of the fishing port. Such participation planning workshops facilitate finding a common ground for *Shapowei's* future development and allow for the formulation and implementation of plans through consultation and communication among stakeholders. The workshop provides opportunities and serves as a platform for diverse groups who are closely linked by social ties to share collective memories of *Shapowei* and participate in joint action in regenerating the neighborhood. In addition, it is of utmost importance to determine and understand the value of community and the needs of diversified stakeholders, particularly local residents, and translate their needs into actual design criteria for neighborhood planning with a strong sense of community and enhancing residents' well-being. Different stakeholders are aware of their participation, acquiring skills and promoting wider community participation in *Shapowei* through an orderly process. The ultimate goal is to balance social order through improving urban space and advocating culture-led urban regeneration.

The vitality of cities and communities is produced by the spatial and complex relationship of various activities, people, and places (Chion, 2009; Ravenscroft, 2000). In *Shapowei's* case, micro-construction and the fishing-port culture are "catalysts" for reproducing local community vitality, as recommended by the cases in Tang (2016) and Jung et al. (2015). The open space design enhances the feelings and experiences that one derives from the streets (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Rebuilding existing buildings as museum sites have recreated memories of the fishing port, and cultural exhibition events have promoted community identity. In short, the community promotes interactions between spaces and people through the creation of open space; it enhances the psychological sense of community through a participatory planning approach for reproducing vitality. These initiatives have been achieved by public recognition, for example, the president of the *Shapowei* merchants committee Mr. Zhong said that the conservation design work of the *Shapowei* community facilitates social inclusion, enhances economic vibrance, and upgrades the image of the city and streets (interviewed on December 12, 2016 at his office).

The participatory planning approach is proven to be a successful approach to reproducing the vitality of the community. As for *Shapowei*, through participation – the collaboration of people pursuing objectives that they themselves have defined (Sanoff, 1999) – has contributed to strengthening the social fabric, commanding community planning processes, recreating the fishing culture, and adding economic and social value to the city in a culturally-motivated regeneration process. In the process of participation, public consensus and the value of community are deeply rooted in community regeneration with multi-stakeholders' involvement. Third parties such as scholars, volunteers, and especially social groups who are enthusiastic about community affairs and attentive to *Shapowei*, play a vital role in the overall success of local community regeneration. They have mastered planning issues on the spot and became community planners. In essence, echoing Hwang (1996) and Seltzer and Mahmoudi (2013), accumulating the broadest possible range of views, disagreement, and context, could generate new combinations of ideas providing an unexpected, ingenious outcome. More importantly, local residents have rebuilt their confidence and share common elements in the community, like their interests and locality. The participatory planning workshop in *Shapowei* achieved what it set out to do in terms of citizen participation.

This research has provided important implications to tackle the dilemma of urban regeneration in China and other countries. The traditional approach of planning does not constantly conform to the development reality and cannot satisfy the public's will and need. Thus, the turning point in urban planning is citizen participation, which is an emergent requirement in urban regeneration in China. Throughout this case, the passionate, independent, and articulate expressions and collective decision-making of the diverse groups represented are impressed. Local residents were more confident in communicating to us than professional planners during the planning workshop. Not only the elderly but also the youth in the neighborhood were adept at public speaking and public hearing, including field questions and project presentation. In essence, approaching citizens to participate in urban regeneration is beneficial to give them both responsibility and voice, building their capacity, involving them throughout the process, and changing the community. The conceptual and empirical discussion exemplifies a new, remarkable effort to indicate an urban regeneration, with an evolving process that embodies participation planning over land. Future studies should place greater importance on examining cases of regeneration in different contexts in China and abroad, and explore the applicable participation planning approach for urban regeneration.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Eddie Chi-man Hui: Conceptualization, Methodology, Tingting Chen: Data curation, Writing - Original draft preparation. Wei Lang: Writing - Reviewing and Editing, Yunbei Ou: Visualization, Investigation.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

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Fig. 7. The activities of “One Day Curator”.

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